

CULTURAL CORE

Broadway

WISH LIST 2019 JOHNSON WANTS TO MAKE BROADWAY A

Executive director strives to lure community to Green Bay district's events

Jeff Bollier Green Bay Press-Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK - WIS.

GREEN BAY - On Broadway Inc. Executive Director Brian Johnson has culture more than concrete on his wish list for 2019.

There's sure to be plenty of construction in the district, which follows Broadway from the Mason Street overpass north to Mather Street. But Johnson said his wish list this year stops and starts with giving Broadway a much different reputation than it once had.

"We want to establish the Broadway District as the cultural center of our community. We're the trendsetters behind the emerging experiences our residents look for," Johnson said. "We want people to choose us. Our wish is to see more members of our community step up to invest their time and talent on Broadway."

He said On Broadway, property owners, business owners and developers did a lot of legwork in 2018 toward making his wish come true. The last of the Larsen Canning complex buildings are being renovated in the Rail Yard, the Tarlton Theatre has opened, and plans for an urban beach and Breakthrough's headquarters have given shape to the Shipyard.

Now, it's time to deliver the cultural goods to match the physical investment in the downtown district.

"We laid a lot of groundwork (in 2018) to get those businesses and developments here," Johnson said. "We're not the end-all, be-all programmer here, so we want to work with nonprofits and other organizations to collaborate on bringing their events to the district."

Johnson said the organization will expand its offering of successful community events like Farmers Market on Broadway and igNight Markets with a 10-week concert series seeded by a \$25,000 Levitt AMP Grant the group won in December. He said the concert series will offer an array of musical styles aimed at connecting with the area's diverse population.

"We're trying to secure a big opener that people will show up to see," said Johnson. "Green Bay has a growing ethnic population and we want to find ways to reflect that growing diversity. We hope to elevate the level and types of performers we're bringing to Green Bay."

Johnson's wish list stretches beyond the concert series, though. Here's a look at what else is on his list.

See BROADWAY, Page 3D



On Broadway Inc. Executive Director Brian Johnson in an alleyway behind House of Home Brew on Jan. 11 in downtown Green Bay. Photo by Jeff Bollier for USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN.

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JIM MATTHEWS/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

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Continued from Page 1D

Invest in public art

Johnson said On Broadway's board set aside funds to support more murals, sculptures and other public art in the district this year.

"We see an opportunity to grow public art and the economic impact it has on our district," he said. "It plays a role in making this a district people want to be a part of."

He said investing in public art could take many forms this year beyond new murals and sculptures: The red artwork in the park at North Broadway and Hubbard Streets could be refreshed and the growth of both the Shipyard and

Rail Yard means streetscaping and public amenities will need to be extended into those areas.

Weigh anchor at the Shipyard

One year ago, the Shipyard was almost scuttled by the Green Bay Bullfrogs moving to Ashwaubenon. City officials adjusted the focus, though, and are developing plans for an area that could see retail, residential, recreation and commercial uses co-exist.

Johnson said you can expect to see Breakthrough break ground on its headquarters. Consultants will also present an action plan to the city for development of public amenities in the area that include an urban beach, a retail container park and a multisport athletic field.

"The southern end of the Broadway district should be completely transformed by 2020," Johnson said.

Focus on housing

Affordable apartments, affordable townhouses market-rate townhouses and luxury condominiums are in the works on the north end of the Broadway district.

Johnson said new units can't come online fast enough to meet the demand from all residents who want to live in the central city.

"Downtown continues to be 100 percent occupied," he said. "Moreso than just units, we want to make sure there's equitable access for a wide variety of people. It's a key part of our strategic goals."