

The Team Behind the Taps

The proposed "Red Arrow Beer Garden" is being spearheaded by Hans and Kimberly Weissgerber—the same team behind the wildly popular and well-established Estabrook Park beer garden. Their expertise in managing Milwaukee's beloved outdoor social spaces has earned them the trust of Milwaukee County Parks.

County Parks Executive Director Guy Smith has publicly backed the initiative, calling it "a great opportunity to activate the space." The county is currently finalizing a vendor permit that would allow the Weissgerbers to operate on a short-term basis through March 2027 while officials continue their search for a permanent, long-term concessionaire.

A New Hub for Downtown Activity

The vision for the site is far more than just a place to grab a pint. According to license applications filed with the city, the operation would cover roughly 37,200 square feet and serve as a vibrant community anchor. Plans suggest a busy slate of programming, including:

- Live music performances
- Dance nights
- Comedy shows
- Community contests

The operators are also looking beyond the summer months. The application indicates a desire to offer indoor food service and a cafe bar during the winter, ensuring that the 920 N. Water St. location remains a consistent draw regardless of the season.

Addressing Safety and Neighborhood Concerns

While the project has seen strong support, it hasn't been without questions. Given the proximity to the high-energy Water Street nightlife scene, some have raised concerns regarding safety.

Supporters, including Alderman Bob Bauman, have been quick to differentiate the beer garden model from typical late-night bars. Emphasizing the professional track record of the Weissgerbers, officials noted that they plan to cap alcohol service at 9 p.m. to prevent late-night spillover and ensure the park remains a family-friendly, community-focused space.

The Big Picture

This transition comes at a pivotal time for Red Arrow Park. With the city actively exploring redesign concepts for the plaza—including potential upgrades to the "Slice of Ice" rink and improvements to pedestrian areas—the beer garden serves as a "bridge" to keep the area active while those long-term plans take shape.

As Milwaukee's beer garden culture continues to thrive—from the traditional vibes at Estabrook to the urban buzz of the Deer District—the Red Arrow Beer Garden aims to carve out its own niche in the heart of downtown.

What's next? The project still needs to clear a few final permitting hurdles and city sign-offs. If the approvals line up, Milwaukeeans could be raising a glass in Red Arrow Park by mid-summer. Keep your eyes on the plaza—the transformation of this downtown staple is officially underway.