



Program hosts and guests, February 23, 2021  
URBAN SPACESHIP PODCAST, EPISODE #2:  
Jeremy Fojut - Co-Founder & CEO, NEWaukee  
Montavius Jones - Development Associate, Cinnaire  
Michael Bradley - Amateur Demographer, Passionate about Urbanism  
Greg Patin (guest speaker) - Strategic Development Manager,  
City of Milwaukee

Mars has its Rover, Milwaukee has its Urban Spaceship – both exploring their regions for important information and inspiring ideas. The Urban Spaceship Podcast will air periodically to explore the intersections of planning, architecture, housing, development, transportation, place making, government, economic development, historic preservation, construction and design.

This podcast is for people who are passionate about urbanism and offers a place where they can connect. Each episode will take a deep dive into ideas that make Milwaukee more human-centered, and will rethink and reframe the foundation urbanism has in our region.

## **Podcast 2 Summary: Parking minimums, zoning and the National Ave. Corridor**

### **What's caught the panelists' eye in urbanism this week:**

Milwaukee and Madison are in the top 6 nationally in a Future of Work Report for increased change in number of LinkedIn members in U.S. metro areas. Promising result for Milwaukee, along with the continued interest by companies to move here. People moving out of high-cost cities and many working remotely, and prefer the affordable housing here.

### **TOPIC: Parking Minimums and Zoning**

Zoning codes are updated a few times a year and enforced by the Department of Neighborhood Services. The city restricts parking and doesn't necessarily want more. The city discourages parking lots and has parking maximums in place. In addition to being expensive, parking runs counter to more walkable, human-scale neighborhoods. Worse than parking spaces are empty parking spaces.

Often it's national retailers who use a template for parking that does not take into account the local situation.

Would a split-rate tax system that taxes parking lots differently help? Some lots are empty most of the time, like the Convention Center lot. Zoning ensures lots are landscaped to look the best they can, but how much parking is appropriate?

An issue often is that banks require more parking in the project plans when financing a project. Milwaukee expects to park cheaply. Even at \$40K/spot, you need \$400/month to make that up and people don't want to pay that much.

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### **Deep Dive Topic: National Avenue Corridor Project**

DOT did not respond to a request to comment on this project.

A 2019 study showing pedestrian issues across Milwaukee shows that National Avenue is the highest conflict area on the south side. It's a pedestrian/transit-focused corridor and it should put people and buses first. Right now, squeezing six lanes in a narrow street with a small sidewalk – four lanes of traffic and two lanes of parking, for 8000 cars a day. No benches, no street trees, cars driving too fast.

Compare this to Oakland Ave. in Shorewood, 9700 cars a day, but it has wider lanes, attractive street-scaping and marked mid-block crosswalks, all combining to improve the identity of the area.

The National Ave. corridor presents such a great opportunity. It connects the whole city out to the suburbs. Mirroring the streetscape of Oakland Ave. is not a radical improvement, but a sensible thing to do. There is little return for businesses currently on National Ave., whereas Oakland is welcoming and gives a return to those businesses. This is an equity issue – racial and class equity issues, affecting predominantly people of color. National Avenue as it is says this neighborhood is not worth it, making the people there second class citizens. This affects people's lives. We need to think about how our public realm looks.

### **Recommendations for National Ave. corridor**

National Ave. represents so much of our community. Of the 515K jobs in Milwaukee County, 70% are between Oklahoma Ave. and Capitol Drive - about 325K jobs. That's the economic engine of our region. The first phase of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to connect downtown with the Milwaukee Regional Medical Complex shows 170K jobs within one mile of that corridor. Compare this to the potential BRT route from City Hall to National Ave. which has almost the same number of jobs. It's almost the exact same job potency as the Wisconsin Ave. corridor.

**Challenge to region/city** – This is one of the most important, potent job corridors in our region and it lends itself to being transit-connected and walkable. It can be multi-modal, with street trees and benches, a great place to work and build the City of Milwaukee.

National Avenue, Silver Spring Drive, and Hampton Avenue corridors could all be more pedestrian-focused. It's not about getting somewhere faster, that's not the way to sell our city. Building streets for the people who live in those neighborhoods should be our vision.