

COMMON WEALTH DEVELOPMENT'S MAIN STREET INDUSTRIES



FROM BUSES TO BUSINESS INCUBATION

Starting in 1931 this site was the regional headquarters and service garage of Northland Greyhound that served most of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. The bow-roof building was the original structure and the flat roof section was added on in 1948. The passenger terminal, Union Bus Station, was located in the Wisconsin Power and Light Building at 122 West Washington Avenue. In 1957 Northland Greyhound merged with Great Lakes Greyhound forming the Central Division of the Greyhound Corporation.

Greyhound was evicted from the Union Bus Station in 1971 and relocated their passenger terminal to their facility at the corner of East Main and Brearly Street. This move drew criticism from the bus-riding public and the Madison Chamber of Commerce. "The new location is on a narrow, congested street considerably removed from the center of the city and from convenient access to city buses." Nevertheless, the "spanking new Greyhound Bus Terminal offering the finest in passenger service and package express shipping" opened at 931 East Main Street in April 1971. In 1986, 30 buses left the terminal each weekday with between 300 and 400 passengers bound "for all points, east, west, north and south".

Greyhound bus drivers went on strike in 1983 and again in 1990. On November 17, 1983 more than 100 people attempted to damage and delay the first bus to come through Madison since the beginning of the nationwide strike. "Strikers, their ranks swollen by volunteers from picket lines at Straus Printing and Publishing Co. and Eastex, hurled epithets, eggs and picket signs at the nearly empty bus when it tried to enter the bus terminal." The bus did eventually depart escorted by police officers.

In the late 1980's Greyhound decided to get out of the "costly" terminal business and targeted 35 terminals nationwide for closure, including the Madison terminal. Greyhound closed their 931 East Main terminal in October 1991 and set-up shop at the Badger Bus Terminal at 2. S. Bedford Street.

Common Wealth Development purchased the vacant building in 1994 and renovated it into Main Street Industries, a business incubator that opened in 1996. The project was made possible by grants and loans from the following: City of Madison Community Development Block Grant, Associated Bank, Office of Community Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Madison Community Foundation, Capital Revolving Loan Fund, the Common Wealth Development Trust and the Evjue Foundation.