

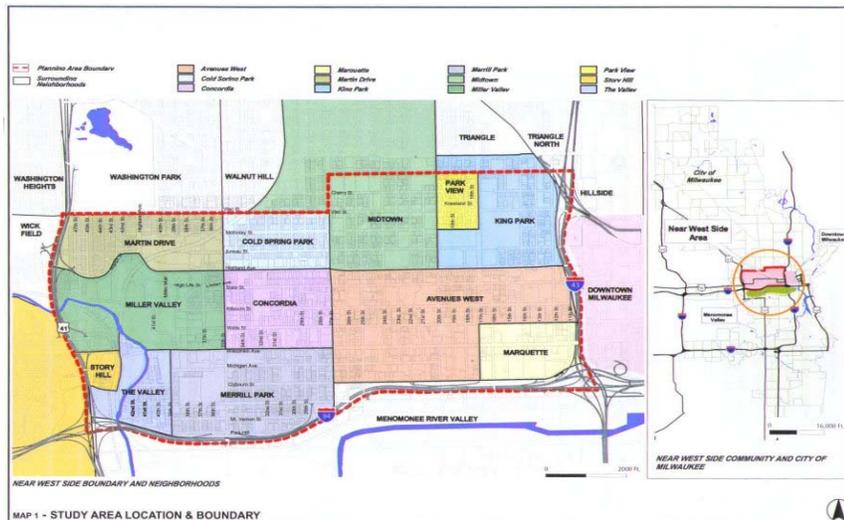
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Near West Side neighborhood poised for revitalization

Key area wants its main street back, more owner-occupancy

The City of Milwaukee's newest neighborhood plan, the Near West Side Comprehensive Plan, is moving through its approval stages, beginning with a public hearing before the City Plan Commission on March 8th.

The near west side, a roughly 360 block area stretching immediately west of Milwaukee's downtown, is home to Harley-Davidson, Marquette University, Miller Brewing and Aurora. In addition, the area is strongly residential, with at least three key commercial districts.



One of the traditional commercial areas is N. 27th Street, a north/south arterial running from W. Wisconsin Avenue north to W. Wells Street. In identifying eight catalytic projects, the planning team listed N. 27th Street, which could become the main street for this district, with opportunity for a full-service grocery, a family sit-down restaurant, and a neighborhood-oriented specialty district, possibly supported by a Tax Incremental District.

Other catalytic projects include revitalization of Vliet Street, a conversion of the Norris Playfield to green open space, and redevelopment of the former Good Samaritan Hospital (City on a Hill).

The plan has extensive detail on the current housing stock on the near west side, only minutes from downtown, where studio and one-bedroom apartments predominate.

The Near West Side Comprehensive plan found that the conversion of these existing units to larger units and/or condominiums would be beneficial to the neighborhood. Also beneficial would be demolition of units that have severely deteriorated, have been abandoned, and have no significance historically. Overall, renovation would be preferred over demolition.

The Department of City Development led the effort to create the plan for the Near West Side neighborhood, with help from community leaders from Avenues West and West End organizations as well as Marquette University and Marquette University High School.

The planning team identified a high number of group homes and social service agencies in the area, some of which present challenges with inadequate building maintenance and management. Subsidized or assisted units account for nearly 20% of the area's housing stock. The study calls for development of mixed-income housing, while increasing owner-occupancy.

“We’re already seeing individual homeowners or developers doing rehab or infill housing,” said June Moberly, Executive Director of Avenues West, one of the study partners. “There is a great deal of opportunity to attract more downtown workers and families to these units.” City Assessor data shows the predominately single-family neighborhoods in the western and central parts of the Near West Side are stabilizing with property appreciation at, or exceeding the citywide rates.

The full final draft of the Near West Side Comprehensive plan is available online. Go to www.mkedcd.org, and click on Near West Side Plan.

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