

For immediate release, March 9, 2004

City's Largest Environmental Cleanup Begins

Work sets the stage for new business, recreational opportunities

Milwaukee's largest environmental cleanup project in the city's contemporary history has started. The 140-acre former Milwaukee Road Shops site is just east of Miller Park, in the Menomonee Valley. The site has been vacant and considered an eyesore since the 1980's.

The site was once home to a cluster of railroad-related manufacturing plants, from forging operations to parts assembly. In the 1880's an estimated 1,800 people were employed in the shops, a work force that grew to approximately 3,000 in the early 1900's. The work diminished and the land changed hands. It was once owned and operated by The Milwaukee Road, which went bankrupt in 1977.

The shops site later became the subject of Milwaukee's largest eminent domain action. The City of Milwaukee acquired the land from Chicago-based CMC Heartland for \$3.55 million in August of 2003.

"This is where the revitalization of the Menomonee Valley really takes off," said DCD Commissioner Pat Algiers. "This is the grand scale version of cleaning up the backyard. Having 140 acres of city land back in use raises incredible opportunity."

Since acquiring the 140 acres, city staff has been planning the massive cleanup effort. Work has now begun at the site.

- ◆ Six miles of relic brick sewers will be cleaned and removed or demolished in place.
- ◆ Asbestos dumped on the site during previous ownership will be removed.
- ◆ Over a million square feet of old building foundations are to be broken in place or removed.
- ◆ Half a million cubic yards of fill will be trucked in and used to create an environmental cap to protect human health and the environment, and raise the site out of the flood plain.
- ◆ The road base for the western extension of Canal Street will be prepared and "surcharged" to compress the soft soils.

The City of Milwaukee aggressively raised funds for the remediation project, winning more than 15 individual state and federal grants, totaling over 3.5 million dollars.

Once the cleanup is completed, a business park will be created on 70 of the acres. Other lands at the former shop site, specifically land adjacent to the Menomonee River and on either side of the N. 35th Street Viaduct, will be dedicated to a mix of play fields, gathering space, natural areas, river access and the Hank Aaron State Trail. The plan for the recreation and natural uses are a result of a national design competition organized by the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center and funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The plan, adopted by the redevelopment authority, has won national awards from the American Society for Landscape Architects, and other national recognition.

Currently the site generates no tax base. The future use of half of the land as an industrial park will change that. The Menomonee Valley business park is estimated to generate more than \$6 million in the first years, and then a million dollars in taxes per year thereafter, according to estimates in the plan for the Tax Incremental District (TID) for the park. The Milwaukee Common Council has approved the \$16 million dollar TID.

More information on Menomonee Valley development can be found at www.renewthevalley.org.