



Build upon the city's quality of life and place-based assets.

Quality of life matters to economic growth. Place matters even more. Public and private leaders and neighborhood leaders must be aligned in nurturing Milwaukee's cultural and civic life and making the city's neighborhoods safe and livable for a broad range of current and prospective residents and businesses.

Attract and nurture ecologically friendly businesses.

The economic development strategy will aim to green the city in general and in specific, retaining, growing and attracting businesses that are friendly to the environment and supportive of Milwaukee's evolving culture of sustainability.

Declare a positive vision for the city.

Public and private leadership needs to constantly articulate a positive vision and spirit of optimism about what Milwaukee is becoming, building from assets and promoting the city as a desirable place to live and work.



CHAPTER 7

Quality of Life and Place

7.1 Introduction

Quality of life matters in attracting and retaining skilled workers and employers, and making neighborhoods appealing and attractive. While most people relocate because of a job or the prospect of one, young professionals and millennials increasingly are prioritizing vibrant, dynamic and connected places when deciding where to live. In fact, some are choosing Milwaukee for its rich night life and cultural scene and as a more affordable alternative to Chicago.¹ Even when a job prospect is the initial draw to a city or region, quality of life is often what keeps people in a place. Conversely, a lack of quality of life can compel people to find opportunities elsewhere: many young people, particularly minority youth, are growing up in neighborhoods that are discouraging and dangerous, and many take the first opportunity to improve the conditions in which they live, often leaving Milwaukee to do so.

A growing body of research over the past 15 years has identified quality of life as central to fostering an inviting environment within which old and new businesses, entrepreneurs, workers and their families can flourish. A review of international research on the topic found a “clear link...between quality of life considerations and location choices of firms and individuals.” The review concluded that “the improvement of quality of life becomes not only a question of social equity, but also, and perhaps predominantly, one element of strategies aiming to attract people and investments in certain locations.”²

Before the advent of “footloose” industries, or industries not tied to a geographic location, traditional economic development strategies were focused on location factors such as raw materials, labor costs, site or infrastructure costs, transportation links, industry clusters and other incentives. However, as industry has become uncoupled from geographic location, quality of life and place have become much more central to location decisions. Fostering an exciting urban environment within which businesses, workers and entrepreneurs alike can flourish, is no longer the “icing on the cake” after all other requirements have been met. It is at the heart of a community’s economic health and prosperity. No CEO wants to locate a business where top level professionals and workers will not also want to locate. They care about everything from culture to cost of living.

It is no coincidence that cities with a high quality of life enjoy similarly robust economies: people flock to cities like Boston, Seattle and Portland for their “creative spark,” openness to new things, touted cultural amenities, shops and restaurants, abundant natural areas, opportunities for intellectual and social interaction, quality public schools and vibrant neighborhoods. Increasingly, Milwaukee is being recognized for its multitude of physical and cultural amenities. Recently ranked one of the ten most exciting cities in America by Movoto blog, the city has the opportunity to continue to grow its quality of life. Milwaukee has more in common with America’s hip, cutting-edge cities than many



Local Success
Recognizing the City's Assets

A 2014 survey² of Milwaukee "40 Under 40" winners included these comments:

—*"I believe that businesses located in vibrant parts of Milwaukee have a leg up on retaining great employees."*

—*"Employers should seek to be located "in a dynamic, livable city that promotes a community on the cutting edge, celebrates the differences between its many residents, and embraces, supports and encourages the change necessary to attract the next generation of professionals."*

—*"Education systems, neighborhood development, entertainment and restaurant options, the arts, and top-notch health care all help draw individuals to a community and keep them there."*

—*"Because employees who find a music spot, church, or even barbershop are more likely to stay in the city, helping young professionals find ways to get connected to Milwaukee's amazing cultural assets should be part of every company's retention strategy."*

—*"It's easy to fall in love with this city once you fully understand all it has to offer."*

people outside and even within the city may realize. The city was also ranked as one of the 10 coolest cities in the Midwest in 2013 by MSN.³

Urban theorist Richard Florida describes "quality of place" as cutting across three dimensions: *what's there*—the combination of the built environment and the natural environment, a stimulating, appealing setting for the pursuit of creative lives; *who's there*—diverse people of all ethnicities, nationalities, religions, and sexual orientations, interacting and providing clear cues that this is a community where anyone can fit in and make a life; *what's going on*—the vibrancy of the street life, café culture, arts, and music, the visible presence of people engaging in outdoor activities, and overall sense of active, exciting, creative goings-on.⁴

In Florida's words, "successful places do not provide just one thing; they provide a range of quality-of-place options for different kinds of people at different stages in their lives. Great cities and metro areas are not monoliths. As Jane Jacobs said long ago, they are federations of neighborhoods."⁵

This chapter discusses key elements of the city's quality of life and place, and recommends strategies to safeguard and strengthen the assets that make Milwaukee one of America's most livable cities.

7.2 Current Conditions

The City of Milwaukee is quickly becoming a destination for those who want the cultural and social amenities of a big city combined with a reasonable cost of living. Milwaukee was recently listed as the #4 place to go in 2014 by *Jet Setter* magazine.⁶ Milwaukee already has a high concentration of amenities that are attractive to young families, empty nesters, Bohemians, tourists, artists, professionals and knowledge workers alike. The city boasts a dense, walkable and exciting urban environment with historic buildings and beautiful architecture, the best access to services and transit of any community in the state, vast educational and healthcare choices, acres of parks and miles of bike lanes and dedicated trails, a vibrant nightlife, and



Twilight view of the Milwaukee Art Museum's Quadracci Pavilion, designed by renowned architect Santiago Calatrava. (Source: Pat Robinson)

numerous festivals, street fairs and cultural events year-round. At the same time, Milwaukee offers a lower cost of living relative to nearby Madison, Chicago, and many of its peer cities across the country.

What's Here?

Milwaukee has an impressive collection of big-city amenities and natural features that are assets to the M7 region and entire state of Wisconsin. The city enjoys a prime geographic location on the shores of Lake Michigan. Three rivers, the Milwaukee, Menomonee and Kinnickinnic, run through the heart of the city. Miles of Lake Michigan beaches, a three-mile riverwalk, Lakeshore State Park, the Hank Aaron State Trail, and an extensive system of bike lanes and trails connect residents, visitors and businesses to Milwaukee's abundant natural resources. More than 4,800 acres of public parkland dot the city. Also bringing green to the landscape are some 200,000 shade and ornamental trees growing along city streets, more than 120 miles of planted boulevards, and more than 150 community gardens. Even Milwaukee's newest industrial park, the Menomonee Valley Industrial Center, includes 80 acres of public green space.

Milwaukee boasts a dense, walkable and exciting urban environment. The city has an impressive collection of historic buildings, with 175 buildings and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places and six, including Milwaukee's City Hall, designated as National Historic Landmarks. More than 150 buildings and districts have local historic designation. Creative design strategies have allowed successful adaptive re-use of many historic structures. The Brewery, a National Register-listed district reusing buildings that formerly housed the Pabst Brewery, was the first LEED-certified neighborhood in the U.S.

The city is host to the region's premier cultural and entertainment venues and several of Wisconsin's most-visited tourist attractions. These include Miller Park, home of the Milwaukee Brewers; the Potawatomi Hotel and Casino; the Harley-Davidson Museum; Henry W. Maier Festival Park, home of Summerfest and a series of ethnic festivals throughout the summer; the Bradley



Local Success Creative Placemaking

The term "creative placemaking" is used to denote culture-based revitalization efforts. In recent years, these have often involved modest-scale investments that support arts and cultural development. Such projects can take many forms: examples are live/work/sell housing for artists, restoration of neglected cultural facilities, establishment of new local arts venues, and conversion of industrial buildings to galleries.

ArtPlace, an organization that supports creative placemaking, says that successful placemaking efforts create "opportunities for people of all income levels and backgrounds to thrive in place. As its value increases, a place that is intentionally inclusive and connected is more likely to spur economic opportunity and allow people to succeed where they are." Further, successful placemaking "fosters connections among people and across cultures. The relationships built among diverse groups of people create safer, more open places that create more opportunity and foster a sense that everyone is welcome."⁷

An ArtPlace grant is supporting Creational Trails, a creative placemaking project that is activating two Milwaukee locations with art and cultural activity. One phase of the project involves the development of a trail, The Artery, along an abandoned rail corridor from the intersection of Keefe and Richards Streets to Hampton Avenue. The trail will be enhanced with public art and performance spaces. The ArtPlace grant also supports the temporary installation of major public art pieces along West Wisconsin Avenue in summer 2014.

Center, home of the Milwaukee Bucks, the Milwaukee Admirals, and Marquette University basketball; a downtown arena that is home for UW-Milwaukee basketball; the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, home to the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Milwaukee Ballet and the Florentine Opera; the Theater District, home to the historic Pabst Theater, the Riverside

GROWING PROSPERITY

Theater and Milwaukee Repertory Theater; the Milwaukee Public Museum; the Milwaukee Art Museum and its iconic Calatrava addition; the Veteran's War Memorial, Discovery World Museum, and Betty Brinn Children's Museum.

A dozen colleges and universities are located in Milwaukee. The largest institutions, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University and Milwaukee Area Technical College, are part of a spectrum of learning opportunity that includes Milwaukee School of Engineering, Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, Mt. Mary College, and other schools. The college inventory includes schools of engineering, dentistry, nursing, architecture, freshwater sciences, design, and education. Programs accommodate students seeking the range of academic credentials from short-term certificates to doctorate degrees.

The state's largest concentration of specialty health care is located in Milwaukee. Facilities

include teaching hospitals at the Medical College of Wisconsin, one of the nation's top-ranked pediatric hospitals, orthopedic and cardiac hospitals, one of the nation's best ophthalmology institutes, and a large Veterans Administration medical center.

Dozens of distinctive neighborhoods are found within the 98 square miles of Milwaukee. While most were settled before World War II, and some as early as the 1880s, the city also offers recently developed subdivisions. Milwaukee is laid out along an easy-to-follow street grid. Its walkable older neighborhoods, with names like Silver City, Franklin Heights and Merrill Park, are dotted with local housing types like the "Milwaukee duplex," a long, narrow two family home with separate living units on each of two floors; "Milwaukee bungalows," one or one-and-a-half story homes frequently graced with details like built-in china cabinets and leaded glass, and hundreds of newly-constructed infill homes designed to fit in with existing housing stock.



Residents and tourists enjoy Bastille Days at Cathedral Square. (Source: Pat Robinson)



A colorful mural adorns a wall in the Avenues West neighborhood. (Source: Pat Robinson)

Neighborhoods located near the Lake Michigan shoreline are characterized by one-of-a-kind architect-designed homes in a great range of styles. Near the edges of the city, lot sizes grow larger, and contemporary residential designs prevail. Homes are affordable in Milwaukee: according to Zillow, the median home sales price in 2013 was \$108,750.⁸ Living costs are lower here than in Chicago, Madison, and many peer cities across the nation.

While schools and churches anchor most Milwaukee neighborhoods, small-scale treasures are equally valued. Small commercial districts, dominated by locally-owned businesses, host cozy bars and restaurants, ethnic eateries and grocery stores, yoga studios, and shops selling everything from juggling supplies to tropical fish. Off-the-beaten path attractions, including small museums, performance spaces, pocket parks, farmer's markets, three branches of the Urban Ecology Center, and architectural gems, add warmth, character and interest to the areas Milwaukeeans call "home."

Who's Here?

Milwaukee's population is the most diverse in the state. Four in 10 residents are African American, 37% are white, 17% are Hispanic or Latino, and Asians and individuals of other ethnicities make up about 6 percent. Almost one in 10 residents is foreign-born, double the rate for the state as a whole. Milwaukee households, particularly those headed by non-whites and Latinos, tend to be younger than residents of the region in general. Milwaukeeans follow a broad range of religious traditions, and have formed Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim congregations.

Milwaukee's 600,000 residents have formed hundreds of volunteer and civic organizations that provide spaces for individuals with common interests to act and interact. We join the Wisconsin Labor History Society to learn about the role of local labor unions. We get our hands in the dirt at Growing Power, Victory Garden Initiative, Alice's Garden and dozens of small community gardens. We bring our artistic talents to the community with Organic Arts, Ltd., the Milwaukee Choristers, the Milwaukee Mandolin



Local Success Community Gardens in Milwaukee

Milwaukee currently has 177 active community gardens. Some are small and neighborhood based, while others have expanded operations to a larger scale. Collectively, these gardens bring neighbors together and provide fresh and healthy foods to city residents.

Growing Power, located on the city's northwest side, has been providing fresh, healthy foods to city residents since 1993. This urban farm spans 3 acres and includes year-round hoop houses, farm animals and greenhouses. Alice's Garden, begun in 2008, is a 2-acre site in Milwaukee's Johnson's Park neighborhood that provides locally grown herbs and herbal teas to Milwaukee residents. Alice's Garden also provides a number of educational programs that teach residents how to grow and maintain a garden, and how to better incorporate nutritious foods and healthy eating habits into their family's diets.

Walnut Way, incorporated in 2000 as a 501(c)3, provides a wide variety of programs and initiatives aimed at making the surrounding neighborhood safer, healthier and a better place to live. Among their many initiatives are a considerable urban agriculture program, including production gardens and orchards, an apiary to raise honey bees, planned hoop houses and agricultural annex, educational programs, and a garden-to-market program, aimed at producing supplemental income for residents by selling agricultural products at market.

HOME GR/OWN Milwaukee is a City-led initiative aimed at empowering residents to transform their neighborhoods by repurposing foreclosed city owned properties for healthy food production. The program aims to streamline permitting, ordinances and other city processes to make healthy food production and food-based entrepreneurship easier to develop. HOME GR/OWN works with existing organizations that are involved in community gardening and sustainable food systems.⁹



Learning from Others
Artist Porticoes in Asheville, NC

The Grove Arcade in downtown Asheville, North Carolina, is a center of creative entrepreneurship. Directly south of the arcade is the bustling Portico Market, featuring dozens of stalls of local farmers, artists and craftspeople selling their wares. Open seven days a week, the Portico Market provides tables that local artists and vendors can rent to display their products and creations for sale.

Through the Portico Market, Asheville is helping to support its local creative community by providing a location where creators and buyers can come together. The Portico Market is “a wonderful place to find the perfect gift or to bring visitors who are intrigued with local culture and want to meet the makers.”¹⁰

Orchestra (the oldest such group in the world) and the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra.

We guard the area’s waterways with the Milwaukee Riverkeepers, and learn to sail with the Milwaukee Community Sailing Center. We redesign green spaces with the Center for Resilient Cities, and teach individuals to read at Literacy Services of Wisconsin. We join “Friends” organizations to support Milwaukee’s public radio and television stations, and give generously to the United Performing Arts Fund, one of the largest in the U.S. We meet young professional peers through FUEL Milwaukee, Milwaukee Urban League Young Professionals, NEWaukee, and Young Nonprofit Professionals Network. We explore our past at the Bay View Historical Society, the Wisconsin Black Historical Society, and Historic Milwaukee. We document subcultures that contribute to the community with Urban Anthropology, Inc.

Many Milwaukeeans maintain a strong connection to their ethnic origins through membership in organizations as varied as the Shamrock Club, Jack and Jill, the Uspeh Slovenian Chorus, the Heritage Chorale, Latino Arts, Spielmannszug Milwaukee Drum & Bugle Corps,

Ladies of Pompeii, Slovak Federated Societies of Milwaukee, the Welsh Club, the Wisconsin Black Historical Society, the Milwaukee Chinese Community Center and the Bantu-American Friendship Association.

Business ownership in Milwaukee is sufficiently varied that the city has not one but six chambers of commerce: the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce and African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Hmong and LGBT chambers. Business owners in more than 30 commercial districts have formed business improvement districts, voluntarily paying annual assessments to fund projects that strengthen the business environment. These investments have paid for streetscape installations, festivals, signage, outdoor markets, and other assets that stimulate local economic activity.

Neighborhoods are well organized in Milwaukee. Covering a spectrum of groups from small block clubs that plan annual street parties to sophisticated community development corporations that develop local real estate, resident-led organizations are working hard to improve the places they live. They are planting flowers, buying and renovating foreclosed houses, improving financial literacy, attracting new businesses, organizing watch groups, running home tours, sponsoring night-time “trick or treat,” and bringing hope, vitality and cohesiveness to neighborhoods throughout the city.



Individuals involved in AWE, Artists Working in Education, show off an art piece. (Source: Pat Robinson)

What's Going On?

As the arts, culture, professional sports and entertainment hub of the region and state, Milwaukee boasts a never ending calendar of activities. The city has a vibrant nightlife. In addition to the nightclubs concentrated in areas such as Water Street, Old World Third Street, Brady Street and Walker's Point, neighborhood spots are important venues for socializing, music and dancing. Milwaukee is known throughout the nation for its major summer music and ethnic festivals, such as the 11-day Summerfest as well as Irishfest, the largest Irish festival in the U.S. Smaller festivals and street fairs, including annual church festivals, fill every summer weekend.

The cultural scene in Milwaukee is particularly impressive for a city its size. More than 150 arts and cultural organizations call the Milwaukee region home: American Style consistently ranks the Milwaukee area as one of the top 25 arts destinations in the U.S. and in 2013 ArtPlace ranked Milwaukee's East Town (and a portion of the Lower East Side) as one of the top 12 art places in America. Milwaukee was the only Midwest city to receive that recognition. The world-class Quadracci Pavilion of the Milwaukee Art Museum, designed by architect Santiago Calatrava, routinely attracts premier art exhibits and installations and several hundred thousand visitors annually. An international film festival and multiple international film weekends sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee have made the city a regional center for cinema.

Milwaukee's waterfront location and extensive park system (winner of a National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management) offers residents and visitors alike a wide array of recreational opportunities. Milwaukeeans take to the outdoors for fishing, power-boating, sailing, and swimming, beach volleyball, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, ice skating and sledding, and soccer, rugby, baseball, slow-pitch softball and bocce ball. Golfers have 15 public courses and numerous private courses to enjoy. Quieter contact with the natural world is available in the heart of the city at Lake Park and Havenwoods State Forest. Sports-lovers enjoy multiple

professional teams (Brewers baseball, Bucks basketball, Admirals hockey, Wave soccer) as well as division I college play at Marquette University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Those who love reading and learning appreciate the impressive collection and wide range of programming at Milwaukee's 13 public libraries. The calendar includes author visits, computer classes, homework help provided by the "teacher in the library" program, story time for children, poetry readings, book clubs, used book sales, drop-in tutoring, résumé preparation classes, and special events like an annual celebration of the birthday of Dr. Seuss.

Equality of Opportunity

There is sobering evidence that not all Milwaukeeans have full access to the city's outstanding quality of life. Racial gaps in employment, educational attainment and income cited earlier in this report significantly limit opportunity for many in our community. The 2013 "Vital Signs" report by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation compares metro Milwaukee with



*Milwaukee residents participate in the Bloom & Groom program.
(Source: City of Milwaukee)*

14 peer metro areas across the nation, noting evidence of race-based disparities in quality of life, household income, poverty, infant mortality, and residential segregation.¹¹

A 2014 report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation detailed the impact of such disparity on the future prospects of children, showing that growing up in chronic poverty contributes directly to stress at levels that can affect children’s health, brain development and social and emotional well-being. Experiencing “toxic stress,” at least one in three African American, Latino and American Indian children in the U.S. lives in a household with an income below the poverty line. The toxic stress and lack of opportunity these children contend with reduce their chances for success.¹²

The Casey study also evaluated the status of children across a dozen factors related to education and early work experiences, family resources and neighborhood context. The study found that, in Wisconsin, white children are far more likely than children of color to have the economic, social and neighborhood factors that put them on the path to adult success. White children in Wisconsin had the 11th highest scores in the nation on Casey’s “Race for Results” index. African American children in the state had the 5th worst scores in the U.S. The scores for Latino children ranked 17th, and Asian children ranked 37th.

The Casey study calls on government, businesses, foundations, and nonprofit organizations to work to close the gaps detailed in its report. “As America’s demographics shift, ensuring that communities of color can participate in and contribute to economic growth and development is not just an issue of social justice—it is an economic imperative. For regional economies to thrive, their residents need to have clear pathways to achieve economic success,” the report concludes.¹³

The City of Milwaukee’s Black Male Achievement Advisory Council is one effort taking direct aim at disparity, focusing on the status of African American men and boys. The Council works to identify local challenges and opportunities for these individuals, explores policies and

strategies that could help to close gaps, and identifies mechanisms to evaluate and sustain progress over time.

7.3 Building on Strengths

Multiple tools are in place to guide the development of assets in Milwaukee neighborhoods. Milwaukee’s comprehensive plan, adopted in 2010 in accordance with standards laid out in Wisconsin’s State Comprehensive Planning Law (also known as the Smart Growth Law), has a strong neighborhood focus. The plan includes 13 area land use plans written with wide stakeholder input. The area planning process identified more than 80 catalytic projects designed to spur the redevelopment of neighborhoods throughout Milwaukee.

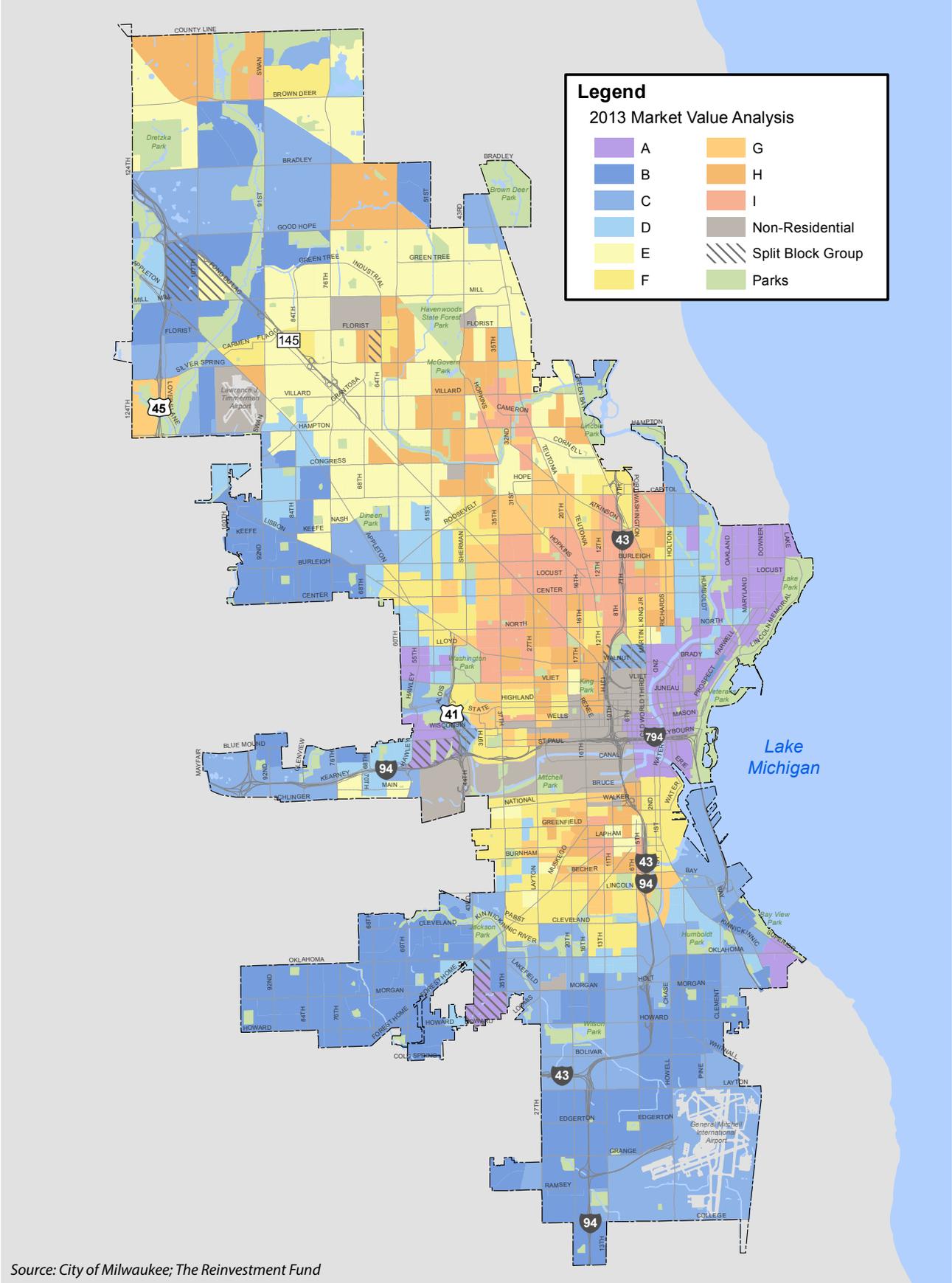
In 2012, a consortium of Milwaukee funders contracted with The Reinvestment Fund to conduct a Market Value Analysis (MVA). This tool evaluates real estate market conditions in the city’s neighborhoods through the lens of residential property sales, assessed values, foreclosure and occupancy rates, and presence of subsidized housing. Neighborhoods are then grouped according to common market traits in order to inform strategies for each type of market that will keep strong markets strong and move weaker markets in the right direction.

Figure 7.1: Market Value Analysis Cluster Totals

MVA Category	# of Block Groups	# of Housing Units	% of Total Housing Units
A	47	29,744	11.9%
B	98	46,593	18.6%
C	41	22,764	9.1%
D	55	24,927	10.0%
E	80	33,950	13.6%
F	73	30,626	12.3%
G	58	21,358	8.5%
H	58	22,077	8.8%
I	49	17,218	6.9%
Non-Residential	19	579	0.2%
Total	578	249,836	99.9%

Source: The Reinvestment Fund

Figure 7.2: Residential Market Conditions in the City of Milwaukee



Source: City of Milwaukee; The Reinvestment Fund



Local Success
Responding to Market Strength

Three ongoing efforts in Milwaukee neighborhoods illustrate the principle of varying investment strategy based on neighborhood market strength.

The Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) is a federally-funded effort that operates in Metcalfe Park and Amani, two weaker market neighborhoods. BNCP provides technical assistance to build the capacity of residents of these neighborhoods to identify, articulate and address local needs.

A cross-sector partnership of government, local institutions, non-profit agencies and local foundations also works with these neighborhoods to develop resources required to support neighborhood-strengthening activity. The Zilber Family Foundation, Northwestern Mutual Foundation, and Greater Milwaukee Foundation provide a match for BNCP's federal funding.

Targeted Investment Neighborhoods (TINs) are areas in which the City of Milwaukee focuses the expenditure of federal HOME funds to improve housing quality. Property owners in these neighborhoods have access to low-cost home improvement loans to encourage the renovation of owner-occupied housing and development of high-quality, affordable rental housing. TINs are small areas in which concentrated City investment will have a positive impact on neighborhood appearance and property values. TIN resources are generally available for three years.

Healthy Neighborhoods, a partnership between the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the City of Milwaukee, makes investments that improve the market appeal of nine middle-market neighborhoods. With a goal of sustaining and increasing home owner-occupancy, Healthy Neighborhoods provides funds to projects that make neighborhoods more physically attractive and socially cohesive.

The analysis shows that most city neighborhoods exhibit considerable market strength. Nearly 50% of the city's housing units were located in block groups designated as "high value" or "regional choice" (categories A – D) and an additional 25% were categorized as "steady" or "transitional" (E – F). Overall, distressed neighborhoods (G – I) accounted for a much lower portion of overall city neighborhoods than other peer cities that have conducted MVAs. (See Appendix D for additional information on MVA methodology.)

The MVA provides a chance for government and partner organizations to take stock of neighborhood market strengths and weaknesses. It also offers a benchmark from which local government, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations working to revitalize neighborhoods can measure the results of their investment strategies. Successful implementation of a number of this report's strategies will benefit from thoughtful application of MVA data and subsequent periodic updates to it.

High rates of residential foreclosure, resulting in falling rates of owner-occupancy and growing numbers of troubled properties, have weakened central city neighborhoods, particularly on the



Learning from Others
Live Baltimore

Live Baltimore, a non-profit organization, works to accelerate that city's growth by promoting the city's thriving neighborhoods. Each month, LiveBaltimore.com draws between 20,000 and 30,000 visitors who consult the site to learn about housing types, neighborhood demographics, transit and walk scores, housing values, and other information that helps people discover the joys and value of city living. The organization also offers a "selling Baltimore" class to real estate brokers; sponsors clever marketing events like a roommate speed-dating session; uses social media extensively, and identifies "neighborhood know-it-alls" who serve as neighborhood ambassadors. While the organization operates independently, City government funds about half of Live Baltimore's budget.¹⁴

near north and near south sides. The City has taken action to remediate these impacts. The Mayor's Foreclosure Partnership Initiative (MFPI), formed in 2008, developed and implemented a multi-pronged approach to respond to the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Among other achievements, MFPI's work expanded home-buyer counseling; created a program that brings together property owners facing foreclosure with their lenders to negotiate alternatives to foreclosure; and formed Take Root Milwaukee, a robust consortium of real estate brokers, lenders, and nonprofit agencies that sponsor foreclosure prevention workshops, home-buyer events, and other activities that encourage home ownership.

Beginning in 2014, the City of Milwaukee embarked upon implementation of a Strong Neighborhoods Plan, which is directing significant City resources to reduce the impact of tax-foreclosed properties on neighborhood property values and safety. Funds support demolition and deconstruction of the most dangerous vacant properties, loans and grants to incentivize the purchase and renovation of tax-foreclosed properties, beautification efforts such as "Painting with Purpose," which involves youth working with artists to produce visual art on boarded properties, and repurposing of City-owned vacant lots.

ReFresh Milwaukee, the City's 10-year sustainability plan adopted in 2013, is strengthening city neighborhoods and improving quality of life. *ReFresh*, written by a Mayor-appointed Green Team of community leaders, guided by the City's Office of Environmental Sustainability, addresses issues such as sustainable building practices, energy efficiency, the use of clean renewable energy at City-owned facilities, access to local and sustainable food, the reuse of vacant lots, biking and pedestrian infrastructure, protecting Lake Michigan and other local waterways, and the reduction of waste sent to landfills. *ReFresh* also recommends implementation of two catalytic projects: redevelopment of the Inner Harbor area, and HOME GR/OWN, a holistic strategy to repurpose City-owned foreclosed properties in ways that improve demand for and access to locally-grown, nutritious food.¹⁵



*Residents and tourists enjoy sun and sand at Bradford Beach.
(Source: Department of City Development / Planning)*



*Downtown Milwaukee streets alive with festival-goers.
(Source: Department of City Development / Planning)*

At the end of the day, the city's residents are its greatest strength. Milwaukee residents support and improve their neighborhoods, participate in block clubs and neighborhood watches, maintain community gardens that teach healthy eating habits to children and families and provide fresh, healthy foods, participate in affinity groups, artist groups, cultural organizations, and networking opportunities, and support churches and faith-based organizations that help those in need. They are employees, managers and owners of city businesses. Many care deeply about Milwaukee and want to see the city succeed. The City must support and engage its residents and identify strategies around which all residents can coalesce.

7.4 Strategies & Actions

Strategies for improving quality of life in the city focus on leveraging existing assets, utilizing data from the MVA to make informed decisions on existing and future programs, and engaging the city’s residents in positive ways.



Strategy 7.1: Enhance Quality of Life & Opportunity

No.	Action Item	Time Frame	Lead Actor	Supporting Partners
7.1.1	Establish a Quality of Life Council	Medium	CITY	LISC; Creative Alliance; Milwaukee Public Library
<p>A Milwaukee Quality of Life Council will provide a forum to identify and discuss ways to improve the city’s quality of life and capitalize on its existing assets. The Council will be responsible for developing the Quality of Life Plan described in 7.1.2.</p>				
7.1.2	Adopt a Quality of Life Plan	Medium	Quality of Life Council	Creative Alliance; VISIT Milwaukee City of Milwaukee; Milwaukee Arts Board; Milw. Public Library
<p>The City of Milwaukee benefits economically from its position as the center of culture, entertainment, higher education, and urban life within the M7 region. A long-range plan to nurture existing assets and develop new ones will help the city to maintain this status, and ensure that many of the region’s most critical assets continue to thrive.</p>				
7.1.3	Establish an Equality of Opportunity Blueprint	Long	CITY	Milwaukee Succeeds
<p>Significant racial gaps in employment, education and aspirations, income, and opportunity plague Milwaukee and inhibit the prospects of success for the entire community. An Equality of Opportunity Blueprint will be established by a consortium of government, education, private, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors to serve as a road map and shared commitment to reduce and, over time, eradicate such gaps and promote full equality of opportunity.</p>				
7.1.4	Use creative placemaking to establish places within Milwaukee in which all segments of the community and region can interact	Long	Greater Milwaukee Committee	
<p>Creative placemaking uses arts and culture to re-envision and revitalize places within a city, fostering exciting places that welcome engagement and participation from a broad spectrum of the community. Public support for such initiatives should focus on the degree to which they establish connection points that foster interaction and communication among diverse groups within the city.</p>				
7.1.5	Implement <i>ReFresh Milwaukee</i> to make Milwaukee a more sustainable city	Medium	CITY	
<p>Aggressive implementation of the city’s new <i>ReFresh Milwaukee</i> sustainability plan will not only improve quality of life for residents, but will also help to define the City of Milwaukee as a green, sustainable and cutting edge city.</p>				
7.1.6	Support continued implementation of catalytic projects identified in area land use plans	Long	CITY	
<p>The 80+ catalytic projects, identified through stakeholder-driven land use planning, represent a confluence of neighborhood vision and development potential that will help revitalize neighborhoods throughout the city.</p>				

7
Strategy 7





Strategy 7.2: Strengthen & Engage Neighborhood & Civic Leadership

No.	Action Item	Time Frame	Lead Actor	Supporting Partners
7.2.1	Support the growth of affinity groups like NEWaukee and FUEL Milwaukee that engage younger Milwaukeeans in civic life	Short	MMAC; GMC	

Organizations like NEWaukee and FUEL Milwaukee are making great strides in engaging young professionals and millennials in Milwaukee and creating buzz with these groups outside of the city. Finding ways to support them will help to develop their capacity and engage more residents. For example, employers could add these groups to annual combined giving campaigns, making it easier for employees to support these groups.

7.2.2	Encourage and support grassroots organizations involved in neighborhood improvement	Medium	CITY	LISC; CDFA
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Hundreds of grassroots organizations, from block clubs to business improvement districts, are actively working to improve their neighborhoods. These groups are critical partners in formulating and implementing neighborhood development strategies. Technical assistance, financial resources, and establishment of liaison relationships between these groups and City government will help to make them more effective and sustain their operations.



Strategy 7.3: Enhance the Impact of Neighborhood Investments

No.	Action Item	Time Frame	Lead Actor	Supporting Partners
7.3.1	Develop a menu of intervention strategies targeted to the different neighborhood categories identified by the MVA	Medium	CITY / DCD	LISC

The results of the MVA suggest different intervention strategies for different neighborhood market types. The MVA can be used as a tool to design and implement approaches that promote the assets of strong markets, preserve the assets of middle markets, and develop assets in the city's weakest markets.

7.3.2	Seek alignment among the many actors working to improve Milwaukee neighborhoods	Medium	LISC / CDGA	City; CDFA; GMF; Zilber Family Foundation; Northwestern Mutual Foundation
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Local government, foundations, neighborhood-based organizations, and federal agencies are all devoting resources and energy to neighborhood improvement. Adoption of a “collective impact” approach, through which actors agree to pursue aligned strategies and adopt common measures of success, will improve effectiveness of neighborhood revitalization efforts and enhance the impact of investments.



Strategy 7.4: Effectively Communicate Milwaukee's Assets



No.	Action Item	Time Frame	Lead Actor	Supporting Partners
7.4.1	Promote Milwaukee as America's water-centric city	Medium	VISIT Milwaukee; Global Water Center	
<p>With a growing water technology industry cluster, the UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Science, miles of shoreline and coastal amenities, and a strong commitment to stewardship of local water resources, Milwaukee is in a prime position to build a national identity that capitalizes on these assets.</p>				
7.4.2	Establish an aggressive neighborhood marketing campaign	Medium	Creative Alliance	LISC Select Milwaukee City of Milwaukee
<p>Live Baltimore provides a compelling model to promote the benefits of city living by making it easy for individuals to explore the attributes of distinct neighborhoods. Live Baltimore also effectively uses intermediaries such as real estate brokers to share advantages and dispel concerns regarding city living. Establishing a similar program in Milwaukee can help to capitalize on existing amenities to attract newcomers.</p>				
7.4.3	Leverage opportunities linked to the City of Milwaukee's international relationships	Long	Milwaukee Sister Cities Committee; Milwaukee China Business Council	International Institute; Milwaukee World Trade Assoc.
<p>Milwaukee has five sister cities recognized by Sister Cities International: Carora, Venezuela; Galway, Ireland; Morogoro, Tanzania, uMhlatuze, South Africa, and Medan, Indonesia. In addition, Milwaukee has a friendship relationship with Ningbo, People's Republic of China. These relationships have borne fruit in a variety of ways, including visiting delegations, business seminars, the enrollment of foreign high school students in Milwaukee schools, and the establishment of sister-school relationships at the high school and university levels. Using strategies such as foreign language websites, familiarization tours among foreign travel agents, and special events highlighting these five cities, Milwaukee can attract additional investment and tourism.</p>				
7.4.4	Create and distribute a Milwaukee marketing tool kit for use by local business leaders	Medium	VISIT Milwaukee	Creative Alliance
<p>Local employers large and small have the opportunity to put Milwaukee on the map nationally as a business location, and they have the advantage of "speaking the same language" as their colleagues in other cities. A tool kit containing items like a short, compelling video about Milwaukee, information about how to attract a professional meeting to the city, and a regular feed of articles from the national media about the city would help equip businesses to tell the city's story to those with whom they interact.</p>				

Endnotes for Chapter 7

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