

## Chapter 5: Catalytic Projects

### 5.1 Implement a creative district or corridor for 5th/6th Streets and National Avenue

#### *Background.*

The 5th Street/6th Street and National Avenue corridor continues to have great potential and needs to be redeveloped.

The market is steadily moving into this corridor as timely strategic investment begins to take place. That means there is an opportunity to work with local residents and property owners to determine what they would like to see happen here--more destination venues, more neighborhood-serving businesses, or both.

The idea of a Cultural, Arts and Entertainment District as a catalytic project (described in the 2009 Near South Side Area Plan) originated as a way to build upon a growing cluster of arts, cultural and entertainment venues centered around South 5th and South 6th Streets and National Avenue--approximately Virginia Street on the north, Washington Street on the south, the I-43/I-94 freeway corridor on the west, to South 5th Street on the east. This Action Plan expands on the concept and suggests specific actions that can help it come to fruition.

It was, and still is, considered a “catalytic project” for its ability to build on a major shift or “sea change” in the market, a growing cluster of arts-oriented uses, a continued commercial hub for Hispanic businesses, and the investment of entrepreneurs and “creative businesses” in the area.

The core group of “creatives” has already made an impact. There are colorful restaurants, bars, artists’ co-ops, craftsmen and arts groups with a presence on the street. However, despite this bold start, developer/investor momentum has yet to fully take hold. On both 5th and 6th Streets, many businesses have not fully recovered from the Great Recession of 2007-09. Restaurants were doubly affected by the recession and cold winters. Scattered between successful businesses are storage buildings and underperforming properties, many that are showing signs of disinvestment--partial board-ups, broken or taped windows, and vacant storefronts.

Since the Near South Side Plan was completed, South 6th Street has become more blighted, resulting in large gaps in the street frontage, which may be due in part to economic conditions and in part to its function as a truck route connecting the freeway to the Sixth Street viaduct.

To address these issues, stakeholder meetings (businesses, residents, property owners, arts groups, local experts) were held to flesh out the specifics for this corridor--how to enhance the restaurants, add more neighborhood services, multifamily residential, smaller entrepreneurs or “creatives” (artisans, craftsmen, etc.)



### 5.1.1 Create a Business Improvement District (BID) or alternative group to manage the Creative Corridor.

The corridor has yet to form a Business Improvement District (BID) or dedicated organization to manage a redevelopment project, channel investment, advance the cluster of core “creative” businesses, and build on the assets of the corridor. Some of these functions may also be carried out by individual businesses working informally as a coalition. To some degree, that is happening now. However, a BID would be a more efficient and arguably more effective means of advancing the district (the Creative Corridor).

Typically, a BID is an umbrella organization that does business recruitment; performs basic services such as clean-up and safety/security; organizes events, marketing and promotion; and conducts special services such as tracking code violations with Department of Neighborhood Services. Along with the day to day operations, the BID also does long-range planning with its members. For the added taxes levied on property owners, they get in return an organization that makes their businesses more viable and their properties more valuable.

Based on this assessment, it is recommended that the Creative Corridor businesses do the following: Create a BID that can work directly with property owners and city departments to set and achieve local goals, as well as address the specifics of areas that affect business climate, such as pedestrian environment, parking, street repaving, building and vacant lot disposition, code enforcement, policing, and areas of mutual concern.

A BID could hire a director to represent the area, do marketing and promotion, and organize local events that increase the economic viability of the district.



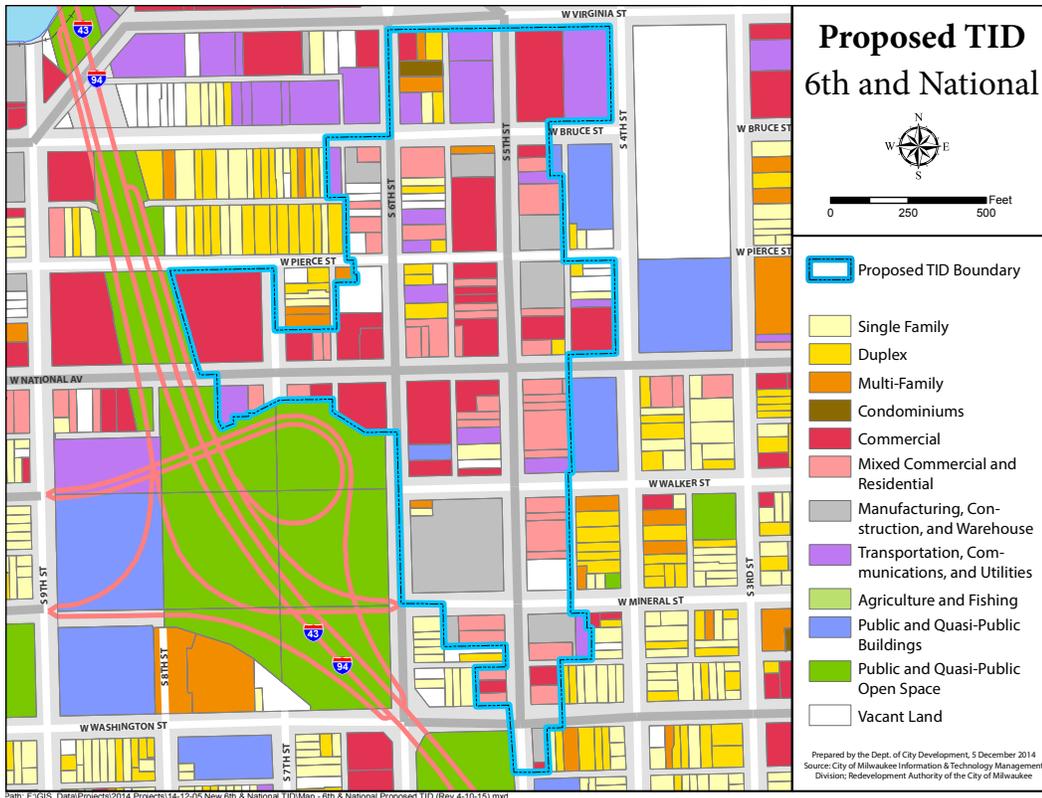
A BID could work with businesses and arts groups to develop arts programming for the creative corridor and coordinate arts groups’ performances with local events.

### 5.1.2 Business Improvement District alternatives.

If businesses are reluctant to form a BID, which means being subject to an additional tax assessment, they could instead form a merchants’ association, a Main Street organization, or a nonprofit 501(c)(3) community development corporation (CDC), that could perform some of the same functions.

A merchant’s association also works directly with property owners and businesses to set goals, as well as address specific areas that affect business climate, e.g., pedestrian environment, parking, safety and security, marketing and promotion. (A good model in Milwaukee would be the Vliet Street Business Association.)

A Main Street organization is another alternative. A good model in Milwaukee is the Historic King Drive Main Street organization, which incorporates a Main Street initiative within the operations of the BID. Typically, Main Street groups focus on design, safety, promotion and economic development, and do long-term planning as well.



Another option is to form a nonprofit 501(c)(3) community development corporation (CDC) to enhance the economic development activities of the BID. The Burleigh Street CDC is a good Milwaukee model and a source for more information. However, it is important to note that the Burleigh Street CDC operates in tandem with the BID and is funded through BID assessments.

The key difference between these alternatives and a BID is that a BID (working with the city) is a taxing authority, which provides a source of funding to achieve the above goals. Without that guaranteed funding source, the organization has to achieve its goals through voluntary business contributions, grants, or donor funds.

### 5.1.3 Create a TID to support improvements in the Creative Corridor.

A tax increment finance district (TID) is currently being created by the city and will provide a planning and financing vehicle for the Creative Corridor. Items that may be financed through the TID are development incentives, streetscape improvements over and beyond the city's base level, and other capital costs needed to improve physical character within the district. The TID boundary (see drawing above), which aligns closely with the Creative Corridor, was created in March of 2015. The TID plan will evolve with the growing district as needs arise.

### 5.1.4 Reconstruct South 5th Street as a complete street.

The City is ready to reconstruct the right-of-way for South 5th Street and has actually put reconstruction on hold in the interest of coordinating public improvements so that they support the Creative Corridor and draw from the results of this planning process and the financial resources of the TID to cover improvements over and beyond the city's base level, e.g., public art, custom street furniture, landscaping, pavers, planters, etc.

Typically, Department of Public Works (DPW) needs a streetscape plan (or a "final decision" on all aspects of the design) early in the year preceding the next year's paving plan. So in order to be included in the 2016 paving plan, the streetscape plan for South 5th Street needs to be submitted within the coming months. DCD and DPW staff will work with the local Alderman's office and local business owners to develop a streetscaping plan for South 5th Street during the summer of 2015.

A "final decision" (that includes community input) will address all aspects of the street design and reconstruction: complete street design; bike lanes; traffic calming measures:

widened sidewalks; curb extensions; parking lay-out (the possible switch from angle to parallel parking); added street trees; a banner and planter program; green infrastructure (permeable pavers, bioswales, or street design that reduces stormwater runoff); public art or street furniture; space for a public bicycle sharing station (provided there is a terrace or curb extension of at least seven feet, excluding the sidewalk); and the actual selection of a complementary group of streetscape elements.

Note: Some improvements such as curb extensions or bike lanes could be included in normal street repaving. There is MMSD funding for green infrastructure that could be incorporated.

For reconstruction of the South 5th Street corridor (and possibly the South 6th Street corridor later), the following tried-and-true approach to a layered streetscape should be taken into consideration. A layered approach can be described as starting with the City's basic streetscape elements; adding BID or TID-funded enhancements; adding personalized or signature elements from local businesses or property owners; and integrating innovative public features or public art that defines the district.



#### **5.1.4.1 The City’s “kit of parts” or other special improvements to the public right of way.**

Begin with a set of streetscape elements, a “kit of parts” common to the district. DCD and DPW staff will work with area business owners to determine right-of-way design, selection and placement of streetscape elements, etc.

Note: The Walker’s Point Association would like to see a “ground-up” design that includes residents with the possible involvement of Arts@ Large who might be able to facilitate as a consultant.

The Creative Corridor is also one of the potential sites for GMC’s Creative Place-making initiative as well as the subject of a UW-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning urban development studio (See Appendix 6.4 for the UWM Urban Development Studio’s report.)

#### **5.1.4.2 TID funded enhancements.**

Over time, add BID or TID-funded enhancements to the streetscape. Consider hiring an artist to do a series of streetscape elements tailored to the district--benches, railings, kiosks, signs--to enrich the district’s sense of place.



#### **5.1.4.3 Individual businesses’ “personalized” spaces or elements.**

In addition to the right of way improvements mentioned above--again, this is an “over time” evolutionary process--businesses may add their own elements to enrich the streetscape, such as a signature bench, planter, an outdoor cafe, public seating area, an architectural fence, a “green screen,” personalized menu boards, public art, street pavers, landscaped entryways, or pocket parks. It also, enriches the streetscape to create transitional, semi-public or semi-private spaces adjacent to the public sidewalk (pedestrian corridor) that enrich the streetscape, e.g., sidewalk cafes, patios, garden space.

#### **5.1.4.4 Other innovative and/or artistic approaches to recapturing public space and enhancing the corridor.**

Innovative approaches to recapturing parts of the public realm such as the “parklet” movement, could be applied to the corridor. (Parklets are parking spaces or loading zones turned into creatively designed and landscaped outdoor seating areas, with permission from DPW and agreement of the adjacent businesses.)

Boulevards or wide medians can be ways of adding green seating, or recreational space to a corridor.

Public art should be incorporated in the Creative Corridor and it can be “high” or “low”--for example, creatively designed storefronts and building facades add character and identity to the district. A sculptural bike rack (or bench or patio railing) can be both artistic and functional. Artistic wall signs and well-placed murals can add richness to the streetscape. They all add to the character of the district.

### 5.1.5 Reverse blighting influences on South 6th Street.

#### 5.1.5.1 Take advantage of economic opportunities.

If the economy continues to improve, and in all likelihood it will, the large empty parcels, particularly on the west side of South 6th Street, will be ready for redevelopment. Some lots are an oversupply of off-street parking, some are vacant lots waiting for the market to pick up. (One positive sign that the market is picking up is recent developer competition for the former Esperanza Unida building at 6th Street and National Avenue, a catalyst for the surrounding area.) In a similar vein, there are a number of buildings that are “on hold” waiting for reinvestment in the area to take off. Taken altogether, they represent a sizable concentrated development opportunity with the added advantage of close proximity to National Avenue, Downtown and the Menomonee Valley.

#### 5.1.5.2 Redevelop vacant lots.

One of the challenges of South 6th street is the mix of smaller commercial buildings and small residential units with large vacant lots in between. The best solution for vacant lots is almost always infill development, or a combination of infill and green space.

#### 5.1.5.3 Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

The decision to retain or demolish smaller buildings is usually made on a case-by-case basis. If the smaller building fits a niche market, or is historic in good repair, or blends into a cohesive street frontage, it does contribute to the district’s character and its economy, and should be saved.

#### 5.1.5.4 Promote residential home improvement programs.

Residential property owners should be encouraged to apply for city programs such as the STRONG Homes Loan Program to make needed repairs to their homes.



### 5.1.6 Apply creative placemaking techniques to the corridor or district.

There is currently a lively discussion among artists, art funders, developers, neighborhood groups and elected officials about what is creative placemaking and what value it adds to communities. In a broad sense, creative placemaking is cultural identity shaping the public realm. For example, murals in the Mission District of San Francisco are exhibits of cultural identity, history, and the collected stories of both early and recent immigrants who began their new lives in the district. The murals are passionate, funny and descriptive. Some are historic. They have evolved to have different meanings over time. Some have “grown up” to be icons, landmarks and reminders of a shared struggle.

In a dynamic sense, creative placemaking is using art to change a place socially, physically and economically (ArtPlace definition). It can be a way to increase economic opportunity for low-income communities (Kresge). Artists are already challenging themselves to lead transformation in distressed and marginalized communities, bringing people together through arts and culture, doing the “work” of walking with and learning from those communities. Creative placemaking can be “up-cycling” or taking throwaway places and making them matter--thereby adding value to the urban environment. It can be public events and interventions that draw attention, change the way a place is perceived or used, break the mold, create a new course or a new identity.



From an economic standpoint, developers are discovering that arts and culture that creates a sense of place can “work” to boost their return on investment. One Milwaukee developer stated at a recent citywide creative forum that because of the public art and artistically developed park space surrounding his developments, his return on investment is 16% higher than his competitors.

In the “urban laboratory” of public space, creative placemaking can be about transformation of parks, infrastructure, urban trails, or streetscaping--even everyday elements like kiosks, bike racks and benches.

#### *5.1.6.1 Ask local business and arts organizations to do “creative placemaking” and develop arts programming for the Creative Corridor.*

Recently, several arts related organizations have moved to the corridor to add to the cluster already there: Arts @ Large; Walker’s Point Arts Center; the Pitch Project and Brenner Brewing. These groups are a logical consortium of bold thinkers and idea generators to spearhead projects and programs for an emerging cultural, arts and entertainment district.

#### *5.1.6.2 Pursue grant opportunities to reclaim and reinvent Paliafito Park.*

Paliafito Park (at 3rd Street and Walker Street) is an underused park with the potential to be a community gathering place and plaza. It is relatively small--a quarter of a block--but well positioned in the neighborhood, close to two schools, and just off the Creative Corridor. A coalition of

organizations, civic-minded individuals, and design partners have come up with an ambitious plan to make it a multi-purpose neighborhood plaza and play space and have also developed a program for funding it. The plan is to artistically transform the existing neighborhood park into an ECO-ARTS plaza to include a rotating outdoor public art gallery, an outdoor performance and community workshop stage, a natural playscape, and a raised bed community garden designed to teach families self-sustaining urban agriculture.

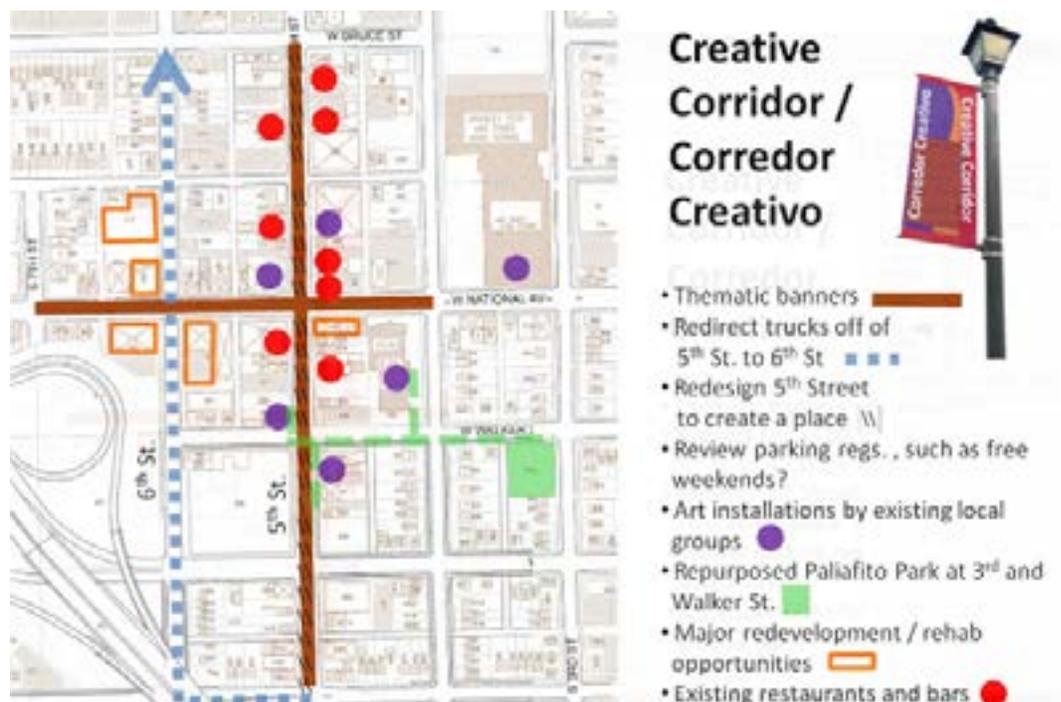
The project is a successful collaboration between Arts@Large and the residents of Walker's Point; Milwaukee Public Schools; Department of City Development; Alderman Jose Perez; UW-Extension; Home-town Building; Walker's Point Neighborhood Association; Reflo Water Sustainable Solutions; and Solutions in the Land.

Mayor Tom Barrett has endorsed this project for the 2015 National Endowment of the Arts "Our Town" grant. The map below shows preliminary design ideas, opportunities, a growing cluster of trending arts/lifestyle uses in the corridor--and potential for a direct tie-in to Paliafito Park (green square just east of the corridor).

## 5.1.7 Strengthen National Avenue as an east-west corridor through Walker's Point.

### 5.1.7.1 Create a "Main Street" district along National Avenue (1st Street to I-94).

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program is arguably the most successful redevelopment program in the United States. It is a proven effective strategy that, if pursued rigorously by a dedicated group of local business owners, has the potential for transforming downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. In Milwaukee, Historic King Drive (BID#8) and Historic Mitchell Street (BID #4) have both had considerable success using a Main Street style approach in combination with BID management. Several commercial districts in Milwaukee (some BIDs and some not) have taken a very similar Main Street style approach to development without having a formal relationship with the National Main Street Center (NMSC).





The National Main Street Center is headquartered in Chicago, IL. For more information, go to their website <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street>. Or e-mail at [mainstreet@savingplaces.org](mailto:mainstreet@savingplaces.org).

The tried-and-true Main Street four points are: Organization; Promotion; Design and Economic Restructuring. Organization comes first. National Avenue must build an organization or working group to support a Main Street strategy. If it chooses to do so, Walker's Point Association could begin to organize the businesses on National Avenue to initiate and undertake a Main Street program (or if a position could be funded that would enable staff to do the start-up work). Once the program is up and running, goals are set and commitments are made--it will become more self-sustaining.

### 5.1.7.2 Long term goals for a National Avenue Main Street.

Long-term goals for a National Avenue Main Street organization might include: creating a complete street design to enhance walkability and bikeability; adding streetscape treatments; creating infill development where opportunities exist; doing substantial rehabilitation of historic buildings; upgrading building exteriors and storefronts with facade grants; creating a more balanced mix of uses; and creating a more pedestrian and customer-friendly environment.

National Avenue as a "Main Street" corridor could eventually expand east to the Kinnickinnic River and west of I-94 to the Walker Square area, as redevelopment supports or permits.

**5.1.8 Redevelop opportunity sites within the Creative Corridor.**

**5.1.8.1 Redevelopable Buildings and Parcels.**

To aid in identifying redevelopment opportunities, a Walker’s Point consortium of Continuum Architects + Planners, El Centro Hispano and Esperanza Unida, did an inventory of redevelopable buildings and parcels and assessment of their redevelopment potential. (For the complete study, see Appendix 6.2). The first of three drawings (below) shows the following opportunities: Number 1 is currently an underutilized vacant lot (former bar that operated in tandem with the now vacant Acapulco restaurant); Number 2 is a combination of parking, vacant lot and existing townhouse units; Number 3 is an isolated house surrounded by a parking lot.

The three drawings also include preliminary programming concepts for each site.\

In the second drawing (right, above), Numbers 4 and 5 are located further north along South 6th Street and would redevelop an existing used auto sales lot (owner has expressed an interest in redevelopment) and an existing parking lot.

The drawing also includes preliminary programming concepts for each site.

In the third drawing (right, below), Numbers 6, 8, and 9 are rehab opportunities, grand buildings that are not currently being used to their full potential. Two large buildings at 610 and 611 West National Avenue, a key intersection and major focal point of the district, are also excellent adaptive reuse opportunities as the market changes. (see 5.1.8.2 for an update related to 611 West National Avenue).

Building 7 is a potential new building which requires the demolition of a building, which may only be justified in an historic district if it actually serves to strengthen the urban fabric of the historical buildings around it.



**BUILDING 1**  
 4 FLOORS - TOTAL 20,000SF  
 5,000SF COMMERCIAL & 12 UNITS

**BUILDING 2**  
 5 FLOORS - TOTAL 72,000SF  
 8,000SF COMMERCIAL & 56 UNITS  
 2 FLOORS PARKING\* - 126 CARS

**BUILDING 3**  
 5 FLOORS - 23,500 TOTAL SF  
 1,300SF COMMERCIAL & 24 UNITS  
 2 FLOORS PARKING\* - 100 CARS  
 (Requires demolition of 1 building)

Purple = Surface Parking Lots  
 Red = Existing Buildings  
 Yellow = Proposed Buildings

\*PARKING = 1 floor below ground,  
 1 floor on grade plus  
 green roof play area

**6TH STREET- southend**



**BUILDING 5**  
 4 FLOORS - TOTAL 48,000SF  
 0 SF COMMERCIAL & 40 UNITS  
 EXISTING SURFACE PARKING

**BUILDING 4**  
 5 FLOORS - 24,800 TOTAL SF  
 1300SF COMMERCIAL & 24 UNITS  
 1 FLOORS PARKING - 50 CARS

Purple = Surface Parking Lots  
 Red = Existing Buildings  
 Yellow = Proposed Buildings

### 6TH STREET- northend



**BUILDING 8**  
 RENOVATION EXISTING  
 BERN BLDG - 523 W NATIONAL  
 TOTAL 30,200SF

**BUILDING 6**  
 RENOVATION EXISTING  
 BUILDING - TOTAL 19,800SF  
 16-18 UNITS - NO PARKING

**BUILDING 7**  
 4 FLOORS - TOTAL 43,200SF  
 0 SF COMMERCIAL & 40 UNITS  
 2 FLOORS PARKING - 80 CARS  
 (Requires demolition of 1 building)

**BUILDING 9**  
 RENOVATION EXISTING BERN  
 BLDG - 511-517 W NATIONAL  
 TOTAL 34,000SF

### NATIONAL AVENUE

### 5.1.8.2 Update - 611 West National (former Esperanza Unida building).

The city has sold the former Esperanza Unida building, 611 West National Avenue, that was taken in tax foreclosure in 2014. The Buyer proposes to renovate the first floor of the building for commercial uses. The second, third and fourth floors will be converted into 36 apartments (33 two-bedroom and 3 three-bedroom units). The Buyer will use WHEDA multi-family financing and federal and state Historic Tax Credits to fund the renovations. A condition of the WHEDA financing will require that 20 percent of the units will be restricted to individuals or families with incomes at or below 80 percent of the county median income. The remaining units will be market rate.

### 5.1.9 UWM Urban Development Studio Concepts.

In the Spring of 2015, an urban development studio in UWM's School of Architecture and Urban Planning did an in-depth study of the Creative Corridor to explore some preliminary concepts and examples of what could be accomplished with a successful redevelopment project. The studio's final report is included in Appendix 6.4.

The students investigated critical development issues suggested by Walker's Point Association neighbors and businesses and vetted by UWM faculty and city staff, and made the following suggestions (many which repeat familiar themes already discussed):

#### 5.1.9.1 Greening the district.

To address the lack of parks or green space, the students suggested exploring street right-of-way opportunities, such as using boulevards and using street trees or other plantings to create a "green ribbon" or a buffer for pedestrians and bicycles. They presented a number of public way solutions that featured improved stormwater management, such as pervious pavers in "green" alleys or bioswales as part of streetscaping. There were quite a few reallocations of paved surfaces to small pocket parks and connecting green pathways (taking area from oversized parking lots, back to back lots). Green rooftop gardens were another suggested approach to recapturing space that could be used for outdoor recreation, gathering, dining, gardening, etc.



### 5.1.9.2 Opportunities (in no particular order).

- The restaurants in the area could benefit from a community garden that supplies fresh vegetables, similar to the Ohio City Farm in Cleveland that supplies the West Side Market and the restaurants in the City of Ohio Main Street district, or the Urban Roots farm in Youngstown that supplies a farmers' market, or Pete's Urban Farm (Core/El centro) in Milwaukee.
- Triangles created by street intersections or right turn bypasses are opportunities for green space and public art that provide mini-park spaces for neighborhood residents.
- The alley between 5th and 6th Streets is a more pleasant pedestrian or bicycle passageway than either of the streets--quieter, less traffic, a kind of shortcut. Alleys, with some attention to "clean-up fix-up", could be bike paths.
- Parklets can be used as amenities--seating areas with plants. Some can be used as bike corrals. Because these are part of the public right-of-way, they provide a visible place for bike parking.
- Many parking lots are only used for part of the day. If parking lots were fully used 24 hours a day there would be greater efficiency and less need for creation of more expensive parking structures.



- There are many rooftops that could be used for gardens or play space for neighborhood children.
- There may be opportunities through the city's adopt-a-lot program for re-purposing vacant lots, to add to green space in the area.
- There is a huge need for sheltered bus stops in the area. And bus stops can be identity features as well.
- Streetscape on South 5th and South 6th Streets could be a "green ribbon" that visually and physically connects and carries pedestrians from north to south and helps unify and identify the corridor.
- Parking lots and vacant lots together, particularly on 6th Street, are a huge infill opportunity. For example, row-houses could be used to define the street with landscaped parking placed to the rear. Live/work units could have a stacked model of commercial/office/residential/rooftop garden or patio.
- A redesigned roundabout could be a better gateway to the district, but it would have to be done in a more balanced way (cars, pedestrians, bike connections, green space, public art and amenities). And it should not be treated in isolation from the surrounding area.
- With the focus on food production businesses in the Menomonee Valley and the Food and Beverage Management program at MATC's Walker's Square campus – the creative corridor might work well for smaller, artisanal food production or microbreweries such as Brenner Brewing already established on South 5th Street.

### 5.1.9.3 Improving the gateway entry.

There is general agreement that the 6th Street roundabout that serves as the gateway entry to the south side needs a redesign for a number of reasons.

1. The roundabout is too small to be functional. A roundabout needs to be large enough to allow cars to smoothly enter and exit and should allow generous weaving room.
2. It does not do a good job accommodating pedestrians or bicycles. Even for automobiles, the southbound angles of entry and exit create too sharp a turning radius which in turn increases speeds more than they should be for a roundabout.
3. The traffic circle in the center lacks the kind of site-specific public art that might define a gateway--vertical, visible as a landmark.
4. There is no public art at the center or around the edges that gives a sense of entry to the South Side. (If there is a redesign, there needs to be better consensus about what role cultural identity plays).
5. The roundabout creates four 'leftover' remnant green spaces, three of which are assigned to parking lots. A redesign could create a better gateway and assignment and use of public land.

### 5.1.9.4 Complete streets and bicycle corridors.

There are several major streets that could benefit from complete street redesign (accommodation of motor vehicles, people on bicycles, pedestrians, and green space). The major focus of their study was 5th/6th Streets and National Avenue, although other streets in Walker's Point could benefit as well.

### 5.1.9.5 Balanced approach to parking.

Make parking lots and garages more shared and less proprietary, which should result in a greater number of parking spaces available to the public (a solution also suggested by the GRAEF parking study). Parking for Walker's Point should be gradually shifted to parking structures as new developments come online; and should be more out of sight than highly visible as it is now. Surface parking lots should gradually be replaced by a combination of green space or parks and new infill development.

### 5.1.9.6 Increasing the residential base.

Walker's Point, according to longtime residents, needs more neighborhood-serving businesses. However, the residential base needs to be increased to provide the market necessary to support these businesses. Most of the student's development scenarios incorporated residential as infill buildings--some mixed use, some single use. The scale and character of the residential





development varied from renovation/rehab of existing buildings to modern townhouses or rowhouses lining the street. Infill building height and massing variety depending on context.

#### 5.1.9.7 *Transit-oriented development (TOD).*

Walker's Point already has the key components of transit-oriented development (TOD) in place: high density, compact, mixed use, a tight walkable street grid, bike paths, and is within walking distance of the downtown Intermodal Station that serves Amtrak, Megabus, Greyhound and Wisconsin Coach Lines. Walker's Point is also well-served by Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) bus routes. For residents, businesses and employees, TOD is an asset and represents a sustainability goal for the city.

The city does not currently have a zoning category for transit-oriented development, but should consider it. This dense mixed use character (in walking distance of transit) should be taken into account in developing guidelines for overlay zoning, detailed planned developments (DPD), and for parking requirements, zoning variances, special use and limited uses that regularly come before Board of Zoning Appeals.

## 5.2 Support a Walker's Point Innovation Initiative

### *Background.*

Walker's Point is already a vibrant multi-cultural community with a rich mix of manufacturers, small businesses, artists, arts groups, old and new world craftspeople, and residents who embrace this kind of diversity. It may be the most diverse of the mixed use districts in the city.

To build on the existing diverse "innovation culture" of collaboration, networking and sharing ideas, an Innovation Initiative is proposed for all of Walker's Point, but would be primarily focused on the areas zoned Industrial Mixed (IM), not the historic single family and duplex residential neighborhoods, and not the areas zoned Industrial Heavy (IH) that mostly fall within the Port Redevelopment Project Area. The Innovation Initiative is aimed at enhancing an environment that already supports the work of artists, artisans, creatives, nonprofits, research institutions, established industries and new entrepreneurs.

Most of Walker's Point still has Industrial Mixed (IM) zoning that reflects its history as a working class neighborhood that incorporated churches, factories, cottages, shops, taverns and everything in between. Of the city's zoning categories, IM allows the widest range of land uses and activities. Many divergent forms of residential development--intentional communities, co-housing and cooperative work environments, and live/work--could easily blend into the existing zoning framework of Walker's Point. IM zoning has the capacity, more than any other zoning category, to support and be compatible with an innovation culture and the kind of high-tech mixed use diverse "urban village" that could be a hub for creative start-ups and entrepreneurs, established companies, and academic research institutions that benefit from being in a environment that supports collaboration and intersection of ideas.

Due to similarities in character, Walker's Point has been compared to innovation districts in other cities. The Brookings Institution defines innovation districts as "geographic areas where leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups, business incubators and accelerators. They are also physically compact, transit-accessible, and technically-wired and offer mixed-use housing, office, and retail." They greatly benefit from the 'back to the city' movement of millennials that has in large part spurred the trend toward urbanization of tech companies. The best and brightest new hires prefer high-energy urban neighborhoods over isolated compounds or "sterile" suburban office parks where the creative process happens in greater isolation.

Brookings Institution has broken innovation districts into three types. For the sake of discussion or comparison, Walker's Point has a similar profile to the first two of the three.

1. The "anchor plus" model, primarily found in the downtowns and midtowns of central cities, is where large scale mixed-use development is centered around major anchor institutions and a rich base of related firms, entrepreneurs and spin-off companies involved in the commercialization of innovation.
2. The "re-imagined urban areas" model, often found near or along historic waterfronts, is where industrial or warehouse districts are undergoing a physical and economic transformation.
3. The third model, "urbanized science park," commonly found in suburban and exurban areas, is where traditionally isolated, sprawling areas of innovation are urbanizing through increased density and an infusion of new activities (including retail and restaurants) that are mixed as opposed to separated.

However, even though Industrial Mixed Use Zoning Districts are similar to Innovation Districts, Walker's Point's IM District is broader in appeal and more diverse in land use. Milwaukee because of its industrial history, happens to have in its older walk-to-work industrial districts and especially in Walker's Point, an existing neighborhood that already lends itself to collaboration or innovation culture ("collision culture" as it is sometimes called), succeeds at industrial mixed use, and is also a very desirable place to live. Walker's Point is well-positioned, in other words, to take advantage of this trend of integrating industry, institutions, public amenities, grass roots entrepreneurship and desirable urban neighborhoods.

As for having the desirable residential characteristics of an "urban village" (high density, compact, mixed use), Walker's Point is already 85% of the way there. The remaining walk-to-work improvements are already happening in Walker's Point along with an urban renaissance of new companies (start-ups), an arts and entertainment cluster, such as Next Act Theatre and 88Nine Radio Milwaukee, civic-minded nonprofits such as the Creative Alliance and the Greater Milwaukee Committee, and local developers who support Walker's Point Association goals: diversity, creative mixed use, connectivity (walking, biking, transit), Complete Streets, greening of the district, historic preservation, waterfront access, etc.

If there is a potential downside to the redevelopment that might occur as a result of these changes that could be a negative for



Walker's Point, it is the market response (gentrification, higher rents, the loss of unfinished class 'C' or 'D' office space) that could in the long term lead to the edging out of the start-ups, shops, studios and entrepreneurs that made the district successful in the first place. For example, the Historic Third Ward neighborhood (across the river from Walker's Point) has priced out many, but not all, of the creative start-up companies, entrepreneurs and artists that initially lent the area its character.

For that reason, the city and neighborhood stakeholders should carefully weigh the impacts of large-scale development that might turn out to be too radical in scope or scale, or that would have a negative effect on the character of Walker's Point.

### 5.2.1 Consider adding a zoning overlay to support the Walker's Point Innovation Initiative.

An overlay of land use and design standards added to the base zoning (predominantly IM in Walker's Point), can improve development projects of all types--infill, new construction and modifications to existing buildings--as a way to further the goals of an initiative or strategy, or the goals of overlapping strategies. The Harbor District Initiative will potentially overlap the



Innovation Initiative in terms of social and economic impacts on the Walker's Point community, although for the most part, they are geographically separate initiatives (see map in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4, Harbor District Initiative that shows the Harbor District Initiative planning area).

On the plus side, an overlay district essentially "raises the bar" for design and land use. On the negative side, it may limit activity for some uses, primarily those that are inconsistent with broad planning goals, and increase the cost of renovation for those on a "shoestring budget." For example, if the overlay does not allow blanked out or blocked out storefront windows at street level, creating a transparent storefront could be an added cost or a negative for some property owners. An overlay district must therefore be carefully considered for potential impacts on property owners, those building new projects and those already in the district.

In light of the potential for achieving local planning goals, consider innovations in zoning or zoning incentives as a way to gain community benefits or "inclusive growth" for Walker's Point that might not happen otherwise. Some cities do incentive zoning to spur a mix of development that meets a balance of affordable and market rate housing, a balance of public and private parks and other amenities. To date, Milwaukee has not used incentive zoning to meet its planning goals of diversity and mixed use, balanced growth and affordability, job creation that includes job training for inner city residents, "green" energy-efficient design and sustainability.



A planning goal of Walker's Point Association that could be an outcome of an Innovation Initiative is to promote "inclusive growth" that potentially becomes "a platform to regenerate adjoining distressed neighborhoods as well as creating educational, employment, and other opportunities for low-income residents of the city." (Brookings Institution, Katz/Wagner)

Inclusive growth (often in the form of density bonuses) can mean any or all of the following:

- (1) Low-cost start-up space for entrepreneurs that is subsidized by higher cost space; for example, affordable live/work units for artists, craftsmen, or artisanal product makers;
- (2) Inclusion of affordable housing as a component of larger-scale market rate housing projects;
- (3) Inclusion of public art and amenities that benefit the surrounding Walker's Point community;
- (4) Inclusion of public parking as part of a shared parking garage arrangement that serves both the new development and the surrounding Walker's Point community;
- (5) Inclusion of neighborhood-serving businesses, nonprofits or community centers as part of a building complex, that might not otherwise be supported by the existing market in the area;
- (6) Inclusion of job training for local residents as part of the construction process;
- (7) Inclusion of community services such as tech support for local businesses, start-ups and entrepreneurs.

### 5.2.2 Keep the diversity of the district.

Walker's Point is often described as: inventive; authentic; having a do-it-yourself attitude and a self-reliant culture; home to a wealth of small businesses, craftspeople and artists. All of this is an asset and strength. The City's policies and guidelines should help Walker's Point keep a balanced mix of affordable housing and shared work space opportunities, including creative worker cooperatives and live/work lofts that support artists, start-ups and entrepreneurs.

### 5.2.3 Improve physical and social connectivity.

Walker's Point is a traditional urban grid that already has good physical connectivity and is gradually becoming more walkable and bikeable following a Complete Street design philosophy. Complete streets focus on the allocation of the public right-of-way to accommodate autos, walking, biking, transit, and green space. While some streets are already improved along Complete Street design principles, more could be added. South 1st Street is singled out by residents as being unfriendly to cyclists and pedestrians (traffic speed, number of lanes, right turn bypasses, lack of street trees, lack of separated bike lanes). Other streets--National Avenue, for example--have narrow sidewalks and too much of the right-of-way assigned to automobiles.



Connectivity also means having a high Walk Score (Walker's Point is currently ranked 83 - most meetings can be reached and most errands can be done on foot) and a high Transit Score (Walker's Point is currently ranked at 56 - transit options are good). For updated scores, go to [www.walkscore.com/WI/Milwaukee/Walker's Point](http://www.walkscore.com/WI/Milwaukee/Walker's Point).

Walker's Point is already a place that fosters social interaction both in and out of the workplace. It has public wifi and high-speed internet service, as well as gathering places, coffee houses, and venues that host lectures and public events.

#### **5.2.4 Build industry partnerships that can implement the best available structured network for high-speed data transmission, computing and storage in metro Milwaukee.**

Milwaukee is still considered "middle of the pack" for having fast affordable high-speed internet when compared to other U.S. cities, which is necessary for competitive start-ups and growing companies who choose to locate in urban districts. Affordable high speed fiberoptic cable is "basic" to the success of the many start-ups and older companies in the Walker's Point Industrial Mixed Zoning and will need to be enhanced by existing or new Internet service providers for individuals and start-ups to realize their potential.



#### **5.2.5 Continue to develop projects that express local arts and culture.**

Walker's Point is highly inclusive, embracing a broad range of cultures and lifestyles and allowing a broad range of expression in the built environment. City policies and guidelines should support this broad expression of cultures and lifestyles, as well as diverse types of art and architecture.

#### **5.2.6 Preserve and adapt historic buildings for mixed use.**

Many of the large former industrial buildings in the area lend themselves to redesign and repurposing as shared workspaces, lofts, live/work space, and the kind of open offices that are prevalent in Industrial Mixed Use Zoning Districts. That said, some are in historic districts and eligible for historic tax credits, some are not. Some bear considerable costs of rehab and renovation, while some do not. Property owners in Walker's Point should take advantage of state and federal historic tax credits as well as city-sponsored programs for building rehab and renovation, such as the Retail Investment Fund and the Facade Grant matching grant program.

Walker's Point and the former Third Ward (across the river) have the largest assemblage of buildings with "residual" potential for transformation in the metro area. Encouraging and incentivizing a mixed use approach to rehab/conversion allows for redevelopment of relatively inexpensive retail, office or residential space or all of the above, instead of the much more costly approach of demolition and replacement with new construction. For a good summary of the argument for rehab and conversion (or repurposing) of small, older buildings, go to [www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/15/smaller-buildings-cities](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/15/smaller-buildings-cities).

### 5.2.7 Support both the new and the old economy in job creation.

Walker's Point is already a nexus for both the old and the new economy in Milwaukee, i.e., high-growth industries that are on the cutting edge of technology and are the creative driving force of economic growth. Anchors are the Reed Street Yards Eco-district, the Global Water Center, and a growing cluster of creative companies such as PKWare, Stamm Media and Technology, and The Commons, a nonprofit that helps area students build partnerships with industry.

There is a rich irony here. While cities of every size and stripe have been investing for the last 40-50 years in the "modern" single use isolated office park on the outskirts of town at sites that were green fields or cornfields, it is the old mixed use walk-to-work industrial and warehouse districts (like Walker's Point) in a city's central core that are beginning to outplay them as hubs of innovation and job creation. Creative business processes have returned to the central city.

### 5.2.8 Do more to green the Walker's Point neighborhood.

The Trust for Public Land ParkScore index that analyzes public access to parks and open space ranks Milwaukee 22nd out of the 60 largest U.S. cities (ParkScore of 56.0 for the city as a whole), but notes gaps in park availability and an "urgent need" for parkland in the Walker's Point area based on its demographic profile--a much



younger than average population; greater than average density for the area; and high number of low income families. Park gaps are based on a dynamic 1/2 mile service area (or a 10 minute walking distance without barriers) for all parks. For more, go to [http://parkscore.tpl.org/ReportImages/Milwaukee\\_WI.pdf](http://parkscore.tpl.org/ReportImages/Milwaukee_WI.pdf)

Along similar lines, it is a target of the city's sustainability plan, ReFresh Milwaukee, that all residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, greenway, or green or other amenity space.

For Walker's Point to continue to be a neighborhood of choice, it needs to have more green space. Although proximity to three rivers does a lot to mitigate the lack of green space, the Walker's Point neighborhood currently lacks sufficient parks and green space to meet the needs of a residential population, particularly families with children.

Creative measures need to be taken to restore green space, such as reassigning portions of public rights-of-way to parks, repurposing vacant lots and redesigning parking lots to have more planted areas and green buffers or screens, reusing remnants (leftover pieces of land), using rooftops as gardens, recapturing the underused portions of large parking areas, and cutting down on the amount of pavement overall.



### 5.2.9 Provide waterfront access where opportunities permit.

The Milwaukee RiverLink Guidelines (1992) call for a continuous riverwalk along the South Water Street bank of the Milwaukee River. Street “stub ends” and other unnamed public rights-of-way should be park-like public access points. River edge buildings should not create a wall between Walker’s Point and the river, but should allow public pass-throughs to the river.

Design of each segment of riverwalk (in tandem with development on the upland side of the river) is governed by the City’s Site Plan Review Overlay District (SPROD), with standards that apply to river-facing facades, amenities, design elements, and the design of the riverwalk itself.

The Milwaukee River to Kinnickinnic River riverwalk, along with the existing “stub ends” and unnamed city rights-of-way, should be designed as a promenade with public amenities, e.g., landscaping, benches, planters, overlooks, and public art that are integral to the overall design. If possible, the Milwaukee-to-Kinnickinnic (south bank) riverwalk should have a naturalistic design similar to the Third Ward “Mary Miss” riverwalk on the north bank of the Milwaukee River from St.Paul Avenue to the Harbor Entrance. This and other waterfront design issues will be explored as part of the Harbor District Waterways and Land Use process over the next year.



### 5.2.10 The City and Innovation Initiative partners should continue to explore both public and private sector financial tools tailored to support cost-effective and flexible space for start-ups and entrepreneurial business platforms.

Explore financial tools such as Fund Milwaukee or equity owner financing (as opposed to traditional bank financing) to assist co-working or cooperative buildings that house and provide business services to start-ups, low profit margin businesses, and creatives. Continue to use existing City resources such as Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) loans to assist the private sector where there are gaps in financing.

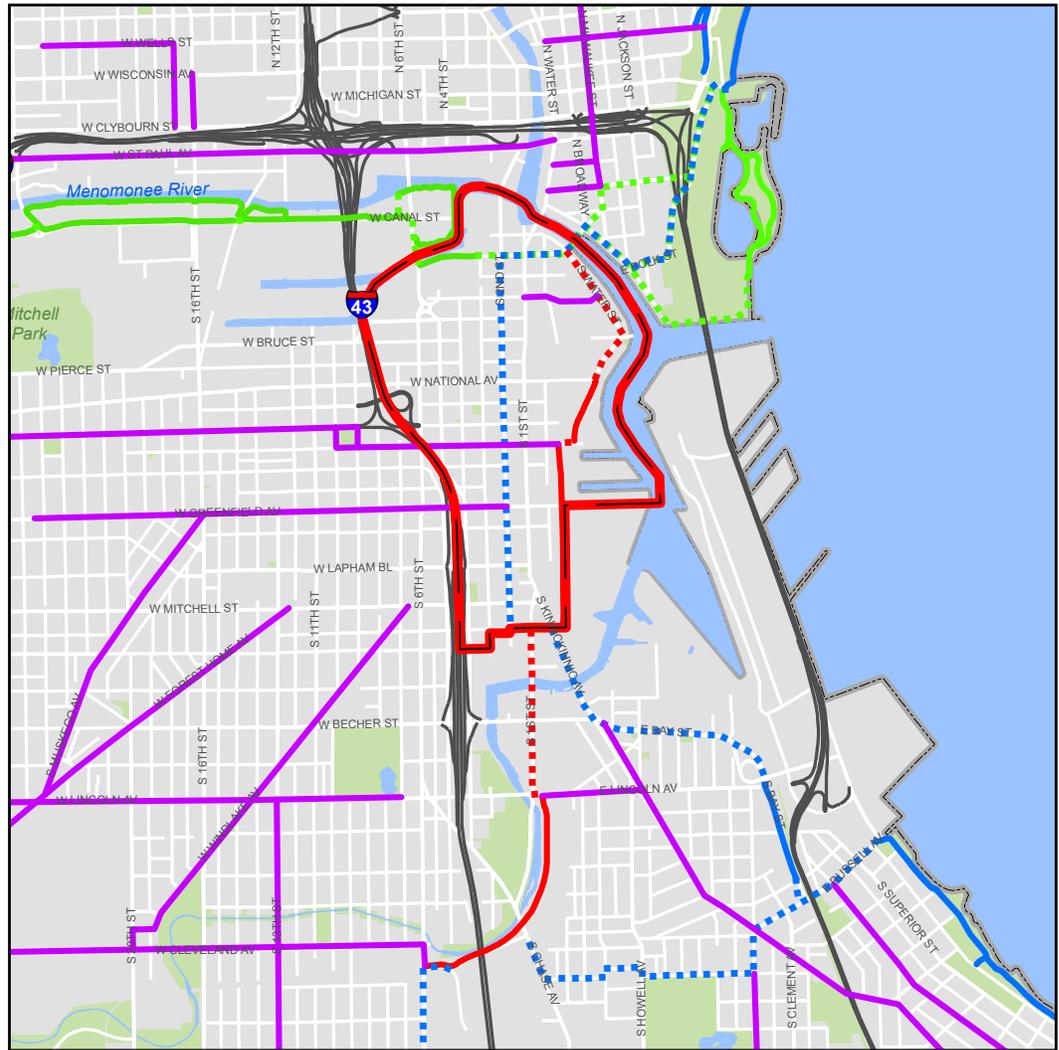
If possible, explore the use of development incentives through existing Tax Increment Financing (typically in areas where TIF is already being used as a development tool) or use of financial tools tailored to meet the needs of specific redevelopment areas, e.g., infrastructure needs or remediation. Explore financial assistance for difficult to develop buildings in Walker’s Point, e.g., very large size (former silos, in some cases), short floor to floor heights, minimal windows, presence of asbestos or conditions requiring remediation.



### 5.2.11 Ensure Bradley Technical High School is a high performing school.

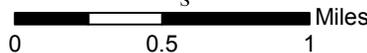
All Walker's Point stakeholders should continue to support efforts to improve Bradley Technical High School and ensure it is a high performing school that prepares students for the types of careers available in Walker's Point and in other high-growth job clusters in the regional economy.

A strong Bradley Technical High School can be an asset to both Walker's Point families looking for a quality education for their children, as well as Walker's Point area businesses who rely on a work force with in-demand technical skills.



### City of Milwaukee Bike System-Walkers Point

Prepared by the Department of City Development, 8 April 2015  
Source: City of Milwaukee Information and Technology Management Division; Real Estate



#### Bike Facility System

- Action Plan Boundary
- Bike Lane
- Hank Aaron State Trail - Off Street
- Hank Aaron State Trail - Bike Lane
- KK River Trail - Off Street
- KK River Trail - Bike Lane
- Oak Leaf Trail - Off Street
- Oak Leaf Trail - Bike Lane

## 5.3 Make and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections.

### 5.3.1 Address opportunities and challenges as existing tools permit.

The City's Department of Public Works has been studying ways to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout Walker's Point. The primary challenge is that many of the streets, primarily east-west streets (for example, Florida and Virginia Streets), are too narrow to widen sidewalks or add bicycle lanes without losing on-street parking. (Walker's Point residents and businesses often stress the need for more, not less parking.) To add another layer of difficulty, a number of east-west streets are discontinuous (Virginia does not go east of South 1st Street and has a one-way block between 5th and 6th Streets) or have challenging major street crossings (e.g., East Florida Street at South 1st Street), or have right-of-way changes mid-street, for example, the East Florida Street right-of-way widens past the railroad bridge east of South 1st Street.

Some streets, like National Avenue, are not overly narrow, but may have an over-assigned right-of-way--literally the street is trying to accommodate too much or too many driving lanes. Adding bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks or street trees would require reducing the number of driving lanes or parking lanes.



That said, some challenges are also assets. Overly narrow streets (often in historic districts) can create a more intimate pedestrian environment. Awkward, angled or curving streets can create difficult five-legged intersections, sharp turns, as well as a more picturesque street frontage. The low railroad overpasses in Walker's Point create clearance hazards for trucks as well as "hallways" for pedestrians, framed by riveted steel trusses that bring to mind a history of heavy industry and freight trains. Stub end streets dead end at the river and, at the same time, create dramatic panoramic views of waterways and an opportunity for overlooks and mini-parks.

Recommendations for improving bicycle/pedestrian connections are as follows:

#### *5.3.1.1 Create better signing and wayfinding for urban trails that converge in Walker's point.*

Use Freshwater Way/Pittsburgh Avenue as the primary connector between the Hank Aaron State Trail, Oak Leaf Trail, Kinnickinnic River Trail, and Milwaukee Riverwalk (that continues to Third Ward and the Lakefront system of parks and trails). Incorporate bicycle lanes in each direction.

The convergence of four major trails in Walker's Point--Hank Aaron State Trail, Oak Leaf Trail, the Kinnickinnic River Trail, and Milwaukee Riverwalk--and a possible future streetcar extension along South 1st Street or South 2nd, presents a rare opportunity to create a coordinated system of urban trails through signage, other forms of wayfinding that could be repeating symbols or graphics on private buildings, signposts, bicycle stands as sculptures, etc. There is

also no joining point or trailhead for these four trails, and that could potentially be a small park or gathering space with a kiosk.

The City, in partnership with Milwaukee County Parks, has received a grant to jointly develop a coordinated trail/bicycle facilities signage plan starting in late 2015. The project will cover traffic control, safety, facility identification, and wayfinding. It will also guide directional signage recommendations, detailed signage typologies, and recommended signage packages and implementation strategies. The project will also be coordinated with Hank Aaron State Trail staff from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

### ***5.3.1.2 Make the 6th Street roundabout more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.***

Add striping, signing and needed curb cuts to make connections fully accessible as well as more distinct, visible and less difficult to maneuver. As the roundabout is designed, it does not serve bicycles, pedestrians and automobiles well. The other fault with the current design is inefficient or unsightly use of the remnant spaces created by the roundabout--some used for unscreened parking. These remnant (leftover) spaces would be better allocated to green space. The center of the traffic circle was intended as a gateway, but has no public art or marker that fulfills that purpose of welcoming travelers to the South Side. See earlier discussion of this topic in Chapter 5, Section 5.1.9.3 Improving the gateway entry.



Several redesigns were proposed by the UWM Urban Development Studio. The one below greens the remnant of public land and the segment of Virginia Street on the south side of the roundabout in front of Conejitos restaurant.

### ***5.3.1.3 Add designated bicycle lanes on National Avenue.***

Consider adding bicycle lanes by modifying the existing road striping layout from four driving lanes to three lanes (one driving lane in each direction plus a center turn lane) plus bicycle lanes. Typically, a three lane pattern is only used if traffic counts are below 15,000 vehicles per day. This recommendation would need to be assessed by Department of Public Works staff to determine if a modified road striping layout would accommodate traffic needs: overall traffic volume, turning movements at each intersection, traffic signal timing and coordination, and address the existing accident history. The long-term benefit if approved, is that a three-lane pattern allows space to be reassigned to bicycle lanes without taking space away from on-street parking and the sidewalks on National Avenue.

### ***5.3.1.4 Consider removing angle parking on South 5th Street.***

Consider removing angle parking on South 5th Street (as part of a plan for street redesign with input from Walker's Point residents and businesses) to free up space in the right-of-way for designated bike lanes. If possible, add buffered bicycle lanes--either a painted buffer like the lanes on South 2nd south of National, or a separated bike-way with a physical buffer, e.g., a raised, possibly planted strip. Both require more space and separated lanes will necessitate specialized maintenance.

### 5.3.1.5 Consider adding traffic calming to more pedestrian-oriented streets.

Add traffic calming on lower traffic volume streets such as South 2nd and South 5th Streets.

Note: Traffic calming (or the intentional slowing of traffic in a pedestrian-oriented district) is not the creation of driving obstacles like speed humps. Traffic calming consists of pedestrian enhancements like curb extensions that improve visibility and shorten crossings for pedestrians or stamped, colored or specially designed crosswalks that may reduce travel speeds, increase pedestrian and bicycle safety. As part of an overall streetscape design, traffic calming can enhance the retail environment of the street. By reducing the noise, fumes and intensity of an automobile-dominated environment, you can create a place where people are more likely to shop, sit outdoors at a cafe, or walk several blocks from parking spot to storefront or restaurant.

### 5.3.1.6 Add to the designated (signed) east-west bicycle routes.

DPW is considering adding several east-west bicycle routes through Walker's Point on lower traffic volume streets such as Maple, Washington, Florida and Virginia Streets. These will be shared streets with bicycle route signage and perhaps intersection/crossing enhancements. Florida Street and Virginia Street are east-west connectors for the major trails that converge in Walker's Point as well as a link from the Hank Aaron State Trail to the Creative Corridor.



Source: Urban Milwaukee

Enhanced bicycle routes on local and minor collector streets with lower traffic volumes are generally more attractive to a broader range of people. Many people, often referred to “interested but concerned”, are not comfortable bicycling on more heavily trafficked streets, even with painted bicycle lanes, because of the traffic volumes and likelihood of transit buses and trucks.

### 5.3.1.7 If feasible, improve designated (signed) north-south bicycle accommodations.

Consider improving bicycle accommodations on South 1st and South 6th Streets, even though they are noisier, more heavily trafficked streets (used by the “strong and fearless”). Even though South 2nd and South 5th Streets are the quieter, safer, therefore preferred bicycle routes, bicyclists continue to use South 1st Street because it is a direct route from Downtown/Third Ward to Bay View, and they use South 6th Street because it is a direct route from Walker's Point via the 6th Street bridge/viaduct to the Menomonee Valley and Downtown.

Note: Given the heavy traffic conditions on South 1st and South 6th Streets, which many bicyclists feel to be dangerous or uncomfortable, bicycle planners prefer to focus on S. 2nd, S. 5th, or the Kinnickinnic River Trail/S. Water Street corridor east of S. 1st Street as offering a higher cost-benefit ratio, i.e. the investment in those streets will support greater ridership.

South 1st Street is a popular transit route that may become an extended streetcar route at some point in the future. The redesign of the street for transit may present a future opportunity for designated (signed) bicycle lanes. South 6th Street is an alternative extended streetcar route.

***5.3.1.8 Add bike sharing stations and auto alternatives to increase transportation choices.***

Public bike sharing stations are being planned for installation in Walker's Point with the first station expected at South 2nd Street and Freshwater Way. There is some challenge to siting bike sharing stations. They are quite large (6' deep by 45' – 65' long depending on the number of docks/bicycles). Additionally, if they are funded with public funds--most are currently being funded with federal transportation grant funds--they need to be located on public right-of-way. DPW is currently evaluating locations that meet these criteria. Another increasingly popular alternative to the automobile, car sharing vehicles, will be available in Walker's Point in 2015.

***5.3.1.9 As part of the next scheduled street reconstruction, pursue available greening solutions for S. 1st Street as a way to make it less harsh, more walkable and pedestrian friendly.***

The street has lost its tree border area due to widening to accommodate additional driving lanes. The creation of terrace area planting of additional street trees will be delayed until the next street reconstruction.



Landscape Not Meeting Code

The street was recently reconstructed and may not be on the city's paving schedule for another 20 years, unless a major project such as a dedicated streetscaping project or a southerly route for streetcar extension occurs sooner. Until the street is reconstructed, the most immediate solution for greening would be compliance with the city's landscape code that requires a planting strip, hedge or buffer for parking lots and paved areas along South 1st Street.

Many parking lots do not meet the required landscape design in the city's landscape code of a green buffer that screens and separates the parking lot from the sidewalk. The photo on the left does meet the screening requirements of the code. The photo on the right does not.

***5.3.1.10 Extend the Milwaukee Riverwalk as properties develop along S. Water Street.***

In keeping with Milwaukee's comprehensive plan, area plan and riverwalk overlay district, as properties develop, create continuous riverwalk extensions that extend the riverwalk along the south bank of the Milwaukee River, past the harbor entrance, and as far along the Kinnickinnic River as is feasible given the presence of heavy industry still located there.



Landscape Meeting Code

**5.3.1.11 Use Riverwalk stub ends and unnamed city rights-of-way as public access points.**

Use Riverwalk stub ends for mini-parks and public access to the waterfront along the Milwaukee and Kinnickinnic Rivers as called for in the 1992 RiverLink Guidelines, a joint City of Milwaukee and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) plan to allow riverwalks and riverfront development while protecting public access, public use and navigation. A “stub end” is a street or other public right-of-way that ends at the river. The 1992 RiverLink Guidelines also laid the groundwork for the riverwalk to be a “Link” or urban trail connector between Wisconsin’s state trail system and

Milwaukee County’s parks and neighborhoods, and became the basis for the city’s riverwalk district overlay zoning.

Potential river edge sites for public green space are as follows: the two unnamed rights-of-way between East Pittsburgh Avenue and East Florida Street; a railroad right of way where East Florida Street meets the river at the railroad swing bridge (if the railroad vacates the land at some point in the future); a stub end at East Bruce Street with an exciting view of the harbor entrance, and the stub end of East Greenfield avenue at UWM School of Freshwater Sciences, from all appearances already being used as green space.



Source: Google

### ***5.3.1.12 Pursue areas for joint city/neighborhood study and collaboration.***

As Walker's Point continues to develop, Walker's Point Association (WPA) should work with the City to address bicycle parking needs--for visitors, customers, employees, clients and residents.

Walker's Point Association should also work with the City to assess pedestrian accessibility, reduce obstacles, and focus on creating a year-round pedestrian environment with good and comfortable transit access. It is important to remember that a good pedestrian environment is also an interesting one with storefront windows or transparency at the street level regardless of use, limited dead or blank walls, pedestrian lighting, points of interest, street trees for shade, places to sit, public art, etc.

As a trade-off, consider some loss of on-street parking, to create more attractive sidewalk spaces, opportunities for terraces/trees/outdoor seating areas/public art/sidewalk sales, particularly in areas where activating the street ("street life") is an asset to businesses and an amenity for residents. The latter will add more long-term value and quality to properties and people's experiences in, and memories of Walker's Point.

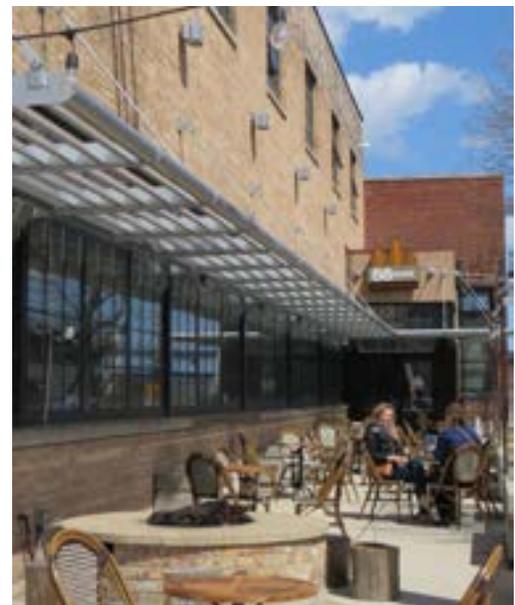
### ***5.3.1.13 Resolve small problems that detract from quality-of-life.***

Add more bus shelters at designated bus stops. They could be standard issue for Milwaukee County Transit System, or they could reflect the more artistic personality of the corridor/district.

Remove unnecessary right turn bypasses and replace with green space that has more benefit to the Walker's Point neighborhood.

Conduct a pedestrian accessibility audit of the neighborhood to see if there are ways to reduce barriers for the disabled.

If possible, resolve the issue of lack of access to Bradley Tech (MPS) "overflow" parking originally intended for the neighborhood that is fenced off and unavailable for use.



## 5.4 Complete the Reed Street Yards Eco-District.

### *Background.*

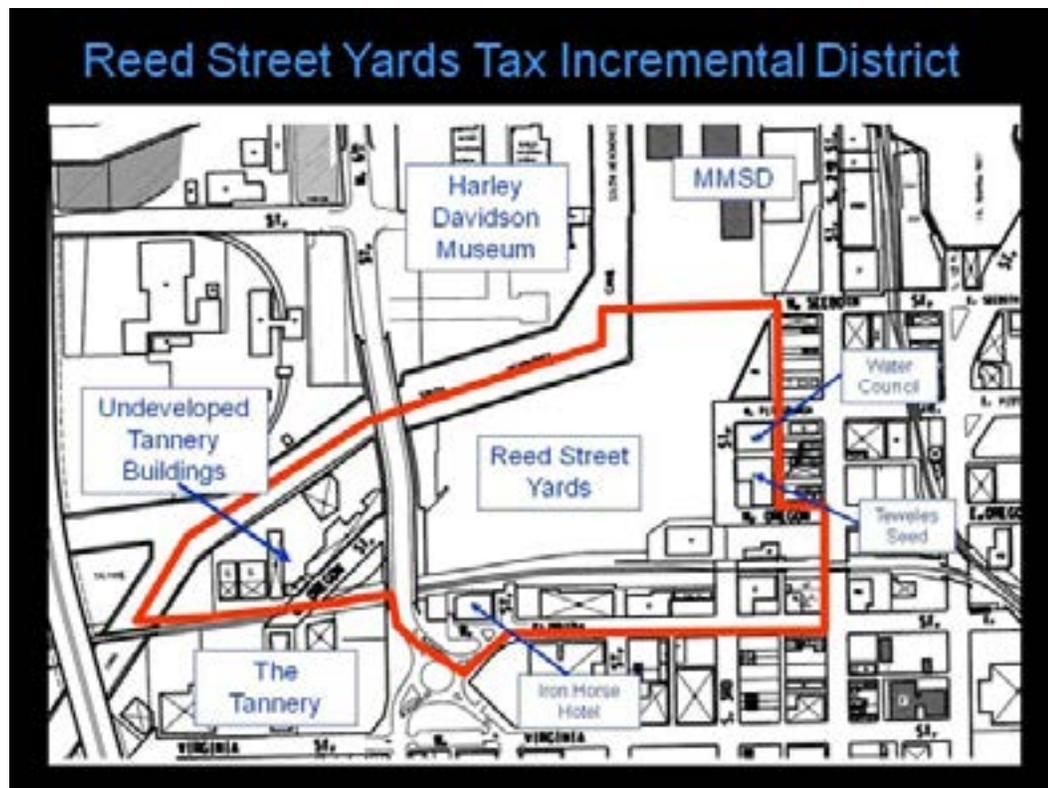
The Reed Street Yards is a 17-acre property in the Walker's Point neighborhood. A former rail yard and truck terminal south of downtown Milwaukee and adjacent to the newly-opened Global Water Center, it is part of the gateway to Walker's Point just south of the Harley-Davidson Museum, and sits at the east end of the Menomonee Valley, arguably Milwaukee's most radical and successful transformation from its old heavy industry manufacturing base to the New Economy.

The City's vision for the Reed Street Yards is to develop a water research and technology park on the site to build on the Milwaukee region's strength as a water research and technology center. Reed Street Yards will be a mixed-use urban office, educational, research and technology zone focused on the international water industry. Over time, the site could house more than 1,000,000



square feet of facilities (approximately 8-10 buildings), create approximately 2,500 jobs (one employee per 400 square-feet of space), and be the physical hub and brain of an international water cluster. The project is expected to be a \$100M project that will increase the assessed value of the site from approximately \$4.5M to \$120M.

Reed Street Yards is an Eco-industrial Park (having a minimum of 70% water-related businesses), a redevelopment project area (at approximately 50% completion), a Development Incentive Zone (DIZ) with green building standards, and a Tax Incremental Finance District.





Reed Street Yards is designed with the following aligned goals:

1. Transform the property into a research and technology park, adjacent to the Global Water Center, focused on Milwaukee's growing water industry.
2. Over time, create a green building complex that is a model of sustainable design and a showcase for modern water technologies and practices, using for example, a purple pipe for development-wide water recycling, bioswales and permeable paving to capture stormwater runoff.
3. Improve site amenities to include a Menomonee Canal riverwalk extension of the Hank Aaron State Trail through the site (partially complete) and an educational interactive public plaza.
4. Provide additional funding for site infrastructure and a \$5 million fund to attract new businesses.
5. Do necessary site and building work to redevelop the complex, such as remediation of brownfields; needed updates of public infrastructure; green landscaping and public access to the Menomonee Canal; creation of a "seamless connection" to, and extension of the riverwalk; elimination of obsolete conditions and blighting influences.
6. Fulfill public sector objectives, such as providing investments in water-related companies; the creation and retention of jobs; increasing the tax base.
7. Blend in with, and become a central part of the vibrant mixed use district of Walker's Point.

### 5.4.1 Recent projects.

#### 5.4.1.1 Freshwater Way.

In 2014, Freshwater Way was completed using green infrastructure (permeable pavers, bioswales planted with native grasses) to absorb run-off and stormwater surge, and to provide access and utilities to the Reed Street Yards. Freshwater Way/Pittsburgh also becomes an east-west bicycle/pedestrian trail connector from Hank Aaron State Trail to Oak Leaf Trail, Kinnickinnic River Trail, and the Milwaukee River.

#### 5.4.1.2 Global Water Center.

The Global Water Center is a water research and business accelerator for universities, existing companies in the field and startups. Opened in 2013, it has almost 90,000 SF of space dedicated to companies, government agencies and universities focused on the water sector. This building houses the Water Council, a portion of the School of Freshwater Sciences, offices from established local water companies such as Badger Meter, A.O. Smith, Veolia, as well as space for start-up and emerging water companies.



### 5.4.1.3 Water Tech One.

Water Tech One, scheduled for construction in Summer of 2015, is designed to be the first of nine office and research buildings in Reed Street Yards built around the theme of sustainability and environmental awareness. Projected to be an 80,000-square foot four-story office building that supports the Water Council, the building will feature a blue roof that captures rainwater and distributes it for use throughout the building. Developers hope to build technology marketing alliances among a cluster of firms anchored by a Fortune 500 company that will altogether create several hundred jobs and advance Reed Street Yards as a water industry and research hub.



### 5.4.2 Redevelopment challenges and financial costs.

#### 5.4.2.1 Need for environmental remediation.

The Reed Street Yards was formerly a rail yard and truck terminal serving industries located at the east end of the Menomonee Valley. Historic land uses associated with site contamination of the site include: the railroad yard with fueling depot, scrap iron yard, gypsum plaster mill, insulation warehouse, alleged vermiculite exfoliation facility, asbestos warehouse and additional warehouses.



### 5.4.3 Potential for job creation.

Upon full build-out the site is projected to have up to one million square feet of office and research space for up to 1,000 new jobs. Because of its placement in the regional water technology economy and its geographic placement at the nexus of the Valley, Downtown, Third Ward and Walker's Point, the potential for economic "spin-off" or multiplier jobs is even greater.

The renderings below depict anticipated build-out. The first rendering (looking south toward South 5th Street and the Iron Horse Hotel) shows the Hank Aaron State Trail within a 40-foot river edge buffer extended along the Menomonee Canal. A plaza and greenway connects the canal to Freshwater Way, East Oregon and East Florida Street past the Global Water Center and Teweles Seed Tower Apartments. The second shows the Water Tech One looking west to Sixth Street and the Menomonee Valley.

The interior photo is the lobby of the 98,000 SF Global Water Center located adjacent to the Reed Street Yards.



(Source: "Just Add Water," an article on Milwaukee's water-related technology cluster in the Wisconsin edition of Site Selection magazine, September, 2014, for the entire article go to <http://www.siteselection.com/issues/2014/sep/wisconsin.cfm>)

#### 5.4.4 Build a pedestrian bridge from Harley-Davidson Museum to Reed Street Yards.

A pedestrian bridge from Harley-Davidson Museum to Reed Street Yards that creates a more direct extension of the Hank Aaron State Trail into Walker's Point and better connects Walker's Point to the Menomonee Valley is included as a recommendation in the Menomonee Valley 2.0 Plan (currently in draft form). Two locations are currently under consideration, noted in red on the concept drawing below: one that would connect directly to the public parking lot at Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District (MMSD) offices and another that connects to the waterfront plaza at Reed Street Yards.



## 5.5 Add Local Historic designation to the S. 2nd Street Historic District.

### *Background.*

Walker's Point is currently home to four National Register historic districts.

(1) The earliest, Walker's Point Historic District, was listed in the National Register on December 19, 1979 and was Milwaukee's first National Register district. It includes residential, commercial and industrial buildings that exemplify the early decades of the city's development. Small workers' cottages were located near to the factories that gave the residents their employment. Mixed in were the large houses of the business owners and prominent merchants. Nearby, retail areas developed along National Avenue, South Fifth and South Sixth Streets.

(2) The South First and Second Streets Historic District was listed in the National Register on November 30, 1987. This district consists of small scale masonry buildings that were devoted to the small scale manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers that clustered around the Union Depot, once located on South Second Street. This area was once the hub of Walker's Point before merchants and retailers moved to National Avenue. This historic district was created as a result of an intensive survey of the area conducted in 1986.

(3) The Florida and Third Industrial Historic District was listed in the National Register on July 10, 2008. These buildings are of a scale that resemble the large loft structures in the Historic Third Ward. Manufacturers produced stoves, ledger books, paper boxes, paper, bedding, and candy and warehoused seeds. The twelve buildings in this district are clustered along or adjacent to the abandoned rail yards of the Soo Line. This historic district was created as result of developers seeking

historic tax credits for the rehabilitation and reuse of the buildings.

(4) The most recent entry into the National Register is the east Oregon and South Barclay Historic District, listed on December 29, 2014. This district consists of a cluster of buildings built or used by the Pittsburgh Paint Glass Company, a national manufacture of paint and coatings that had a large branch operation here in Milwaukee. This historic district was created as result of developers seeking historic tax credits for the rehabilitation and reuse of the buildings.

### 5.5.1 Preliminary study of South 2nd Street local historic designation.

South Second Street is currently being studied for its potential to become a locally designated Historic District. The street's architectural and cultural importance has already been determined by its National Register listing as part of the South First and Second Streets Historic District. The local historic designation proposes to extend the boundary further south than it is currently in order to pick up additional historic buildings south of West Oregon Street. Official boundaries have not been determined.

Historic designation is a way of looking collectively at a group of buildings and determining how the historic character of the whole can help each individual property owner achieve success.

There needs to be a general consensus among the property owners that they are in a historic district, that they have a common interest in maintaining and improving the district, and that the local historic designation supports this. Alderman Perez has sponsored several public meetings on the potential for a South 2nd Street local historic district designation. More study and additional meetings will determine if this is something the property owners want and believe is in their best interest.

### 5.5.2 What would local designation mean for the property owners?

Local historic district designation would result in a set of guidelines that are uniform for all of the properties and help maintain certain standards for renovation. These guidelines are based on the Secretary of Interior Standards. In this way one owner's investment in his property would not be undone by the haphazard repairs and inappropriate remodeling of his neighbors.

Historic designation only applies to the exterior of the building and property that is around the building. When work is proposed, e.g., restoring a storefront, paving the rear of the lot for parking, installing new signage, etc., the owner or contractor fills out an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness before any work can begin. Historic Preservation staff determines if the proposed work meets the guidelines and works with the owner to make adjustments if necessary. In many instances, staff can issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. Major projects need review and approval from the Historic Preservation Commission that meets once a month.

One example of a commercial district that has been very successful since it was listed in the National Register and received local designation is Brady Street Historic District. A second very successful district is Historic King Drive. Buildings continue to be restored and rehabilitated, new construction has occurred on vacant lots and there is a lively mix of businesses and street



activity. Review of renovations by the city's Historic Preservation Commission has resulted in high quality and authentic restorations and renovations, and buildings with a lot of curb appeal.

### 5.5.3 Making the case for local historic designation - an added layer of protection.

The National Register is the official list of the country's cultural properties worthy of preservation. However, listing in the National Register imposes few restrictions on a property. A National Register property may be demolished, altered or sold just like any other property without any special review or approval requested. There are no requirements that a National Registered listed property be open for tours or public inspection to ensure that it is being maintained. Only if a property owner seeks historic tax credits for property renovation or repair, does he have to meet design guidelines established by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Local Historic designation would provide an added layer of protection which benefits all property owners in the district, chiefly by adding a review process through the city's Historic Preservation Commission (and assigned staff) for building permits for alterations, additions, infill and demolition.



### 5.5.4 Making the case for local historic designation - economic benefits.

Economic studies on the benefits of the historic tax credits have been conducted across the country. Research has consistently revealed that the use of tax credits has led to more local construction jobs, more permanent jobs and has been catalytic to the adjacent area. Likewise, property values rise and remain stable despite economic ups and downs when buildings are grouped together in a historic district. Local historic districts or historic districts that have dual listing as both local and national, have been shown to be more stable, maintain property values and draw more business than non-historic areas.

In recent years some of the property owners along South Second Street, in the South First and Second Street National Register Historic District, have taken advantage of the historic tax credits to rehabilitate their buildings. The carefully cleaned buildings, with new or restored windows and authentically rebuilt storefronts have proven a draw to customers.

Some property owners along National Avenue have also made use of or are in the process of using the historic tax credits to revitalize their properties.

Because of the historic tax credits, the owners' tax liability is reduced, making the project more affordable. The owner benefits, the community benefits from the revitalization and the building tenants find that a well rehabilitated historic building is good for business. Many tenants and customers find the older and more intimate buildings more attractive than big, glassy, featureless spaces.

Recent developments: As of 2015, in order to qualify for historic tax credits in Wisconsin, a project must be certified "historic" by state or federal organizations. The State of Wisconsin is currently considering a system "to rank applicants and award credits

where they would have the greatest economic impact," or to award tax credits competitively to developers based on job creation.

In *The Economics of Rehabilitation* (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1997), an expert in the field of preservation economics, Donovan Rypkema, lists the economic arguments for investing in historic districts.

- Reinvestment can generate tax credits and establish a new and higher depreciation schedule.
- Rehabilitation can extend the property's economic life - the period of time over which it can profitably generate income.
- With an improved physical condition, the owner may be able to achieve a better quantity, quality and durability of the income stream.
- An improved property could be eligible for more favorable financing including the variables of loan-to-value ratio, interest rate and loan term.
- Rehabilitation might be the most cost effective way to free up the value of the land that is currently under-producing.
- Individual reinvestment often is the most effective spur to adjacent property reinvestment. This can have a positive effect on the cumulative value of the properties within the area.



- Vacancy tends to be significantly lower in well maintained buildings in good condition than in deteriorating structures.
- A well conceived rehabilitation plan may eliminate areas of operating inefficiency such as outdated heating plants, etc.
- Areas of the building that are currently unused (such as upper floors of downtown buildings) or underutilized (often basements) may be placed in financially productive service. This may also effectively increase the building's net to gross ratio.

A recent report by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation noted the contributions of preservation to urban revitalization.

1. New businesses formed
2. Private investment stimulated
3. Tourism stimulated
4. Increased property values
5. Enhanced quality of life and the sense of neighborhood and community pride
6. New jobs created
7. Compatible land use patterns
8. Increased property and sales taxes
9. Pockets of deterioration and poverty diluted

In The Economics of Rehabilitation, Rypke-ma summarizes the research on economic impacts of historic preservation:



Historic preservation does have a measurable economic effect on a community. This impact is not only as an economic activity in general, but in comparison to new construction in particular. Comprehensive econometric models have been created by the federal government to measure the effect that an expenditure in one segment of the economy has on the rest of the segments - the multiplier effect. (Multiplier is the ratio of total dollars spent to, or as a result of, direct dollars spent or invested.) Using that data it is possible to directly compare the local impact of new construction versus rehabilitation. Suppose a community is choosing between spending \$1,000,000 in new construction and spending \$1,000,000 on rehabilitation. What would the differences be?

- \$120,000 more dollars will initially stay in the community with rehabilitation than with new construction.
- Five to nine more construction jobs will be created with rehabilitation than with new construction.
- 4.7 more new jobs will be created elsewhere in the community with rehabilitation than with new construction.
- Household incomes in the community will increase \$107,000 more with rehabilitation than with new construction.
- Retail sales in the community will increase \$142,000 as a result of that \$1,000,000 of rehabilitation expenditure - \$34,000 more than with \$1,000,000 of new construction.
- Real estate companies, lending institutions, personal service vendors, and eating and drinking establishments all will receive more monetary benefit from \$1,000,000 in rehabilitation than from \$1,000,000 of new construction.

### 5.5.5 Making the case for local historic designation - timing relative to the Milwaukee market.

Development pressure is likely to increase in coming years due to several market factors--a recovering economy, attractiveness of near downtown locations, Reed Street Yards build-out, and the relative affordability of South 2nd Street for commercial and mixed use development. Local designation could prevent or at least slow tear-downs for parking lots; speculative buy-and-hold strategies that result in disinvestment; and some entirely legal but exploitative practices, such as “piggybacking” or waiting to capitalize (cash in) on the investment of others in the district, or the tax strategy of taking depreciation intended for, but not reinvested in property repair and maintenance, while waiting to “cash out” at the end of the allowed depreciation period based on higher property values created by reinvestment, rehab and renovation of historic properties--again, the investment of others in the district.

The key to generating a greater return on investment for all property owners is protecting investment in historic properties while encouraging highest and best use.

In addition to the federal and state historic tax credits for eligible properties contributing to a National Register Historic District, the city offers development resources for rehab and restoration, such as the facade grant program, Retail Investment Fund, White Box program, and Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) financing.

For more information on National Register and Local Historic designation, go to Appendix 6.2 Historic Preservation Fact Sheets.

