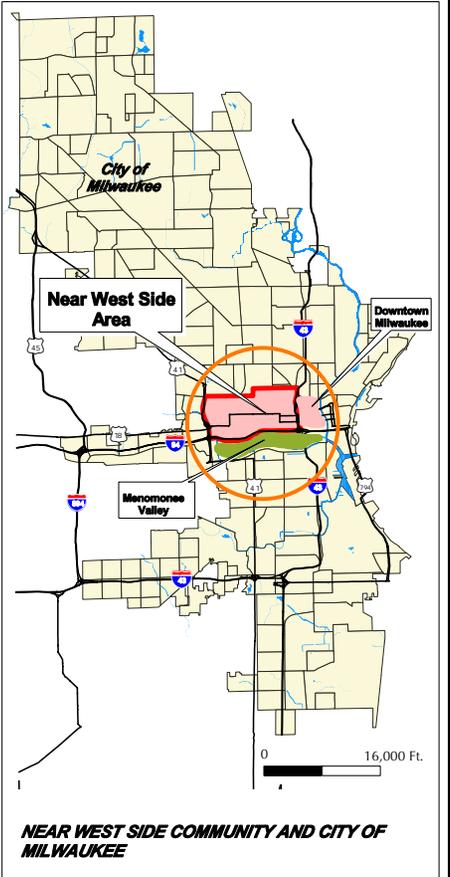
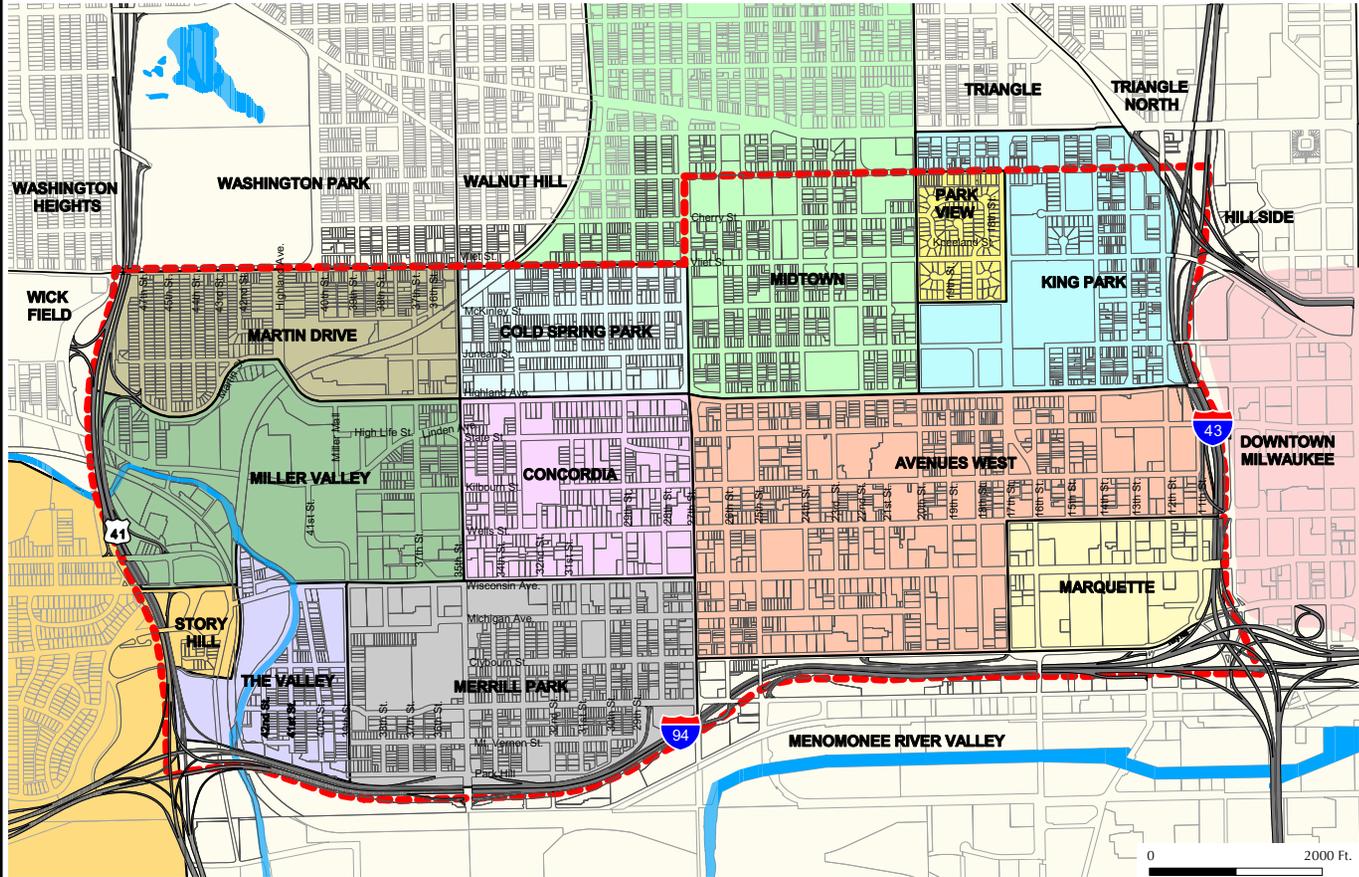


# ***Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION***

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- |  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
|  <b>Planning Area Boundary</b>    |  <b>Avenues West</b>     |  <b>Marquette</b>    |  <b>Merrill Park</b>  |  <b>Park View</b>  |
|  <b>Surrounding Neighborhoods</b> |  <b>Cold Spring Park</b> |  <b>Martin Drive</b> |  <b>Midtown</b>       |  <b>Story Hill</b> |
|  |  <b>Concordia</b>        |  <b>King Park</b>    |  <b>Miller Valley</b> |  <b>The Valley</b> |



NEAR WEST SIDE BOUNDARY AND NEIGHBORHOODS

MAP 1 - STUDY AREA LOCATION & BOUNDARY



The Near West Side Comprehensive Plan has been a comprehensive planning effort built upon the momentum created by recent revitalization activities and strong assets of the community including its close proximity to downtown, easy access to freeways and major bus routes, historic and architectural charm, and most importantly dedicated and active neighborhood associations. The plan establishes priorities for strengthening these community housing, business, retail, transportation, recreational and cultural assets. The plan promotes investment and provides guidance for public and private development initiatives.

## PLANNING CONTEXT

### City Comprehensive Plan Structure

The preparation of the Near West Side Comprehensive Plan has been done under the authority of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law, Wis. Stats. §66.1001, more commonly referred to as "Smart Growth" Legislation. The 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, and subsequently 1999 Assembly Bill AB 872 and 2001 Wisconsin Act 16, revised planning legislation for all communities in the State. The Smart Growth legislation provides a framework for developing comprehensive plans, and requires that any program or action of a community that affects land use must be consistent with the community's comprehensive plan. Therefore, upon adoption, all land use decisions must be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies outlined in the Milwaukee Near West Side Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Milwaukee's comprehensive planning process has been structured to recognize the different levels of interest-the need to plan for the entire City as well as its smaller geographic areas. Consequently, the City's Comprehensive Plan consists of 2 components: a citywide policy plan and multiple area plans. The Near West Side Comprehensive Plan is one of these area plans.

The overall organization of this plan is intended to create a document that is clear, concise, and user-friendly. The Introduction and the Planning Process & Information Gathering chapters provide a succinct review and analysis of neighborhood characteristics, including the existing demographic and physical conditions and a summary of the public participation process results. The Land Use chapter identifies the types of uses and related design guidelines planned for the Near West Side as a whole. The District and Corridors chapter specifies geographically where those land uses should be located and provides additional design standards specific to those locations. The Catalytic Projects chapter identifies a number of specific sites within the area and makes recommendations for the development of those sites. By structuring recommendations, first for the whole neighborhood, then for specific districts, and finally for particular sites, policy recommendations can be easily referenced based on the specifics of a reinvestment proposal.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Near West Side Comprehensive Plan is to create a place where people can live, work and play in a safe, clean, inviting community. The plan establishes priorities for strengthening and building upon the neighborhood assets. The plan promotes investment and provides guidance for public and private development. By creating new business opportunities, enhancing existing recreation and cultural alternatives, creating pedestrian-friendly areas, and creating a lifestyle option that can result in minimizing the development of outlying areas, the improvements to the area will provide benefits for the neighborhood, city, and region as a whole.

## PLAN GOALS

Goals were developed as a guide for the planning process to serve as the underlying philosophy of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Residential Goals

- Strengthen and improve the existing neighborhood fabric.
- Increase owner-occupancy throughout the Near West Side.

### Commercial Goals

- Create retail destinations that utilize existing commercial land and infrastructure.
- Enhance the marketability of commercial nodes to promote economic stability and growth.

### Institutions and Public Spaces Goals

- Increase sense of security throughout the Near West Side.
- Enhance public destinations and gathering places for residents and visitors.

### Transportation Goals

- Recreate historic neighborhood traffic patterns to maximize route alternatives.
- Improve the viability of transportation alternatives.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS / ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### Community Boundaries

For the purpose of this plan, the Near West Side is located west of I-43, north of I-94, east of U.S. 41, south of Vliet Street, west of N. 27th Street, and south of Galena Street east of N. 27th Street. This area includes all or portions of 12 City designated neighborhoods. Within the City, the Near West Side is directly west of Downtown Milwaukee, the location of City Hall, major financial institutions, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Bradley Center, and other cultural and entertainment destinations. The Menomonee Valley is located directly south of the Near West Side, a river valley home to a major industrial center of the City that is currently undergoing a public/private redevelopment initiative. To the southwest is Miller Park, home of the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team. The Near West Side is centrally located in the Metropolitan Milwaukee region and access is relatively efficient between the neighborhood and outlying areas due to proximity of the freeway system and major bus routes (**See Map 1, page 2**).

### History

According to various reports, the Milwaukee area was originally settled by indigenous settlements along the Menomonee and Milwaukee Rivers. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries scattered European settlements were located in the Milwaukee area. As Milwaukee became a village, in 1837, and then a city, in 1846, the area west of downtown began to see increasing levels of settlement. Development of the area continued including the establishment of Miller Brewery in 1855, Marquette University in 1881, and Harley-Davidson in 1903.

Development of the area peaked in the early to mid 20th century, with Wisconsin Avenue and 27th Street being the main corridors of activity. The 1950's and 60's saw the creation of the limited access highways, creating limited points of access between the neighborhood and areas to the east, south and west. Residential needs of the expanding hospital and health care service employees in the area sparked the development of many one bedroom and efficiency apartment buildings and the gradual decrease in number of single family homes. In the late 20th century, the increasing

availability of new single family homes in outlying areas, ease of access promised by the freeway system, and the closing of numerous hospitals, resulted in decreased demand for housing and decline in neighborhood maintenance.

### Demographics

**Population and Density:** The number of persons living in the Near West Side area decreased by 17% between 1990 and 2000. In contrast, the City of Milwaukee's overall population declined by only 5% over the past decade.

A number of factors contributed to the decline in population in the Near West Side. One of the main contributors has been the national trend toward smaller family sizes, which is reflected in the declining number of persons per household. The Near West Side has also been impacted by the general migration out of the City into suburban areas. A specific factor contributing to the population loss of the Near West Side has been the fact that the population in some of the more stable neighborhoods, such as Martin Drive and the Valley, are aging and the housing stock has not "turned over" to younger families with children.

In the 2000 U.S. Census, the Near West Side had a total population of 30,728. While there has been progressive loss of population in the Near West Side over the past three decades, the area, with a current density of 11,945 persons per square mile, remains one of the more densely populated districts in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. In comparison, the City of Milwaukee average density is 6,251 persons per square mile while typical suburban densities range from 2,000 to 4,000 persons per square mile.

**Age Distribution:** The age distribution patterns in the Near West Side are diverse, reflecting the varying characteristics of the different neighborhoods. The overall median age for census tracts in the Near West Side is 23.2 years compared to 30.6 years for the City of Milwaukee. The median age in the census tracts around Marquette University is relatively young, ranging from 19.8 to 25.3 years. The median age in some of the more stable older neighborhoods, such as Martin Drive and the Valley in the western part of the Near West Side ranges from 27.0 to 33.0 years. Some of the census tracts in the central portion of the Near West Side between N. 27th Street and N. 35th Street have median ages ranging from 33.0 to 38.0 due to some of the apartments and group housing serving elderly residents.

**Racial and Ethnic Characteristics:** The Near West Side closely approximates the City's overall racial and ethnic distribution. 65% of the residents are members of minority racial groups or are Hispanic, compared with 55% of all City residents. Many stakeholders view the racial and ethnic diversity of the Near West Side as one of its strong assets.

While there is a diverse population among Near West Side area residents, members of the different racial and ethnic groups tend to be concentrated within the area. The white population is concentrated in the western neighborhoods of the Valley, portions of Story Hill, and Martin Drive and in the census tracts around Marquette University, with smaller concentrations in certain blocks in the Concordia, Cold Springs Park, and Merrill Park neighborhoods. The northern portion of the Near West Side has the highest concentrations of African Americans. There are relatively high percentages of Hispanic population in the Merrill Park and Miller Valley Area. The area north of Vliet Street and west of N. 27th Street has a relatively high concentration of Asian population. This area is technically outside the planning area, but the concentration of an Asian population in the area may influence the business mix on Vliet Street.

**Households:** The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that there are 12,232 households on the Near West Side. The average household size is 2.18 persons per household, compared to a citywide average of 2.50 persons. 49.6% (6,067) of the total households consist of only one person. Approximately 47.9% (5,858) are households with female heads.

**Group Quarters:** Approximately 13.3% (4,096 persons) of the population in the Near West Side live in group quarters. The largest concentration of group living quarters are resident halls (3,306 students) and other student housing associated with Marquette University.

The remainder of residents living in group housing settings are in treatment centers, shelters, and other institutional settings. The relatively large number of non-student group living quarters in the Near West Side is a significant issue.

**Housing Units:** The Near West Side has approximately 14,071 housing units. Approximately 9.2% (1,306 units) of these are single-family structures and 16.2% (2,274 units) are duplex structures. The neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of single-family and duplex homes are Martin Drive, the Valley, Story Hill, Merrill Park, and Parkview. There are smaller concentrations of single-family homes on certain blocks in Concordia, Cold Spring Park, and Midtown.

Approximately 65% of the housing units in the Near West Side are rental units in multifamily apartment buildings or complexes. Most of the large apartment buildings and complexes are located in Concordia, Avenues West, Midtown, the Marquette area, and King Park. Many of the apartment buildings date from the period between the 1950's to the 1980's when a large number of employees at the medical centers resided in the area.

There has been virtually no market experience with condominiums within the near West Side. The City Assessor lists only one small condominium project on the Near West Side, located on Michigan Street.

**Occupancy Rates:** The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that approximately 86.9% (12,232 units) are occupied and 13.1% (1,839 units) are vacant. Citywide 93.2% of units are occupied and 6.8% are vacant.

The highest vacancy rates are in the apartment buildings with a high proportion of studio and one-bedroom units. Property managers and landlords report vacancy rates of 25% or more in some of these structures. The vacancy rates in single-family and duplex units are relatively low.

**Reduction in the Number of Housing Units:** According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, the number of housing units in the Near West Side declined by 1,621 units between 1990 and 2000.

City building permit records indicate 117 new units were constructed since 1993, however, 946 units were demolished. There have been some conversions/consolidation of multifamily units to provide for larger SF occupancy units accounting for additional declines in the total number of housing units.

**Owner versus Rental Occupancy:** Of the occupied units in the Near West Side, 86.3% (10,558 units) are renter-occupied and 13.7% (1,674 units) are owner-occupied; this is significantly lower than the citywide owner-occupancy rate at 45.3%.

The City's Master Property Files indicate that approximately 74.7% of single-family homes and 50.0 % of duplexes are owner-occupied. The neighborhoods within the Near West Side with the

highest number of owner-occupied units are Martin Drive, Merrill Park, the Valley, and Parkview.

**Subsidized and Assisted Housing:** Subsidized or assisted units account for nearly 20% of the area's housing stock. There are 2,412 site-based low-income housing units in the area. Approximately 1,376 units are designed for elderly occupancy, the remainder for family occupancy. The majority of the assisted housing in the Near West Side is federally assisted rental housing (Section 8, 202 and 236) and Section 42 tax credit projects.

There are 321 households in the Rent Assistance Programs (RAP) operated by the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County. While participants in this program receive financial assistance for housing, they are responsible for finding their own rental units. RAP households were not concentrated in any one part of the area.

**Major Employers and Employment:** The Near West Side includes many businesses and institutions with a large number of employees. There are a total of approximately 29,300 persons employed within the three zip code areas that are either totally or partially in the Near West Side.

Of the 981 businesses listed within the three zip codes, four companies have 1,000 or more employees, 37 have between 100 and 999 employees and 38 have between 50 and 99 employees. The majority of businesses are smaller companies employing fewer than 50 persons.

Some of the largest employers in the Near West Side include Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Miller Brewing Company, Harley-Davidson Motor Company, Marquette University, Ameritech, and the Milwaukee Housing Authority.

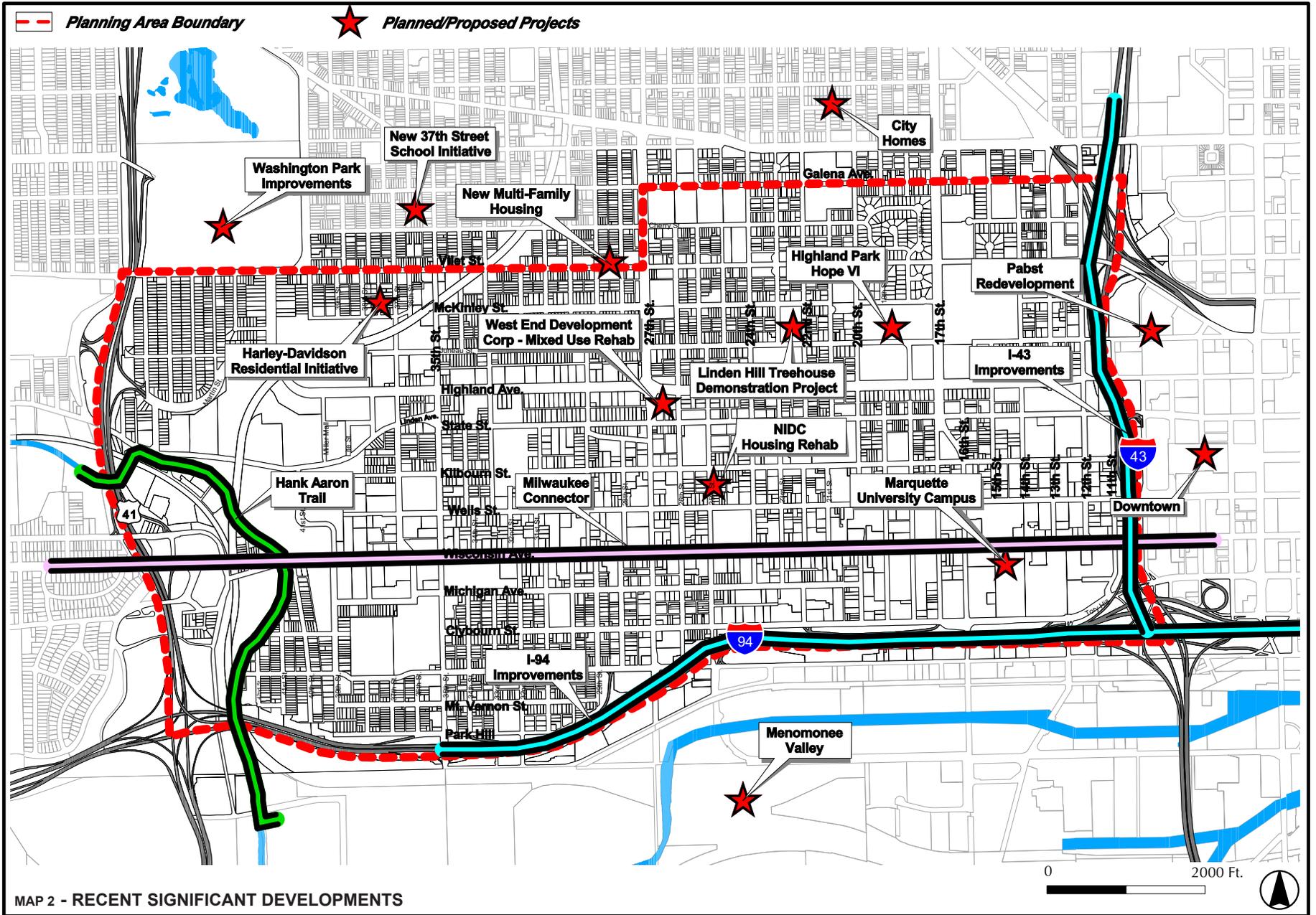
From a market perspective, the large number of employees that make up the daytime population in the area is one of the Near West Side's greatest assets. Although relatively few businesses are oriented toward serving the large employment base in the Near West Side, there is potential for businesses to "capture" a higher percentage of employee spending.

Likewise, the large number of employees in the Near West Side could potentially provide a market for housing, if some of the security concerns can be overcome and if attractive housing products are available.

### **Recent Significant Developments**

Projects in various stages of development illustrate the continued interest in the Near West Side. Marquette University has completed streetscape improvements along Wisconsin Avenue between 11th and 16th Streets. NIDC has completed the rehabilitation of several homes on Kilbourn Street, east of 25th Street. Harley-Davidson, in partnership with the City and various non-profit housing developers, has begun a residential initiative to construct and rehabilitate homes south of Vliet Street, west of 36th Street.

Major infrastructure projects are scheduled to begin or are completing the planning process including improvements to I-94 and I-43, the Milwaukee Connector public transit project, and the Hank Aaron Trail. A major funding announcement was the awarding of a \$19 million Department of Housing and Urban Development HOPE VI grant for the redevelopment of the Highland Park public housing site at Highland Avenue and 17th Street. The project will replace the high-rise buildings and 60's style rowhouses with a 114 unit mid-rise apartment building, 16 townhouses, and 30 single family homes on site with an additional 40 homes spread throughout the immediate area (See Map 2, page 8).



MAP 2 - RECENT SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

### **Major Access Points into the Neighborhood**

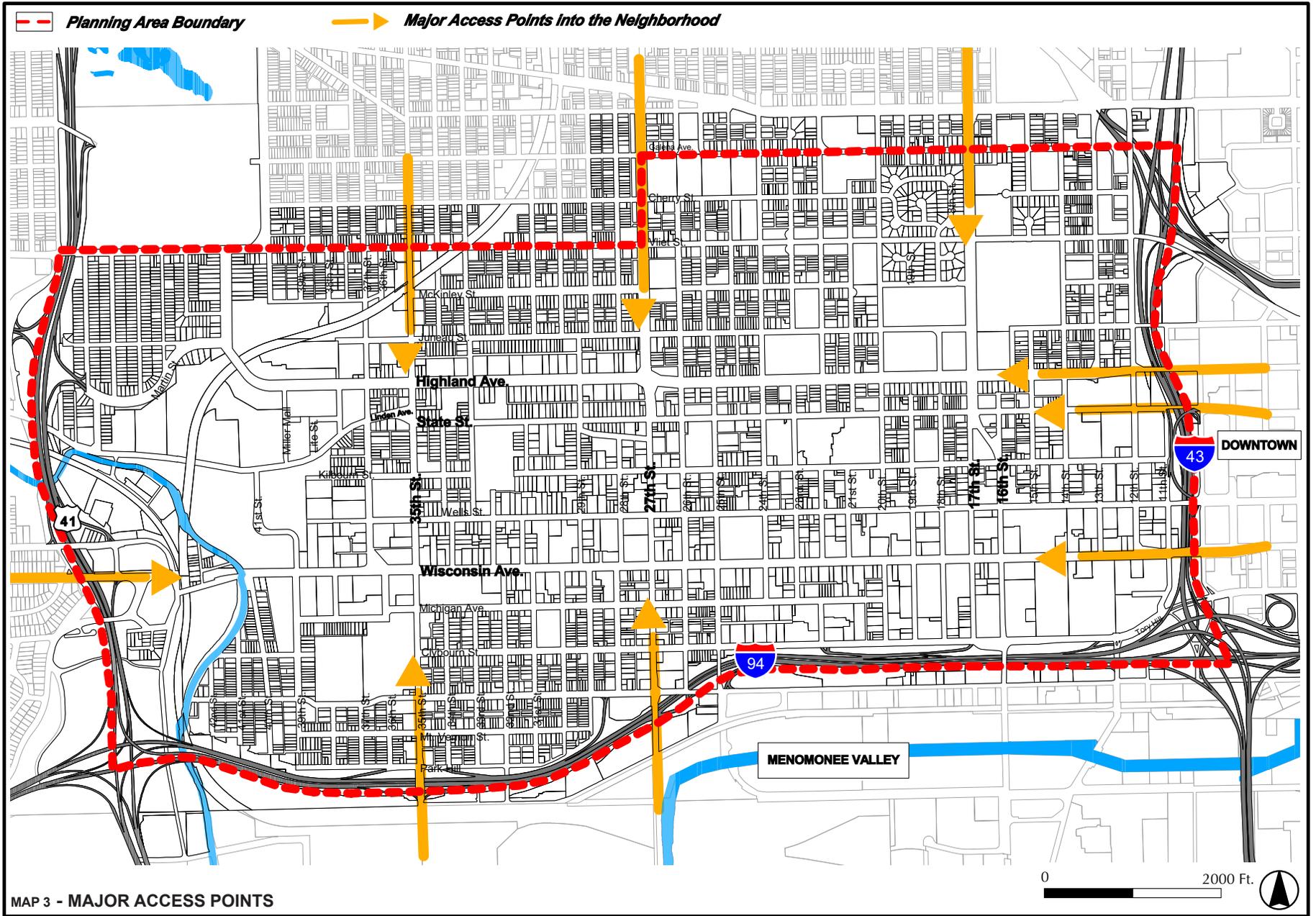
With the construction of the limited access highways of I-43, I-94 and U.S. 41, a majority of access points were closed, increasing the importance of the remaining major access points into the neighborhood. These major access points include Wisconsin Avenue at U.S. 41; the only major access point for the west side of the neighborhood. Westbound Wisconsin Avenue, State Street and Highland Avenue at I-43, are the major points of entry coming from Downtown. 27th and 35th Streets at I-94 are major access points for traffic from I-94 and for areas south of the neighborhood, since 27th and 35th have bridges over Menomonee Valley and I-94. The major entries into the Near West Side from the north are 27th Street and 35th Streets. 17th Street provides significant access as well (See Map 3, page 10).

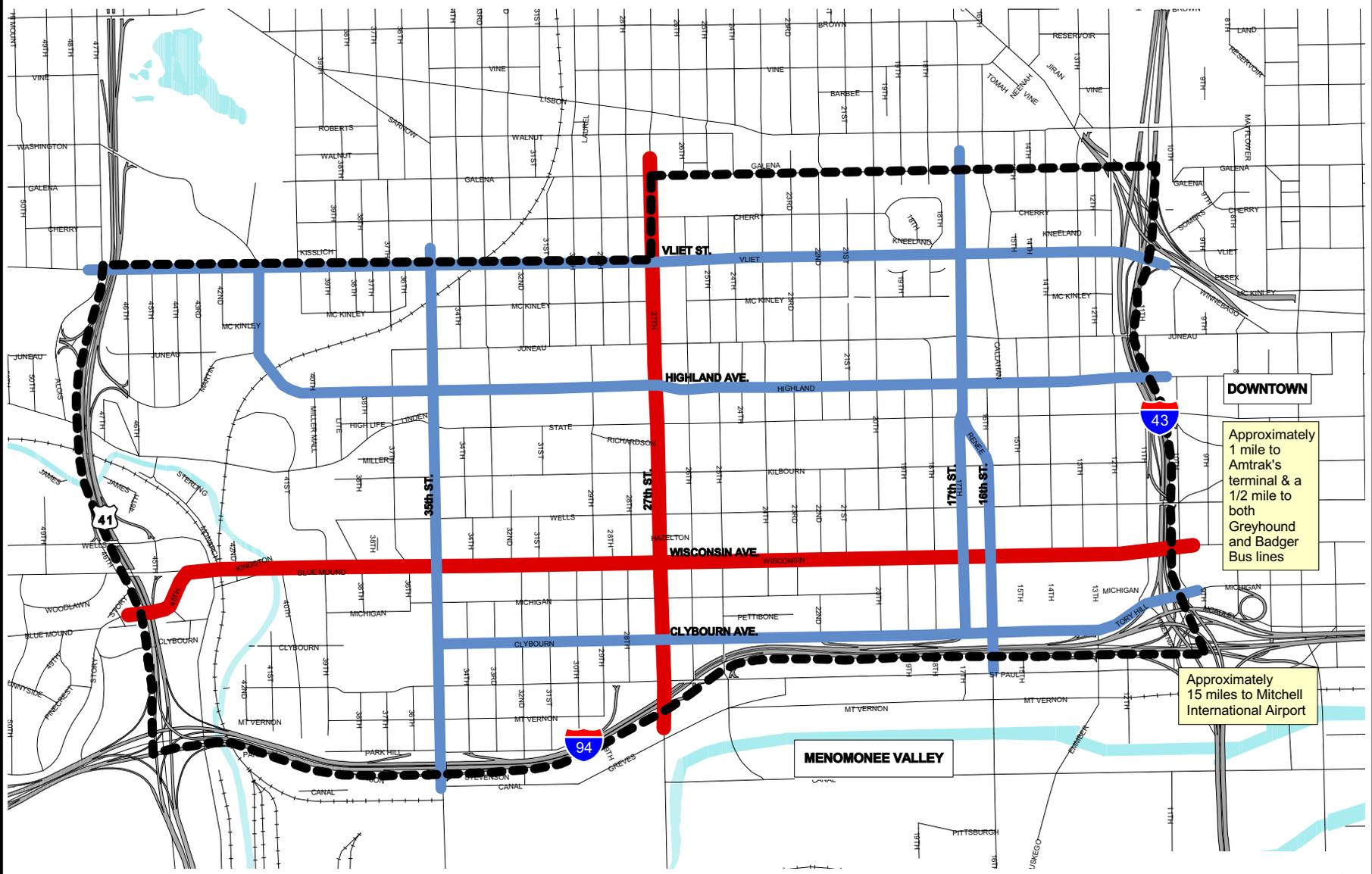
### **Major Streets within the Neighborhood**

In addition to the three major highways, several arterials run through the neighborhood. Wisconsin Avenue is a principal east-west arterial, while 27th and 35th Streets are the principal north-south arterials. Vliet Street, Highland Avenue, and Clybourn Avenue are minor east-west arterials, while 16th and 17th are additional north-south routes acting as minor arterials to other areas of the City (See Map 4, page 11).

### **Proximity to Downtown**

The Near West Side is adjacent to the west boundary of Downtown Milwaukee, I-43. The close proximity to Downtown has always influenced the development within the neighborhood. Elaborate mansions and other high quality single-family homes were constructed for influential business owners, families, and landowners who wanted to live close to the business center. The major employers have benefited from the close proximity to Downtown's resources. As Downtown experiences a revival in the development of businesses, entertainment and cultural destinations, the Near West Side can capitalize on its proximity by offering people the opportunity to live minutes away from the jobs and amenities of Downtown while not having to pay for homes higher than the median value (See Map 5, page 12).





**DOWNTOWN**

Approximately 1 mile to Amtrak's terminal & a 1/2 mile to both Greyhound and Badger Bus lines

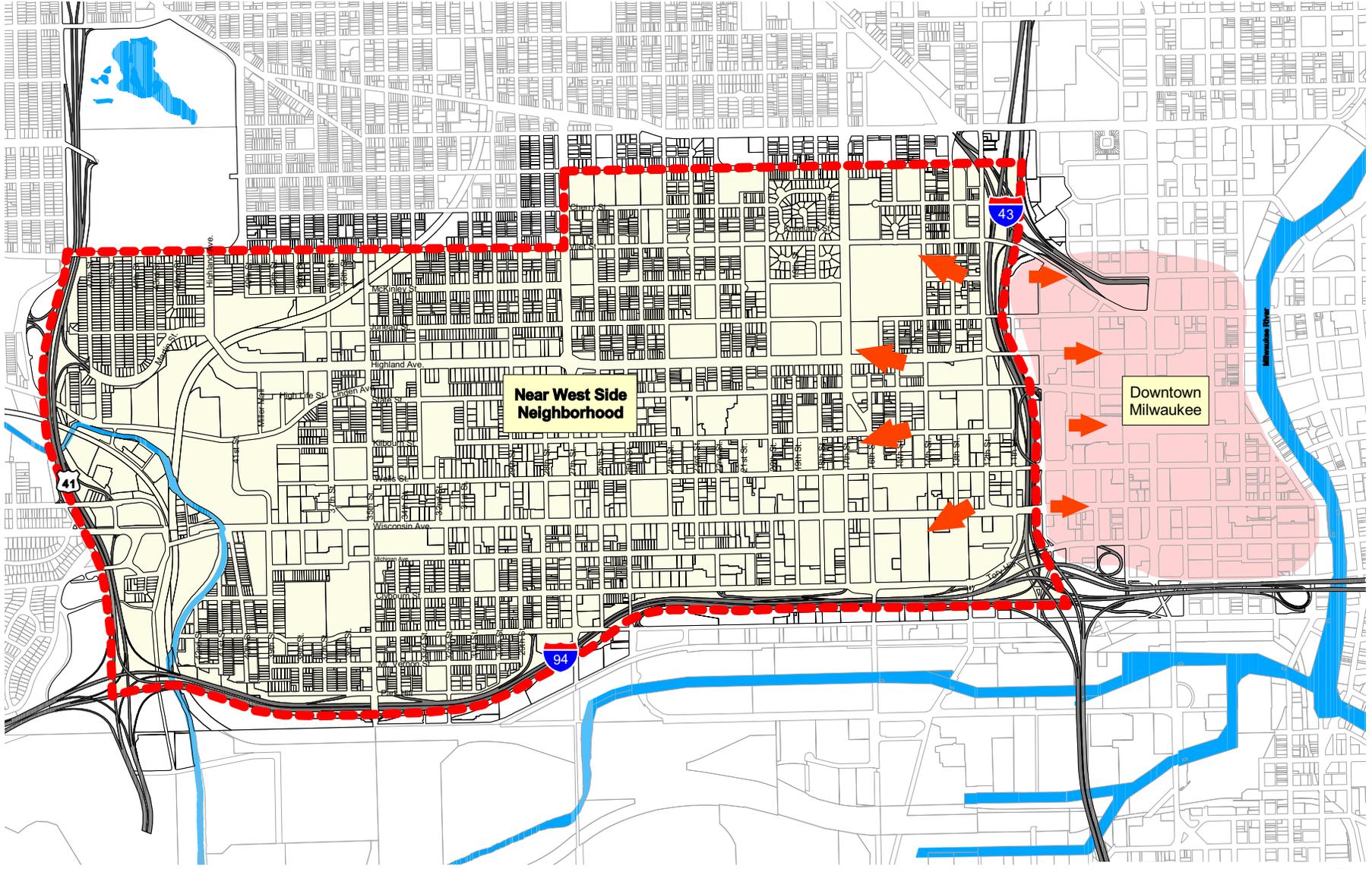
Approximately 15 miles to Mitchell International Airport

**MENOMONEE VALLEY**



MAP 4 - MAJOR STREETS

 **Planning Area Boundary**



**Near West Side  
Neighborhood**

**Downtown  
Milwaukee**

**MAP 5 - PROXIMITY TO DOWNTOWN**