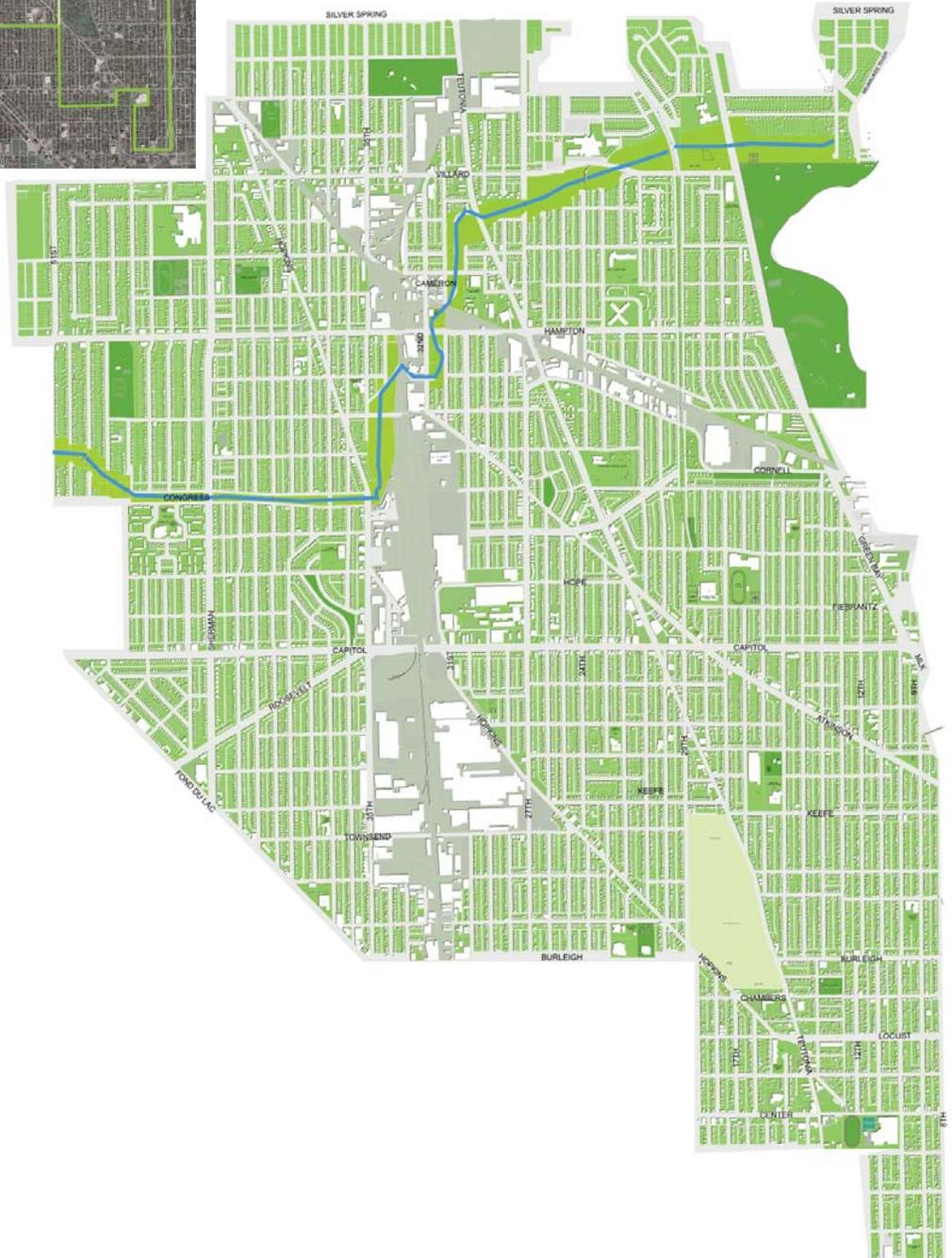


introduction

1

Introduction



Plan Goals

Milwaukee's future lies in its neighborhoods. This plan is a vision for the Near North area based upon the thoughts and ideas from those within its many neighborhoods. From this vision a plan was crafted with the intent of contributing to a bright and meaningful future for Milwaukee's Near North neighborhoods.

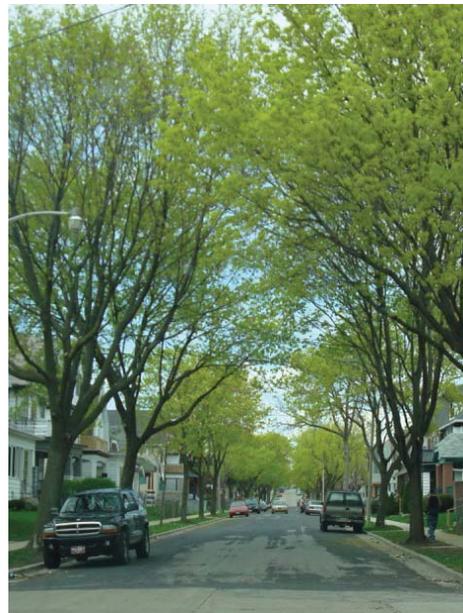
On a working level the purpose of the Near North Plan is to evaluate the assets and opportunities of the area and to provide a coordinated framework for public and private investment decisions. The Plan will provide implementation strategies with an emphasis on sustainable and high quality design. Lastly, the plan is to serve as a guide for local stakeholders and organizations working to improve the near north area.

OVERALL PLAN GOALS

- Create excitement and enhance confidence by providing a comprehensive, collective vision.
- Utilize the existing planning knowledge base by integrating the analysis and recommendations of pertinent studies and planning efforts recently conducted / being conducted for the project area
- Identify needs, highlight development opportunities, and establish priorities for public investment in transportation, economic development, recreational, institutional, and cultural assets including public art
- Provide guidance for balancing residential, commercial and industrial investment and adding long-term value
- Clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved in implementation
- Job creation

The Near North Area Plan will achieve these goals by:

1. An assessment of area assets and liabilities
2. Involvement of area stakeholders in a continuing dialogue about issues, concerns, and opportunities
3. An understanding of national precedents and the value of a sustainable approach to planning
4. Identification of needs, opportunities, and investment priorities for transportation, economic development, recreational, institutional, and cultural assets
5. Recommendations for action in major land use categories including affordable and diverse housing, business and industry, parks and open space, and transportation
6. Identification of major ("catalytic") projects as touchstones for continued neighborhood improvement



Community Input and Planning Process

Community Input and Visioning

This plan is part of a city wide comprehensive plan process that began in 2004. Responding to State of Wisconsin Smart Growth legislation in 1999, the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development undertook an initiative to map out a comprehensive plan for the entire city – for the first time in its 163 year history – by dividing the city into 13 area plans. The Near North side plan is one of the 13 area plans comprising the City of Milwaukee Comprehensive Plan. The area plan provides a more detailed approach for each area, which consequently will provide a more cohesive story for each neighborhood.

The significance of these area plans, as part of a city-wide comprehensive plan, is that upon adoption all land use decisions in the near north area must be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies, outlined in this plan.

Land use decisions should also be coordinated with current efforts underway in the community by residents,

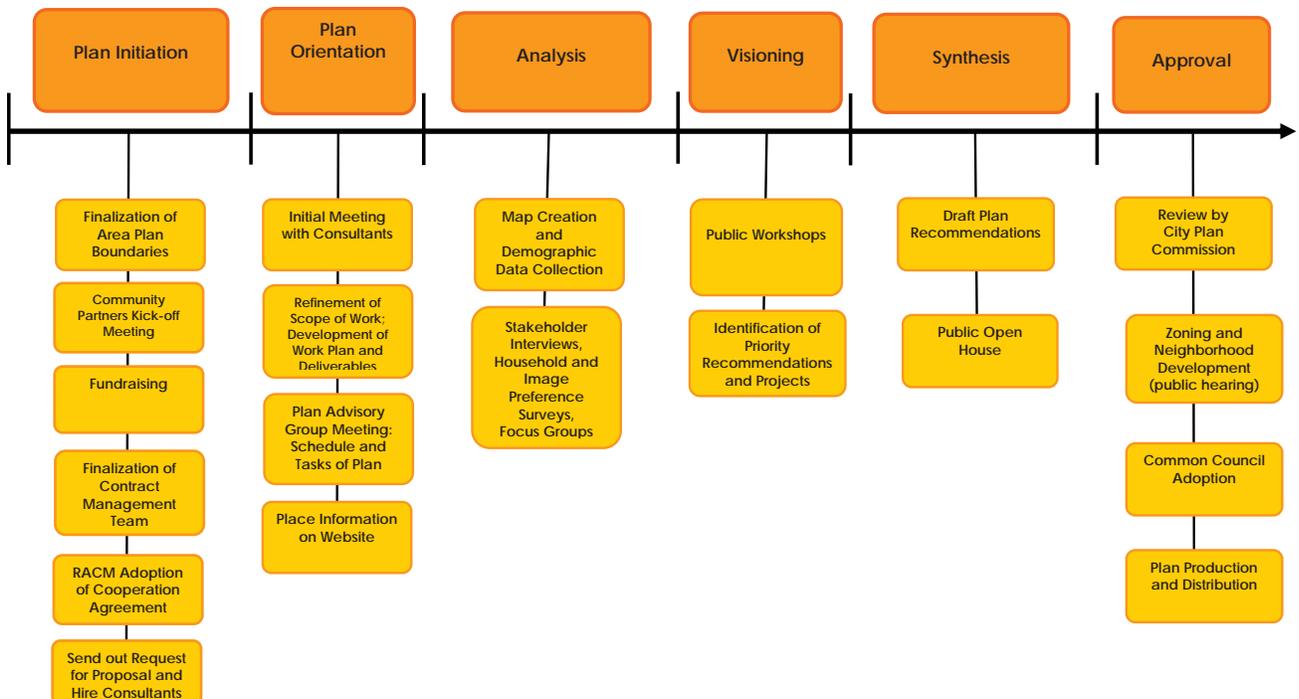
businesses, and other stakeholders. To this end, City staff and area stakeholders (residents, business owners, neighborhood organizations, churches, development corporations, and others) were engaged in a two-year process to understand neighborhood characteristics and to develop recommendations to address stakeholder concerns and capitalize on existing and future neighborhood opportunities and assets. The plan is focused around three groups or issues: residents and neighborhoods; business and industry; and environment and open space.

The plan is organized by structuring recommendations first for the area as a whole, and then for smaller districts and corridors, and then lastly for specific catalytic sites.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Plan goals and objectives; plan area context.

Chapter 2 – Plan Process and Public Input: Public input process; results; demographic and market analysis.

Near North Side Area Plan Process



Community Input and Planning Process

Chapter 3 – Land Use Policies: Area-wide land use goals and recommendations.

Chapter 4 – District & Corridor Recommendations: More specific and characteristic land use, redevelopment and urban form strategies and polices at a neighborhood level.

Chapter 5 - Catalytic Projects: Identifies several specific sites in the plan area with specific development proposals in order to create spin-off development or activity.

Chapter 6 – Implementation: Identifies priorities and responsible parties to carry out recommendations called for in this plan.

The team of organizations and individuals that worked on the plan is a critical component not only for the planning process and plan delivery, but perhaps more importantly to provide legitimacy and consistency from plan creation to project implementation.

Contract Management Team

The Contract Management Team (CMT) acted as the steering or executive committee and consisted of organizations with significant interests and constituencies in the planning area: the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee, 30th Street Industrial Corridor ICC, Atkinson Avenue Community Development Corporation, Atkinson / Capitol / Teutonia BID 29, Northwest Side Community Development Corporation, and Villard Avenue BID 19. The CMT worked closely with the consultants to steer the planning consultants and city staff throughout the planning process.

PLANNING PROCESS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The process for developing the Near North Area Plan involved five major steps:

1. Data and Market Analysis
2. Community Input
3. Community Visioning
4. Alternatives and Draft Recommendations
5. Draft and Final Plan Development



Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee

Atkinson-Capitol-Teutonia Business Improvement District



Villard Avenue Business Improvement District



Contract Management Team membership

Community Input and Planning Process

Project Management Team

The Project Management Team (PMT) was comprised of staff from a range of City departments including the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee, Department of City Development, Department of Public Works, and Department of Administration. This team provided additional guidance to the planning team, particularly as it related to larger city issues, ongoing city initiatives, and plans and policies that are in process.

COMMUNITY INPUT & VISIONING

Community input and visioning involved a variety of opportunities for stakeholders and residents to provide input to the plan on neighborhood issues, assets, and opportunities for improvement, redevelopment, and catalytic projects. Stakeholder involvement also increases community ownership over the plan as well as improving involvement in neighborhood issues and improvement. Stakeholders were involved in the following processes and venues:

- Discussions with the Contract Management Team, Project Management Team, and Plan Advisory Group
- Community visioning and brainstorming workshops
- Stakeholder interviews and focus groups
- Image preference survey
- Household survey
- Meetings with local businesses and economic community
- Public web accessibility to the process
- Public open houses to review draft plan



Neighborhood Context

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The Near North Area is located in the north-central portion of Milwaukee bounded on the north by Silver Spring Drive; on the west by Fond du Lac Avenue and N. 51st Street; on the east by U.S. 43, Green Bay Avenue, and Lincoln Park; and on the south by Burleigh Street, Center Street, and North Avenue between N. 8th and 35th Streets. The primary artery of the community lies along Capitol Drive which runs east and west through the center of the plan area.

The plan area is bisected by a number of corridors:

- Lincoln Creek, which flows generally from west to northeast and into the Lincoln Park lagoons and Milwaukee River
- 30th Street Industrial Corridor and rail network, oriented north-south through the center of the plan area
- High traffic roadways that serve as major access routes both to and through the plan area: Silver Spring Drive, Capitol Drive, Sherman Boulevard, Roosevelt Drive, Fond du Lac, Green Bay, Hampton, Teutonia, Atkinson, and Hopkins Avenues.



Historical Context

Much of the near north area and its neighborhoods were and are influenced by the rail line bisecting the plan area along the N. 30th Street. It was around this line that developed what is now the 30th Street industrial corridor. Much of the corridor developed primarily as a below-grade rail line used to deliver raw materials to the industrial companies located along the line. The largest of these manufacturers was the A.O. Smith Company, located along Hopkins Avenue up to 27th Street and Capitol Drive. Founded in 1874 as a parts maker for baby carriages, A.O. Smith expanded its operations to bicycle frames and then to pressed steel car frames in 1899. In 1904, A.O. Smith was officially incorporated and well positioned at the start of the car-dominated “American Century”. Due to its pre-eminence as a manufacturer, the old adage that “what’s good for GM is good for America” could certainly apply locally as well – “what’s good for A.O. Smith is good for Milwaukee.” A.O. Smith dominated the neighborhood in both size and employment. At its peak 10,000 local residents were employed by A.O. Smith at its 85-acre complex.

The northern portion of the plan area is the former village of North Milwaukee. North Milwaukee was incorporated in 1897 shortly after it developed into an industrial suburb built around the old beer line that serviced Milwaukee’s dominant turn of the century breweries. The village of North Milwaukee existed until it was annexed in 1929 by the rapidly growing city of Milwaukee. Traces of the village still exist: the original village town hall just south of 35th and Villard, the E.R. Wagner Company which set up shop during the area’s industrial expansion at the turn of the century, and perhaps its most notable imprint, North Milwaukee’s old downtown, the Villard Avenue retail district between N.27th and N. 35th Streets.

To the southeast of the North Milwaukee area is the Rufus King Neighborhood, named after the Civil War general and namesake high school. Given Milwaukee’s current urban agricultural initiatives with Growing Power and Johnson’s Park, it is notable that Milwaukee’s original

Neighborhood Context

urban agriculture movement began in the 1870's by farmers in the now Rufus King neighborhood who grew crops primarily to sell to the city's expanding urban population. Indeed, in the 1880's a large greenhouse covered several acres of land near what is now the Atkinson Avenue public library. The Rufus King area was an independent enclave until it was systematically annexed into the city of Milwaukee during the late 1920's. Through the 20th Century the Rufus King neighborhood was a middle and upper-middle class white collar neighborhood and is reflected in the substantial and attractive housing stock that exists throughout the neighborhood today. The professional nature of the area stayed true to form when the largely German population moved out and a African-American professional class moved in. This change in racial and ethnic diversity was substantial. The neighborhood was less than 1% African-American in 1960. By 1980 it was 90%.

West of Rufus King is the Garden Homes neighborhood. Garden Homes is the country's first municipally-built housing cooperative development. Developed during 1921-23, Garden Homes was a product of the Milwaukee socialist platform to address a shortage of safe, decent working-class housing. The objective of the Garden Homes was to incorporate "the best ideas of city planning so as to provide the greatest utility as well as healthful conditions with attractive conditions and to provide for intensive gardening" – hence the name. Garden Homes was notable because it was an effort to allow low and moderate income persons (at the time, white's only) to live and own a single and two-family home as opposed to the more common multi-family tenements. The Garden Homes were the pre-cursor to the more well-known planned green belt towns of Greendale, WI; Greenbelt, MD; and Green Hills, OH built during the 1930's.

On the southern end of the plan area is the North Division neighborhood. One of the most prominent features of the North Division neighborhood is the 80-acre Union Cemetery, a civil-war era cemetery that is the largest parcel in the near north area after Tower. Another notable feature was Borchert Field at 8th and Chambers

that served as the original home of the minor league Milwaukee Brewers from 1902-1952. U.S. 43 now runs through its former site.

To appreciate the scope and direction of this plan it is important to take stock not only of its history but also the driving land use and development issues currently underway for the Near North area.

The 30th Street Industrial Corridor

The 30th Street industrial Corridor (The Corridor) is a 5-mile long and roughly 8-block wide swath of vacant and active industrial land that runs from Hampton Avenue south to Highland Avenue in the city of Milwaukee. More than half of this corridor is located within the Near North planning area. The corridor represents both opportunities and challenges for the city as a whole and for the near north area. The corridor offers the potential to provide much needed family supporting job opportunities to central city residents yet at the same time weighs down the community with large patches of under-utilized, blighted, and contaminated industrial properties. It was designated as a Greenlight District Reinvestment Zone by the City, which is a zone where the City would give the "green light" on use of Tax Incremental Financing and other economic development tools within the corridor to attract and retain businesses and jobs.

Neighborhood Context

Tower / AO Smith (Century City)

The former Tower Automotive and A.O. Smith (Century City) manufacturing complex is a vacant 85-acre industrial site on the northern end of the Corridor, and is the largest brownfield in the state of Wisconsin and is currently the largest environmental and economic development undertaking by the City of Milwaukee. In 2009 the City of Milwaukee acquired the Tower property with the intent, by means of a \$36 million Tax Increment Financing district, to raze, remediate, and re-develop the site with manufacturing and light manufacturing employers with a goal of creating 700-1,000 jobs for local residents. Tower represents the most significant land use and redevelopment issue for the near north area plan.

Capitol Drive

Capitol Drive is the largest commercial arterial street in the near north area and bi-sects both the plan area and separates the Corridor between its largest parcel (Tower) and three of the Corridor's larger tenants, Eaton Corp., DRS, and Aldrich Chemical. Capitol Drive is the un-official gateway into the Corridor and the official welcome mat for the Tower re-development project as signified by a major streetscaping initiative between N. 27th and N. 35th Streets begun in 2009.



Neighborhood Context

Villard Avenue

The portion of Villard Avenue in the Near North plan area, between N. 27th Street and Sherman Boulevard, is a traditional commercial main street strip consisting of two and three storey store front retail uses with residential and office space above. “Main Street” Villard is a carryover from its role as the commercial center of the former municipality of North Milwaukee. There are two notable development issues integral to rejuvenating and sustaining the Villard retail district: the proposed Villard Square Public Library and the now-vacant St. Michael’s hospital.

In 2009, the City of Milwaukee approved plans to relocate an existing public library at 33rd and Villard to a new facility integrated with affordable senior housing at a now-vacant parcel at 35th Street and Villard.

To the east of the Villard retail district is the now-vacant St. Michael’s hospital. The medical facility is a 900,000 square foot complex that can either be re-developed or razed for future development consideration.



Photo credit: Bill Tennesen and Astor Theater.

Neighborhood Context

Lincoln Creek

Lincoln Creek is a 9-mile long creek that collects storm run-off from a 21-square mile area of Milwaukee and flows from west to northeast into the Lincoln Park lagoons and Milwaukee River. Extensive drainage and landscaping was conducted along the creek following significant flood events in the late 90's. In the near north area Lincoln Creek runs adjacent to six major sites, Lincoln Park; the Northlawn public housing development; St. Michael's hospital; the proposed Bishops Creek mixed-use residential development; the 30th Street Industrial Corridor; and the Parklawn public housing development. Lincoln Creek is also part of the "Green Seams" stormwater management initiative of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.



Site Developments

There are also three significant site developments currently underway in the near north area: The Teutonia Gardens is a mixed-use residential development at the intersection of W. Center Street and Teutonia Avenue that incorporates 24 apartment units, 5,400 square feet of retail, and an urban garden.

DRS Power & Control Technologies, a major tenant in the 30th Street Corridor, recently expanded its operations with a \$11 million addition to its facility. DRS is a developer of shipboard electrical power and distribution systems for the U.S. Navy. A small-business incubator is also located in the DRS facility.

Bishop's Creek is a 55-unit mixed-use apartment development planned for a blighted industrial parcel at the intersection of N. 32nd Street and Hampton Avenue.

Introduction