

CHAPTER V: CATALYTIC PROJECTS

5.1 The Italian Village

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A. Boundaries

Generally Jackson Street to the west; Harbor Drive to the east; Chicago Street to the north; and Polk Street to the south.

B. Goal

Build a new district employing traditional urban patterns and the cultural amenities of an Italian village.

C. Overall Recommendations

New development must be well integrated into the surrounding areas and follow land use and form recommendations for Area C. Italian Community Center Grounds in Chapter 4 and all of Chapter 3.

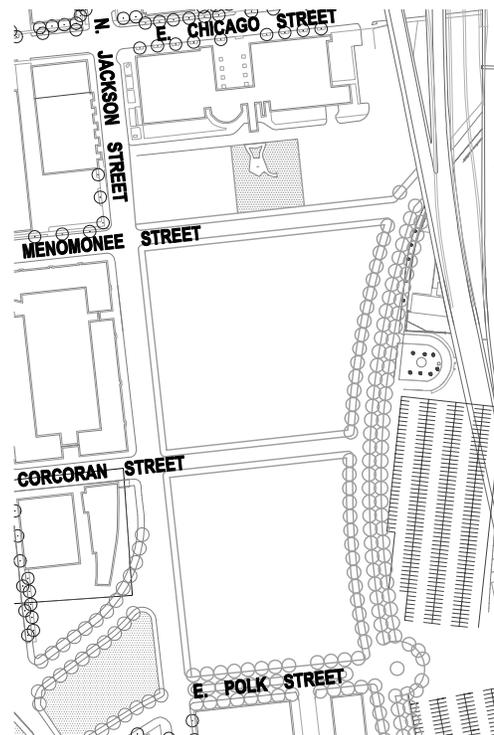
D. Street Design Recommendations

Establish a unique system of connecting streets, blocks and public spaces for this district. Consider the forms and spaces created by different street alignments and the opportunities presented by each configuration. Provide alleys and small streets where possible. Match the district's western entrances to Menomonee and Corcoran Streets to maintain physical continuity with the rest of the neighborhood.

Mix of uses



Illustration 1



Extend Menomonee Street and Corcoran Street east into the ICC grounds to provide the continuity with the neighborhood to the west. The ICC grounds would then be defined in three oversized blocks. These street extensions need not be straight. Extend Jackson Street south from Corcoran Street to Polk Street to further subdivide and connect the ICC grounds to the south edge of the neighborhood along the river while conveniently connecting the south end of the ICC grounds to I-794 (See Illustration 1).

These street extensions could be standard size 60' rights-of-way rather than the 80' existing street widths and would provide for the extension of city services, utilities and street trees to support any development scenario. One further subdivision could run from the ICC south entry lawn southward to Polk Street (see Illustration 2), or southward then turning southwest and extend to essentially connect the ICC to the Milwaukee River, (see Illustration 3).

Illustration 2

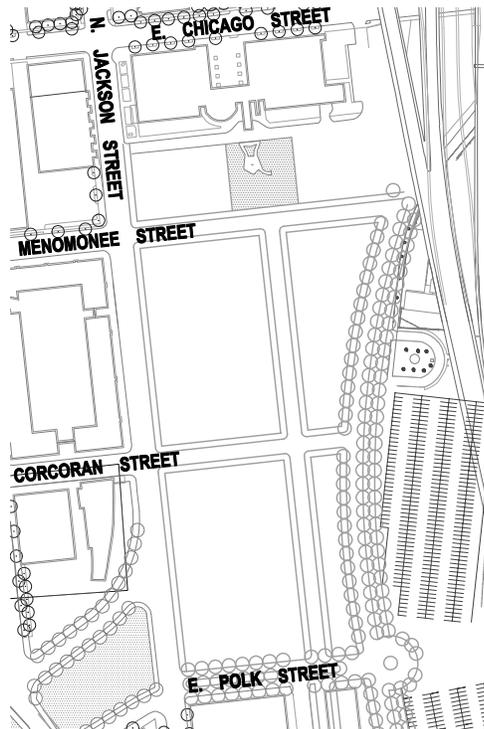
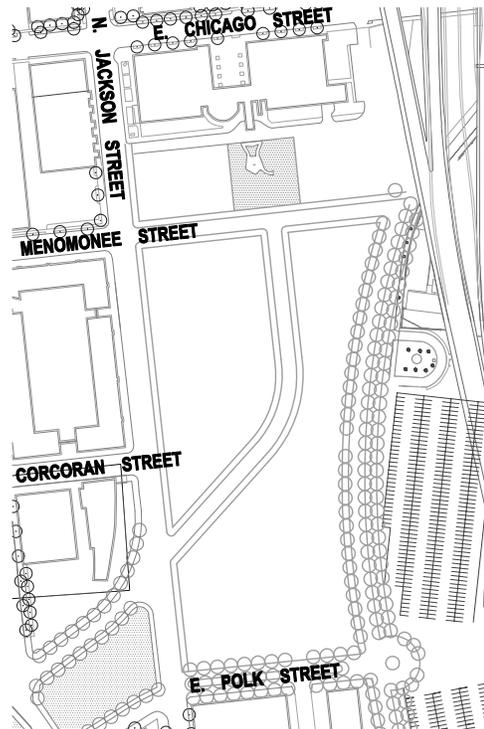


Illustration 3



E. Rationale

The resulting smaller blocks are more characteristic of actual Italian village settlement patterns. The option with the street bending toward the river (see Illustration 3) adds an element of irregularity to the standard street grid, a distinctly European trait. This approach would not only provide ICC connections to the neighborhood and the river, but allow for a unique variation within the standard street grid that could help define the village as a special place.

The Italian Village’s street grid should create a functional hierarchy. Chicago Street and Polk Street to the north and south of the village respectively provide a sufficient street grid for transportation purposes in the east-west direction and serve the middle and south gates of Maier Festival Park directly. Jackson Street and Harbor Drive provide sufficient transportation routes in the north-south direction. Together, these streets form a regular and functional street grid and serve the transportation needs of the Italian Village and the Third Ward.



Arcades



The internal streets of the Italian Village should on the other hand emphasize the local access and cultural needs of the village. These needs include well-defined public spaces, and pathways, and visual access to cultural and natural assets. While the streets should be public, they should provide a strong sense of being inside a district, a unique place, a neighborhood within a neighborhood.

F. Recommended Responsible Parties

*The Italian Community Center
The City of Milwaukee*



Cafes



European street layout with landmark. Student model by Eriki Daniels at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning - UWM

5.2 HARBOR DRIVE

A. Boundaries

Harbor Drive from Michigan Street southward to the Milwaukee River.

B. Goal

Design Harbor Drive as a green street in the classic tradition on the proposed alignment, with a double row of trees and wide sidewalk on the east side, and enhanced with public artwork.

C. Overall Recommendations

See accompanying graphics.

D. Street Design

The street cross section recommended for Harbor Drive provides for a double row of trees on the east. This design feature forms an elegant pedestrian promenade, a lush screening device and the key transforming element to give this street a prestigious image. Along this arcade of trees, pedestrian amenities, benches, information kiosks, transit shelters, lighting, public art, etc. can be organized.

Landscape edge buffers parking and freeway



Pedestrian promenade along festival grounds



The street should be widened to allow a promenade of 32'-36' in width. This promenade should be continuous, with minimal intersections with vehicle crossings. The roadbed should support two-way traffic with lane widths of 11-12' each and an 8' parking lane on both sides of the street. The west sidewalk area should provide at least a 12'-16' width with one row of curbside street trees. This side may be interrupted by new streets intersections and infrequent curb cuts supporting access to parking for new development projects at the ICC grounds and to the south.

This cross section eliminates the median previously proposed offering flexibility in traffic access to developments along the west side of the street while emphasizing a priority space for pedestrian circulation on a year round basis on the east. These pedestrian promenades become grand urban features that transform the image of places around them but only if they extend to connect destinations and landmarks. The opportunity to do just that is what is proposed for Harbor Drive in this Neighborhood Plan.



*Connect the harbor
mouth to the art
museum*

E. Rationale

Nothing less than a complete transformation is proposed for this street from a back industrial alley or service drive character to a front, a green street, a formal connector “where the urban fabric of the Third Ward meets the park-like setting of the festival grounds”. The Festival’s Millennium Plan introduced the idea of connecting the festival’s mid-gate at Chicago Street to its south gate at Polk Street by way of a boulevard with trees on either side of the street and another row in a centered street median. This Neighborhood Plan redefines that greening concept, to address the following objectives:

1. Enhance the sense of arrival and the pedestrian transition to and from the festival entry gates. Facilitate bus arrivals and departures from the festival park.
2. Further develop the visual buffer for the Third Ward Neighborhood and the Italian Community Center from the raised freeway and the service side character of the festival facilities along most of Harbor Drive.

Harbor mouth



- 3. Increase the connectivity between new development in the eastern half of the Third Ward and the natural assets and open space at the Milwaukee River and lakefront.
- 4. Extend this formal edge and connector north to the gardens of the Milwaukee Art Museum and Pier Wisconsin site and south to the Milwaukee River and Harbor’s mouth, as a symbolic link of the City’s historical origin to its new symbol of the future, the Milwaukee Art Museum.
- 5. Set the stage for the high profile development of the Italian Community Center grounds.

F. Recommended Responsible Parties

*The City of Milwaukee
Maier Festival Park
Italian Community Center*



Milwaukee Art Museum

5.3 POLK GREEN

A. Boundaries

Polk Street from Harbor Drive westward to the Milwaukee River, all the adjacent railroad property and the terminus of Jefferson Street west of Erie Street.

B. Goal

Provide the South Residential District and Italian Village with both a strong connection to the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan, and an elegant formal setting for adjacent upscale urban residential development, thus promoting a unique mix of high-density urban amenity and access to natural areas.

C. Overall Recommendations

Dramatically transform Polk Street into a green, which connects the Milwaukee River to the lake directly through the Festival Park South Gate, or indirectly by connecting to the Harbor Drive promenade and then north to the Main Gate at Chicago Street or south to the harbor's mouth.

Acquire and convert two parcels of unused railroad property – one north of Polk Street and another parcel to the southwest on the west side of Erie Street, next to the Milwaukee River into a green space, as first suggested in the Italian Community Center's Bonifica Study.

A green street connecting the lake to the river



Incorporate Jefferson Street's right-of-way between Erie Street and the Milwaukee River into the same green.

Design and landscape these spaces to create visual and pedestrian connections into a continuous green between the river and South Gate on Harbor Drive.

East of Jackson Street, use the railroad property to convert Polk Street to a boulevard. West of Jackson Street, narrow Polk Street to enlarge the park area.

A new street running along the north side of the park needs to connect Jefferson Street to Erie Street and

align with a possible new street in the Italian Village should define the northern edge of the park.

The park's design and facilities should celebrate the railroad and industrial heritage of the Third Ward by retaining a railroad track for visual and historic interest or for occasional low speed train use and informal train boarding if occasional service is provided.

Provide play and socializing space for residents of surrounding high-density residential development, their visitors and children.

See accompanying graphics.



A neighborhood park

D. Street Design Recommendations

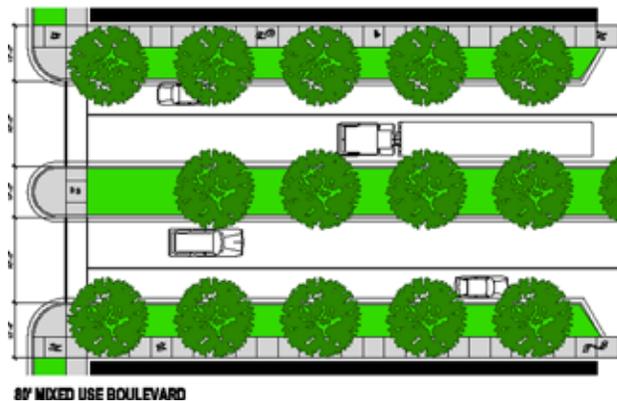
The street cross section recommended for Polk between Harbor Drive and Jackson Street provides for a 12' median with a single row of trees, one 12' lane of moving traffic and one 8' parking lane on each side of the median. The sidewalks should be a minimum of 14' with an 8' parkway including a row of trees. The sidewalk should be as wide as possible depending on how much land is added to the width of Polk Street as a result of acquiring the railroad right of way but no less than 6 feet. At the small park proposed at the junction with Jackson Street the median should stop. Polk Street should continue west to Erie Street as a two-way street with parking on both sides and standard 6' sidewalks with street trees located in an adjacent 8' curbside parkway.

E. Rationale

Looking westward, creating this new linear green space across the Ward in the east-west direction will connect new inland development to the Third Ward Riverwalk, offering public access to the water's edge and linking this small neighborhood open space to a larger continuous network. This green, encompassing a new Riverwalk plaza at Jefferson Street and visually terminating with the railroad swing bridge, has the potential to become a powerful place, commanding a deep natural and historic connection.

Looking eastward, the rationale for recommending this approach comes from the Festival's Millennium Plan. It calls for a high volume pedestrian way into the grounds and all the way to the lake provided by way of the

Minimum street dimension standard for Polk



South Gate. The Millennium Plan suggested the idea of enhancing the South gate entry experience, retaining the view corridor to the lake and potentially offering off-season access to the lake for the neighborhood. The development rationale builds from these stated goals:

1. The South Gate access corridor in the festival park represents half of the distance between the river and the lake. The western extension of that concept just two and a half blocks would complete the linkage creating an exceptional river to lake amenity within the South Residential District in particular and for the rest of the neighborhood to the west.
2. This project would create new development potential along Polk Street.
3. The land required to provide the additional street width is now part of a railroad right of way along the north edge of Polk Street. This strip of land is too narrow for development. It should be acquired for the public purpose of adding green space to the neighborhood.
4. The creation of this green street along Polk Street could neutralize the negative impact of existing incompatible land uses across the boulevard should development of one side occur more quickly than the opposite side.
5. The value increase to adjacent parcels created by this short length of boulevard should readily justify its construction.

F. Recommended Responsible Parties

*The City of Milwaukee
Historic Third Ward Association
Italian Community Center*

5.4 LANDMARK SITES

A landmark site is a prominent or well-known location or unique development opportunity that calls for a special design. Landmark sites should be reserved for superior cultural and architectural expressions befitting the significance of these sites. Landmark sites and their development offer opportunities for reconsideration of most form policies and design guidelines under prescribed conditions. They should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The Historic Third Ward Design Guidelines provide criteria for evaluating the merit of proposed designs. Exceptions to form

recommendations and design guidelines are not provided to landmark sites as a matter of right.

Higher density developments or taller buildings may be located at landmark sites only if the buildings merit special consideration due to the quality of their design and how well they fulfill the urban design opportunity provided by the site. One such design criterion is how they enhance or whether they incorporate well-defined public spaces. Higher density developments should define public spaces such as parks, piazzas, courtyards and the Riverwalk.

To encourage the best urban design and architectural excellence, signature buildings on landmark sites may be allowed to vary from some form recommendations



LANDMARK SITES

THIRD WARD NEIGHBORHOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The following landmark sites are recommended based on their locations as gateways to the Third Ward, their relation to planned open spaces or natural amenity, or some combination.

The symbols for buildings on landmark sites found on the plan map are intended to locate the sites and to provide some possible development concepts that reinforce the opportunity of the site. They are not meant to regulate the plan or heights of actual building designs, however landmark proposal may be compared to the merits of those depicted in the plan.

- 1. Starting on the west end the Third Ward, a landmark site east of Plankinton Avenue marks the confluence of the Milwaukee and Menomonee Rivers. A public river edge space marked with a taller building could be desirable if they appropriately commemorate the roles that these rivers played to Milwaukee’s earliest inhabitants and accentuate the natural beauty of this significant location.



- 2. Moving across the Milwaukee River, the riverfront site at the southwest corner of Water Street and St. Paul Avenue offers a golden opportunity to mark what is possibly the most prominent gateway to the neighborhood. A landmark building on this corner could dramatize this threshold to the neighborhood, complement the Third Ward River Park across St. Paul Avenue, and complete one of the Third Ward’s most picturesque vistas.



Landmark tower with massing that transitions to neighborhood



3. As the product of previous plans and the dedicated leadership of the Historic Third Ward Association, the third landmark building and catalytic project is almost complete. The new Milwaukee Public Market is under construction at the northeast corner of St. Paul Avenue and Water Street and expected to open in the summer of 2005. The market will continue the long standing tradition of produce business on Commission Row. Congratulations on a well executed plan recommendation!

4. Continuing east, the next landmark sites are located along St. Paul Avenue between Jefferson Street and Van Buren Street. A powerful design statement, perhaps a high-rise would serve a number of goals. It would serve to visually connect the Third Ward to taller downtown buildings and reduce the psychological distance across I-794. This promising gateway would also mark a transportation center that provides a major transit station and a “park once” opportunity from where people could walk or ride transit to their final destination in the Third Ward, Downtown, Maier Festival Park, Pier Wisconsin, and Lakeshore State Park. An important criterion for allowing greater building height would be a public open space sited to the south of the building, open to the sun and protected from northerly and westerly winds.



5. Traditionally, the Italian piazza is marked by a landmark building of a scale appropriate to the size of the setting. A landmark site is recommended at the east end of an extended Menomonee Street near where it intersects with Harbor Drive. A single, relatively narrow tower at this location could beautifully terminate the eastward view on Menomonee Street, identify the Italian Village, and provide dramatic views of the neighborhood, downtown and the lakefront without blocking views from other buildings.

6. The last landmark site celebrates the confluence of the Milwaukee River and Milwaukee's third river, the legendary Kinnicinnic River, and the arrival of the mature combined river at its final destination, Lake Michigan. This site is the last buildable private site before the Milwaukee River reaches Lake Michigan and affords dramatic views of the rivers and the lake. It is located at the junction of Erie Street and an extended Van Buren Street. The Lake Bed Grant boundary defines the eastern perimeter of this site. The land use designation of this current parking lot should change from parkland to mixed-use development. On-site parking would need to be structured.

In addition, the design of this landmark needs to complement the river access site southwest across Erie Street. This city-owned parcel has been identified as a design competition site and will be designed and developed as a public space with a significant work of public art to commemorate where the Milwaukee River and harbor entrance meet.

