

Third Ward Neighborhood Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary

Part Old Milwaukee, part young creative class, part main street hominess, and part downtown pizzazz, the Third Ward is widely regarded as one of Milwaukee's most dynamic and interesting neighborhoods and real estate markets. Its district of well preserved, large historic buildings, festival grounds, art galleries, theatre groups, eating and drinking establishments, and special events such as the Third Ward Annual Jazz Festival make it a unique attraction in the Milwaukee metro area. In addition, the Third Ward's adjacency to Downtown, the Milwaukee Riverwalk, new Lakeshore State Park and I-794 make it a high profile business, residential, and recreation location for those seeking urban quality and natural amenity.

What people may not realize is that due to the success of the Third Ward's revival, almost every building in the Ward has now been rehabilitated to accommodate the demand for more offices, shops and residences. As a result, Milwaukee is now witnessing the growth of a new neighborhood from the genuine rootstock of Milwaukee's historical development.

What's next for the Third Ward?

The Third Ward Neighborhood Comprehensive Plan will guide the development of underutilized properties in a manner that builds on the present success of the Historic District and continues the very planning and design principles that make the Third Ward a great place to live, shop, work, and recreate today.

Recommendations

What is the single most important characteristic that makes the Third Ward a great place to be? Buildings in this neighborhood relate to streets in the manner common to great neighborhoods in New York City (such as Greenwich Village), in parts of Boston, in San Francisco and many European cities. The Plan makes extensive recommendations to continue the tradition of utilizing streets and adjacent buildings as lively corridors of social space and commerce. The Historic Third Ward Neighborhood Design Guidelines, a companion piece to this plan, further details how to continue to develop great buildings and corridors.



Another unique attribute of the Third Ward is its relationship to natural areas such as the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan. The plan connects existing and new development areas with various public spaces such as streets, boulevards, and small parks or squares that transition to the Riverwalk and Lakewalk. Residents in the Third Ward will always be a pleasant walk, jog, or bike ride from the Riverwalk, the new State Park, and other lakefront attractions.

Urban neighborhoods also have to find a way to finesse adjacencies. Can upscale shops and luxury residences co-exist with Maier Festival Park? The Plan transitions the festival park to other uses with a grand boulevard that serves bus travel to the park while screening it and I-794 from development to the west. The plan recommends against residential development facing east along the boulevard to avoid noise issues.

The plan takes on the long-standing issue of building height in the Third Ward. Generally, building heights should remain as they are now – beautifully and classically proportioned 1 to 1 with the width of the street. However, the Plan also identifies a series of locations where exceptions could be made for landmark buildings, only if their designs are superior to that possible under the plan's form recommendations.

As large industrial businesses continue to leave the area due to market forces, the plan recommends replacing them with commercial, residential, and institutional land uses. Small, light manufacturers will continue to be part of the diverse land use mix of the Third Ward.

These and other recommendations are organized as neighborhood-wide strategies and policies (Chapter 3), districts and corridors (Chapter 4), and catalytic projects (Chapter 5).

The [Comprehensive Plan Map](#) summarizes these recommendations.

Catalytic Projects

A catalytic project is a high-profile major project that benefits the development potential of the surrounding area.

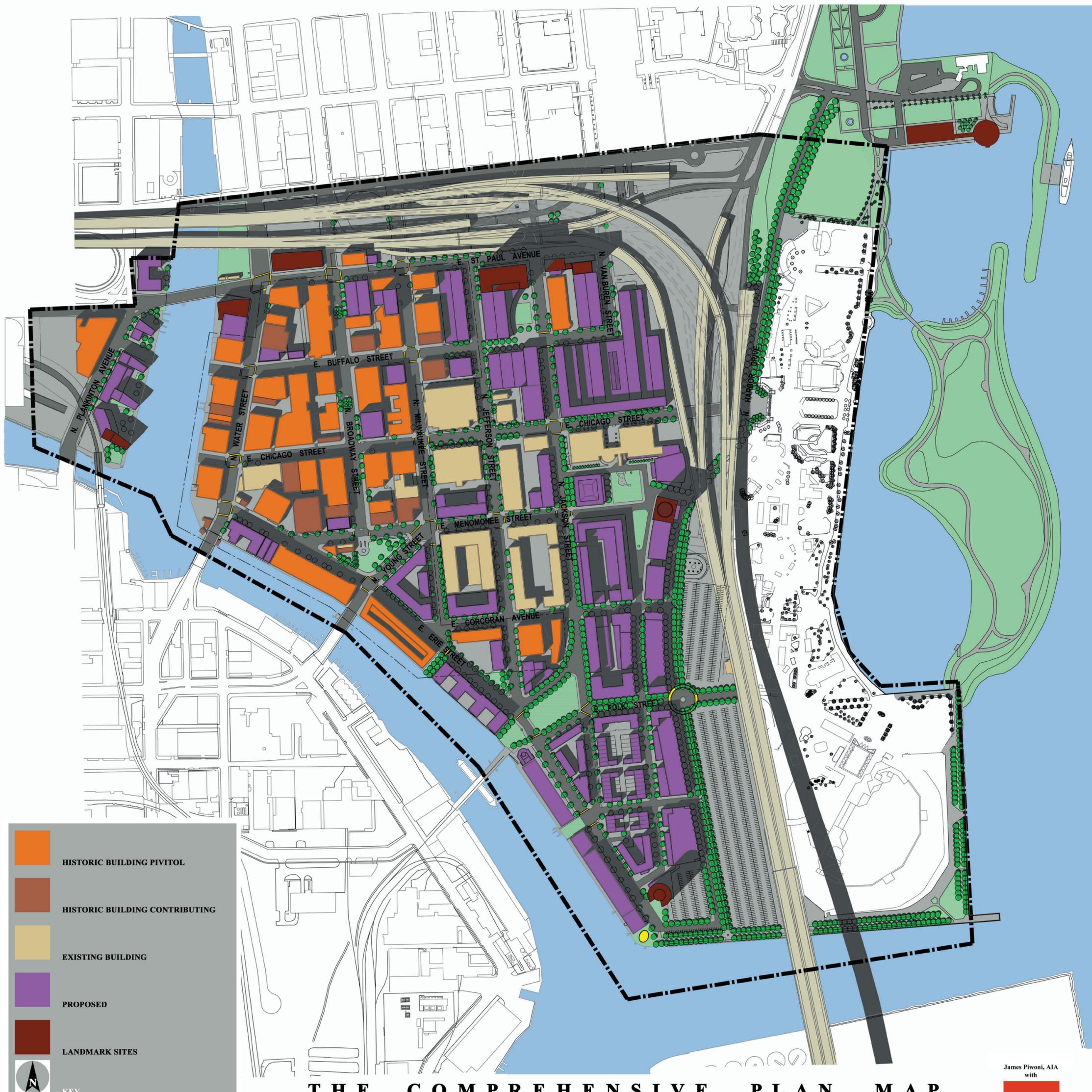
Italian Village -- Build a new district employing traditional urban patterns and the cultural amenities of an Italian village.

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



Polk Green -- 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 quality and access to natural areas.

Landmark Sites -- Prominent or well-known locations are unique development opportunities that call for special designs. 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. 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 well they enhance existing or incorporate new well-defined public spaces.



THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAP

KEY

- HISTORIC BUILDING PIVOTAL
- HISTORIC BUILDING CONTRIBUTING
- EXISTING BUILDING
- PROPOSED
- LANDMARK SITES

KEY