

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The West Side Area Plan is the result of a comprehensive community-based planning effort between area stakeholders and the City of Milwaukee, facilitated by a consultant team of experts in city planning and urban design.

The Plan includes an analysis of demographic and economic trends, redevelopment standards and policies, recommended catalytic projects to spur desirable redevelopment, and implementation strategies. The Plan also includes a summary of the public participation process, its results, and the way those results guided the development of the plan recommendations.

The Plan identifies a series of goals and strategies for the West Side to help achieve a vision that recognizes the area's strengths and opportunities; the unique characteristics of its neighborhoods; valuable historic districts, access to major roads and freeways, and wealth of educational and cultural institutions.

The West Side Area Plan builds a framework to prioritize district goals, organize stakeholders, apply resources, and protect assets so that all neighborhoods can be preserved and enhanced.

Area Plans act as a framework or “umbrella plan” for other supporting plans such as:

- Business Improvement District plans
- Tax Increment Development Finance District (TID) plans
- Zoning overlay districts such as General and Detailed Plan Developments
- Design and Development Guidelines for special districts, facade grants, etc.
- Capital Improvement Plans (streetscape, paving, reconstruction, etc.)
- Targeted Investment Neighborhood (TIN) plans
- Redevelopment plans (blight elimination, land assembly, remediation, etc.)
- Neighborhood action plans
- Quality of life plans, e.g. Washington Park Partners Plan
- Community Development Block Grant Consolidated Plans

PLANNING CONTEXT

Plan Boundaries

The West Side planning area is approximately bounded by W. Silver Spring Drive on the north; W. Fond du Lac Avenue, North 42nd Street, North 35th Street and U.S. Highway 41 on the east; the City of Milwaukee municipal boundary with Wauwatosa on the west; and West Allis on the south along the I-94 freeway corridor (Map 1: West Side Planning Area Context).

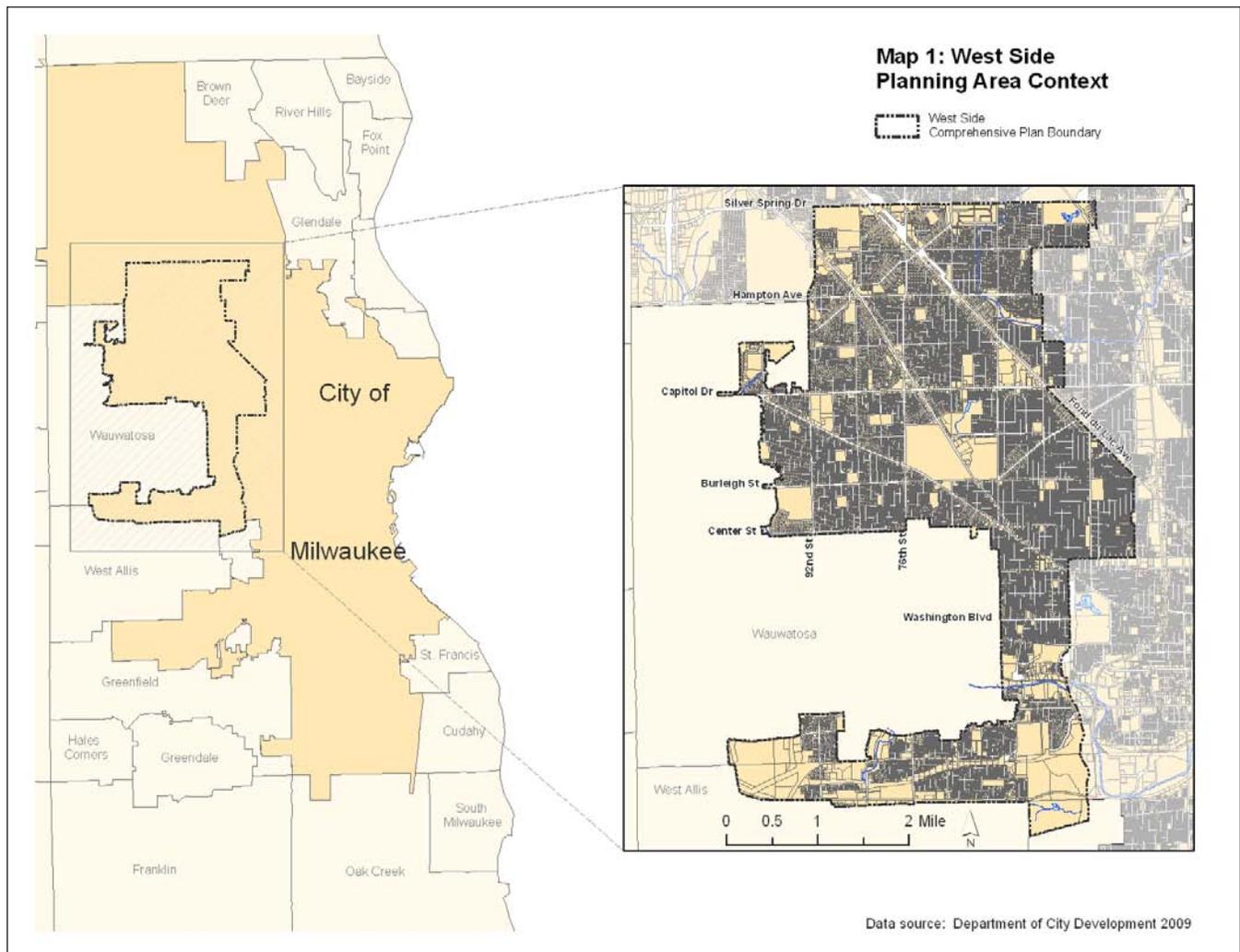
Plan Area Overview

The northern portion of the study area is primarily residential, with post World War II, subdivision-style neighborhoods to the west and northwest,

and older, denser neighborhoods with more duplex housing to the east. Several neighborhoods in the plan area have some of the most desirable traditional architecture in the Milwaukee area (Story Hill, Washington Heights, Sherman Park, Enderis Park) along with the some of the highest, most stable property values in the City of Milwaukee. In addition, the neighborhoods that wrap around the City of Wauwatosa enjoy “the best of both worlds”-convenient access to village amenities and close proximity to downtown Milwaukee activities. The popular quip that the West Side is “ten minutes from anywhere” is true.

The northern portion of the plan area contains several established commercial corridors, including W. Fond du Lac Avenue, W. Appleton Avenue, and W. Capitol Drive. Some of the diagonal routes are state trunk highways that originally were main

Map 1: West Side Planning Area Context



connectors between Milwaukee and cities to the northwest, such as Appleton and Fond du Lac.

Currently, these routes serve as commuter routes from the northwestern suburbs and Northwest Side into downtown Milwaukee, thus prompting the request for traffic calming (from impacted West Side neighborhoods) on these routes so the West Side is not just a continuous flow, high speed pass-through for commuters on their way to and from work.

Some of the West Side's oldest commercial corridors such as North Avenue, Bluemound Road and Wisconsin Avenue, were original farm to market routes that have historically carried traffic from the far rural outskirts (prairie) to the urban city center (downtown).

The West Side also contains a number of unique neighborhood shopping thoroughfares, many that are concentrated on portions of these historic routes, including several Business Improvement Districts (to be discussed later in Chapters 4 and 5) and the "Mosaic on Burleigh" one of the City of Milwaukee's four pilot "Main Street" districts.

The southern portion of the study area includes the Interstate 94 corridor, a major gateway to the City of Milwaukee and a series of access points to major recreational destinations and institutions such as the Milwaukee Brewers Stadium (Miller Park); the Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens and Zoofari Conference Center; State Fair Park; and the Veteran's Administration Medical Center and Grounds, including Wood National Cemetery, and the Civil War era Soldiers Home along with many other historic buildings.

City of Milwaukee Comprehensive Plan Structure

The West Side Area Plan is one of thirteen Area Plans that geographically cover the entire City of Milwaukee. The Area Plans together with the City-wide Policy Plan are intended to represent the interests of the various neighborhoods, districts and corridors within the City of Milwaukee; provide long range planning in a coherent and consistent manner; and provide an overall framework for investment.



These Plans are prepared to comply with Wisconsin's 1999 Comprehensive Planning Law, Wis. Stats. 66.1001, often referred to as "Smart Growth" Legislation because it mandates planned over unplanned, ad hoc or urban sprawl development for all municipalities in the State of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislation provides a framework for developing comprehensive plans including a substantial public participation requirement, procedures for adopting such plans, and the requirement 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 for the West Side must be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies outlined in the West Side Plan.

The recommendations of this plan represent a broad consensus achieved during a 9-month planning process involving a wide array of stakeholders representing many diverse and sometimes competing interests. Over time, as plan ideas are implemented and recommendations followed, it is important to recognize that consensus building and conflict resolution will need to continue. For all planning decisions, it remains an ongoing process to balance the needs of the environment, the market for business development, neighborhoods, individual property owners, land developers and the region as a whole.

The best way to ensure that this balance is achieved is for residents and business owners to be engaged in decisions regarding new development, which becomes part of using and interpreting the plan. To help achieve an effective level of engagement, there needs to be a forum where all citizens are allowed to have a voice, for example: town hall meetings (often conducted by the Alderman for the District where development is proposed), board and commission meetings, and public hearings on matters that affect city policy and that determine the specific outcomes of large impact development.

PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Immediate or Short Term Goals

The purpose of the West Side Area Plan is to evaluate assets and opportunities in the City's West Side, with particular focus on areas and properties that are susceptible to change, and with particular regard to the vision of groups who are working to affect change such as business improvement districts and neighborhood associations.

With the help and cooperation of these groups and West Side residents at large, the plan seeks to develop a community-based vision that builds on identified assets and opportunities; addresses obstacles to the health and stability of West Side neighborhoods, districts and corridors; and makes recommendations for areas and properties that are susceptible to change to guide new development and redevelopment.



Broad or Long Term Goals

The long range goals of Milwaukee’s comprehensive planning effort (Area Plans and Citywide Policy Plan, and supporting action plans, redevelopment plans, etc.) include:

1. Build upon the strengths of the neighborhoods and commercial corridors in the plan area;
2. Provide a predictable regulatory process;
3. Optimize the long-term value of public and private investments; and
4. Generate consensus among business owners, property owners, residents and associations about the future development and redevelopment of their areas.
5. Coordinate with other regional planning bodies to achieve strategic planning goals for the Milwaukee 7 region.

ORGANIZATION AND OUTREACH

Balanced and Broad-based Outcomes

To achieve these goals, the Plan establishes priorities for enhancing and building upon existing links to neighborhood associations, business associations, business improvement districts, developers, property owners, religious groups, major employers, institutions active in the community, community organizers, and last but not least, Aldermen (elected to represent Districts within the plan area) who know the area’s strengths and weaknesses and can identify good opportunities for intensive development or preservation/conservation. Throughout the planning process, a number of these individuals work closely with the city and the plan consultant to ensure that the plan is attuned to local issues and concerns.

As a “check and balance” to visioning, the Plan also establishes priorities for feasibility defined

by a rigorous market analysis and a high level of interaction with City staff and elected officials, to determine within private and public sector budgets what is timely, reasonable and feasible for implementing a community-wide development strategy.

As the various elements of the Plan come together, the planning process itself becomes a vehicle for discussion among City staff, elected officials, and area stakeholders, about which strategies to pursue or how best to choose and make improvements. As a result of the Area Plan, the West Side will strengthen its presence in the City of Milwaukee and be better able to work toward implementing the vision of this group of stakeholders.

Stakeholder Involvement and Role of Teams in Guiding the Planning Process

The four groups chiefly responsible for guiding and informing the plan, were as follows:

The Consultant Team



The Consultant Team primarily responsible for preparing the plan and conducting public meetings was made up of individuals with broad expertise in urban design/development, neighborhood

planning, commercial district planning, public outreach and community participation.

The principal consultant was PDI/ GRAEF with sub-consultant Beth Foy & Associates. The market analysis was performed under separate contract with Houseal Lavigne, a firm specializing in economic research and analysis for a range of clients and outcomes, with sub-consultant Cross Management Services, Inc.



Contract Management Team

The Contract Management Team is typically comprised of funding partners with organizational interests in the plan area, city staff responsible for managing the plan, key city agencies with funding responsibilities in the plan area (for example,

Community Development Block Grant), and Aldermen who are elected representatives and who have the ability to direct resources to the plan area. In the absence of funding partners as was the case for the West Side, management responsibilities were largely assumed by key city staff and elected officials, the six Aldermen representing the West Side, and to some extent by the more active and involved members of the Plan Advisory Group.

Plan Advisory Group

The Plan Advisory Group (PAG) consisted of a broad cross-section of representatives from West Side neighborhood associations, commercial districts, non-profit community groups and religious organizations. The PAG met regularly to review the information gathered, provide direction for public participation, offer guidance on plan development and provide feedback on draft versions of the plan. Their first hand knowledge of the plan area and its issues helped to guide the development of the plan. As the plan moves forward into implementation, they will also be expected to play a major role in forming the partnerships needed to direct, refine and guide the plan's recommendations.



The Project Management Team

The Project Management Team was made up of in-house experts from city departments and representatives of organizations with jurisdiction or program responsibilities in the plan area. These included representatives from the Department of City Development, Department of Public Works, Department of Neighborhood Services, Neighborhood Business Development Team, Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation, Community Block Grant Office and CDBG-R American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Housing Authority, Redevelopment Authority, Milwaukee Foreclosure Initiative, and other representatives of organizations that are active and invested in the West Side.

Other contacts were made on an “as needed” basis with county, regional and state authorities such as the State of Wisconsin Department of

Transportation (WisDOT), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), etc.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Historic Neighborhoods

The West Side is home to many exceptional neighborhoods, including several with historic designation. Milwaukee Magazine recently published a list of the most desirable neighborhoods in the Milwaukee metro area, and four of the eight city neighborhoods were on the West Side: Mount Mary, Sherman Park, Story Hill, and Washington Heights.



- The **Mount Mary** neighborhood surrounding green and picturesque Mount Mary College is a popular neighborhood full of well-kept postwar brick homes on larger lots. The neighborhood is bordered by the City limits (Wauwatosa) to the west and south, West Concordia Avenue on the north and Cooper Park on the east.



- **Sherman Park** is a large historic neighborhood near West Center Street and North 47th Street full of richly styled Arts and Crafts, Tudor, and Bungalow style

homes. The Sherman Park neighborhood is one of Milwaukee's first to embrace diversity of race and culture as an asset. Also worth noting, its centrally located Orthodox Jewish synagogue has drawn a large stable community of residents who continue to invest in the neighborhood, support a local school (yeshiva), and walk to local businesses.



- The **Story Hill** neighborhood sits on a scenic bluff and looks out over Miller Park. Its cluster of 80-year-old “storybook” homes were originally developed by a local builder to show off architectural styles reminiscent of an earlier period of romantic cottages and charming hideaways. Both the storybook houses and the neighborhood have held on to their charm and romantic appeal over the years and are still very much in demand today.



- **Washington Heights** is a prestigious neighborhood full of stately four-squares and generous bungalows built between 1900 and 1920. Two of the boulevards in the neighborhood provide a grand setting for these traditional homes, West

Washington Boulevard and North Hi-Mount Boulevard, and are nationally designated historic districts.

Historical Context

The major roadways that form the bones of the West Side set the stage for the area's development. These roads were early routes out of the city along pioneer Indian trails, former plank roads, and section lines. Blue Mound Road, for example, was one of the earliest roads in the county. It wound through agricultural lands west of Milwaukee to connect the City with Madison and Blue Mounds, WI. Fond du Lac Avenue and Appleton Avenue also connected Milwaukee with their namesake towns in other parts of Wisconsin, and Burleigh Street is an example of a major street that was built along a section line.

Early pioneer developments led to the area's first neighborhoods. For example, Calvary Cemetery was established in the 1850s, the VA Medical Center soon followed after the Civil War, and in the 1920s Mount Mary College was built in an area with very little development at the time. In the 1920s and 1930s, the early neighborhoods of Washington Heights, Story Hill, and Enderis Park were all established near these early developments in the West Side. Historic Washington Boulevard was also developed to connect Wauwatosa's Washington Highlands subdivision with Milwaukee's popular Washington Park.

Public transit routes also helped guide early development in the West Side. In the 1890s and 1900s, the cities of Wauwatosa and West Allis were incorporated and streetcar routes began connecting downtown Milwaukee with both cities via Wells Street. In the 1920s, the higher speed Interurban commuter railway was built through what is now the Interstate 94 corridor, connecting with the Waukesha Interurban line. Both of the city's public transit systems were terminated by the late 1950s, but not before they made impacts on development patterns.

Today, the West Side is primarily residential because much the area was originally developed to offer attractive options for families wanting to live outside of the dense central city. Much of the northwest

section of the West Side, for example, was built after World War 2 when the city was experiencing the biggest housing boom in its history. Since the automobile had become ubiquitous by that time, this portion of the West Side is largely made up of auto-oriented residential subdivisions.

Recent Developments of Significance

Interstate 94 Reconstruction – The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has proposed reconstruction of the Zoo Interchange – the connection between I-94, I-894 and US 45 near the Milwaukee County Zoo (see map at right). The Zoo Interchange opened to traffic in 1963 and is currently the busiest interchange in Wisconsin. WisDOT has maintained the interchange since its

development, but now believes the interchange is approaching the end of its useful life.

Sherman Park TIN – The City of Milwaukee recently designated the area between 40th and 45th from Hadley to Burleigh as a Targeted Investment Neighborhood (TIN). The TIN program focuses funds and resources in small areas for approximately three years. The goal of the program is to support and encourage owner occupancy and landlord responsibility and to improve the safety and appearance of the targeted neighborhoods.

Mosaic on Burleigh – The stretch of Burleigh Street from Sherman Blvd. to 60th Street was chosen as one of the City of Milwaukee’s four pilot districts for the Main Street Milwaukee Program. This program aims to strengthen small businesses and revitalize neighborhood main streets throughout the city.

Zoo Interchange Study Area Boundary Map (Source: WisDOT)



Hank Aaron State Trail – A current plan will extend the Hank Aaron State Trail from Miller Park west to the county line to link with the Oak Leaf New Berlin trails. Once completed, this will become the longest extended trail system east of the Mississippi.

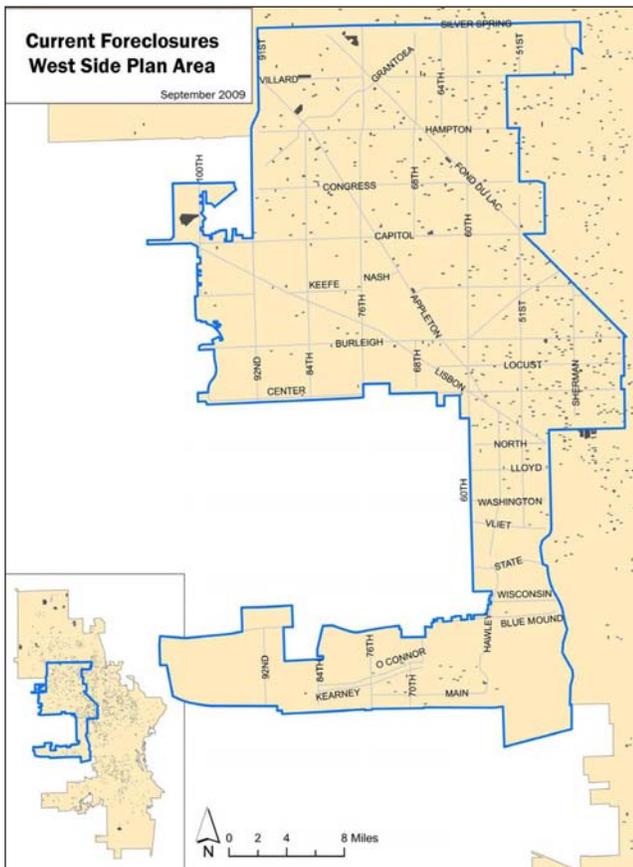


UWM expansion – To the west of the Plan Area in Wauwatosa, The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee is planning to develop a new engineering

campus on the Milwaukee County grounds. The campus will house a new research park for UWM faculty, graduate students and senior scientists focused on biomedical engineering and advanced manufacturing. UWM is currently negotiating with the County on a land sale.

Foreclosures – Slightly more than one in every ten homes in the West Side Plan Area has been subject to a foreclosure filing since the start of 2007, a rate which is similar to that for the City as a whole. Lenders have taken title to over 1,000 foreclosed homes in the West Side Plan Area during that same period. The neighborhoods in the Plan Area with lower average household incomes have been

Bank-Owned Foreclosed Properties (Source: City of Milwaukee)



disproportionately impacted by foreclosure activity. The City is actively engaged in an effort to help educate homeowners and work with banks to restructure bad loans.

PLAN USE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Document Organization

The overall organization of this plan is intended to create a document that is clear, concise, and user-friendly. The Introduction, the Planning Process and 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 3 identifies the types of uses and related policies and redevelopment strategies planned for the West Side Plan area as a whole. The following chapters 4 and 5 outline more specifically where and how those policies and strategies should be implemented within each district, corridor and catalytic project, and provides additional design guidelines specific to those locations. Chapter 6 goes on to describe implementation strategies for the plan area as a whole.

By structuring recommendations first for the whole plan area, then for specific districts and corridors, and finally for particular catalytic project sites, policy recommendations can be easily referenced based on the specifics of a reinvestment proposal.

Implementation and Updates over Time

Area Plans must adapt and evolve with changing circumstances. For example, new markets may present opportunities to specialize or customize a district. New tools such as tax incentives or credits can also transform an area. New transit improvements can present land use opportunities (transit oriented development nodes). As places evolve, plans need to change along with them.

In summary, this comprehensive area plan serves as a guide for both the short-term and long-term redevelopment of Milwaukee’s West Side. It seeks to preserve the unique qualities of West Side neighborhoods and to direct new investment that will improve the value and identity of these communities.

