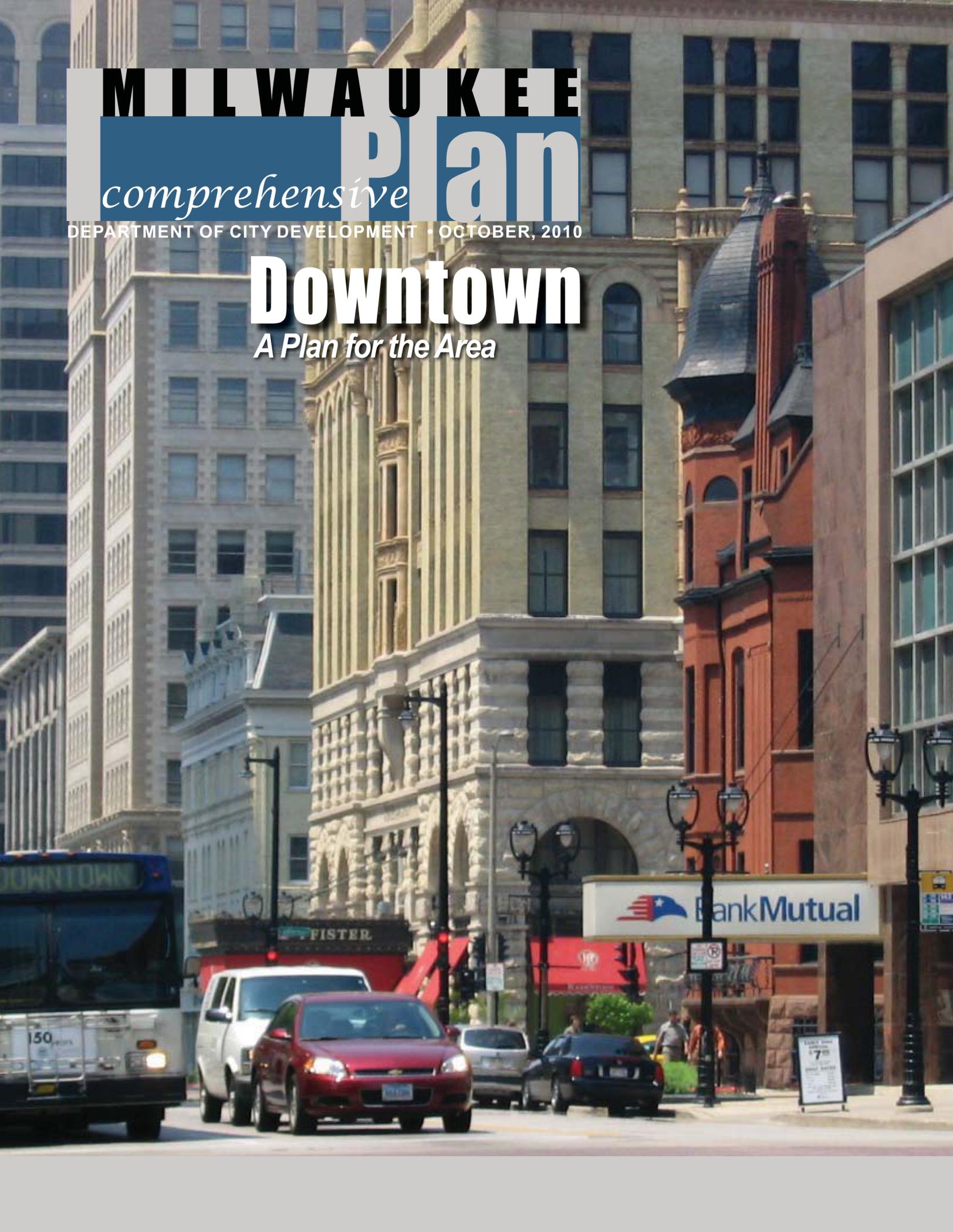
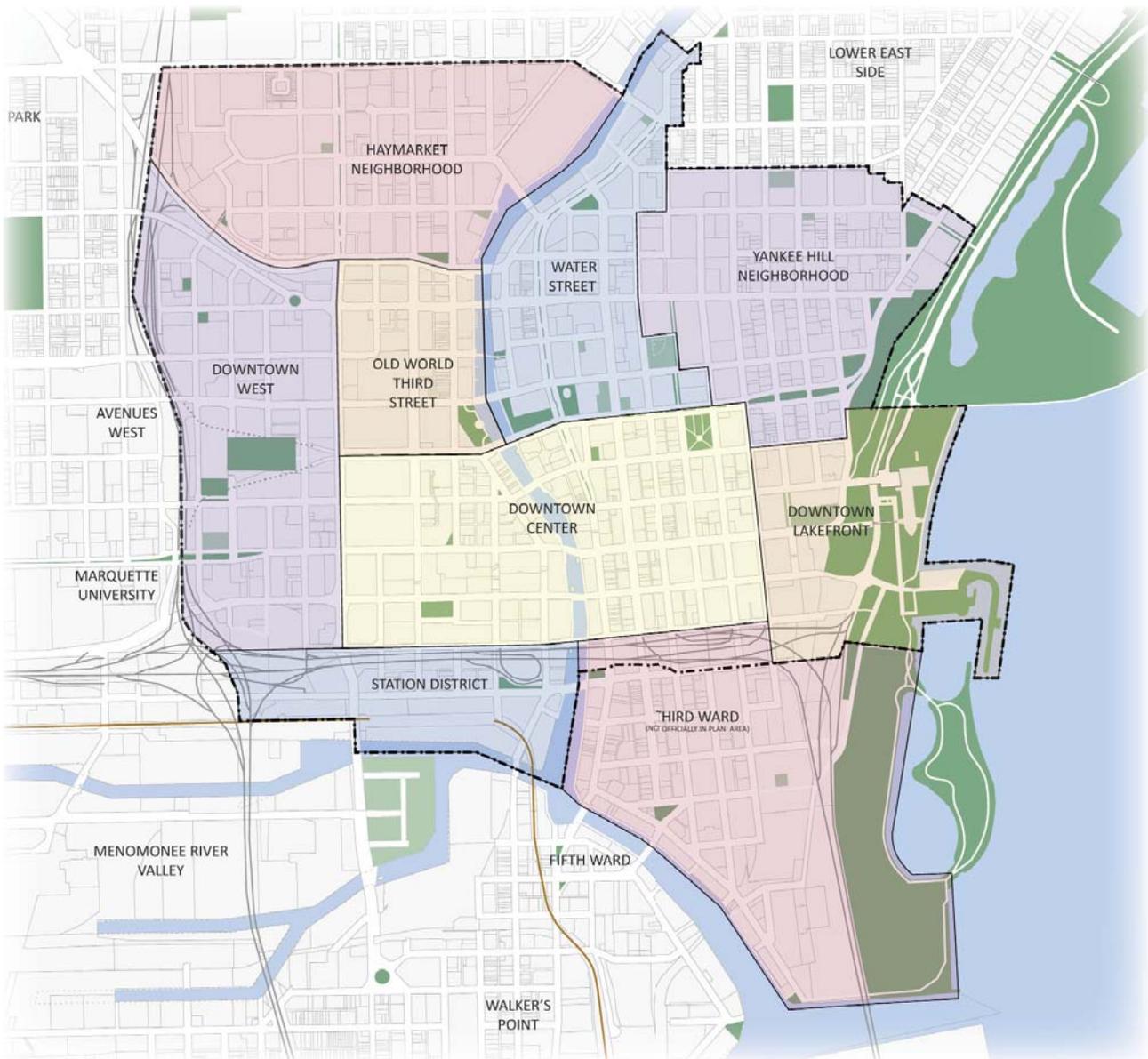


MILWAUKEE *comprehensive* Plan

DEPARTMENT OF CITY DEVELOPMENT • OCTOBER, 2010

Downtown *A Plan for the Area*





Chapter 4

Districts

The organization of Chapter 4 into districts enables the Plan to address various areas of Downtown in greater detail. The districts are not hierarchical in importance; rather, an economically and socially vital Downtown depends upon the diversity and variety offered by a number of districts that are distinct and mutually reinforcing. Numerous approaches to identifying districts were considered, and the outline that follows is a result of much analysis and debate.

Many, if not all, of the “districts” that follow merge into adjoining districts and blend into surrounding areas. Districts do not have defined edges, but rather have either geographic focal points, functional or economic synergies, or both.

In the Downtown Center District, for example, there is a strong geographic relationship to the rest of Downtown. The dominant uses are offices and retail within a dense core area of overlapping synergies, reinforced by major investments surrounding the District. In the Old World Third District, the sports arena functions are directly reinforced by synergies with proximate dining and entertainment venues on Old World Third and Water Streets. A good example of a district in functional or economic transition is the Station District. While the Station District is recognized as an area south of Clybourn, the expanding train and bus services at the Intermodal Station can be expected to increasingly influence business location decisions northward to Michigan or even Wisconsin Avenue. As another example of overlapping districts and synergies, the Lakefront District’s office area is oriented eastward while blending into the Central District. It is also part of an extended cultural, recreational and park zone along Lake Michigan.

Downtown Lakefront District



Lakefront terminus of Wisconsin Avenue



The Downtown Lakefront District consists primarily of a Class A office district located east of Van Buren Street and a large lakefront with surrounding open space and major cultural institutions, such as the War Memorial, the Milwaukee Art Museum; Discovery World Science Museum; and the Betty Brinn Children’s Museum. With Lake Michigan in the foreground and the Santiago Calatrava designed art museum addition along with the vertical residential and commercial buildings in the background, the Lakefront District is essentially the picture post card image for the entire city.

The Lakefront district can be viewed as being comprised of three distinct parts: 1) The Lakefront cultural and recreational amenities; 2) The Milwaukee County O’Donnell park pavilions and parking complex ; and 3) the office district west of the O’Donnell complex comprised primarily of the US Bank and Northwestern Mutual campuses as well as the Ernst & Young building. The main arteries that serve the Lakefront District are Lincoln Memorial Drive and Michigan Street. Both feed traffic onto the adjacent interstate (US 794), the Hoan Bridge, and lakefront cultural destinations such as Henry Maier Festival Park (Summerfest grounds).

The major challenge for the Lakefront District is a grade change that separates the Lakefront from the downtown proper, effectively cutting off the two areas from one another and preventing a smooth interaction between the Lakefront and the built environment of Downtown.

A second challenge are restrictions upon Lakebed Grant Land (most of the Lakefront is regulated by the State Department of Natural Resources), to land uses related to navigation,

fisheries, or public access to the waterfront. The positive result of this is a Lakefront that is predominantly public park, museum or recreational space. The limiting result is that there are almost no private venues that might enhance the public realm, such as restaurants, etc.

A third challenge is that access to the Lakefront is primarily designed for the automobile with pedestrian access more of an after-thought. This car-centric approach originated with a proposed Lakefront freeway in the 1960's when city planners and traffic engineers designed context free roadways for suburban commuters, and high volume thru-traffic; multi-modal design for pedestrians, bicyclists, etc. was secondary or non-existent. Preference was routinely given to vehicular traffic and the resulting by-products can still be seen today in a spaghetti string collection of highways, roads, and associated empty right-of-way remnants. The epitome of this car-centric style of planning is located around a distinctly pedestrian unfriendly intersection at Lincoln Memorial and Michigan that contains multiple dedicated turning lanes and a "frogger" style crossing for pedestrians attempting to access the Lakefront festival grounds and attractions.

O'Donnell Terrace is the major transition point from Downtown to the Lakefront. There is a lack of active uses anywhere near the lower grade level of Lincoln Memorial Drive. This configuration does not help address the design problem of how to resolve the grade differential from Downtown to the Lakefront while creating a dramatic approach and enhanced access. The Calatrava addition and Discovery World (set back from Lincoln Memorial hugging the lakefront) do help compensate by creating a visual and physical destination point. However, the overall composition suffers from the harsh presence of the O'Donnell parking garage which has little more than a grassy mound and a freestanding sign facing pedestrians on Michigan Street. At the same time, the Downtown Transit Center has windowless precast walls with little chance for interaction except at the small, unremarkable entrance. The O'Donnell Park garage could be improved with modifications to the south of the existing structure, whereas the Downtown Transit Center will need significant changes or removal/replacement to improve this negative pedestrian condition at such a premier site.

If Milwaukee wishes to elevate itself and its image onto a more favorable and competitive level in terms of place-making and overall urban design, a better connected, pedestrian friendly Lakefront area needs to be realized. Its current design is inconsistently good, somewhat functional, but falls short of its potential. In short, the pieces are in place to make it truly grand.



A redesigned lakefront interchange could create better pedestrian connections to the Lakefront and also create new redevelopment opportunities



Intersection of Michigan Street and Lincoln Memorial Drive



Downtown Lakefront District Recommendations:

Michigan and Wisconsin Avenue Corridors

- Make physical infrastructure changes to narrow the gap between the Downtown CBD and the Lakefront, such as creating a more hospitable pedestrian environment.
- Streetscaping, activation of building facades, enlivening uses and interesting places should all be a part of any solution to make E. Michigan Street a more prestigious address for current and future office and residential tenants.
- Eliminate the right-turn by-passes at the Michigan Street and Lincoln Memorial Drive intersection.
- Re-align Michigan Street to accommodate future development on either side at the Lincoln Memorial intersection.
- Extend the two-way traffic pattern of Van Buren and Jackson Streets south to Wisconsin Avenue.
- Treat Wisconsin Avenue as an extension of the art museum and transform it into an “Avenue of the Arts” lined with significant public art and sculptures that will draw visitors to and from the Downtown and Lakefront attractions.

Lincoln Memorial Drive

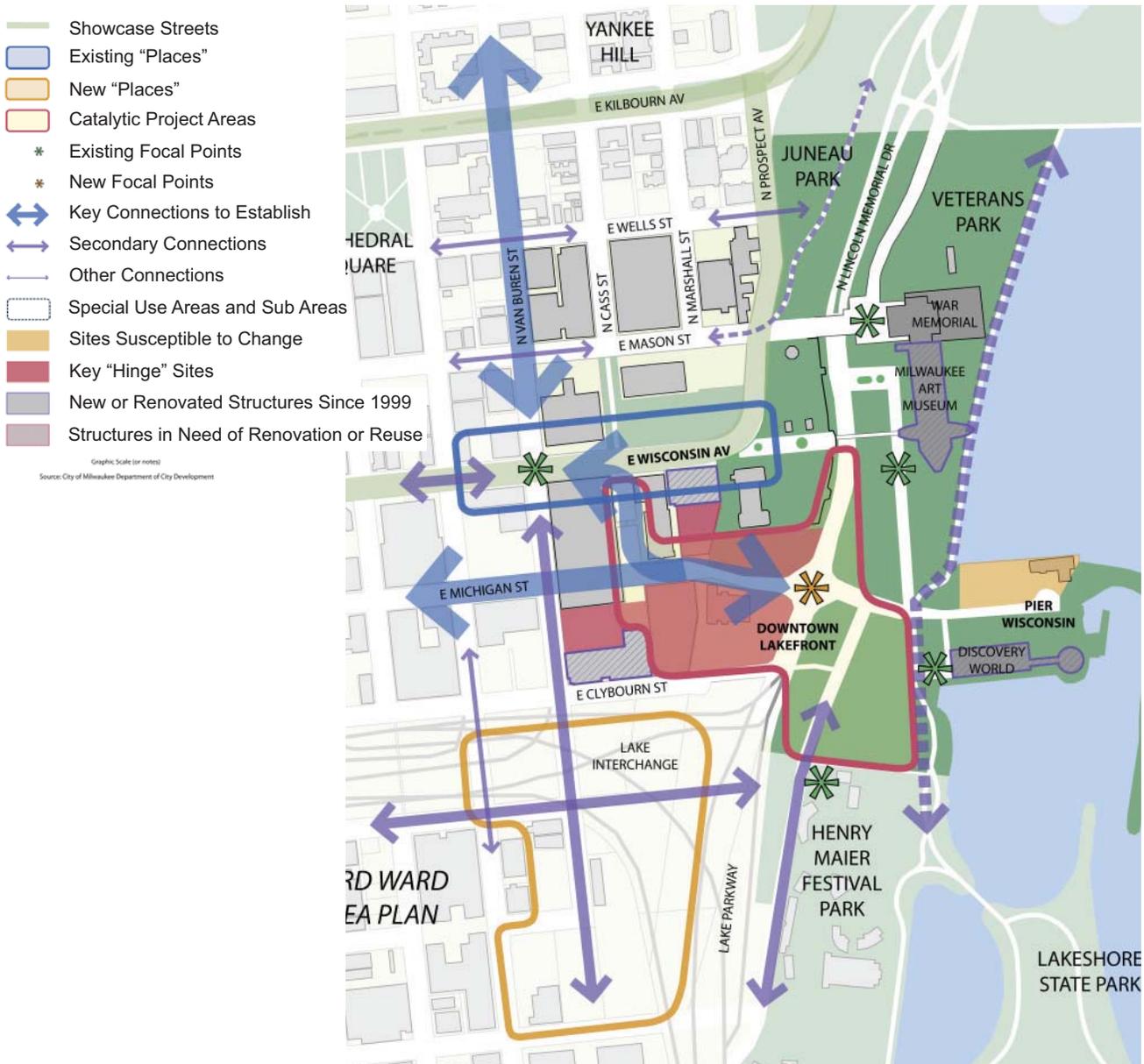
- Relocate the Downtown Transit Center to the Station District to complement the Intermodal Station and proposed streetcar line.
- Develop vertically above the transit center site with a single or a mix of uses with a public plaza or public wintergarden occupying the ground floor and terracing down to Lincoln Memorial Drive.
- Consider redevelopment opportunities to the south of the O’Donnell parking garage at the intersection of Lincoln Memorial Drive and Michigan Street.
- The Mason Street bridge overpass on Lincoln Memorial Drive serves as a southbound gateway to the Downtown Lakefront. Use public art, lighting or other visual effects under and around the bridge to signify this transition between the passive open spaces of the Lakefront to the north and the active and engaging uses of the Downtown Lakefront.
- Re-align Lincoln Memorial Drive between Michigan Street and Clybourn to meet the geometry of Municipal Pier.
- Take advantage of the Lincoln Memorial re-alignment and create a new plaza that in effect extends the Municipal Pier from Harbor Drive out to Lincoln Memorial Drive.
- Program the new plaza with fountains, public art, sculptures, benches, water-themed play areas, along with food, beverage, retail kiosks and pavilions.
- Consider a public art piece that serves as a gateway element to the Lakefront at Michigan. If possible, combine this with traffic calming and an intersection redesign to create a more inviting experience for pedestrians coming to the Lakefront from Downtown.

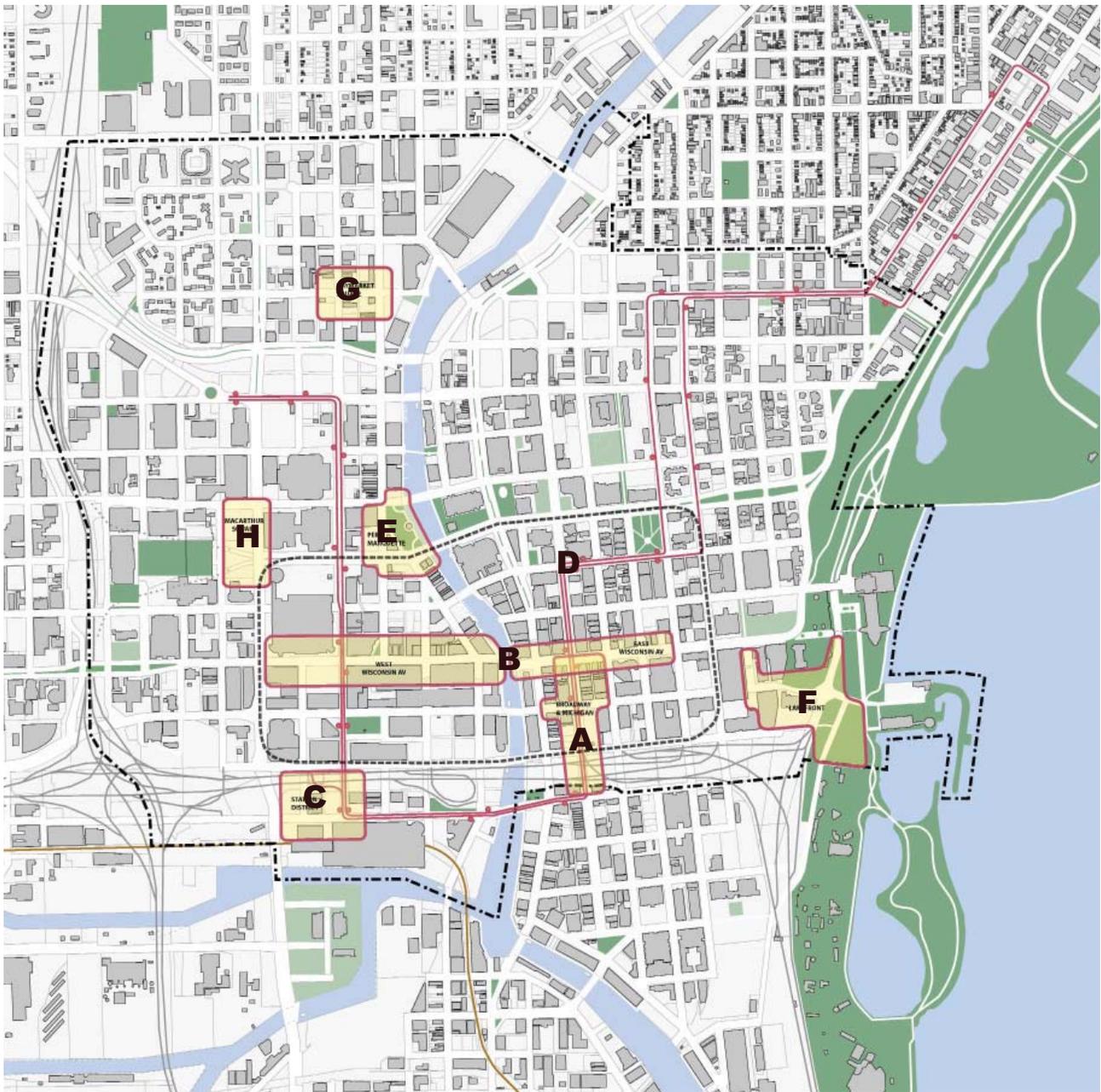


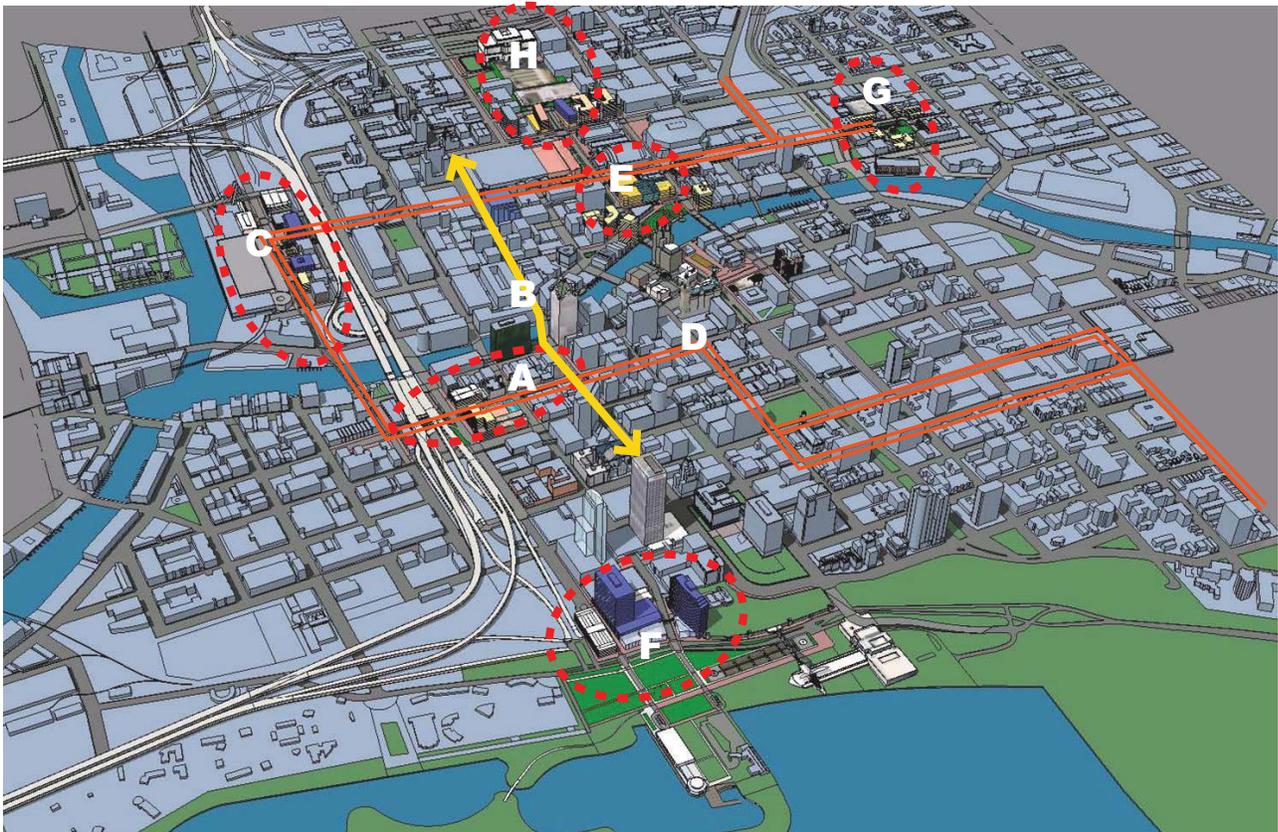
Michigan Street and Lincoln Memorial Drive, with the Milwaukee County Transit Center in the background

Third Ward Connection

- Strengthen the connection between the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Third Ward, generally considered Milwaukee’s “arts district”. Ideally, a re-design of the I-794 Lakefront Interchange could best mitigate existing disconnects and improve the overall area for redevelopment.
- Consider the descending leg of the Hoan Bridge to meet a descending I-794 expressway at an at-grade point to best achieve this connection and at the same time create a dramatic gateway into the Lakefront, much like the 6th Street viaduct bridge suspensions signal an entrance to the Menomonee Valley and Milwaukee’s Near South Side.
- If an at-grade scenario is not practically or politically feasible, alternative improvements to the interchange with less obtrusive and more artfully designed cross-over ramps could yield some improvements, if tied to ground level improvements such as landscaping, lighting, etc.







Catalytic Projects

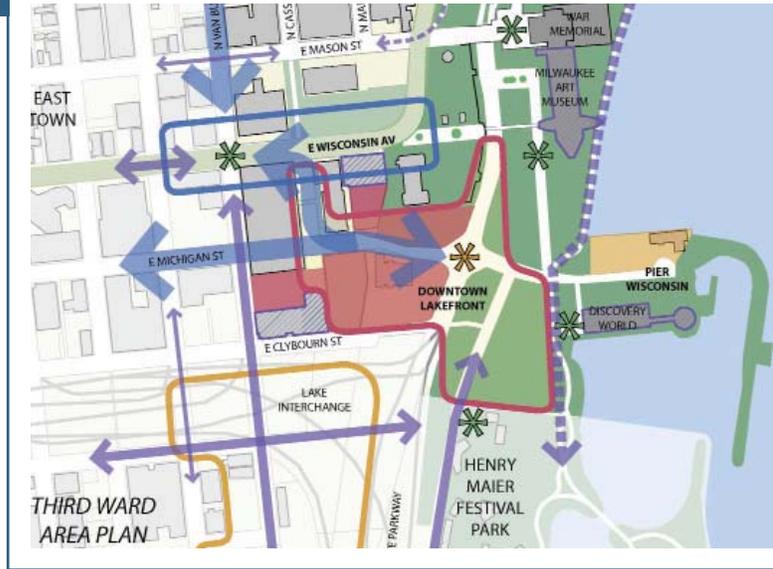
- A** - Broadway Connection
- B** - Wisconsin Avenue Strategy
- C** - Station Plaza
- D** - Downtown Streetcar
- E** - Pere Marquette Square
- F** - Lakefront Gateway
- G** - Haymarket Square
- H** - Kilbourn Extension to MacArthur Square

Chapter 5 Catalytic Projects

During the planning process several redevelopment projects and programs aimed at increasing economic and community value were identified. Implementation of these “catalytic” projects and initiatives will represent a significant public and / or private financial investment in the area. These projects are considered catalytic because they inspire a confidence and commitment that leads to additional investment and improvement in the surrounding area; boldly creates or reinforces the Downtown’s image, amenities, and a sense of place; and accomplishes these things in a manner that furthers Downtown’s attractiveness and overall development goals.

Eight catalytic projects are proposed in this plan. Six projects focus on redevelopment of specific sites and two projects are initiatives or strategies on a broader, less site-specific scope. The map opposite illustrates the geographic location of each of the catalytic projects or initiatives. Detailed descriptions for each catalytic project include the current status of the site or area, objectives for each project, and specific recommendations – including design concepts.

Lakefront Gateway



Current State



Milwaukee Art Museum



Pier Wisconsin

Milwaukee's Downtown has one of the world's most beautiful waterfront settings. The concave water's edge provides an embracing relationship between Downtown and one of the largest and greatest freshwater bodies in the world.

More than any other physical feature, the Lakefront defines Milwaukee. Downtown adjoins the open spaces created with landfill to the north of Downtown, thanks to the vision of the City's founders and the creativity of landscape architects including Frederick Law Olmsted.

Compared to other cities on the world stage, Milwaukee has experienced slow but steady appreciation of the potentials of its Lakefront. Open parklands continue to be expanded to the north and south of Downtown through new landfills. Eero Saarinen's dramatic War Memorial and Art Center, built in 1957, claimed the Lakefront for cultural activities as well as recreation. The creation and expansion of Summerfest into the world's largest music festival has further expanded the roles of the Lakefront in enhancing lifestyle offerings with entertainment for Milwaukeeans as well as millions of visitors. Santiago Calatrava's extraordinary addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum has firmly located Milwaukee's emerging lakefront on the world's tourism map.

Additional attractions have made Milwaukee's Downtown Lakefront a place for education as well as culture, entertainment, and recreation. The recently-completed Discovery World has brought interactive science exhibits and an aquarium to the Lakefront and has the potential for further expansion with other possible educational facilities related to Milwaukee's

contributions to the advancement of world science and technology.

Plans in the 1960s for a freeway loop around Downtown would have severely damaged the pedestrian accessibility and human-scale qualities of Milwaukee's Lakefront. Fortunately, the freeway plans were abandoned, but the Lincoln Memorial Drive extension was designed to pass through the Downtown Lakefront for an easy connection with Interstate 794. Currently, therefore, traffic patterns dominate circulation along the Lakefront, challenging potentials for an intimate, inviting, walkable connection from Downtown offices, hotels, and residences to the Lakefront attractions. Further isolating the Lakefront from Milwaukee's Downtown office district and residential areas is the significant grade differential exacerbated by the O'Donnell parking garage, a formidable three-story high parking garage wall fronting the west side of Lincoln Memorial Drive. In addition, the development of the Downtown Transit Center with its under-used rooftop park and concrete wall facing the Lake was a well intentioned mistake, extending the barrier between Downtown and the Lakefront farther south to Clybourn Street.

In conclusion, Downtown Milwaukee is blessed with an embracing setting on Lake Michigan, and past visions have resulted in landfill to create recreational open spaces along with cultural, entertainment, and educational facilities to broaden the Lakefront's leisure-time attractions. The Saarinen and Calatrava components of the Milwaukee Art Museum provide inspirations of beauty and identity for Milwaukee.

Objectives

Objective 1: Significantly improved pedestrian access from Downtown to the Lakefront attractions including the Milwaukee Art Museum, Discovery World, the Lakefront walking/biking paths, and Summerfest, along with future cultural and recreation facilities.

Issues: There are two barriers to safe, convenient pedestrian circulation between Downtown and the Lakefront – first, a vertical barrier and, second, a horizontal barrier. The vertical barrier is daunting. The grade differential is about 20 feet, and the stairs from O'Donnell Park to the Lakefront are not inviting and discourage climbing. The one pedestrian bridge over Lincoln Memorial Drive connects O'Donnell Park with the Milwaukee Art Museum, not the Lakefront.

The horizontal barrier is also formidable. In a distance of four thousand feet between Ogden Street and I-794, the only direct



Right turn by-passes diminish the pedestrian environment



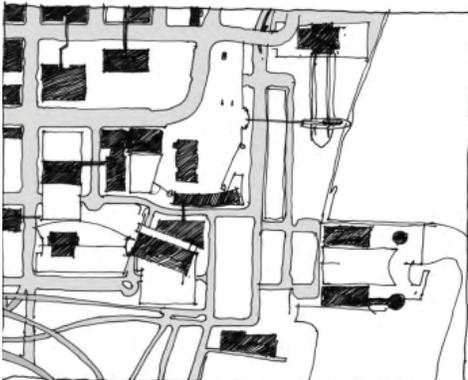
LAKE FRONT NEIGHBORHOOD



ALT A - FIGURE GROUND WITH ROADS



ALT B - FIGURE GROUND WITH ROADS



ALT C - FIGURE GROUND WITH ROADS

Conceptual Lakefront figure ground diagrams

grade-level pedestrian access between Downtown and the Lakefront is Michigan Street via Cass Street from Wisconsin Avenue. Along this path there are no attractive pedestrian amenities facing Cass and Michigan, and, once pedestrians reach Lincoln Memorial Drive, they must cross seven lanes of traffic on the Drive before reaching the Lakefront parks and attractions.

Objective 2: Calm traffic and a sense of arrival for drivers on Lincoln Memorial Drive.

Issues: Lincoln Memorial Drive is designed for efficient traffic flow between the Drive and Michigan Street as well as Interstate 794. As drivers approach Downtown, the view of the Calatrava addition to the Art Museum is stunning. However, there is no traffic pattern that indicates to drivers that they have arrived at a special place along the Lakefront.

Objective 3: Ease and safety of vehicular access between Lincoln Memorial Drive and Michigan Street, Clybourn Street, and I-794.

Issues: Commuters use Lincoln Memorial Drive to get to parking garages along Michigan and Clybourn Streets. These access routes must be maintained to avoid shifts in traffic onto Mason Street, which would increase conflicts with traffic accessing Downtown from the Prospect/Farwell one-way pair.

Objective 4: Expand the emerging “world-class” character of Milwaukee’s Lakefront by developing a park and cultural campus that rivals the best waterfronts in the world.

Many persons interviewed as part of the planning process indicated that Downtown Milwaukee’s Lakefront setting is an underutilized asset that could provide a much stronger advantage in Milwaukee’s competition with other cities to attract businesses, residents, and visitors. New recreational, cultural, educational, and entertainment venues could be added, including activities on the water, reinforcing existing facilities. In addition, the extensive quantity of Lakefront open spaces adjacent to Downtown could be expanded, programmed, and designed to accommodate specific activities while exuding a high-level of landscape diversity and beauty.

Objective 5: Increased living, working, and visitor populations in Downtown Milwaukee.

Issues: Milwaukee’s Downtown already offers a variety of housing options for urbane lifestyle seekers. However, national demographic statistics indicate that “empty nesters” are increasing rapidly, and the demand for Lakefront residences will exceed supply when the market recovers. Also, there

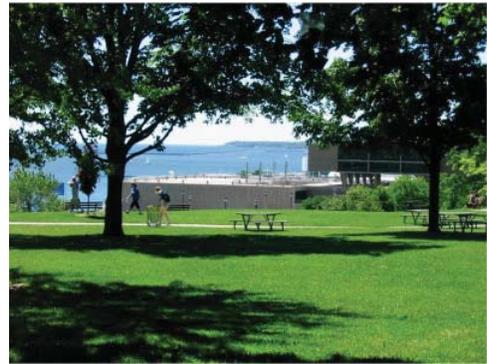
is strong interest in additional Class A office buildings along the Lakefront, particularly appealing to companies new to Downtown.

Objective 6: Maximization of private-sector investment in Lakefront improvements, minimizing taxpayer outlay.

Issues: The properties adjacent to the Lakefront are publicly-owned and underdeveloped based upon market value and highest and best use assessments. These include the O'Donnell Garage and Park, the Downtown Transit Center, the I-794 corridor properties, and the Summerfest grounds. Other underdeveloped properties are close enough to the Lakefront to be marketed as part of the Lakefront District. Redevelopment of a portion of the O'Donnell and Transit Center properties could incorporate additional cultural facilities and generate substantial private sector investment to help pay for public sector improvements. In subsequent phases, elimination or reconfiguration of unnecessary or redundant I-794 access ramps would open up additional land for both development and improved pedestrian access to the Lakefront.

Objective 7: Enhanced access to Harbor Drive to improve developability and links between the Third Ward and Lincoln Memorial Drive.

Issues: Although Harbor Drive provides a direct access between the Lakefront and the Third Ward, the connection with Lincoln Memorial Drive via Michigan Street is clumsy and would be hazardous with any substantial increase in traffic. Harbor Drive is currently fronted by undefined open spaces, the Summerfest grounds, and large surface parking lots that serve Summerfest and Downtown employees. All of these publicly- and privately-owned sites have redevelopment potential.



Catalytic Project – A Lakefront cultural park and gateway facilitated by a reconfigured Lakefront traffic pattern.

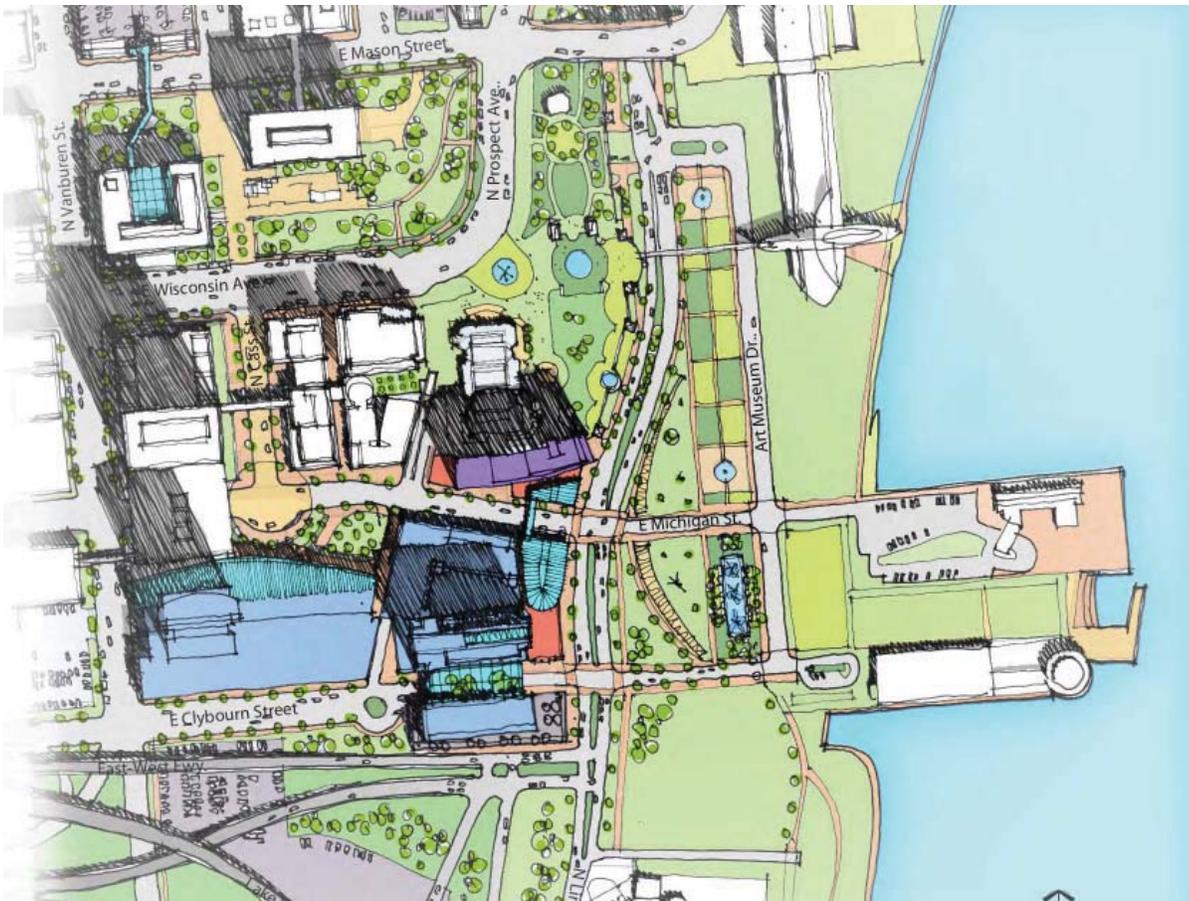
A necessary ingredient in the creation of future improvements and public activities along the Lakefront is a reduction in traffic/pedestrian conflicts and barriers to pedestrian access between Downtown and the Lakefront. The proposed modifications to the Lakefront street and land utilization pattern has advantages in setting the stage for new development on the west side of Lincoln Memorial Drive as well as additional Lakefront activities, users, and energy on the east side of Lincoln Memorial Drive. Features include:

- Shift the existing alignment of Lincoln Memorial Drive south of Michigan Street and re-locating the Downtown Transit Center results in the creation of two high-value development sites on the west side of the Drive.
- An internationally recognized park and cultural campus. A new Lakefront plaza or park is created by extending the linear arrangement of the municipal pier out to a re-configured Lincoln Memorial Drive and backdropped by a glass curtain wall and public wintergarden from development at the current Downtown Transit Center site.
- A new “Lakefront Plaza” can accommodate a composition of sculptures, exhibits, interactive fountains, as well as retail kiosks and pavilions.
- The space closest to Downtown is 74,800 sq ft in size, and the overall area is 184,000 sq ft, plus the 30,000 sq. ft. triangular space to the west of Kiley Gardens.
- There are no through-streets conflicting with pedestrians to the east of Lincoln Memorial Drive.
- Improved pedestrian access. Elimination of the dedicated right-turn lanes at Michigan Street reduces pedestrian crossings from seven to five lanes.

In conclusion, an invigorated Lakefront District could consist of a wide range of open space, recreational, cultural, educational, and entertainment uses, adjoined on the west by a dramatic edge consisting of commercial developments in two or three architecturally-expressive towers built on air-rights over public wintergardens, gallery spaces, and internal grade transitions. This synergistic combination of uses within a fully-integrated urban design concept would significantly enhance Milwaukee’s identity and competitiveness.



View of conceptual development west of Lincoln Memorial Drive



Next Steps

Concepts for future improvements and development of the area east of Lincoln Memorial Drive are not included in the Downtown Plan Update. The proposed traffic improvements in this plan, however, comprise a set of concepts and options for providing access to existing and future open spaces and cultural facilities east of Lincoln Memorial Drive. A comprehensive study of the Lakefront east of Lincoln Memorial Drive would determine a vision and direction for this area to best maximize its value to Downtown and to the city and region as a whole. Analysis of other traffic configurations should be included in a Lakefront study in order that land uses and both vehicular and pedestrian circulation are coordinated on both sides of Lincoln Memorial Drive.

A task force consisting of Lakefront District stakeholders should be created to refine the District plans and establish other financing strategies for infrastructure and cultural improvements within the District. Public-private partnerships, foundations, and commercial revenues should be emphasized to implement public Lakefront infrastructure and civic improvements, minimizing the use of general City and County funds. The purchase price for the air rights above two key publicly-owned development sites that could be created to the west of Lincoln Memorial Drive could generate a substantial level of financial support for new cultural amenities and improvements.