4 Districts & Corridors

Chapter three, the land use policy chapter, identifies characteristics and development standards to be applied throughout the Menomonee Valley planning area. This chapter organizes the plan area into smaller districts and corridors and recommendations for each area are identified.

1. Valley West

As far back as the late 19th century, the westerly portion of the Menomonee Valley was comprised largely of two major entities: the Falk Corporation and the Milwaukee Rail Road repair and maintenance shops. Today, only Falk (as part of the Rexnord Corporation) remains and what were once the sprawling Milwaukee Road shops is today the Menomonee Valley Industrial Center which, along with the steady presence of the Falk facility, now defines the west end of the Valley planning area.

The Valley West is that portion of the Menomonee Valley between US 41 / Miller Parkway, east to the 27th Street Viaduct with Interstate 94 and the CP Rail line serving as the northern and southern boundaries respectively. It is this district that is most reflective of the visible transformation of the Valley in recent years and the face of much, but certainly not all, of its success. This is highlighted primarily through the major redevelopment effort that replaced the long-blighted rail shops with the Menomonee Valley Industrial Center. The MVIC is a 65-acre industrial park that is home to ten light industrial businesses and 1,300 employees. Two notable features of the MVIC that distinguish it from other business parks are the shared storm water park and the Hank Aaron State Trail, which weaves the Valley into the surrounding urban fabric and is a popular stretch for bikers, runners, and pedestrians.

Flanking the MVIC on the west is a collection of large surface parking lots for the Milwaukee Brewers' Miller Park. Used by Milwaukee's Major League baseball team during 82 regular season home games, these lots provide excellent visibility for the MVIC businesses due to the hundreds of thousands of Brewers' fans using them for parking and tailgating during the spring, summer, and early fall months. It should be mentioned that entrance to these parking areas and the business park is primarily via a single road, Canal Street. During Valley plan interviews, it was noted that despite the traffic generation by both of these entities, the level of truck and car traffic is remarkably manageable during game days. This demonstrates that urban settings are able to not only accommodate multiple industrial, entertainment, and commercial endeavors in close proximity to one another, but also enjoy mutual benefit from these settings.

East of the MVIC is the Rexnord Corporation. A legacy industry from Milwaukee's days as "machine shop to the world", Rexnord, as the Falk Corporation, has been at its Valley location since 1888. Rexnord currently occupies approximately 50 acres, is one of the largest employers in the Valley, and a solid industrial anchor for the economic well-being of both the Valley and the city of Milwaukee.

Directly south of the MVIC and Rexnord is the new Three Bridges Park. Officially opened to the public in 2013, Three Bridges Park is a 24-acre park built over land formerly used by the rail lines as an "airlinesyard", rail-speak for rail car staging and queuing areas. As the name suggests, three attractive and thoughtfully designed pedestrian bridges connect the park to the Valley's Hank Aaron State Trail system and to neighborhoods adjacent to the Valley's southern rim, connecting jobs, people, and nature.

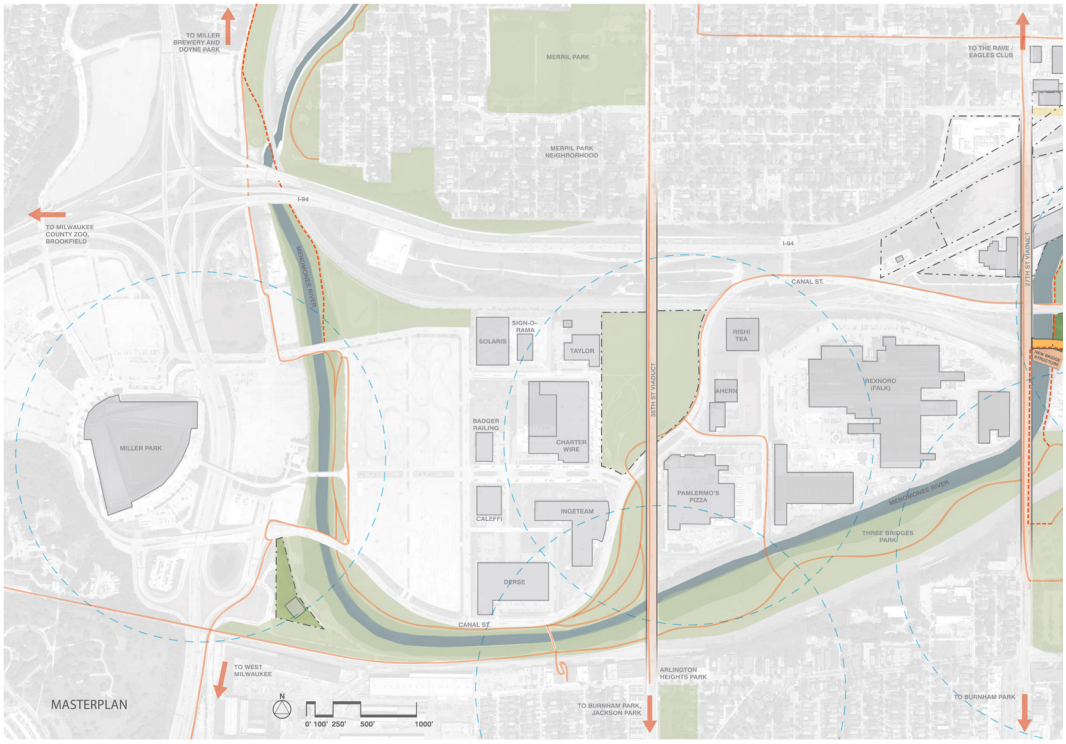
The Valley West has been the focus of redevelopment efforts by the City of Milwaukee since the creation of the 1998 Valley plan and the formation of Menomonee Valley Partners and has been an unquestioned success. It is a stable and well-developed area of the Valley that, going forward, requires no major land use changes. Rather, improved multi-modal transportation connections, landscaping, lighting, signage, and other design enhancements will add a finer grain layer of aesthetics, visibility, and identity to the Valley and its adjacent neighbors.

West Valley Recommendations:

- Maintain access to and from 27th Street and I-94.
- The planned I-94 reconstruction should be used to improve access to Canal Street and wayfinding to/ within the Valley.
- Organize a coordinated Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) team to create a design plan for I-94 and 27th Street improvements and access to Canal Street.
- Coordinate Menomonee Valley Partners with DPW, DNR, and WisDOT, as part of the Stadium Interchange project, to include a dedicated bike lane between Miller Park and the MVIC as part of the stadium interchange project. This would supply an improved and uninterrupted connection linking the Valley, Merrill Park, and Doyne Park.
- Additional bike and pedestrian crossings combined with traffic calming should be established at hazardous points on Canal Street.
- Activate the storm water park with recreational programming such as soccer and MVIC employee events that do not require fixed structures that would conflict with its primary use as a storm water retention facility.
- Continue efforts to integrate and accent the viaducts into the Valley with LED lighting enhancements, providing distinct nighttime visibility and providing Milwaukee with a new recognizable landmark.

Garabit Viaduct, France. Lighted infrastructure provides an unmistakable place making feature
Source: Free Images, Guy Patny

Decorative LED lighting provides aesthetics & pedestrian comfort to highway overpass



An improved N 44th St. can provide a key bike and pedestrian linkages between west side neighborhoods and the Valley

A lighted 35th St viaduct would create an iconic Valley landmark

2. Valley Center

The Valley Center is that portion of the Valley located between the 27th and 16th Street Viaducts on the west and east, and the CP rail lines to the north as well as south. It is a section of the Valley notable for its lack of industrial uses and the unmistakable presence of the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino, the largest employer in the Valley and a draw for 6 million annual visitors. Facing the hotel and casino on the north are Marquette University's Valley Fields, home to Marquette's soccer and track and field teams. Valley Fields features a prominent and attractive streetscape pattern along Canal Street and can be a model to follow for the remainder of that street.

Directly west of Marquette University's Valley Fields is the City of Milwaukee's Department of Public Works fleet repair yard. Covering approximately 10 acres, the site is situated at a prominent Valley gateway at the Canal Street roundabout. Given that all other parcels around the roundabout are essentially vacant, future streetscaping and aesthetic improvements on the site would greatly enhance this very visible location.

Located along the northern bank of the Menomonee River opposite the DPW yard is the former Milwaukee Gas Company complex. Comprised of four buildings designed by Alexander Eschweiler, the Gas Light buildings have been recently redeveloped with various uses including an indoor skateboard park, artist studio, and, most notably, a significant renovation of the main gas building to accommodate Zimmerman Architectural Studios. This rehabilitation represents an exemplary example of historic reuse of the Valley's building stock while adding professional employment to the heart of urban Milwaukee.

There is at least one, and potentially four, prominent redevelopment sites in the Valley Center. The most significant is 17 acres of privately-owned, vacant property west of the City Lights complex. With prominent river frontage and access to Mount Vernon Avenue, this site is a significant redevelopment site for future light industrial and accessory uses.

A second site with future development potential is the MMSD owned parcel located in the northeast quadrant of the Canal Street roundabout and at the 45 degree bend of the Menomonee River. While the majority of the site is currently used for storm water detention, a remainder of the property is currently leased to the City of Milwaukee for storage and maintenance of parking enforcement vehicles. Given its location to the Hank Aaron State Trail and river frontage the site may be suitable for future commercial development.

Adams Yard is a Canadian Pacific (CP) owned rail spur with frontage along Canal Street. Underutilized, CP may consider selling this parcel at some point in the future. The site offers suitable acreage and road access for light industrial users and would fill an undeveloped gap along this section of Canal Street. Immediately east of Adams Yard and adjacent to the Potawatomi casino is the Cargill beef slaughtering facility. The facility is sited on 6-acres of land and was an important employer for local residents until Cargill shuttered the plan indefinitely in 2014.

Valley Center Recommendations:

- Improve water flow at the CP rail bridge at the Menomonee River crossing at N. 27th Street.
- The 199 N. 25th Street MMSD Property northwest of the Canal Street roundabout can be redeveloped for eating and drinking establishments incorporating recreational uses at its river side.
- Improve landscaping at the center of the Canal Street roundabout as both an aesthetic feature and to improve the safety and functionality of the roundabout.
- Install a linear arrangement of large canopy type trees along Canal Street and Adams Yard.
- Any future redevelopment at Adams Yard is to be reserved for light industrial uses similar to those in the MVIC.
- Install storm water improvements in and around Canal Street and the roundabout and continuing into the DPW fleet yard to reduce heavy particulate and contaminated runoff into the Menomonee River.
- Improve fencing and landscaping around the perimeter of the DPW yard in order to improve first impressions at this gateway location.
- Continue the current planned development zoning and associated development intent for the vacant Giuffre property east of the City Lights development.
- Former Cargill slaughtering site: With the permanent closing of the slaughtering operation, a major change in use of this parcel must be anticipated. It abuts the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino to the east and is across the street from parking facilities serving the hotel and casino to the west and south. Entertainment, commercial, hotel, office, or other uses supportive of the hotel and casino, or light industrial use, are recommended. Future development design shall be complimentary and sensitive to the Marquette Valley Fields and the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino. Facades shall avoid blank walls and feature landscaping and prominent glazing.

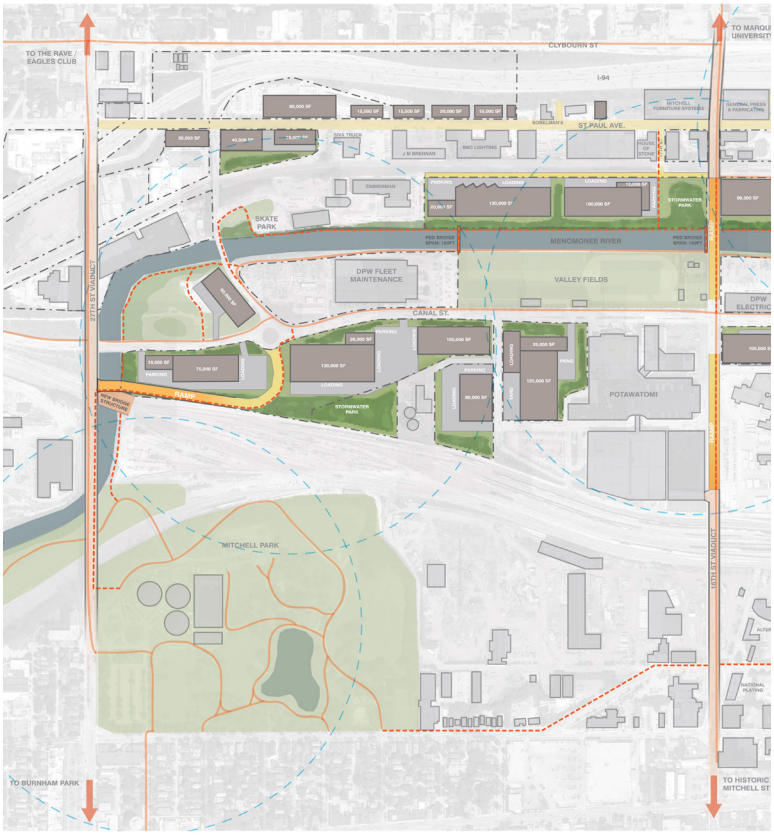
- Continue incorporating viaducts into Valley context with efforts to add LED lighting, storm water improvements and best practices, and improved underside lighting
- The vacant Cargill parcels fronting along Canal Street and bisecting Emmber Lane are recommended for light industrial uses generally, and more specifically for food and beverage sector manufacturers as part of a targeted food and beverage (FaB) district. These are visible, spacious, and accessible sites attractive for future development.
- Eliminate the right turn bypass at the southwest corner of Canal and Emmber Lane.

The Milwaukee Dept. of Public Works vehicle yard adjacent to the Menomonee River

Now vacant Cargill slaughtering facility adjacent to the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino. Source: Bing Maps

Canal Street roundabout
Source: Bing Maps

Right turn bypass lanes at Canal and Emmber
Source: Bing Maps



Valley Center

3. East Gateway

The East Gateway is that portion of the Menomonee Valley east of the 16th Street Viaduct between the Menomonee River to the north and the Menomonee Canal to the south, essentially forming a peninsula jutting into the space between Downtown Milwaukee and Walker's Point. As opposed to the west end of the Valley that has been redeveloped from nearly a blank slate with Miller Park, the MVIC, and a western terminus of Canal Street, the east end remains a somewhat eclectic mix of old and new uses on smaller footprints with some areas having awkward, if any, roadway access.

A prominent feature of the east end has been the redesign of the 6th Street viaduct in 2002 that transformed the viaduct into a combination roadway and bridge that connected 6th Street at grade to the Valley. With an eventual modernization and extension of Canal Street, the Valley for the first time had convenient and direct access to and from the north and south sides of the city.

Along with the improvement to Canal Street, the eastern terminus of the Valley is occupied by the Harley-Davidson Museum at the T-intersection of 6th Street and Canal Street, offering a pleasant vista to east bound traffic. The museum is situated at a significant intersection at the confluence of the Valley's waterways and surrounded by downtown Milwaukee, the Valley, and Walker's Point. Given its central location and large number of visitors to its grounds, the Harley-Davidson Museum has an opportunity to be a nexus tying together these major Milwaukee neighborhoods into an integrated business, transportation, and entertainment district along Milwaukee's two rivers.

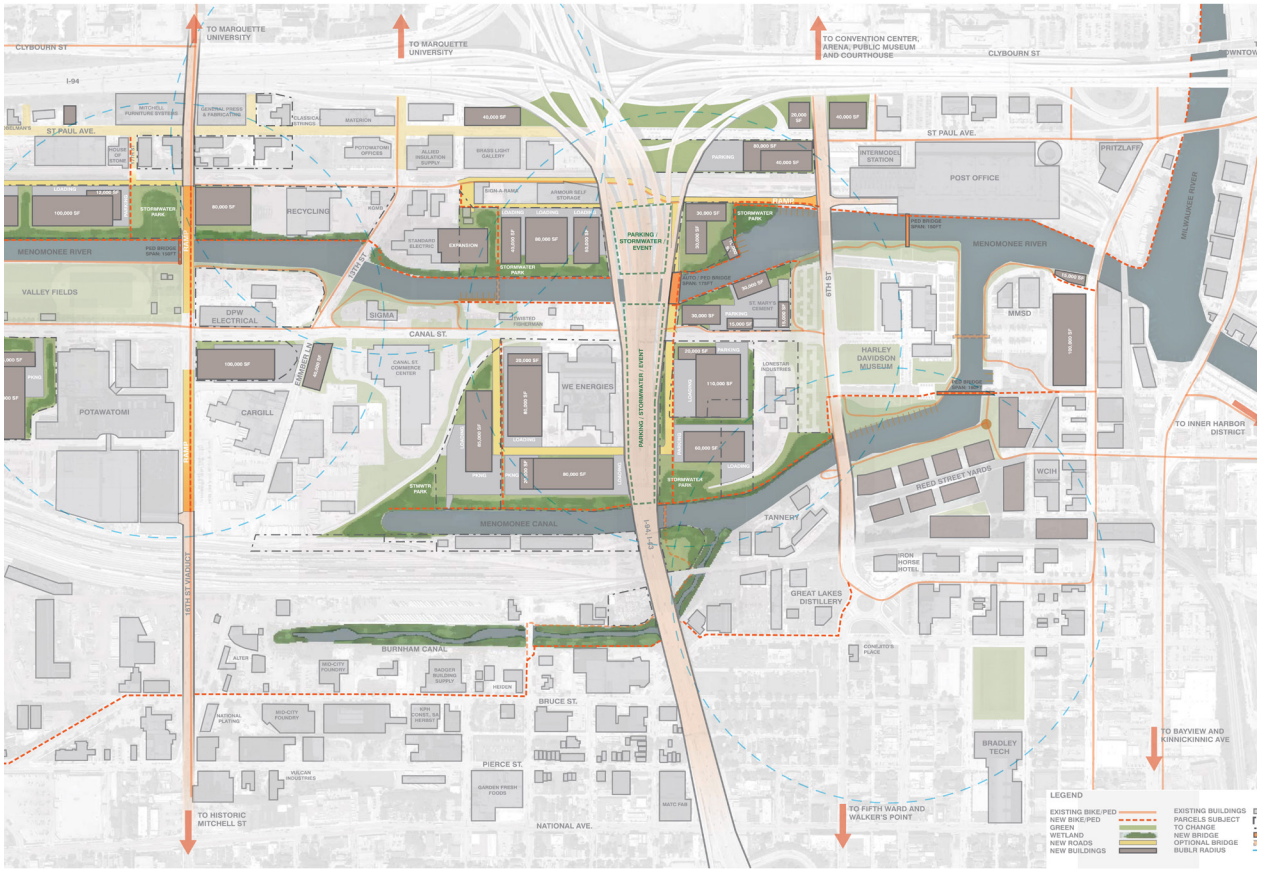
Despite the magnitude of change provided by the 6th and Canal improvements, the east end of the Valley contains a surprisingly large number of vacant and under-utilized parcels along Canal Street and along the north side of the Menomonee River. With improved access and varying degrees of remediation, these parcels represent an opportunity for a new wave of Valley redevelopment on its eastern end not unlike that which occurred on its west in terms of total acreage and economic impact. Included in this inventory of developable land is property owned by We Energies adjacent to its Valley plant. In 2015 the Valley plant will convert its operations to natural gas from coal. This will eliminate the need for coal barge deliveries and the large coal pile to the rear of the plant along the Menomonee Canal. This change will free-up nearly 5-acres as well as the adjacent lot to the west currently used for employee parking. Together with large vacant tracts east of the Valley plant, this southern hemisphere of the East Gateway contains nearly 36 contiguous acres for light industrial development.

Included in the East Gateway is a stretch of properties along the north side of the Menomonee River containing a mix of vacant parcels and a number of office and light industrial businesses. The large vacant riverfront properties would be highly desirable for redevelopment but for their lack of modern street access. These properties are currently accessible by way of an under-developed Mt. Vernon right-of-way more resembling an alley than a street. With proper street improvements, this area of the Valley, given its visibility and acreage, has the potential to significantly contribute to the overall goals and objectives of not only the East Gateway but to the overall mission of the City and the Milwaukee 7 (M7).

East Gateway Recommendations:

- Convert the existing Mt. Vernon right-of-way into an improved public street from the eastern edge of the Giuffre site to the eastern edge of the RACM owned 260 N. 12th site and Pettit Point.
- Should the Milwaukee recycling facility (MRF) operations cease before the end of its present agreement, future use should be light manufacturing with site development focused on river frontage considerations.
- Prioritize the 260 N. 12th site to be cleared and cleaned for immediate light industrial development with uses focused on the food and beverage cluster.
- Preserve the now vacant former administrative office building at the entrance to the 260 N. 12th site. Razing to improve access should be a last resort if all other alternatives are not feasible.
- Recognize that access to 260 N. 12th via an improved Mt. Vernon will not be a standard access point due to the placement of existing buildings but rather will resemble access to Zimmerman Studios. To that end, examine a curbless section of road at this entry and exit point to maximize access width.
- Pettit Point land uses are recommended to be light industrial and potential water uses such as a marina (as referenced in the Greening the Valley section). A food and beverage use is particularly desired.
- Improve pedestrian access from the Intermodal Station to 6th Street Viaduct.
- Areas underneath Marquette Interchange can accommodate storm water and surface parking for new redevelopment parcels adjacent to the interchange.

- It is recommended that the Cargill-owned open space on Canal Street be utilized for light industrial uses.
- The East Gateway redevelopment parcels of St. Mary's Cement, Stollenwerks, and We Energies coal pile and parking site should be reserved for light industrial land uses.
- Establish an access drive to activate these redevelopment parcels.
- Create a new pedestrian connection spanning the river from the Harley-Davidson Museum to the Reed Street Yards.



Valley East

4. St. Paul Corridor

St. Paul Avenue is an east-west street along the Valley at the base of its northern bluff and supplies a direct connection to the Valley from downtown Milwaukee, the Intermodal station, and the Historic Third Ward. Like the Valley, St. Paul has been and is currently comprised of industrial and heavy commercial uses devoid of residential and institutional uses. There is no singular or dominating business facility on the street, but rather varied commercial and industrial operations that include insulation wholesaling, chemical coating processing, cold storage, lighting fixture designers and retailers, custom stone fabricators, and automotive and mechanical contractors. Sobelman's, a locally owned bar and grill is the sole food and drinking establishment in the St. Paul portion of the Valley.

As in other historically industrial areas in Milwaukee, St. Paul contains a small collection of under-utilized, turn of the 20th century, multi-story industrial buildings. Architecturally notable with cream city brick and attractive fenestration, these buildings are no longer practical for industrial operations and are further hampered by the existing industrial zoning along much of St. Paul. Combined with varying levels of age and disrepair, the long-term future of these buildings is unknown.

Visually, the 16th and 27th Street viaducts and the Marquette Interchange traverse over the top of St. Paul Avenue and unlike Canal Street, the elevation differences make these roadways a much more looming presence along St. Paul. Combined with the majority of its physical stock being industrial in nature, uninviting viaduct stairwells, and minimal streetscaping, St. Paul presents an intimidating and detached environment for pedestrians and drivers alike.

Lack of access exacerabtes the visual and comfort issues, particularly on the west end of St. Paul. While there is a clean transition of St. Paul on its east end into the Third Ward, the west suffers from a confusing spaghetti string collection of I-94 on and off ramps, right-turn-bypass remnants, and an overall poor right-of-way condition. Indeed, while it is but a ten minute walk from 27th and Wisconsin Avenue south to St. Paul (less by bike) it seems an afterthought as a means to access St. Paul or the Valley. It is imperative that a more intuitive and human scaled access between these roadways be integrated into the upcoming I-94 reconstruction project. This project provides an unique opportunity to create a more cohesive and economically viable part of not only the Menomonee Valley, but Wisconsin Avenue and the near west side neighborhoods, as improve access between the Valley and near southside neighborhoods. While the Canal Street corridor of the Valley has been transformed into a national model of industrial redevelopment, it has been business as usual along St. Paul Avenue. Its relative isolation has long been viewed as an asset that has benefitted many of the businesses located on the street. However; in light of the demand generated by the overall success of the Valley, the current business mix along St. Paul ,and potential to improve access and visibility, the opportunity exists for St. Paul to evolve into a dynamic urban business corridor unique to not only Milwaukee but to southeast Wisconsin and the rest of the state.

St. Paul Recommendations:

- Rezone or establish a St. Paul overlay district to accommodate light industrial uses not otherwise permitted in the current IH classification.
- Establish an additional north-south connection between St. Paul Avenue and Mt. Vernon Avenue. These two corridors offer significant and compatible redevelopment potential and are currently only accessible to each other via 13th and N. 25th Streets, nearly one mile distance apart.
- Among other permitted uses under its current zoning classification, the RACM-owned vacant parcel at 18th and St. Paul is recommended for public off-street parking.
- Organize a St. Paul CSS design team to work with WisDOT to create a significant context sensitive design solution for St. Paul and connecting streets affected by the I-94 reconstruction.
- Work to eliminate the right turn bypasses at the 27th and St. Paul intersection.
- Reduce the number of chain link and barbed wire fences fronting along St. Paul.
- Residential uses are not recommended in the St. Paul corridor as defined in this plan document.

View of St. Paul Avenue looking west
Source: Dept. of City Development

Vacant cream city brick building
Source: Dept. of City Development

27th St Viaduct looms over St. Paul Ave
Source: Dept. of City Development

Underutilized light industrial property
Source: Dept. of City Development

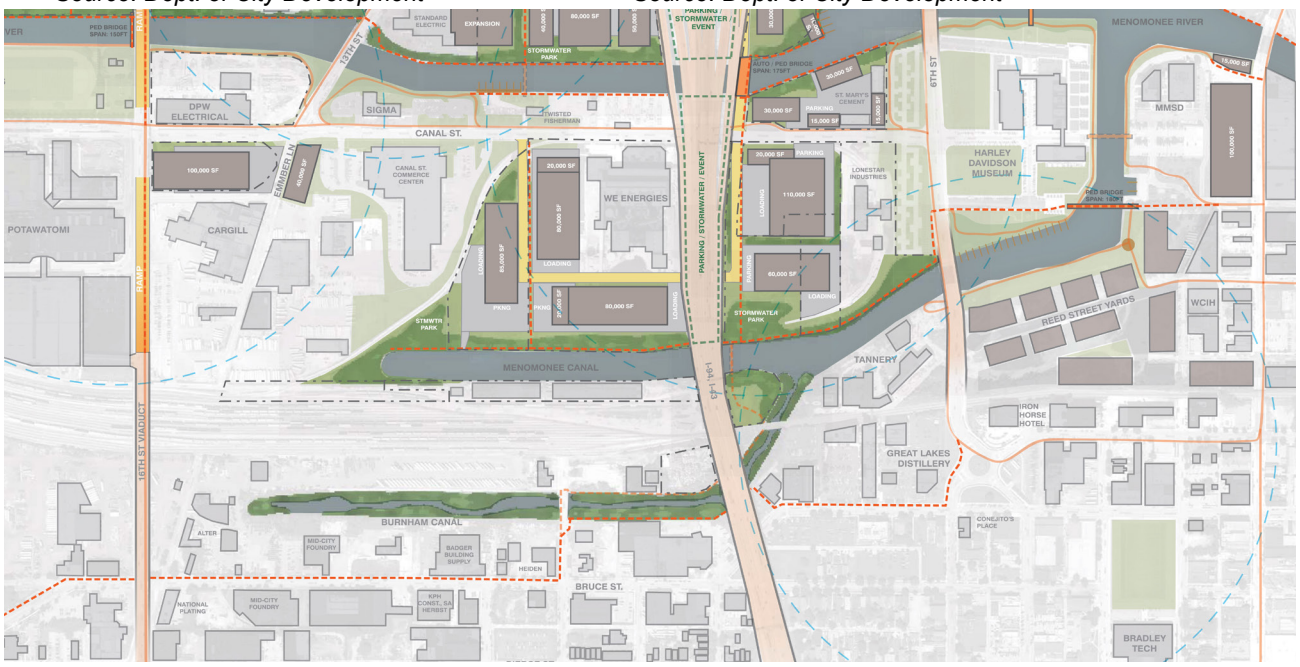
View of St. Paul Ave looking east
Source: Dept. of City Development

Heavy industrial operations still operate on St. Paul
Source: Dept. of City Development

Overgrown sidewalk along St. Paul Ave
Source: Dept. of City Development

Access to 16th St Viaduct from Bruce
Source: Dept. of City Development

National Plating Company
Source: Dept. of City Development



View of W Bruce St.
Source: Dept. of City Development

View of W Pierce St. looking east
Source: Dept. of City Development

5. Bruce & Pierce Industrial District

The southeast portion of the Valley plan area is not located in what is traditionally viewed as the Menomonee Valley, but its historical industrial roots, physical plant, and current industrial heavy users make it a natural extension of the Valley. The area is dominated by Alter, formerly Miller Compressing, a large scale metal compacting and salvage operation. East of Alter are smaller salvage operations, metal working, tanning, and automotive services. Notable manufacturing employers east of Cesar Chavez Drive are Vulcan Global Manufacturing Solutions, a lead refining business, and Garden Fresh Foods, a food processing and packaging business.

Unlike the Valley proper, the eastern edge of this district contains a scatteration of residential and commercial establishments, which is not surprising given the high density residential neighborhoods and major commercial corridor of National Avenue to the immediate south. While this mix of uses is compatible west of Chavez, the area east of Chavez is decidedly industrial in nature and land use conflicts should be addressed in order to avoid undermining the economic and job producing viability of these manufacturers.

Bruce & Pierce Recommendations:

- Residential and educational uses are not recommended for the Pierce and Bruce District as defined in this plan document.
- Retain the recently revised (2014) IM zoning classification in the Pierce and Bruce district. If needed, create an industrial overlay that adds additional protections against industrial land use conflicts.
- Determine support for extending the Valley BID to this area of Pierce and Bruce. The industrial mission of the Valley is compatible with this portion of Pierce and Bruce - maintaining and growing local industrial employment. A possible BID expansion would also reinforce this area's industrial identity and further refute future land use conflicts with the potential to invite additional industrial erosion.

Burnham Canal looking east
Source: Dept. of City Development

11th St Bridge spanning the Burnham Canal
Source: Dept. of City Development