

Chapter 4 District and Corridor Recommendations

Districts

The Washington Park study area is almost small enough to be considered as a single district for planning purposes, however, the history of development and current designations suggest separate districts to the east and west of 35th Street, and north of the park and east of the park. The park itself also creates an influence on surrounding properties which should be recognized. Therefore, the study area is described as three districts, which though separate have porous boundaries in terms of daily functions of area residents.

Recommendations are provided with an overall vision for each district and corridor, followed by a description of planning concepts, and associated development strategies and projects, which also include a discussion of potential urban forms and development types.

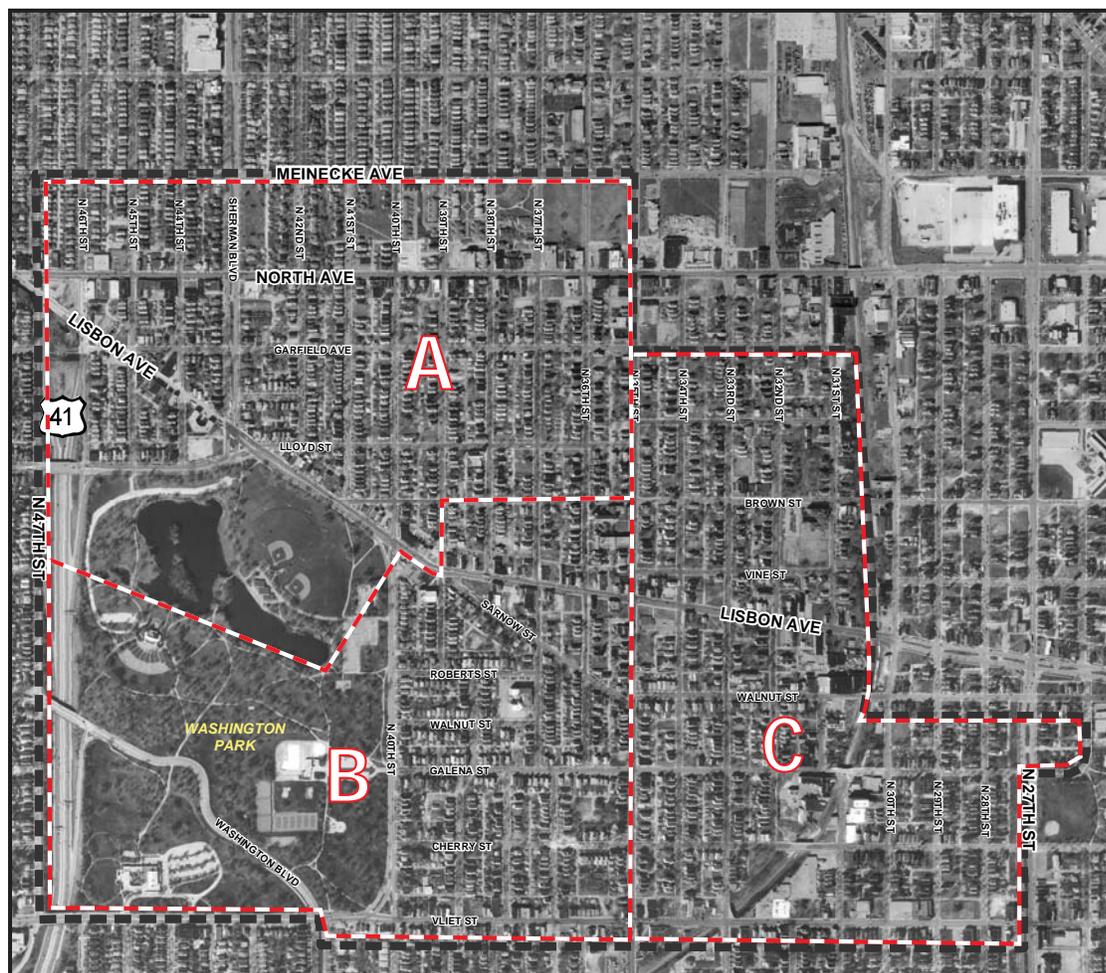


Figure 20: Neighborhood Districts

District A: North of the Park

District A, to the north of Washington Park, is a study in dichotomies, encompassing perhaps the most vital part of Washington Park, with a diversity of commercial and civic uses, and the most challenged, where residential blocks vary greatly in value and physical condition. The North Avenue corridor (addressed in Corridor section) is the main commercial area of the district from 35th Street west to 47th Street. New investment along North Avenue, especially in the corridor from North Avenue up to Meinecke Avenue holds much promise for stabilizing the neighborhood, yet blocks south of North Avenue to Brown Street have the highest concentration of vacant lots in the study area, with accompanying challenges.

Overall Vision for District A: North of the Park

Public and private development efforts will build on the value of views and proximity to Washington Park, the value of a designated historic district along Sherman Boulevard, and recent investment along North Avenue.

Concepts and Strategies

North Avenue Gateway Initiative

This initiative to sustain redevelopment and reinvestment momentum along North Avenue is discussed in the Corridor section below.

Park View Blocks

The “Park View Blocks” along Lisbon Avenue facing Washington Park should be considered a prime redevelopment project area. Marginal commercial uses should be relocated and higher value residential uses should be encouraged. Encourage construction of masonry buildings in high value, high traffic locations facing Washington Park, taking design cues from the small number of local examples. Zoning on the blocks should be consolidated by removing the scattered commercial and rezone to multi-family residential. Two existing apartment buildings that face the park—the Glen View Apartments on the 4100 block and the United Methodist building at 40th and Lisbon, are vintage “brownstone” type apartment buildings. Redevelopment efforts should seek to market the park view and build long-term value through an effort to construct masonry multi-unit buildings or stacked flat type structures..

Maintain and Extend Value of Historic District and Washington Heights

The Sherman Boulevard Historic District should be used as a marketing point for redevelopment on adjacent blocks, specifically at the former Finney Library block of North Avenue, and down Lisbon

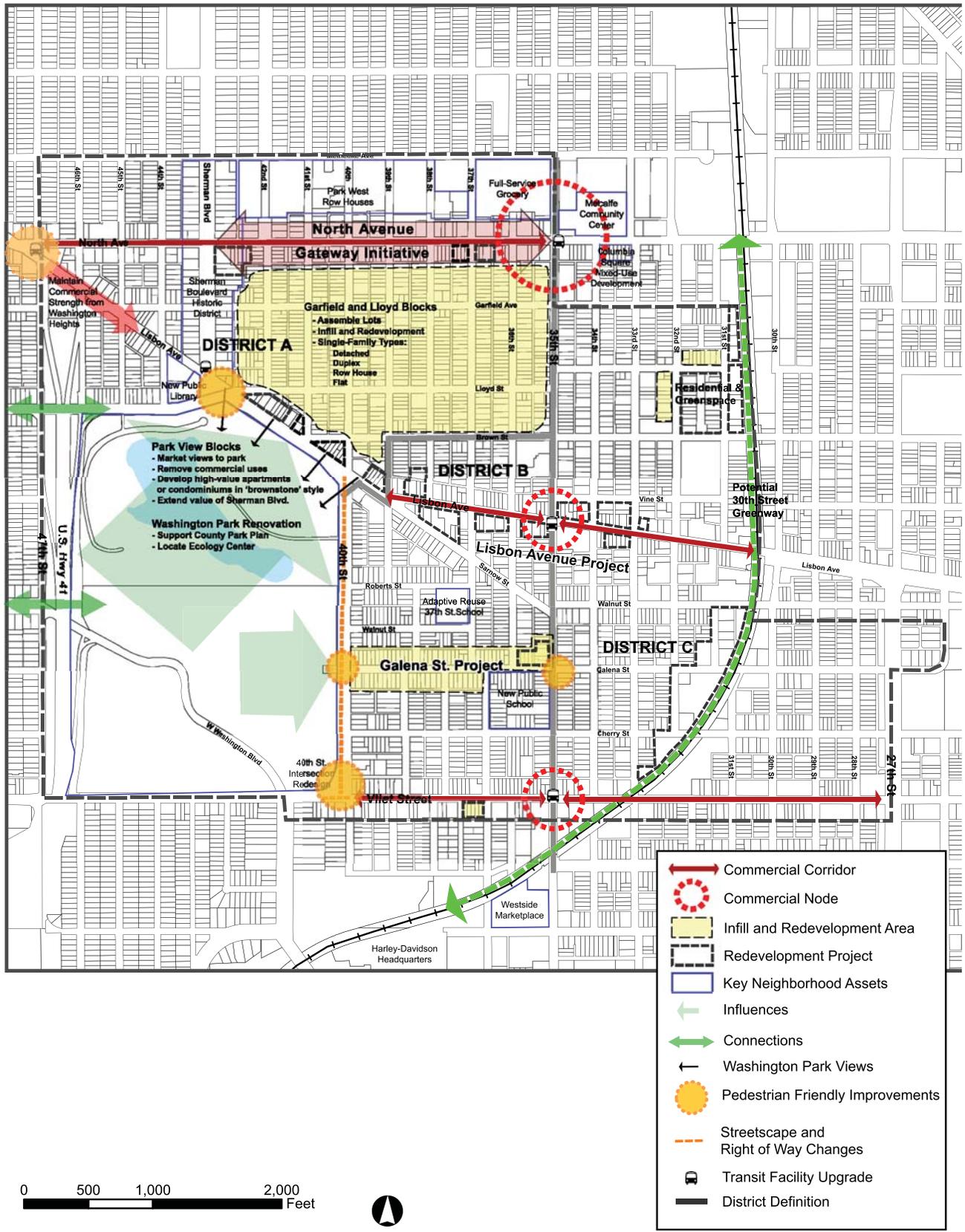


Figure 21: Districts and Corridors Concept Plan

Avenue on the “park view” blocks. Likewise, the North/Lisbon/47th Street commercial node should be maintained to build on strength in Washington Heights and new investments like the District 3 police headquarters. In addition, stronger, aesthetically pleasing connections should be made to the Washington Heights neighborhood across I-41.

Garfield and Lloyd Blocks between 35th & 42nd Streets

A sustained infill and redevelopment program should be undertaken to address concentrations of vacant and delinquent properties on blocks met by Garfield Avenue, Lloyd Street, and Brown Street. Vacant lots should be assembled into viable redevelopment areas. Some blocks, such as 38th Street between Garfield and Lloyd have so many vacant, city owned, and tax delinquent lots (see Figure 19), that a strategy of selective acquisition and clearance might be considered, after further investigation of each structure. Developers are looking for a critical mass of new housing that will change perceptions of an area, and this type of large-scale assembly is a viable approach. Row house or townhouse housing types are more economical than building detached houses, so this type of construction should be considered for blocks where little original fabric remains, especially on block ends and corners. With any form of infill housing, owner occupancy should be encouraged.

Lisbon and Sherman Blvd. Intersection and Washington Park Entrance

Given the civic uses that surround this intersection and the high pedestrian activity in this neighborhood, a study should be conducted to investigate how this intersection could improve both vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Continued effort should be made to improve access into Washington Park. Design of a grand entry into Washington Park should be pursued.

Catalytic Projects in District A:

United Methodist Expansion

Garfield and Lloyd Blocks Residential Redevelopment and Infill

North Avenue Gateway (also see Corridors)

District B: East of the Park

District B includes the southern portion of Washington Park and areas to the east of the park and west of 35th Street. Traveling east, the character of Lisbon Avenue changes at 39th Street as the diagonal alignment straightens relative to the grid and vacant lots become numerous. Yet fewer vacant lots are found on residential blocks than in District A, and values of houses along 40th Street are more stable. A new school at 35th and Galena is a major catalyst for reinvestment.

The block layout in District B is diverse with blocks with varying lengths caused by the diagonal alignment of Lisbon Avenue; blocks aligned in an east-west direction, with houses facing to the north or south, including Galena, Walnut, and Robert streets; square blocks along 35th Street between Galena and Vliet Street; and misaligned north-south streets that jog across Galena Street and a closed intersection at the west end of Sarnow Street where it meets Lisbon.. This layout gives the district an insular feeling, if not an enclave, compared to the rigid but open grid of the surrounding areas.

Main corridors in the district include Lisbon Avenue, Vliet Street, 35th Street, and 40th Street along the east side of the park. Lisbon Avenue and Vliet are both addressed in the Corridors section, as are their commercial nodes at 35th Street.

Overall Vision for District B: East of the Park

Recent investments in a new public school and investments in Washington Park by Milwaukee County will spur redevelopment and renovation of housing along Galena Street. Reuse of the old 37th Street School could provide space for job training and other social service organizations or owner-occupied housing, while the mix of commercial, civic, light industrial, and live and work spaces along Vliet Street provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for area residents.

Concepts and Strategies

Lisbon Avenue

See Corridors and Catalytic Projects sections for a detailed discussion of Lisbon Avenue.

Galena Street Project

With Washington Park to the west and the new Bethune Academy elementary school to the east at 35th Street, an opportunity to revitalize Galena Street should be pursued. The east-west alignment of Galena, with houses facing to the north and south (which does not continue east of 35th Street) creates a distinct environment. At present, however, the atmosphere on the street is created by a combination of derelict housing and illegal activity. A concerted effort should be made to revitalize Galena Street through a coordinated program of housing renovation, select housing removal, and new construction, especially on the blocks immediate to the new school. This project will continue the investment that the City has made in the school and in new housing on adjacent blocks along 35th Street.

37th Street School Reuse

With the construction of the Bethune Academy the future use of the old 37th Street School is still under consideration. The building

is an asset and its reuse a potential catalytic project. The City has considered development proposals that considered a conversion of the very solid masonry building to residential units or using the school space for neighborhood based social service organizations. In either case, the buildings reuse should compliment the surrounding neighborhood and if residential units are pursued, owner occupancy should be encouraged.

40th Street Streetscape and Washington Park

Creation of improved pedestrian amenities and traffic calming along 40th St. should be encouraged. Streetscape amenities should include sidewalks on the park side of the street, pedestrian scale streetlights, and improved pedestrian street crossings. In combination with the Galena Street project, a grander entry to Washington Park should be designed at the terminus of Galena Street.

Washington Park Urban Ecology Center

The Urban Ecology Center, a neighborhood-based, non-profit community center, plans to renovate the Washington Park Boathouse to use as an educational facility and environmental laboratory. This use of the park building would greatly increase activity in the park, in addition to serving the several school children in the area through a variety of educational programs.

Catalytic Projects in District B:

Lisbon Avenue Infill and Redevelopment

Galena and 35th housing

Reuse of the 37th Street School

District C: Walnut Hill

Walnut Hill is a slightly older section of the study area, including the areas to the east of 35th Street. The District includes a local historic landmark house at 1721 North 34th Street, and other houses that display local carpentry craftsmanship at the end of the 19th century. The area has organized itself as a neighborhood unit under the name, Walnut Hill. The main commercial corridors of Lisbon and Vliet connect across 35th Street, and the North Line railroad viaduct creates an eastern boundary, but the planning study area also includes land to the east of the tracks south of Walnut Street to 27th Street.

Overall Vision for District C: Walnut Hill

Walnut Hill will continue steady renovation of its original housing stock and small scale infill housing projects. Residential redevelopment in combination with a small greenspace north of West Side Academy I will spur redevelopment and renovation of housing on facing blocks. The potential to create a greenway and bicycle trail in the North Line railroad viaduct is also explored.

Concepts and Strategies

West Side Park and Housing

The eastern side of the study area lacks small scale parks and open space. The planning process identified the block at 32nd and Brown, across from West Side Academy I as a potential park. While the feasibility of redeveloping the entire block as a park is unlikely, incorporating a small public greenspace when redevelopment occurs is a possibility that the City can pursue. This open space is proposed as with a coordinated housing renovation and infill effort on facing blocks, particularly along 31st Street where existing repair shops detract from the value of area. The project is detailed as a Catalytic Project.

North Line Greenway

The historic North Line railroad viaduct lost its last freight customer north of Vliet Street when Tower Automotive closed in 2005. CP Railway should be engaged in a discussion about the potential to construct a recreational and commuter bicycle trail in the viaduct, while retaining the railroad track for future use. The 30th Street Industrial Corridor Corporation should also consider the value of a recreational and commuter trail as an amenity to adjacent properties, and a means of connecting jobs to local residents.

Similar rails to trails project can be found in urban neighborhoods, including the Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis, which includes a section with a combined active railroad track and adjacent recreational trail. Fencing between the trail and track will protect both trail users and the railroad. Given that parcels along the viaduct, such as the blocks south of Galena and Cherry streets, are not viable as industrial sites, and given known soil contamination and the higher costs of remediation for residential uses, the plan recommends including some of the former industrial parcels along the viaduct in the greenway system if redevelopment of these parcels is not feasible.

Catalytic Projects in District C:

Residential and Greenspace redevelopment north of West Side Academy I along 30th Street Industrial Corridor

Lisbon Avenue Infill and Redevelopment

30th Street Industrial Corridor Industrial re-use sites

Corridors

North Avenue Corridor

North Avenue is the primary commercial corridor in Washington Park. Over the last decade a number of projects have coalesced around the node at 35th Street into a group of new projects that have changed the face of that section of North Avenue. These projects include: a new Jewel/Osco grocery and drug store, the Metcalfe Community Center, Columbia Square mixed-use building, and Gateway Plaza's renovation of the mixed-use building on the southwest corner of 35th and North and construction of adjacent townhouses. North Avenue CDC and New Covenant Housing Corporation, with the assistance of City programs and financing, have lead the way on North Avenue revitalization, and both groups plan further renovation projects and major new construction, which are outlined below.

Concepts and Strategies

North Avenue Gateway Initiative

The Gateway District Initiative can be thought of as the umbrella concept that covers all of the private sector and public sector efforts under way to improve North Avenue in Washington Park. The efforts on the public side include a TIF district and CDBC grants that brings financial support to projects, along with recent public works improvements to the streetscape, including new street lamps and banners. The Plan supports the whole Gateway Initiative with projects outlined below.

Mixed Use Development

The Plan recommends continuing the trend toward new mixed use buildings and renovation of older mixed-use buildings along North Avenue. The Columbia Square project on the 3300 block and Toussaint Square on the 3400 block, just east of the study area, show that this type of development project is viable, and that there is a market for new rental apartment units in Washington Park. The level of new investment along North Avenue is reaching a point where the environment on the street is one of renewal and reinvestment, with many new and renovated buildings. The Plan supports this strategy, in general and with details on specific projects in the Catalytic Projects section.

35th Street Transit Improvements

With so many improvements happening at the intersection of 35th Street and North Avenue, the Plan recommends inclusion of transit facilities in support of riders and redevelopment. Routes 21, 4H and 35 intersect at the corner, allowing riders to transfer. A transit shelter should be installed on one of more of the corners, along with other rider amenities and transit information kiosks.

Lisbon and North Intersection Improvements

The intersection of North and Lisbon Avenues is very highly trafficked. Given traffic counts, the proximity to the freeway on ramp, and high speeds in the area, increase pedestrian amenities should be included in streetscape improvements. This intersection should be examined in greater detail in the 'West Side' Area Planning process.

Catalytic Projects along North Avenue:

Finney Library site

Toussaint Square

Food Court

Lisbon Avenue Corridor

Lisbon Avenue between 40th Street and the railroad viaduct is the most challenged part of Washington Park. The Plan recommends a change to City policy in regard to future land use, zoning, and development strategy. Lisbon Avenue can no longer support the amount of commercial space that it once did. Future land use policy is to seek multi-family uses or focused mixed-use or commercial development on blocks at the 35th Street intersection. Certain blocks have a preponderance of vacant land, much of it owned by the City or Lisbon Avenue Neighborhood Development (LAND), a local group working on revitalization projects. LAND worked to bring the Lisbon Avenue Health Clinic to a vacant bank building on the 3500 block of Lisbon, and this clinic has since expanded in size.

Taking a cue from redevelopment strategies along North Avenue, the amount of vacant land along Lisbon can be considered an opportunity to assemble whole block ends for new development.

Concepts and Strategies

Rezone and Incentives

Blocks along Lisbon Avenue should be rezoned from Commercial Service, to an appropriate multi-family district. A City program should be identified to assist with development of multi-family apartment projects, or townhouse projects.

Block End Assembly and Infill Development

Taking a cue from successful redevelopment strategies along North Avenue, the amount of vacant land along Lisbon can be considered an opportunity to assemble whole block ends for new development. Because the City or other non-profit organizations already own

many of these parcels, the blocks could be relatively easy to assemble with only a limited number of strategic acquisitions.

Blocks that should be assembled and marketed for new construction include:

3300 block, north and south sides

3400 block, north side at the 35th Street intersection

3500 block, south side excluding the Kehr Chocolate building.

3600 block, with only one existing structure and vacant land owned by LAND.

3800 block, north side, excluding the mixed-use masonry building at the west end.

Public Facility

A public facility could also be a welcome project on vacant land along Lisbon Avenue. City departments should consider the potential for locating City facilities on City-owned land.

Lisbon and 35th Street Node

The intersection of 35th and Lisbon has lost much of its commercial strength. The former St. Andrew's Church is located on the southeast corner, and the Lisbon Avenue Health Center is on the northwest corner, along with the long serving Lisbon Avenue Dental Clinic. Two of the four corners are institutional uses rather than commercial uses. The Plan proposes redevelopment of the northeast corner to a new commercial use, retail or hospitality. Strategies for the southwest corner could be to relocate the small grocery store on the northeast corner to a new building, and infill around an existing building in mid-block, or removal of the existing building, excluding the Kehr Chocolate building, and redevelopment to a commercial or mixed use. However, with a new full service grocery and drug store at 35th and North, and the Westside Marketplace on 35th south of Vliet, the market for any commercial space along Lisbon will remain weak.

Lisbon Avenue Health Center and West Side Academy II

LAND worked to bring the Lisbon Avenue Health Clinic to a vacant bank building on the 3500 block of Lisbon, and this clinic has since expanded in size. The clinic has expressed a need for additional off-street parking and has sought to negotiate with West Side Academy II for use of their parking lot immediately north. The school would also like to redesign a portion of its site for improved play areas and parking. In addition, the school district owns the vacant church to the north. Currently the school is not using the building and is seeking alternative uses for the building. The Plan recommends continued effort by the City to assist both parties to find the needed space for play areas and parking.

Catalytic Projects along Lisbon Avenue:
Lisbon Avenue Infill and Redevelopment

Vliet Street Corridor

Vliet Street in Washington Park is a classic Milwaukee mixed-use corridor. It has single-family houses, small mixed use buildings and the odd larger structure, such as the historic theater, now owned and used by the Hmong American Friendship Association. The commercial node at 35th Street shows signs of strength and retains some handsome brick buildings, next to franchise fast food restaurants, yet much of the rest of the corridor struggles with vacant and boarded storefronts, and apartments in need of renovation. Like Lisbon Avenue, the potential to support commercial uses is weak, and a recent proposal to construct new row houses where a vacant mixed use building recently stood on the 3700 block suggests an overall strategy that favors new residential construction.

The Near West Side comprehensive plan addresses Vliet Street from 35th Street to 40th Street as a corridor, recommending a mix of uses with commercial nodes and areas.

Concepts and Strategies

Infill and Redevelopment

The Plan supports new infill development, especially that of new row house or townhouse developments.

Vliet and 35th Street Node

The Plan supports small-scale commercial infill development that complements the historic fabric at the intersection of 35th Street, especially on the northwest corner, but retaining the existing building. A transit shelter should be installed at the transfer point between Routes 11, 4H and 35.

Hmong-American Friendship Association

Efforts should be made to encourage the Hmong-American community, which is concentrated on residential blocks around Vliet Street, to open businesses along Vliet Street. The area might lend itself to specialty retail such as a cultural center. The development of businesses that celebrate Hmong culture and share Hmong food and crafts and arts with the greater Milwaukee community would foster economic development and cross-cultural understanding.

Catalytic Projects along Vliet Street:
3700 Block Townhouses
35th Street node infill