

# Wisconsin Avenue Revitalization



## **Goal** *To revitalize Wisconsin Avenue as Downtown Milwaukee's Main Street*

### **Objectives**

- Make Wisconsin Avenue more pedestrian-friendly through streetscape improvements.
- Create a streetwall of high-quality facades.
- Restore existing facades to traditional historic character.
- Enhance the street character through the building and streetlight scale.
- Ensure that the primary entrances of stores and offices are on Wisconsin Avenue.
- Strive for all buildings to be fully occupied.
- Program a new market mix of merchandise, services and facilities.

### **Responsible Parties**

- Greater Milwaukee Committee, Grand Avenue Task Force
- Rouse Milwaukee / Grand Avenue Corp.
- City of Milwaukee
- Department of City Development
- Department of Public Works

### **Rationale**

The economic revitalization of Wisconsin Avenue is of strategic importance to the Downtown renaissance. The corridor from the Library to O'Donnell Park is both the gateway and the Main Street of Downtown. The new Midwest Express Convention Center, Library Hill housing development and Milwaukee County Art Museum expansion, for example, will bring more people to Wisconsin Avenue. These new structures, and many others, testify to the existing joint public and private sector commitment to Wisconsin Avenue. Capitalizing on this initial energy, the Plan

applies it to recapturing the Avenue's former grandeur to make a civic statement appropriate to its pivotal position within the realms of business and commerce.

### **Recommendations**

Nowhere in Downtown will commitments to improving the physical environment complement economic activity with greater impact than Wisconsin Avenue. Encouraging people to walk requires more than providing sidewalks. People must feel comfortable and safe; there must be attractive destinations. To fulfill its role as a premier destination street, the Plan proposes extensive streetscape improvements that reflect the different physical conditions and character on either side of the River.

### **Pedestrian Realm**

Intermittent hollow sidewalks exist along the length of Wisconsin Avenue. To date this has precluded extensive street tree planting. For the Avenue to acquire the necessary intensity of green that will encourage people to visit and walk, the sidewalks must be extended into the street. Expanded sidewalks will permit other street furniture to be located underneath the trees while maintaining maximum sidewalk width for the expected increase in pedestrian volumes. Increasing the sidewalk width must be balanced with the need to provide another important amenity, on-street parking.

The commercial stature of Wisconsin Avenue should be underscored with street furniture of durable materials. Street lights should be of sufficient height and proportion to connote the street's importance. Public art must be displayed at focal points. Benches must provide restful havens.

The retail viability and pedestrian dynamics of Downtown are largely dependent on the pedes-



The Library Hill residential /mixed-use development is located between 7th and 8th street is currently under construction.





Historic view of Wisconsin Avenue

trian's level of comfort crossing the street. Crosswalks should be an extension of the sidewalk through the vehicular realm of the street. Therefore, different materials should be employed to clearly define this transitional zone. Improved crosswalks should follow the model found on Old World Third Street; use of brick and Belgian block evokes the city's historical character. Enhanced treatment is recommended at every intersection on Wisconsin Avenue. Textured materials within the intersection also performs the function of slowing traffic, therefore further enhancing the perception of pedestrian security.

Two locations along Wisconsin Avenue, in front of the Miller Pavilion at O'Donnell Park and the Grand Avenue, deserve special streetscape enhancements. These locations are expected to attract significant volumes of pedestrian activity and street crossing. This justifies special design treatment. A paving material, other than asphalt and white concrete, should extend from building edge to building edge for several blocks. This will create a plaza-like appearance and feeling that immediately indicates the special character of place.

**Retail**

Wisconsin Avenue is the traditional retail address in Downtown Milwaukee. Recent activities have begun to reactivate retail conditions. The proposed streetscape enhancements will further that momentum. A mixed-use entertainment/hotel complex is proposed opposite the Convention Center to augment that investment. The new uses should complement those of the Grand Avenue, therefore contributing to its revitalization. New and



Present-day view of Wisconsin Avenue

revitalized buildings must comport to design standards aimed at enhancing the Wisconsin Avenue pedestrian realm. This includes activating facades with display windows, building entrances, outdoor cafes, pedestrian scaled signs and banners, etc. The goal is to provide pedestrians with a visually interesting sidewalk. Buildings should not present blank facades; those that do should be retrofitted with arcades or opened with display windows.

**Park Once**

Parking decks near Wisconsin Avenue should all participate in the parking management program, Park Once. Signage will direct drivers to the nearest deck with available spaces.

**Remove Buses**

To further enhance the pedestrian realm, the plan recommends that most of the County buses be transferred to Wells or Michigan Streets. Travelling on these parallel streets maintains commuter access while relieving vehicular capacity on Wisconsin Avenue for other uses.

**Trolley**

The distance between many of the daily, weekly and seasonal activity generators combined with inclement weather dictates that no matter how commodious the pedestrian realm, it must be supplemented with a transit system or people will frequently require their cars. The Milwaukee County Transit System has already sought funding for a Wisconsin Avenue trolley system to supplement the seasonal Brady Street Loop.

**Wisconsin Avenue Streetscape Improvements**

**Transit Stops**

- Street Car Stop
- Trolley Stop 1
- Trolley Stop 2

**Intersections**

- Type A Enhanced Intersection and Crosswalks
- Type B Enhanced Crosswalks
- Type C Painted Crosswalks

**Streetscape Components**

- Recommended Retail Frontage
- Street Texturing
- Sidewalk Texturing
- Street Lights
- Street Trees
- Existing Trees





Enhanced intersection and defined crosswalk



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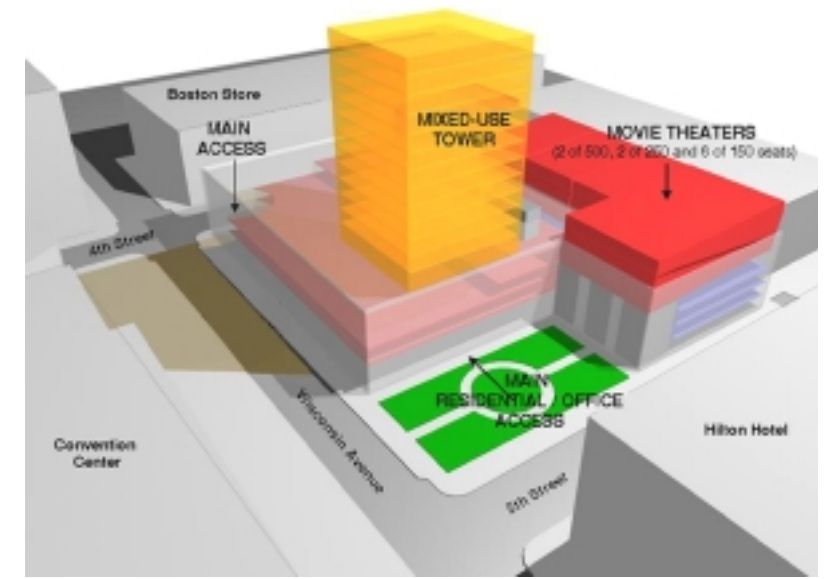
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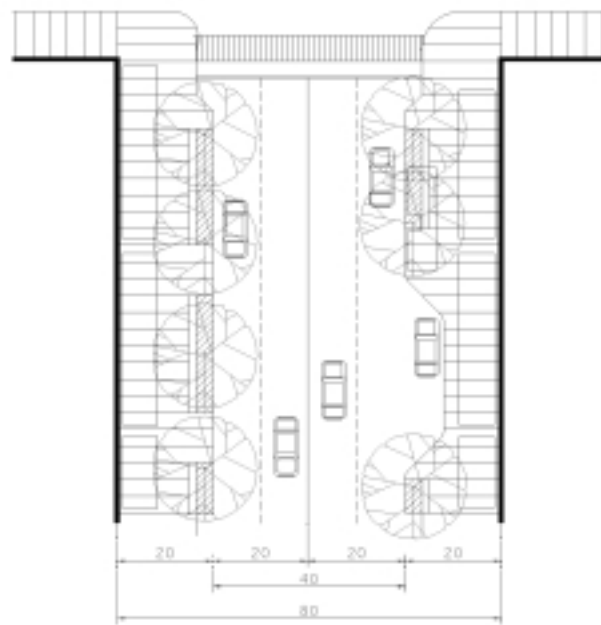


These three dimensional studies illustrate a conceptual infill program for the redevelopment site at Wisconsin Avenue and 4th Street.

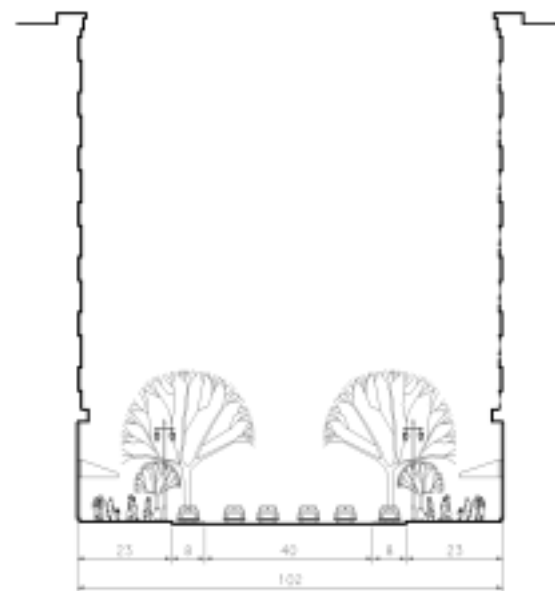
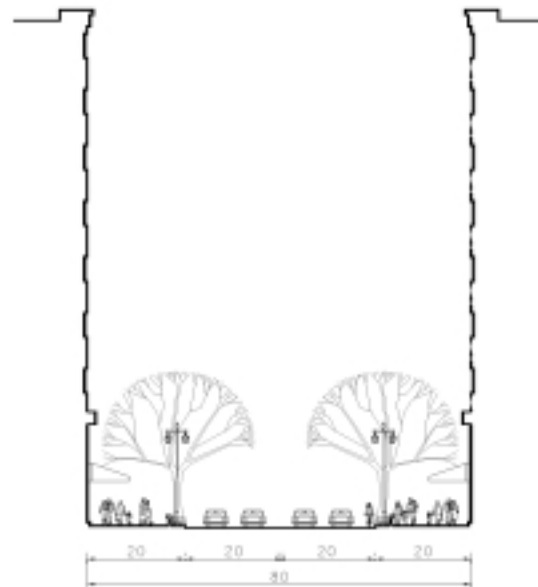
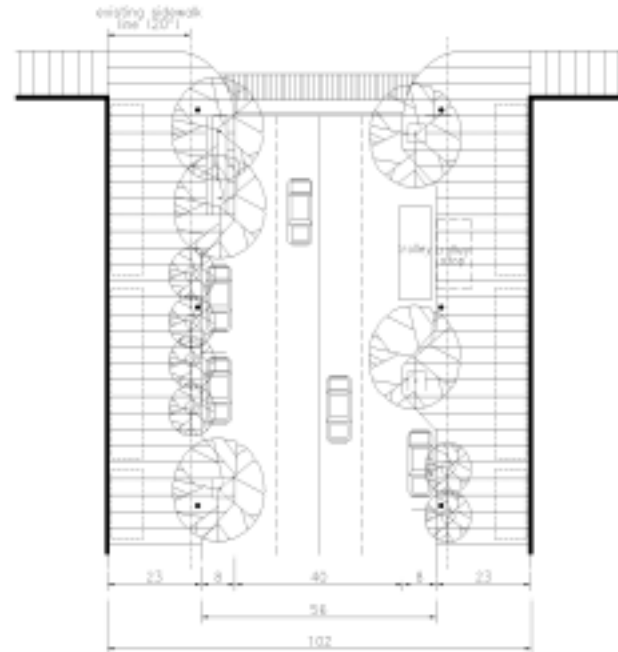
The ground floor contains shops and parking. Vertical circulation, elevators and escalators, will take patrons to the upper level cinemas and shops. A tower accessed from the 5th St. plaza could contain residences, offices, a hotel or a combination of these. Parking is provided underground as well as in a parking garage.



***West Wisconsin Avenue***



***East Wisconsin Avenue***



West Wisconsin Avenue existing condition

Illustrative simulation of enhanced streetscape treatment. Special paving material extends across the sidewalks and street, from building edge to building edge. This creates a plaza-like feeling to indicate the importance of pedestrian activity. A similar concept is proposed in front of O'Donnell Park.



East Wisconsin Avenue existing condition

Proposed streetscape enhancements include street trees, banners, new street lights, enhanced pedestrian crosswalks and intersection improvements.

