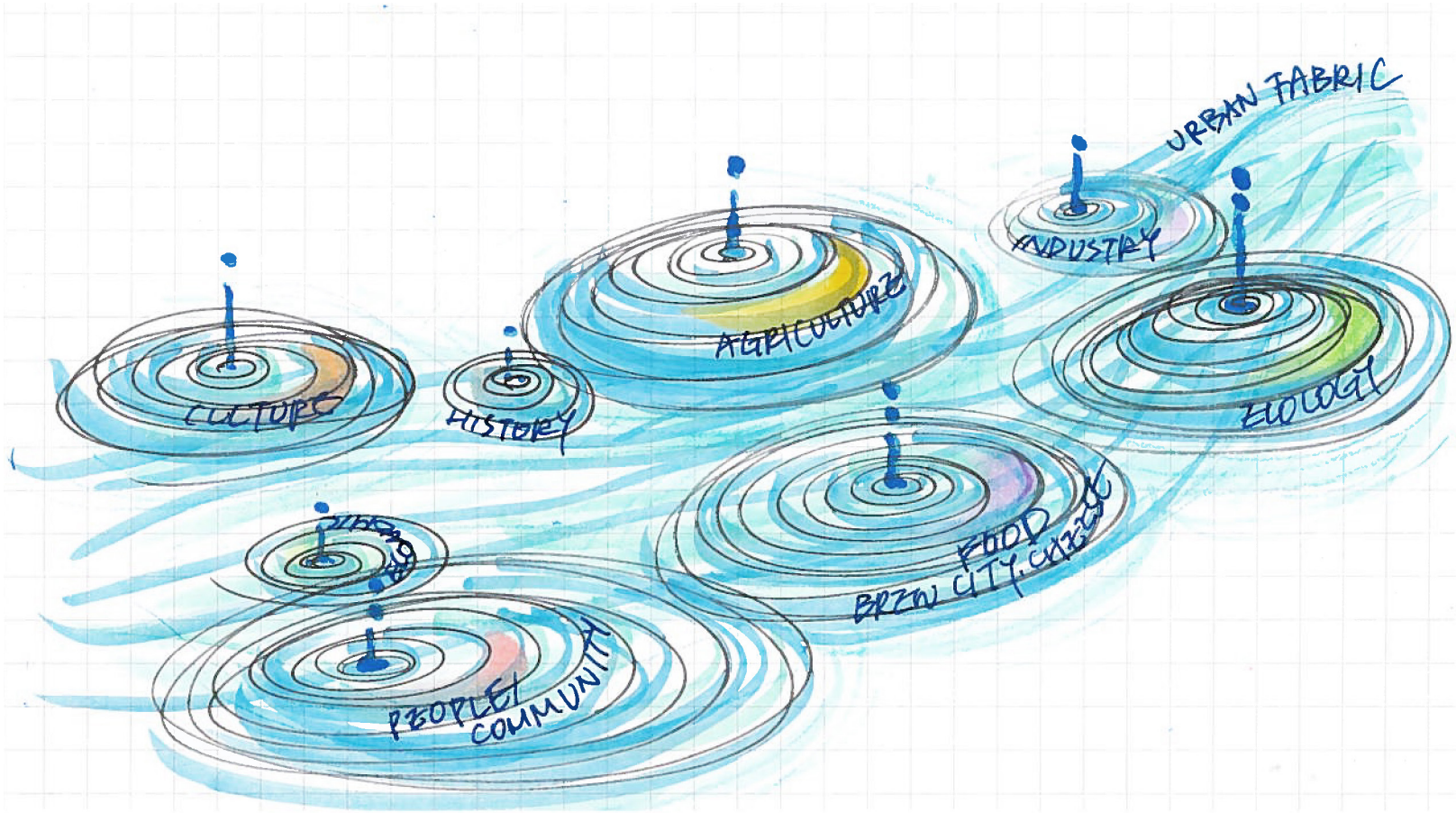

THE WATER CURRENT TOUR

A Water Centric City Interactive Walking Tour

WATER CENTRIC CITY MILWAUKEE

December 2019

Sketch by SmithGroup

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City of Milwaukee

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Milwaukee Environmental Collaboration Office would like to acknowledge those who supported and participated in the Water Centric City Design Workshop and helped generate concepts for the Water Current Tour.

Special thanks to the Fund for Lake Michigan, who provided funding for this project, as well as the many stakeholders who provided feedback and input during this process.

Fund for Lake Michigan

The Brico Fund
City as a Living Lab (Mary Miss)
City of Milwaukee Department of City Development
City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works
Clean Wisconsin
Freshwater Tool Kit
Greater Milwaukee Committee
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
Harbor District, Inc.
Julilly Kohler
Lybra Loest
Milwaukee Food Tours
Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Milwaukee Water Commons
Milwaukee WaterWorks
Plastic-Free MKE
Port Milwaukee
Reflo
Rockwell Automation
Sixteenth Street Community Health Center
University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, School of Freshwater Sciences
Visit Milwaukee
The Water Council
Walker's Point Association
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

DESIGN TEAMS:

Chemistry in Place℠

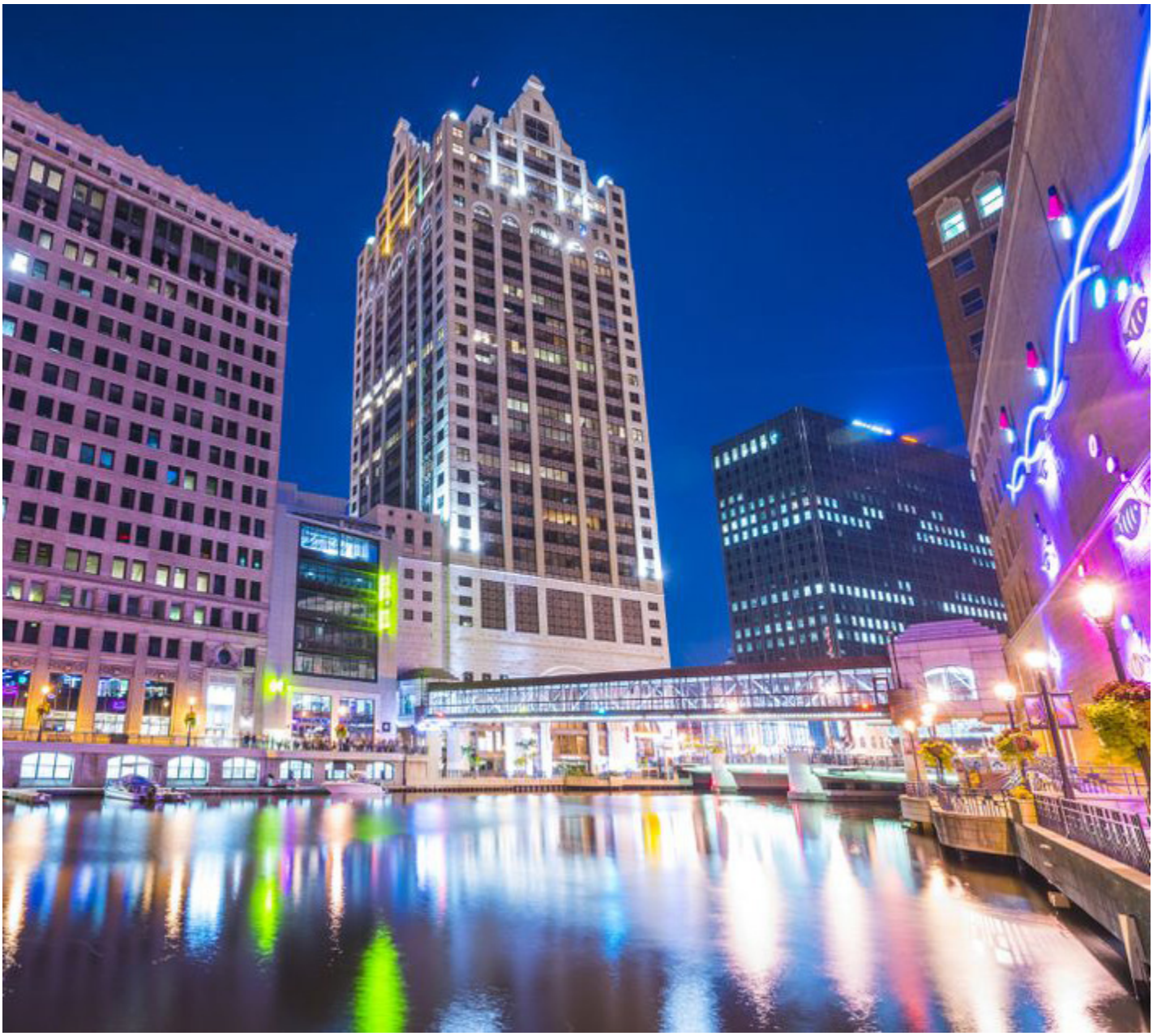
GRAEF

STORMWATER SOLUTIONS ENGINEERING LLC

SMITHGROUP

Ce Planning Studio

CODA worx Collaboration of Design + Art



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WATER CENTRIC CITY

ecoCITY of MILWAUKEE

Milwaukee is defined by water. Native communities settled here because of it. Our history was shaped by it and our future depends on it. At the confluence of three great rivers pouring into the largest freshwater resource on the planet, we're not just the Midwest. We're a coastal city on America's Fresh Coast.

But it's more than just proximity to these resources that makes our city special. Many cities are lucky enough to find themselves positioned along the Great Lakes or even a great river, but Milwaukee is rising to the occasion in a novel way. We're a Water Centric City filled with passionate leaders and innovative thinkers working to protect our shared watershed and communities. We have a collective water story worth sharing.

Sketch by GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions

THE WATER CURRENT TOUR:
A WATER CENTRIC CITY INTERACTIVE WALKING TOUR

Project Summary

The City of Milwaukee is telling our water story. We've invested in improving water access, water quality, and innovation through implementation of the Milwaukee RiverWalk, Global Water Center, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee (UWM) School of Freshwater Sciences, and the Harbor District. We're investing in 21st Century water infrastructure through the Milwaukee Water Works and Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District. The City of Milwaukee Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO) would like to build on these great accomplishments by developing urban design improvements and branding that support Milwaukee's global profile as a Water Centric City. These improvements will showcase our leadership in managing our water resource in a sustainable and resilient way.

With support of the Fund for Lake Michigan, ECO organized a Water Centric City Design Workshop to develop ideas for effectively telling Milwaukee's water story through art, interactive signage, creative placemaking and connecting visitors to Milwaukee's water assets. **In particular, the objective of this project is to better connect the southern end of the Milwaukee RiverWalk to the Global Water Center and the UWM School of Freshwater Sciences through a walking tour along 2nd Street to Greenfield Avenue.**

To quickly and creatively generate design concepts, ECO organized a design workshop with three interdisciplinary teams of urban planners and designers to create conceptual designs and strategies. The goals of these design improvements included:

- Continue to build Milwaukee's identity and sense of place around fresh water
- Create water-themed visual cues that connect existing water assets, especially the Riverwalk to the Global Water Center and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences.
- Showcase and educate the community and visitors on Milwaukee's efforts to improve water quality, preserve, protect, and restore water resources, and develop innovative water technologies.
- Attract water-related businesses to locate in the Water Technology District or Harbor District.
- Build support for continued investments in environmental protection, water-related infrastructure, and water-related businesses.

This report summarizes the results of the design workshop and identifies priority projects that can be implemented in the near term and long term. These improvements will set the foundation for a pedestrian/bicycle focused urban trail that connects visitors to the many water-focused efforts and programs that have been planned or implemented by the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), the Water Council, the Harbor District, Milwaukee Riverkeeper, and various other environmental non-profits.

Map of Priority Planning Area for the Water Centric City Design Workshop

Project Timing

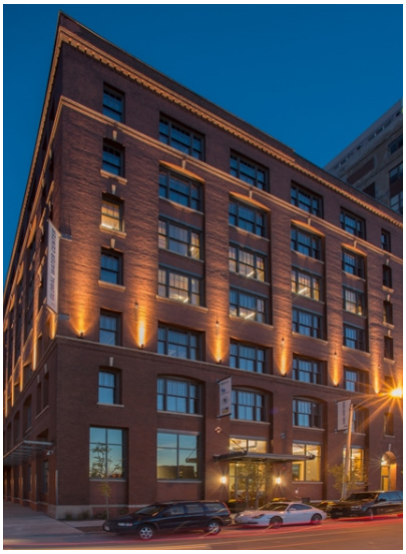
There is no time like the present to start sharing the Water Centric City message. Milwaukee is in a unique position to take advantage of the national and global spotlight as we prepare to host several major conferences. In addition to the 2020 National Democratic Convention in July, Milwaukee is slated to host more regional and national conferences in the near future than ever before, including the Healing Our Waters Conference for the Great Lakes Coalition, the One Water Summit for the US Water Alliance, and the Ryder Cup, which will draw visitors to Milwaukee.

In anticipation of these high-profile events, ECO has an aggressive timeline to develop and implement a series of smaller but impactful catalytic projects that can set the stage for future phases of this effort.

Project Area

For the purposes of the design workshop, teams were asked to focus their efforts on design improvements and recommendations for the area directly south of the Riverwalk, along 2nd Street to Greenfield, and Greenfield to the UWM School of Freshwater Sciences. Design improvements are intended to create improved visual connections and water-centric branding that collectively help establish a user-friendly urban trail that draws visitors from Downtown and the Third Ward to Global Water Center/Water Technology District and finally to the UWM-School of Freshwater Sciences/Harbor District via S. Second Street and E. Greenfield Avenue.

Milwaukee RiverWalk


Global Water Center

Public Dock Access along the RiverWalk

Harbor View Plaza in the Harbor District

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS: PRIORITY PROJECTS

To quickly generate creative and invigorating urban design improvement concepts, ECO selected three design teams to participate in a one-day design workshop. Each team presented five project concepts to the selection committee, who discussed and prioritized their project recommendations. The following sections provide a summary of the priority projects that ECO and the selection committee agreed would provide the most impact, were affordable, and could be implemented within a short timeframe. The projects were evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Inviting and Safe.** First and foremost, the route of the tour must feel inviting to pedestrians, and those traveling by bike, scooter, or other similar means.

- **Delightful.** The purpose of the tour is to draw attention to and celebrate the great work being done around water in Milwaukee, so each feature must creatively inform people while still feeling whimsical, interactive, and delightful.

- **Inspiring and Impactful.** The water-centric tour should embody the values that are being implemented throughout the City through demonstrations. These initial projects - while smaller in scale - should still serve as catalysts for future projects.

- **Affordable and Implementable.** ECO would like to have these initial projects completed by June of 2020. Given the short timeframe and tight budget, projects should be achievable within this time schedule. The City will also prioritize projects in public spaces. Projects on private property or on railroad bridges are possible, but reaching agreements with third-parties can be time consuming or may not be feasible.

Images from the design workshop where all three teams shared ideas and heard feedback from stakeholders

Milwaukee's Wild Residents

Milwaukee's Wild Residents is designed to captivate and delight in an accessible, family-friendly scavenger hunt. This scavenger hunt concept – develop by the SmithGroup | CE Planning | CODAworx team - is envisioned as a series of art installations depicting Milwaukee's native animals that will stretch the entire length of the tour and create a sense of discovery along the way. A collection of murals, sculptures, and street art created by different artists will represent wild Milwaukee residents that co-exist along the water's edge. Animals may include a trout, a heron, a frog, a turtle, a dragonfly, an eagle... all located along the trail.

Mix in some that are bold and beckoning while others are harder to find and provide a fun sense of discovery. Each critter could be accompanied by a simple sign that contains a fact about Milwaukee water, and links you back to an app or URL. Signs could be fabricated by Bradley Tech students (located one block west of the corridor).

Examples of artwork from various artists, compliments of SmithGroup | CE Planning | CODAworx

Sketches by GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions

Bronze Inlay from Boston's Freedom Trail

Water Route Markers

An important goal of the water-centric trail is to create a clearly defined path to guide visitors from the RiverWalk to the Global Water Center and UWM School of Freshwater Sciences. The GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions team proposed placing route markers along the trail as a simple and clear way to achieve this goal. Stencils can be used to create the trail through the neighborhood – much like the Freedom Trail in Boston.

These stencils can be affordably created and replicated to increase the connectivity for visitors and residents from the Milwaukee Riverwalk ending in the Third Ward to the Walker's Point neighborhood.

These stencil designs could also be adapted to a more permanent cast iron inlay that can be installed along key locations of the trail.

Examples of vertical wayfinding elements and district banners

In addition to route markers on the ground plane, vertical elements should also be incorporated throughout the 2nd Street corridor. These vertical elements should serve to give visitors more visible cues that the trail continues south. Vertical elements could be artistically designed flags or banners that storefronts could install, or bold, freestanding wayfindings signage that serve as a key district icon.

The Water Marks project by artist Mary Miss is one effort that has been proposed to implement vertical elements - Water Marks - that draw attention to Milwaukee's vast network of water assets. This project works with neighborhoods throughout Milwaukee to select a representative letter, artwork, and their personalized water story. Our design teams were able to see a presentation from Mary Miss on her project during the design workshop and were grateful for her input on their concepts for the walking tour. To learn more visit: CityAsLivingLab.org/WaterMarks.

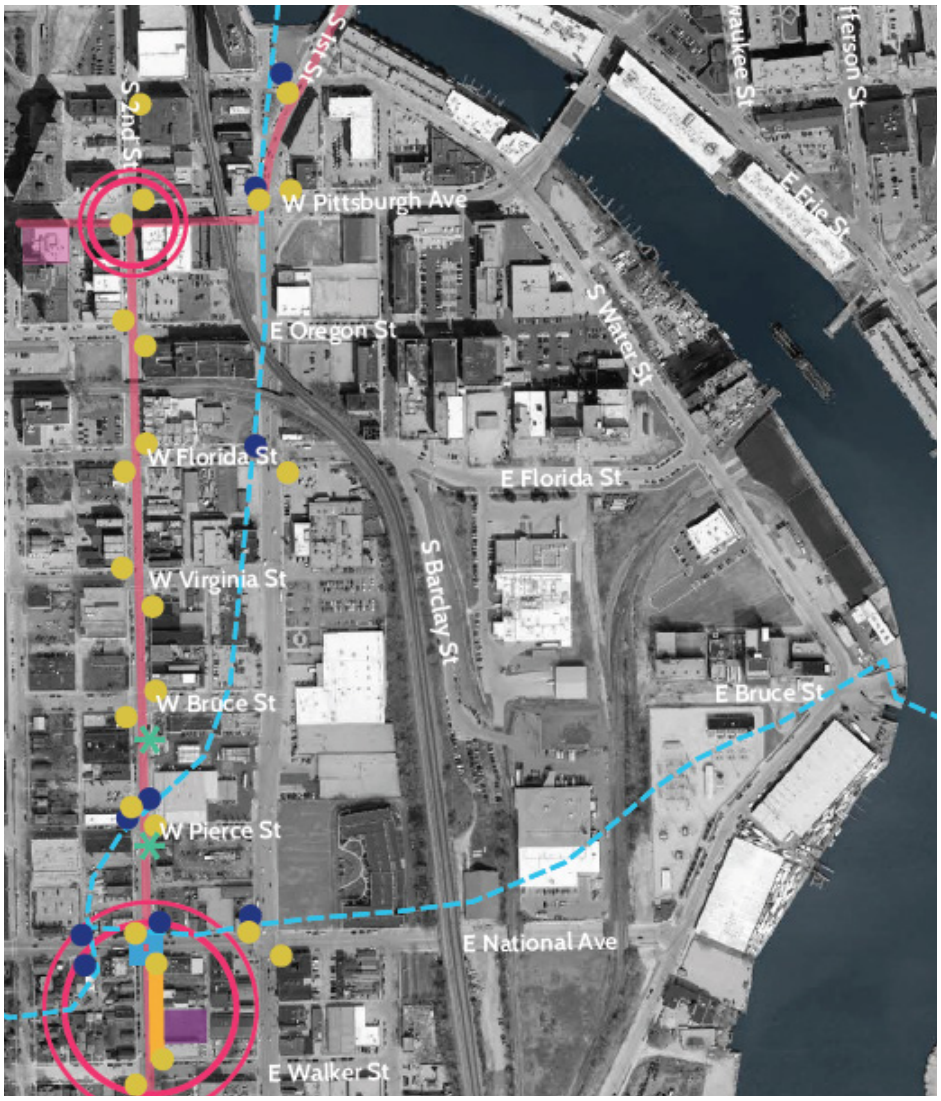
District Crosswalks

Painted intersections are a unique way of increasing pedestrian safety, walkability, connectivity and incorporating public art. Furthermore, these installations make being a pedestrian more engaging and help strengthen neighborhood identity. The GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions team identified the intersection of National Avenue and 2nd Street as a priority site for a district crosswalk, given the high levels of traffic and therefore visibility (and potential safety benefits). Additional high-traffic/high profile intersections could also be considered for this treatment. Design for the crosswalks could include collaboration with a local neighborhood artist to ensure that designs are responsive to neighborhood character and identity, while incorporating water-centric themes.

Sketches by GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions

Watershed Moments

Walker's Point is home to three watersheds, adjacent to a major port and harbor, and near the confluence of three Milwaukee rivers. Watershed Moments were suggested by the GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions team as a way to celebrate Milwaukee's waterways and watersheds, and educate the community and visitors on their importance and value. A neighborhood watershed walk can be highlighted through mounted signage and watershed boundary lines on the ground that describe what watersheds are, why they are important, where they are physically located, and indicate the Milwaukee River, Menomonee River, and Kinnickinnic River watersheds. Lines and signage can highlight where the water flows as a drop falls on either side of the watershed line. These Watershed Moments will help bring more awareness to the water's presence even when water is not visible. The Watershed Moments will need to be limited to sidewalks and will not extend into the street so as not to create confusion of existing traffic markings.



Aerial of the project area depicting location of the three watersheds. Graphic by GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions

Sketches by GRAEF

Example of sidewalk public art

Examples of parking lot screening options

Sketch of parking lot screening at 2nd and Greenfield

Parking Lot Screening

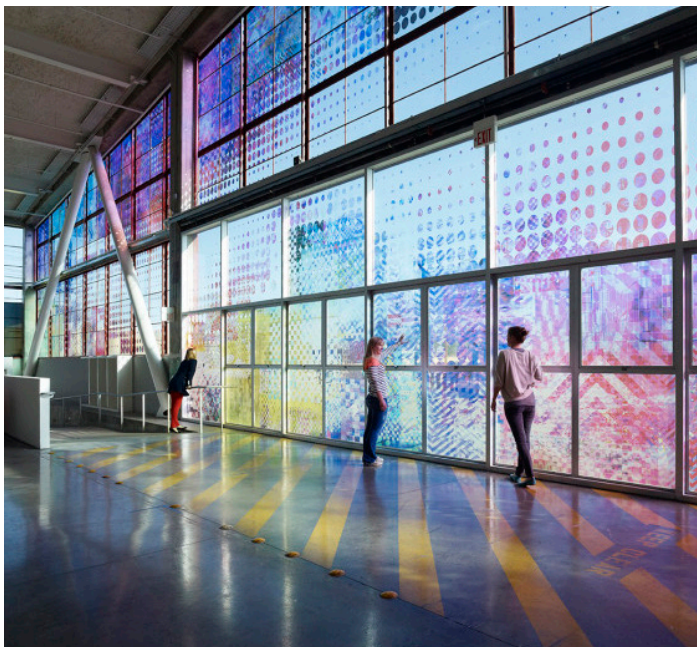
There are several surface parking lots along the 2nd Street route that are in varying conditions ranging from decent to unsightly. Creative and artistic use of parking lot screening techniques will help add visual interest for pedestrians and serve the dual purpose of screening large areas of surface parking lots.

Rockwell Automation has two large surface lots on the corner of 2nd and Greenfield where creative screening could also serve to help direct visitors toward the School of Freshwater Sciences on Greenfield. In addition to the Rockwell Automation sites, there are several small lots that could receive a similar parking lot screen treatment. Parking lot screening will not be opaque in keeping with CEPTED principles.

Rendering of Historc Film Art by Chemisty in Place

Window Film Art

Walker's Point is fortunate to have several old buildings that are rich with history and architectural character. However, several of these buildings are currently vacant. The Chemistry in Place team suggested a simple way to activate these vacant buildings is to display historical images on the windows using window film. These images could educate the public about the water history of the area. Alternatively, window films could also be used to create interesting art on storefront windows along the 2nd Street route. This is a simple and affordable way to add visual interest at the street level.



Example of window film art

Examples of different styles of educational signage

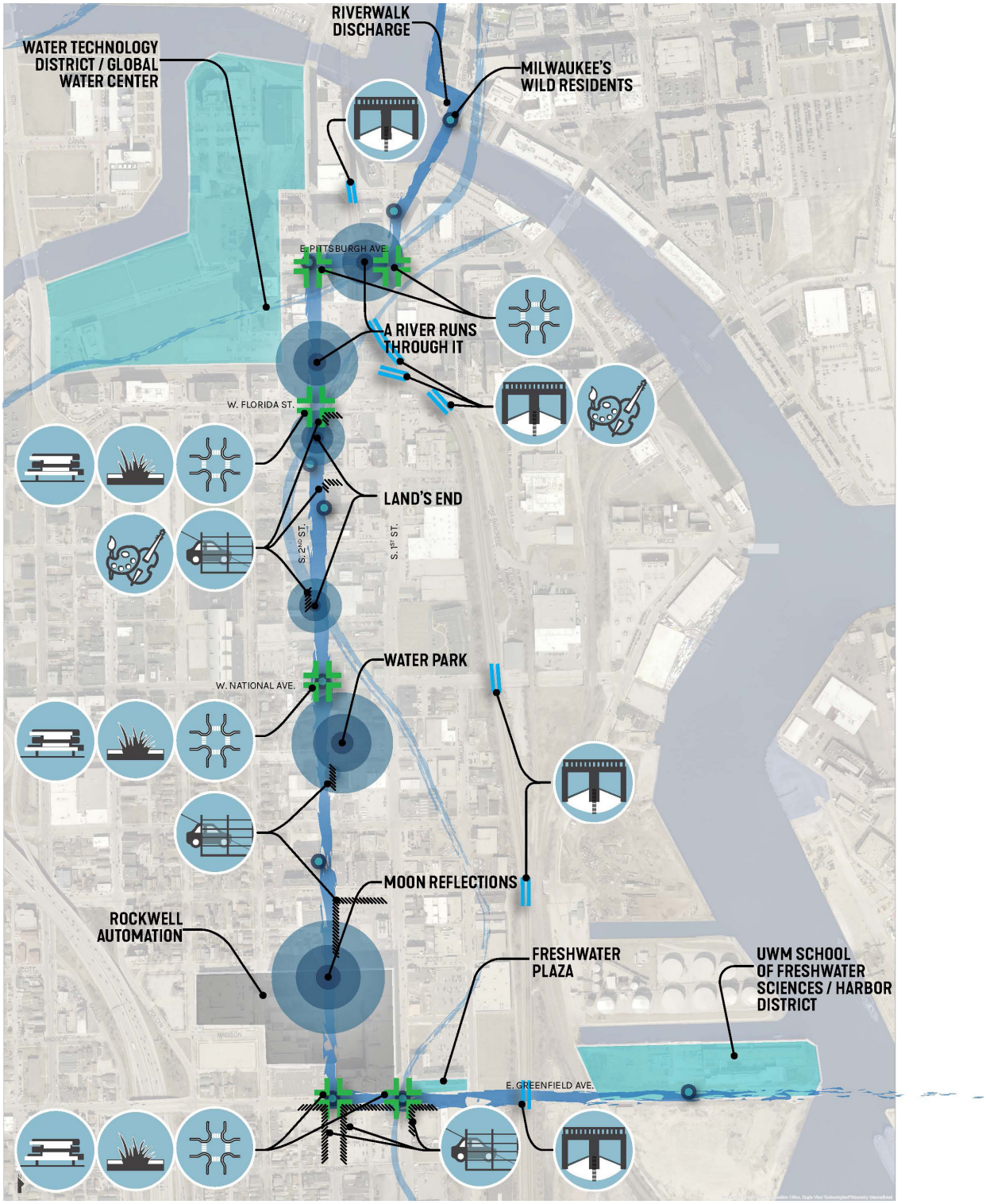
Educational Signage

The purpose of the tour is to draw attention to and celebrate the great work being done around water in Milwaukee, so each feature must creatively inform people while still feeling whimsical, interactive, and delightful. Future phases of the project should incorporate updated educational signage that focuses on water-centric programs and businesses in the district and throughout Milwaukee. This includes re-evaluating any existing educational signage that may need to be updated.

Examples of permanent exhibits

Permanent Water Centric City Exhibit in the Wisconsin Center

Outside of the Water Design Workshop, ECO is developing a proposal for a permanent water exhibit in the Wisconsin Center that would reference Milwaukee's water assets, including the new water trail. ECO is working on concepts of a 20 foot wall exhibit and options for larger, more interactive space. This would help encourage visitors to visit the Global Water Center and the Water Centric City Trail.



Example of The Current Tour Map, created by SmithGroup | CE Planning |CODAworx

The Water Current Trail Map

A trail map will be developed that will graphically depict the route and provide additional information about attractions, activities along the trail, and water-related organizations and businesses throughout Milwaukee. This map will be available in both hardcopy and digital formats, and can be easily accessible to visitors. This map could also have the option of adding a digital interactive component in the future.

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the priority projects described above, ECO and the selection committee also evaluated more long-term projects that could be further developed in future phases. These projects were considered too large for near-term implementation, however, could potentially be explored in future years with more planning, coordination, community involvement, and funding.

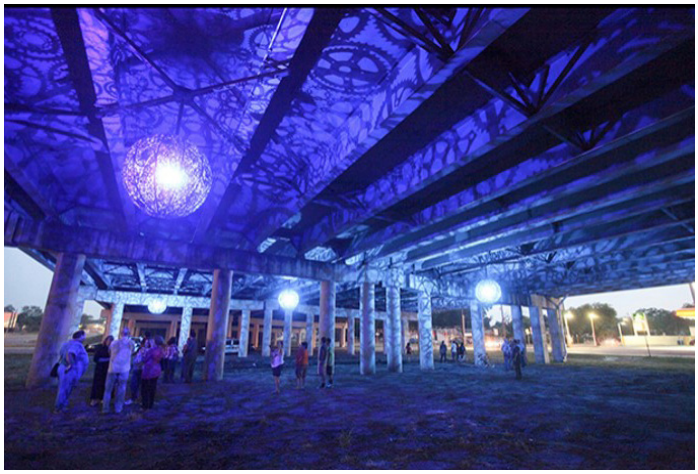
Rendering by SmithGroup

Rendering by SmithGroup

Bridge and Underpass Lighting & Art

The water-centric trail takes visitors under three bridges and underpasses – two under a railroad bridges and one under the Rockwell Automation building. These bridges present a unique opportunity to use lighting design, murals, and panels to reinforce the trail path, help brand the area, and create a visual draw. Adding artistic elements can also help make these often dark and uninviting spaces feel safer for pedestrians. Both the SmithGroup | CE Planning | CODAworx and GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions teams suggested enhancements to the bridges using lighting and art.

Note: Any enhancements to railroad bridges would be subject to approval of applicable railroad companies and may be difficult to obtain in the short-term.



Examples of lighting design and murals

Rendering by GRAEF

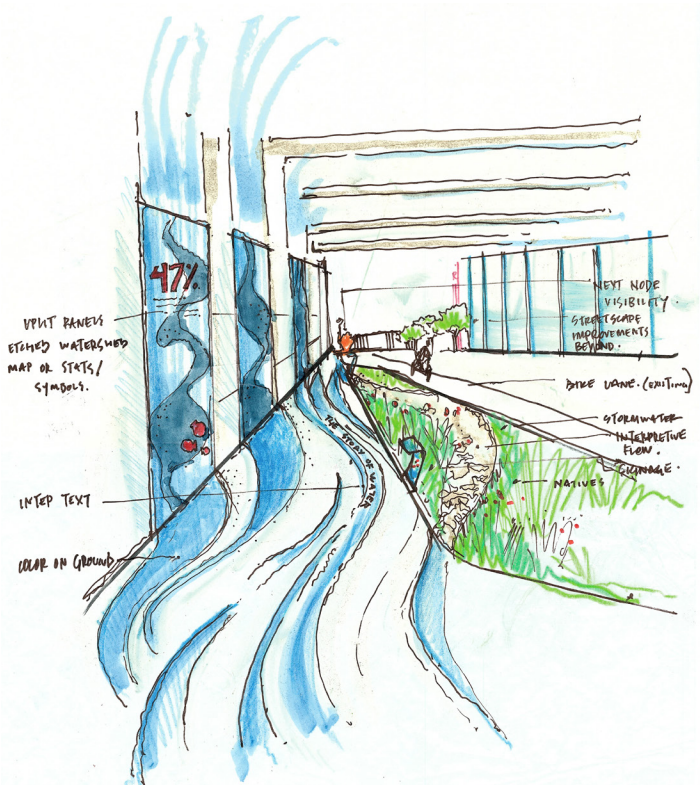
Rendering by GRAEF

Rockwell Automation Projection, Lighting Design and Murals

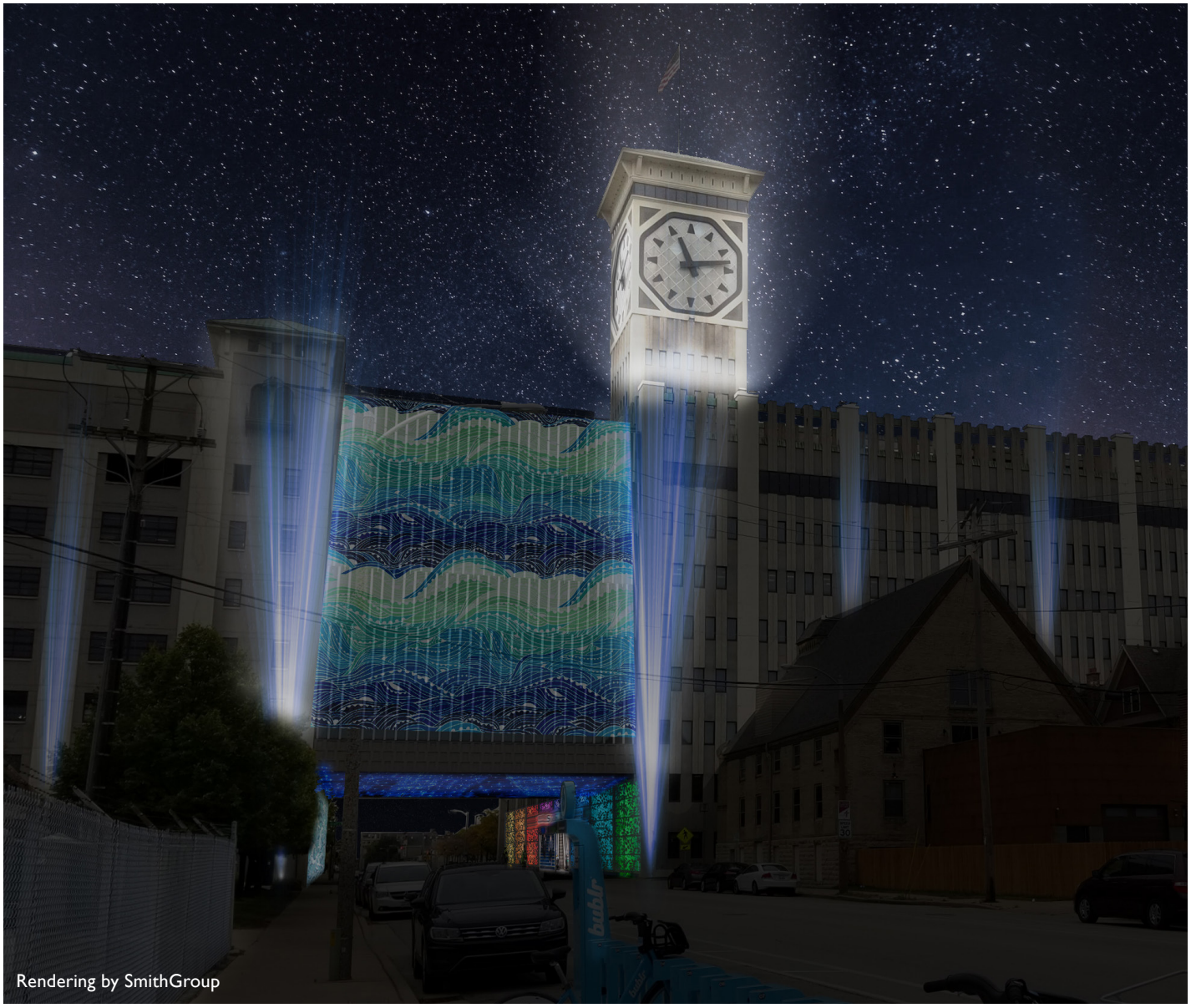
The Rockwell Automation building is an iconic landmark for the City of Milwaukee – its large and distinctive form is visible from downtown and nearby overpasses. The 10-story building looms over 2nd Street and is also a prime canvas for artistic expressions of water through lighting design, video projection, or underpass murals.

Both SmithGroup | CE Planning | CODAworx and GRAEF | Stormwater Solutions provided concepts for projected art or lighting design for the Rockwell building. Cost estimates for these projects vary widely, but could be supported through corporate sponsorship.

The SmithGroup | CE Planning | CODAworx team also proposed adding green infrastructure pocket parks in the currently unused parking lane under the Rockwell underpass. Plantings in these areas could be selected for low-light environments and offer additional green space in an area that is primarily made up of impervious, hard surfaces.



Rendering by SmithGroup



Rendering by SmithGroup

The River Beach

A key site identified during the workshop was the privately-owned property at Water and E. Seebooth Streets. Situated right on the river, and directly south of the RiverWalk, this site – if activated correctly – has the potential to draw people from the Third Ward south toward Walker's Point. The Chemistry in Place team reimagined this site as a "river beach", complete with imported sand, beach umbrellas, food and beverages, casual outdoor picnic areas, and festive music. Note, this is just a concept. Any development or proposed changes to this site, or any enhancement concepts that occur on private property are at the discretion of the current property owner of the site.

Rendering by Chemistry in Place

Rendering by Chemistry in Place

Water Refilling Stations

ECO would like to explore the possibility of adding water bottle filling stations along the Water Current Tour route. Incorporating these best practices encourage the use of reusable water bottles and sends the message that Milwaukee has a respectful and forward-thinking approach to water and sustainability. The Water Current tour should embody the values that are being implemented throughout the City through demonstrations.

HOME GR/OWN

Milwaukee SHINES

Me2

BETTER BUILDINGS CHALLENGE

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ABOUT ECO

The City of Milwaukee's Environmental Collaboration Office, or ECO, strives to make Milwaukee a world class eco-city on America's Fresh Coast. ECO develops practical solutions that improve people's lives and the economy while working to protect and restore the natural ecosystems that support our long-term prosperity. We collaborate with the community, develop global partnerships, offer award-winning programs, and implement the City's Refresh Milwaukee sustainability plan. ECO's suite of sustainability programs include the Water Centric City initiative, Milwaukee Shines solar program, HOME GR/OWN vacant lot beautification program, Better Buildings Challenge commercial building energy efficiency program, and the Me2 residential energy efficiency program. The Water Centric City initiative showcases Milwaukee's global leadership in managing our water resources in a sustainable and resilient way.

WATER
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