

Beerline “B” Master Plan & Neighborhood Code

May, 1999

1.0 Area Description, Historical Use and Neighborhood Involvement

The Beer Line “B” project has evolved from a series of investigations that explored the revitalization of the area along the west bank of the Milwaukee River, between Pleasant Street to the south, Humboldt Avenue to the northeast, and Kilbourn Park and Reservoir Blvd to the northwest. Formerly an industrial and commercial zone, Beerline “B” has been grossly underutilized for several years.

2.0 Goals

The major goals for Beerline “B” are as follows:

- Design a unified, pedestrian friendly master plan that utilizes amenities such as river frontage, flat land, existing infrastructure, steep terrain into the downtown, adjacent neighborhoods, and Riverwalk system.
- Develop a market-responsive plan that provides a diversity of building types, with an emphasis on owner-occupied housing.
- Connect the Brewer’s Hill neighborhood with the new area below the bluff by extending elements of the upper street grid to the river.
- Examine the potential of Kilbourn Park and its relationship to the development areas adjacent to the river and the Riverwalk system.
- Provide additional information regarding the suitability for development and disposition of multiple parcels vis-à-vis existing buildings, infrastructure, and environmental condition.
- Use the area’s topography and natural amenities to develop unique public places and housing typologies.
- Involve stakeholders and adjacent neighborhood residents in identifying issues and building consensus and support for the final development plan.

3.0 Objectives

In the context of the above stated goals, the design team has developed the following project objectives:

- Provide within the “code” design and density guidelines that provide a strong framework, yet allow developers creative flexibility to propose alternative options for specific pieces of property.
- Design an overall plan in which the development interests of existing landowners are accommodated.
- Improve overall traffic patterns and ease of access to and through the site, taking into account “traffic calming” measures suitable for a residential area.
- Increase the public’s access to the river at several points within the development area, carefully differentiating public areas from private.

4.0 Site Access

As defined in the Milwaukee Riverlink Guidelines, access encompasses physical access, psychological access, visual access, and economic access. The site itself poses significant challenges due to its linear nature, limited access points, and the topographic constraints of the bluff.

- Physical Access:

- Vehicular: Vehicular access is limited to Commerce Street, which connects at the southwest end of the site to Pleasant Street and at the northeast end of the site to Humboldt Avenue. No vehicular access is available from Kilbourn Park down the bluff. Major circulation routes in the vicinity of the project area include North Avenue to the north and Water Street on the southeast side of the Milwaukee River. Major north-south routes include Palmer Street on the west (which becomes Pleasant Street at Commerce Street); Holton Street; and Humboldt Avenue.
- Pedestrian and Bicycle: The only street with the project area, Commerce Street, is partially unimproved and lacks sidewalks east of Holton Street. Pedestrians and bicyclists can use the old railroad bed that traverses the site along the bluff. Currently, there is no direct pedestrian connection between Kilbourn Park and the project area. Holton Street Viaduct, which crosses over the site, has a pedestrian staircase down to Commerce Street.
- Water: The riverfront adjacent to the project area is still navigable, allowing the potential for large and small boat access to the site.
- Psychological Access: Psychological access addresses whether a place is inviting or intimidating. The lack of public amenities, in addition to the lack of people using the site, results in an uninviting atmosphere. Given the site's key position between the river and adjacent neighborhoods, new development has the potential to create a barrier between the two unless new connections are explicitly created.
- Visual Access: The project area's natural topography makes this site an important visual amenity for the community. The site's location on the river, coupled with the bluff, makes for a unique setting in Milwaukee.
- Economic Access: The project area is currently underutilized in terms of accommodating different economic groups, land uses, and economic sectors. The site is generally vacant, except for four buildings. These existing buildings appear to be structurally sound and are candidates for adaptive reuse.

5.0 Master Plan Summary

The intent of this project is to create a new neighborhood that integrates into the adjacent urban fabric of Brewer's Hill and at the same time provide new places to live and work near downtown and on the waterfront of the Milwaukee River.

- Urban Pattern: The aim of the plan is to make a new neighborhood that is traditional in character and integrated into the adjacent urban fabric. The urban pattern of streets and blocks will permit a mix of uses and building types.
- Linkages & Open Spaces: New public open spaces and linkages, in the form of landscaped vehicular and pedestrian streets, parks, and squares are proposed as part of the Master Plan. Additions and extension to the existing system of public open space are proposed, including linkages to Kilbourn Park and Brewer's Hill, as well as the creation of a major addition to the Riverwalk. Major issues are as follows:
 - Site access
 - Vehicular Streets (Major and Minor circulation)
 - The Riverwalk
 - Linkages/access points from the top of the bluff into the site
 - The Residential Square (proposed for the former Trostel Tannery site)
 - The bluff (including landscaping potential)
 - Extension of Kilbourn Park to the Milwaukee River

- Development Parcels: This section identifies specific parcels and the opportunities/character for each:
 - Pleasant Street Gateway
 - Hubbard Street Promontory
 - Residential development of the Trostel Site
 - Additional development of the Brewer's Point site
 - Riverside housing north of Holton Street
 - Humboldt Avenue Gateway

The overall development program for the project area was based on providing an economically feasible mixed-use urban community. The program focused on two primary uses: housing and commercial/mixed-use. The resulting Land Use Plan creatively integrates multiple housing types and commercial/mixed-use with extensive open space, amenities, and linkages to adjacent neighborhoods and parks. Furthermore, to encourage a vital mixed-income community, the Land Use Plan provides for a diversity of housing types, including single-family homes, townhouses, condominiums, and apartments. As a result, the density varies from 12-15 dwelling units per acre for single family and townhouses and up to 40 dwelling unites per acre for multi-family residential.

The Master Plan also addresses many of the environmental issues involved in preparing the site for development, including a series of foundation and ground improvement alternatives and environmental management.