

Riverworks Industrial Center: Expanding Redevelopment Opportunities in Milwaukee
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1.0 Purpose

The Northeast Milwaukee Industrial Development Corporation (NMIDC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the Riverworks Industrial Corridor. NMIDC strives to revitalize the area by attracting new industrial and commercial businesses and preventing the flight of those currently in the corridor.

As a first step in revitalizing the corridor, NMIDC formed a partnership with WisPark Corporation, called Riverworks Partners, and purchased the old 33 acre AMC/Chrysler property to resell to industrial corporations to bring back the higher paying jobs to the area. This area is known as the Riverworks Industrial Center, Milwaukee's first urban industrial park created with recycled land.

NMIDC contracted with Landscape Architects, Inc. to prepare a Redevelopment Master Plan. Research concentrated on existing conditions in the Riverworks area, including existing development and land use, building type, market area socioeconomic factors, market perception, environmental inhibitors, and urban design deficiencies. Existing properties were evaluated to identify development, underutilized properties and incompatible land uses for redevelopment.

For physical planning purposes, the Riverworks Industrial Center was subdivided into three geographic areas:

- Riverworks North
- Capitol Drive Corridor
- Riverworks South

2.0 Goals

The goals of the planning process for the Riverworks Industrial Corridor were as follows:

- Identify priority redevelopment sites and evaluate obstacles and opportunities for each site
- Examine factors of market demand and articulate appropriate development types for key sites
- Identify an overall development strategy for industrial and retail development in the area
- Prepare an implementation plan that will support actions to market and recruit new business development and increase customer shopping in the area
- Position NMIDC for additional public funding and the creation of public/private partnerships for redevelopment of the area

3.0 Commercial Market Analysis

In general, retail and service sales were expected to grow from 1999 through 2020 as a result of small increases in incomes and/or household growth. There were ten categories of retail and related services that make up the CDC retail mix and would serve the area:

- Food, such as groceries, for home consumption
- Eating and drinking, consisting of prepared food and beverage
- General merchandise, including department stores, variety stores, "box" stores
- Furniture and accessories

- Automotive dealers, including new/used vehicles and parts
- Drugstores, including health/beauty supply stores and small pharmacies
- Apparel and accessories
- Hardware and building materials
- Gasoline and related vehicular services
- Miscellaneous (florists, optical goods, etc)

Additional information regarding the commercial market analysis:

- Retailers in NMIDC attracted approximately 80% of their customers from the Riverwest/Harambee neighborhood and local industrial businesses
- Traffic counts on Capitol Drive were rising
- The neighborhood population within one mile of the CDC had an average income of \$7,300 – the neighboring communities of Shorewood and Whitefish Bay have an average income of \$25,000
- 63% of the Riverwest/Harambee neighborhood was African American

4.0 Land Use and Redevelopment Evaluation

Riverwork North

- Located north of Capitol Drive, this area was comprised of six parcels with primarily stable but unrelated land uses. The area also had a series of high-rise communications towers that serve several businesses in the immediate area. The area was somewhat complex to redevelop because the City of Glendale and City of Milwaukee boundary literally divided key properties. Approximately 80 acres of land in the Glendale Technology Center (GTC) had been redeveloped since 1994 (with the assistance of tax incremental financing (TIF)). Located next to NMIDC, this employee/customer base can be targeted for NMIDC businesses.
- The jurisdictional border bisected a grouping of underutilized, small residential and commercial properties on Richards Street. The developments were not compatible with the quality of businesses developing in the GTC and on the Capitol Drive Corridor (CDC). If the 20, ¼ acre, lots could be assembled, they would create one 5 acre parcel; however, because of the number of lots and the jurisdictional differences, this process would be complicated and lengthy.
- A mixed-use business complex, located north of Hope Avenue, was in good condition, with an 85% occupancy rate. The building had expansion potential based on its proximity to GTC. However, in order to enhance this value, roadways and sidewalks would need to link this section of NMIDC to GTC.
- The former Telsmith building (JT & T complex) was recently sold and was being utilized for short-term lease space. With frontage on Capitol Drive, Journal Broadcasting campus to the east, and the commercial hub across Holton Street to the West, the 6.7-acre site held redevelopment potential for a myriad of redevelopment scenarios. The main office building and warehouse was best suited for professional office, light manufacturing and storage facilities. The current assessed value of the property limited the potential for redevelopment in the short term. As the market dynamics change, the site may hold greater value for radical redevelopment. In the short term, this complex should be enhanced to have a greater presence on Capitol Drive.

- A 5 acre park-and-ride lot for UWM occupied the remaining prime riverfront lands in the north district. This site was clearly underutilized for development and was not compatible with a business campus environment. The site had been considered for use as a prison or other large box retailing ventures. Students that use the UWM lot were interviewed to evaluate their patronage of local businesses. Based on their response, the student demographic was an obvious target market for other CDC retailers.
- The Wisconsin National Guard site was an incompatible use for a redeveloping business district. A higher and better use of this property could enhance the business mix and tax base for the City.

Riverworks South

- A large majority of the properties were zoned for industrial use. It was situated ¼ mile east of I-43 and within blocks of dense residential neighborhoods.
- Business types in the area included light manufacturing, food processing, printing, distribution, automotive repair and maintenance, auto supplies, recycling, and other indoor/outdoor storage facilities.
- Several small 1940's warehouse buildings located within two blocks of Capitol Drive were either vacant, commanded low rents, and/or had high vacancy rates. This cluster of similar buildings was best suited for professional offices. The buildings could fill a gap in a growing niche for inexpensive, easy-to-adapt buildings that are a shell for creative interior build-out.
- Several land assembly and infill sites held potential for redevelopment.
- Multi-family residential development located on Humboldt Boulevard was the only compatible residential development in the NMIDC boundary. The buildings buffered the industrial use when approaching Capitol Drive. A two-acre underutilized parking lot located directly west of the apartments could serve as a green space buffer between the incompatible uses.
- Larger vacant buildings, such as the Johnson Controls building on Humboldt Boulevard, were also adaptable for light industrial and various multi-tenant service industry and social service type businesses.
- The remaining productive light industrial and commercial buildings and land located in the northern part of this section were recommended to be treated with a "hands off/if it's not broken, don't fix it" approach.

Capitol Drive Corridor (CDC)

- The CDC evolved from a primarily industrial and commercial area into a destination commercial/retail corridor. The mix of retailers in the CDC served the local neighborhood and attracted customers from as far as a three-mile radius. Corporate brand name retail businesses and fast food chains dominated most of the CDC.
- A cluster of businesses within a two-block radius from Richards Street and Capitol Drive composed a commercial hub with several smaller opportunity infill sites that would appeal to specialty or boutique-type retailers. At the time of the Plan, the corridor resembled a suburban shopping mall, with large parking lots that front Capitol Drive and sporadic outlot developments. The infill development of specialty-type retailers would reshape the retail setting to one that is more consistent with the neighborhood and quality shopping areas. Changing the perceptions of the area was an important strategy for the CDC.

- An inventory of existing parking stalls in the CDC area was conducted to determine the gross number of stalls currently available (including handicap stalls but excluding any additional off-street parking). The following results were collected during 10 spot evaluations over the course of six months:

Parking Lot	Total Capacity	Estimated Daily Use
Walgreens	400	35%
Builders Square	360	50%
Aldi's	160	50%
Outpost	90	90%

The total number of stalls was clearly in abundance and there appeared to be a potential for infill development on some of these sites. An assessment of the land capacity for retail infill projects in the hub area rendered an additional 50,000 square feet of new retail space. Approximately 20% of the parking stalls currently allocated in hub parking lots would be utilized for infill development.

- Larger retail businesses locating in the CDC hub could only result from infill of parking lots and adaptive reuse of existing and future structures. This study highlighted several corporate retail businesses that were undergoing transition that may result in vacancies of key development sites.
- The Plan's redevelopment scheme was designed to increase density of businesses fronting Capitol Drive, provide opportunities to improve the retail mix, and enhance the retail environment and aesthetic quality (streetscaping and pedestrian enhancements) of the CDC.
- In correlation with infill development and a focus on retail/commercial businesses in the CDC, NMIDC and Riverworks should implement a new image/logo to promote retailing. This image should be used on gateway signage, as well as marketing/promotional materials, to create a unifying theme. Two key locations for gateway signage were located on the Journal Broadcast campus and at the Railroad overpass on Capitol Drive.