

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CALL TO ACTION:

The Walker Square neighborhood finds itself at a geographic and economic crossroads. To its east is a portion of the larger Walker's Point neighborhood that is seeing high levels of investment, population growth, new housing construction and conversions, and a rising profile as a dining, entertainment and arts destination within the region. To the north is the Menomonee Valley, an area that has been transformed over the past two decades from an environmentally and economically degraded area to an economic engine providing jobs for thousands of Milwaukee residents and acres of new trails and parkland, with continued job growth expected for years to come. At the western edge of Walker Square, Cesar E. Chavez Drive serves as a commercial hub for Milwaukee's Latino population and separates Walker Square from the traditional residential areas of Clarke Square and the Layton Boulevard West neighborhoods further west. These neighborhoods are home to a variety of community-based organizations and other partners that are engaged in successful efforts to attract new homeowners and increase the quality of life for existing residents.

Walker Square is blessed with its own assets, including a sturdy housing stock, active residents, engaged civic and non-profit partners, and its namesake Walker Square Park that serves as the central gathering place for the community.

The activity occurring in the neighborhoods surrounding Walker Square has brought significant attention to those areas from the City of Milwaukee and additional governmental entities, the development community, area philanthropic foundations, and others. The Walker Square Neighborhood Association (WSNA) has asked the City of Milwaukee to work with the WSNA, residents, area business owners, and other stakeholders to develop this Walker Square Strategic Action Plan to create a road map of strategies aimed at improving quality of life and attracting additional resources to Walker Square, ensuring that current residents benefit from all of the investment in Walker Square and the surrounding neighborhoods, and preserving the character of Walker Square as a diverse, mixed-income community.

PLANNING GOALS:

Walker Square's challenges, opportunities, and the public input received throughout the planning process raise a number of questions that this Action Plan attempts to address by recommending specific actions. The questions and recommended actions are based on the goals (**in bold below**) that serve as the foundation for this plan:

- How can city government and other stakeholders best **support ongoing efforts to strengthen Cesar E. Chavez Drive's position as a thriving shopping destination that caters to the Milwaukee Latino community?**
- What is the long-term vision for National Avenue and how can that vision **strike the appropriate balance between the diverse set of needs of the industrial, residential, commercial, automobile and pedestrian users of National Avenue?**
- What steps can be taken to **encourage investment in the housing stock in Walker Square?**
- How can residents, city government, the Milwaukee Police Department, and area community-based organizations best collaborate to **address concerns related to crime, the perception of crime, and problem properties in Walker Square?**
- Are there improvements that can be made to Walker Square Park that will help **solidify Walker Square Park's place as the "front yard" of the neighborhood and make it an even more attractive place for neighbors and visitors to enjoy?**

PLAN FOCUS AREAS:

Based on the planning goals and public input received during the process, the action items recommended by the Walker Square Strategic Action Plan fall into three areas of focus, which are each represented by a chapter within the plan:

Thriving Commercial Corridors in Walker Square (Chapter 3) suggests actions that will strengthen the Cesar E. Chavez Drive business district and bolster the role of National Avenue as the transition area

between the industrial areas to the north and the residential neighborhood to the south.

Living in Walker Square (Chapter 4)

recommends actions to increase residents' access to resources to maintain and improve the housing stock within Walker Square, strengthen partnerships with area community-based organizations, and address neighborhood concerns regarding nuisance properties.

Improving the Public Realm (Chapter 5) offers strategies to solidify Walker Square Park's role as a showcase gathering place for the neighborhood, make National Avenue more attractive for all users, and make strategic improvements to streets and bicycle connections in the area.

KEY ACTIONS:

The Walker Square Strategic Action Plan identifies key actions for each of the plan focus areas. These actions were developed with significant public input and are listed below. The individual chapters provide additional detail about why these actions are important and how to make them a reality. The Walker Square Strategic Action Plan also outlines additional supporting actions within each of the plan focus areas.

THRIVING COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Key Action #1: Support the Cesar E. Chavez Business Improvement District Farm Project

Key Action #2: Encourage and support efforts to bring a Business Improvement District to National Avenue

Key Action #3: Encourage an appropriate, context sensitive mix of uses on National Avenue

Key Action #4: Work with Milwaukee Police Department - District 2 to deploy targeted safety strategies along Greenfield Avenue

Key Action #5: Support FaB Wisconsin efforts to locate a Center of Excellence within the FaB focus area, preferably on National Avenue

LIVING IN...

Key Action #1: Increase the availability and use of resources for new homeowners to purchase homes in Walker Square and existing homeowners to make repairs to their homes

WALKER SQUARE

Key Action #2: Continue to leverage the strength of non-profit partners working in Walker Square

Key Action #3: Identify and engage in targeted collaborations to address pressing public safety concerns

Key Action #4: Continue to reinforce and build the Walker Square neighborhood's identity and "brand"

IMPROVING THE PUBLIC REALM

Key Action #1: Invest in Walker Square Park

Key Action #2: Transform West National Avenue into a complete street

Key Action #3: Transform West Mineral and West Walker Streets between South 9th and South 11th Streets into pedestrian friendly, tree-lined boulevards

Key Action #4: Develop a network of local street bikeways that prioritize and optimize safe and efficient bike travel

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN:

The goal of the Walker Square Strategic Action Plan is to provide a blueprint for the City of Milwaukee and neighborhood stakeholders to drive positive change in Walker Square and attract additional investment to the neighborhood. Implementing the actions recommended in the Action Plan will require the coordinated engagement and sustained commitment of stakeholders spanning government, the private sector, community-based organizations, and residents.

The Walker Square Strategic Action Plan identifies specific entities that must take the lead if individual actions are to be successfully implemented and suggests necessary partnerships and possible funding sources to make these recommendations a reality.

With its strong existing assets and the ongoing investment in surrounding neighborhoods, Walker Square is well positioned to see continued improvements in its commercial corridors, housing stock, and public spaces. The key actions outlined in the Walker Square Strategic Action Plan are designed to ensure these improvements are guided by the vision that Walker Square residents and business owners have for the future of their community and to position Walker Square to thrive for generations to follow.