

File No. 121132

Supporting Documentation for the Historic Mitchell Street Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Overlay Zone

Supporting Documentation from Milwaukee's Comprehensive Plan:

The next section is a series of key recommendations taken from the City of Milwaukee's Near South Side Plan (adopted May, 2009), as it pertains to the community's vision, goals and strategy for Mitchell Street:

Overall Assessment for Mitchell Street (p. 79 of the Plan):

The Near South Side Market Analysis identified Mitchell Street from approximately Cesar Chavez Drive to Interstate 94/43 as a primary retail corridor that should be enhanced.

Mitchell Street has the potential to become a community-wide shopping district that provides goods and services for the Near South Side and the regional market area.

The Mitchell Street corridor has the benefit of larger footprint buildings and parcels with ample parking that could support larger anchor stores.

Retail businesses thrive by being adjacent to each other in a convenient, compact, pedestrian-oriented setting that allows shoppers to move easily from store to store. This principle can be seen on traditional retail corridors like Mitchell Street and in newer "town center" concept developments and suburban shopping malls.

The future viability of Mitchell Street depends on maintaining this high quality main street or downtown retail look and function. The following policies and strategies recommend how to fulfill this retail vision.

Policies and Strategies for Mitchell Street (taken from pp. 79-81 of the Plan):

1. Define a "pedestrian-oriented shopping zone" comprising the street level of buildings on properties with frontage on either side of Mitchell Street between 5th and 13th Streets, including either side of the Forest Home Avenue triangle.
2. Within this defined zone, maintain and promote an economically vibrant mix of retail stores and services at the street level, while discouraging uses that do not directly contribute to a high quality shopping experience.
3. Protect the heart of the pedestrian retail corridor by discouraging uses that don't contribute to a dedicated shopping zone.
4. Locate non-retail uses on parcels outside or above this pedestrian-oriented shopping zone. Social services, governmental agencies, and professional services should be located on floors above the street level or on surrounding streets.
5. Organizations that provide transportation services should locate where they can provide appropriate facilities for waiting and boarding passengers and vehicular movement, not in the pedestrian-oriented shopping zone.
6. Discourage new auto-oriented uses, drive through businesses, and gas stations in the pedestrian-oriented shopping zone.
7. Encourage businesses within the district to locate along Mitchell Street instead of along other non-primary commercial corridors.

8. To diversify the availability of goods and services in close proximity to Near South Side residents, attract national retailers that would complement and fit the urban format of the Mitchell Street corridor.
9. Increase residential densities within and adjacent to the corridor to provide a stable customer base for Mitchell Street businesses.
10. All new developments along Mitchell Street should maintain the corridor's street frontage. Large blank walls with no windows facing the street should be avoided. The façades of larger-scale buildings should be broken up with architectural detail and include ample windows.

Supporting Documentation from Milwaukee's West Mitchell Street's Designation as an Historic District:

The following paragraphs address the social, architectural and historic significance of Mitchell Street buildings constructed between 1870-1940, and are excerpted from the City of Milwaukee's Historic Designation Study Report for the West Mitchell Street Historic District (revised September, 2012):

Although Mitchell Street was laid out in 1857, little settlement occurred until the later 1870's when this farm studded portion of the South Side began to attract Polish settlers. As late as the mid-1880's, however, agricultural enterprises such as the Enos and Company Nursery and the Comstock Celery Farm could still be found in the neighborhood. Gradually commercial buildings began to appear in the vicinity of St. Stanislaus Church, which had stood in lonely grandeur at Mitchell and South 5th streets for years before it got its first neighbors. As Polish settlement increased, Mitchell Street developed into the commercial, cultural and religious center of the Polish community. Eventually, Mitchell Street became known as the 'Polish Grand Avenue' and ranked second in commercial importance only to downtown, a position it maintained until well after World War II. The substantial commercial structures erected there, including the enormous Kunzelmann-Esser, Schuster's, Sears Roebuck and Company and National Hardware Buildings, were a testament to the thriving retail trade. Only Milwaukee's central business district had as many large stores as Mitchell Street. Other indications of the street's importance were the many banks established there, as well as the two movie theaters, the Granada (razed) and the Modjeska.

After 1970 Mitchell Street slid into a precipitous decline that witnessed the closing of most of the large stores. Attempts were made to revive the street by building a landscaped pedestrian mall and a farmer's market in 1975, but the results were disappointing. The street has since been returned to a traffic thoroughfare and the farmer's market has been replaced with commercial buildings. Over the years, only two important structures on Mitchell Street have been razed, the Granada Theater, formerly at 1127 West Mitchell (razed 1973), and St. Jacobi Church, (razed 1975) formerly on the site where Mitchell Street intersects with West Forest Home Avenue.

The Mitchell Street Historic District is a nine-block commercial strip of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, brick or frame commercial structures. Although most of the structures are two stories tall, there are several one-story buildings and a number of buildings ranging from two to four stories in height. The Kunzelmann-Esser Building, at eight stories, is the tallest building on the street and one of the tallest on the South Side. There are approximately ninety buildings within the district. In addition to commercial structures, there are two large church complexes within the district.

The buildings were built between 1870 and 1940 with most dating from the period between 1890 and 1920. Many of the present structures were built to replace earlier buildings. They illustrate a wide range of architectural styles popular for commercial buildings in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. False-fronted wooden buildings,

brick Queen Anne structures, early Twentieth Century Chicago Style commercial blocks, Classical Revival banks and Moderne storefronts can be found within the district.

Mitchell Street is architecturally significant for its fine assemblage of commercial structures and churches representing a wide range of architectural styles and periods. Styles range from boomtown gable-fronted storefronts to Queen Anne, Classical Revival, Mediterranean and Moderne. Researching permit records and looking at the rear of the buildings shows that Mitchell's Street's vitality led to successive periods of remodeling at many of the locations where new fronts and additional stories were added to accommodate growing businesses. The commercial district was relatively well confined to the frontage along Mitchell Street itself.

Supporting Documentation Including Proposed and Recently Approved Developments within the Overlay:

Library – 906-910 W. Mitchell (the Hills Building)

Library on 1st floor and 33 apartments in 4 story building. Total project cost \$10.4m.

<http://urbanmilwaukee.com/2014/12/05/plenty-of-horne-new-forest-home-library-coming/>

<http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/business/286047951.html>

Historic Modjeska Theatre, 1124 W. Historic Mitchell Street

Originally opened in 1924 as a 2,000 seat cinema. Evolved into a performance facility over the decades. Now 1,200 seat theater. Closed in 2010. Fundraising to reopen theater.

<http://urbanmilwaukee.com/pressrelease/historic-modjeska-theatre-moves-closer-to-opening/>

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/reopening-modjeska-theatre-crucial-to-paying-for-restoration-b99265138z1-258726641.html>

Apartment development – 601-615 W. Historic Mitchell Street

Conversion of an existing building into 36 apartments. 6,000 sq ft of street-level retail.

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/building-sale-revives-stalled-mitchell-st-apartments-b99176079z1-238538401.html>

Former Goldmann's Department Store – 930-932 W. Historic Mitchell Street

42,000 sq ft bldg will be turned into medical clinic for American Indians. \$6m redevelopment project. Goldmann's closed in 2007 after operating for 111 years.

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/iconic-vacant-goldmanns-department-store-building-sold-b99383406z1-281395941.html>