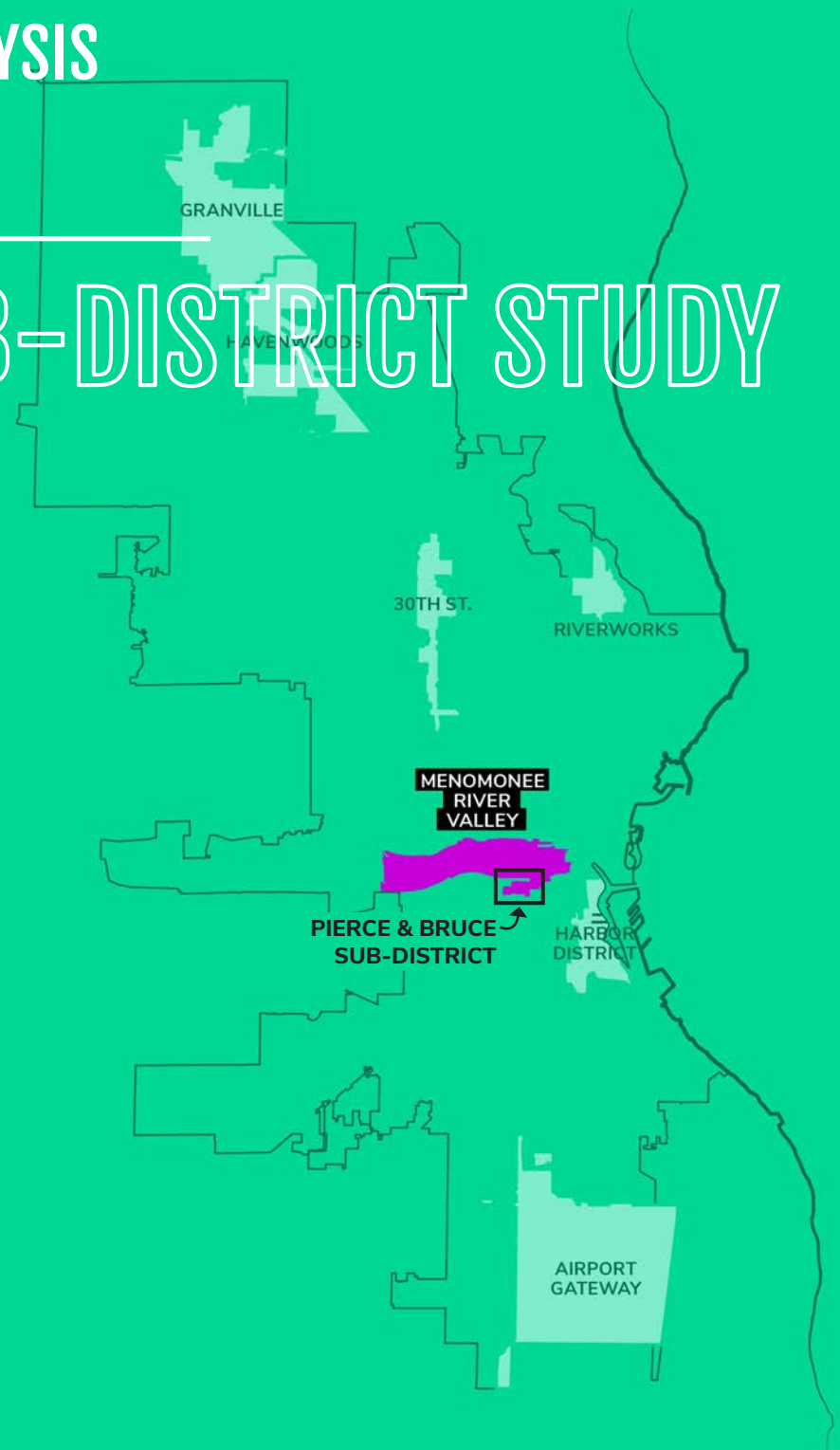


# MILWAUKEE INDUSTRIAL LAND ANALYSIS MENOMONEE VALLEY

## PIERCE & BRUCE SUB-DISTRICT STUDY



DECEMBER 2023



## Acknowledgments

### CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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Vanessa Koster, Deputy Commissioner  
Sam Leichtling, City Planning Manager  
Tanya Fonseca, Long Range Planning Manager  
Monica Wauck Smith, Project Manager  
Dave Misky, Redevelopment Authority of Milwaukee

### MENOMONEE VALLEY PARTNERS, INC

Corey Zetts, Executive Director  
Louie Glotfelty, Project Manager: Planning & Placemaking

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The Pierce & Bruce Business & Area Resident Community

### CONSULTANT TEAM

Interface Studio  
P3 Development Group

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 04 INTRODUCTION**
- 09 UNDERSTANDING THE AREA**
- 11 GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**
- 12 RECOMMENDATIONS**
- 19 IMPLEMENTATION**

# DISTRICT BY THE NUMBERS

MENOMONEE RIVER VALLEY -  
BID#26

PIERCE-BRUCE SUB-DISTRICT

PARCEL AREA (ACRES)

**70** Excluding the  
Burnham Canal Area

Source: City of Milwaukee Land Use data, 2022

# OF BUSINESSES

**27**

Source: City of Milwaukee & Menomonee  
Valley Partners

% INDUSTRIAL ZONED LAND

**100%**

## INTRODUCTION

### Project Background

In June 2023, the City of Milwaukee initiated a planning effort focused on the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District area of Menomonee Valley. The goal of this effort was to develop a framework of recommendations for evaluating the current zoning in the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District area of the Menomonee Valley Industrial Business Improvement District (BID), which was recently expanded to include businesses in the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District area. Currently, most parcels are zoned Industrial Heavy, though there are some exceptions. This project is an extension of the Citywide Milwaukee Industrial Land Use Study (adopted in 2021) and will update the Valley 2.0 Plan. The key purpose of this project is to analyze this area, connect with local businesses, and ultimately provide recommendations to make future decisions regarding land use in this area.

It is important to note that this planning study will consider zoning changes for the study area. The process to change zoning or establish a zoning overlay by ordinance would follow the completion of this study. Public hearings will be required before any rezoning effort is reviewed by the City Plan Commission, Zoning, Neighborhoods, Development Committee, and then to the full Common Council for final approval.

The Pierce and Bruce Sub-District Study focuses on a small enclave of industrial land just north of Milwaukee's Walker Square Neighborhood. The study area is bounded by S. 16th Street to the west, S. 9th Street to the east, the Burnham Canal to the north, and to the south it follows the rear property lines of the southern parcels fronting W. Pierce Street, as depicted in the study area map to the right. In July 2019,

The Menomonee Valley Industrial BID expanded its boundaries to include this area based on concerns from area businesses about recent re-zonings to allow non-industrial users in the area.

### What is considered an “industrial land use” and why do we need it?

“Industrial land use” can broadly be described as the use of a parcel for the purpose of making, mending, or moving goods. As defined in the City's zoning code, industrial businesses can operate within a spectrum of industrial zoning districts. Some districts are more permissive of non-industrial uses.

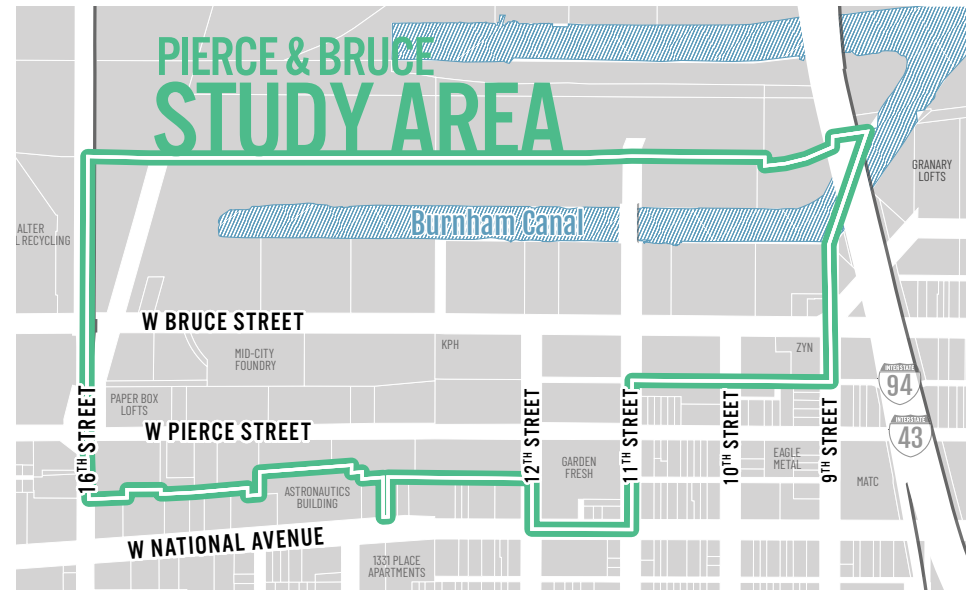
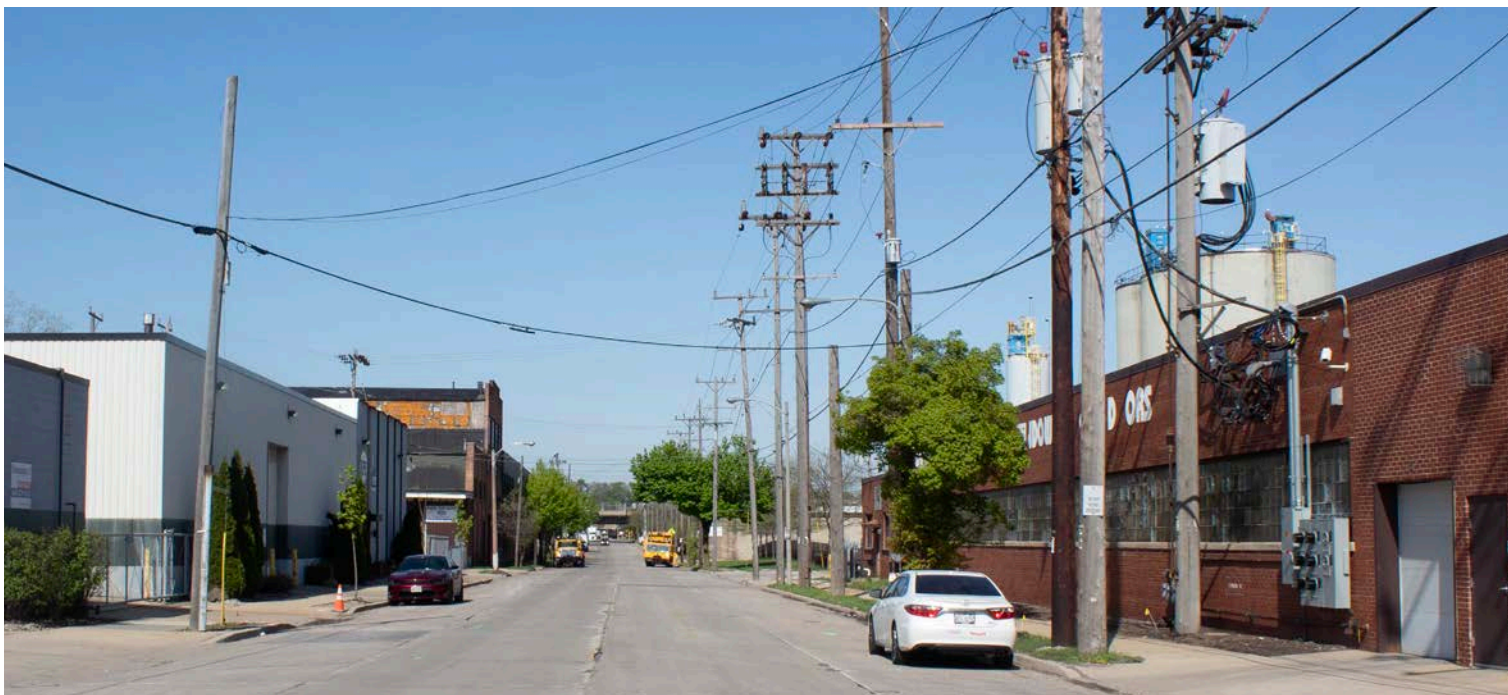


Image above shows Pierce and Bruce Sub-District Study area.



Top image shows adjacency of residential and industrial properties in the Sub-District along 9th Street. Bottom image shows typical character of the streetscape along W. Bruce Street, looking west.

## Why study the Pierce & Bruce Sub-District?

There are three primary factors that initiated this study:

### **The Industrial Land Use Study suggested a review of local zoning.**

The Citywide Industrial Land Analysis Study identifies this area as “changing” and recommends a sub-area study to consider rezoning specifically to accommodate light industrial uses not otherwise permitted in the current IH classification. In recent years, the City has received requests to rezone sites along W. Pierce Street and W. Bruce Street for non-manufacturing uses.

### **The Burnham Canal Wetland Restoration Project is underway in this area.**

The Burnham Canal is undergoing a multi-step process that includes remediating environmental contamination, creating a wetland base with clean gravel and sand, and later adding soil and wetland plants on top. Ultimately, the Burnham Canal will become 6.7 acres of restored wetland. The wetland construction phase of the project is scheduled to begin in 2025. This creates a natural amenity and potential recreational opportunity.

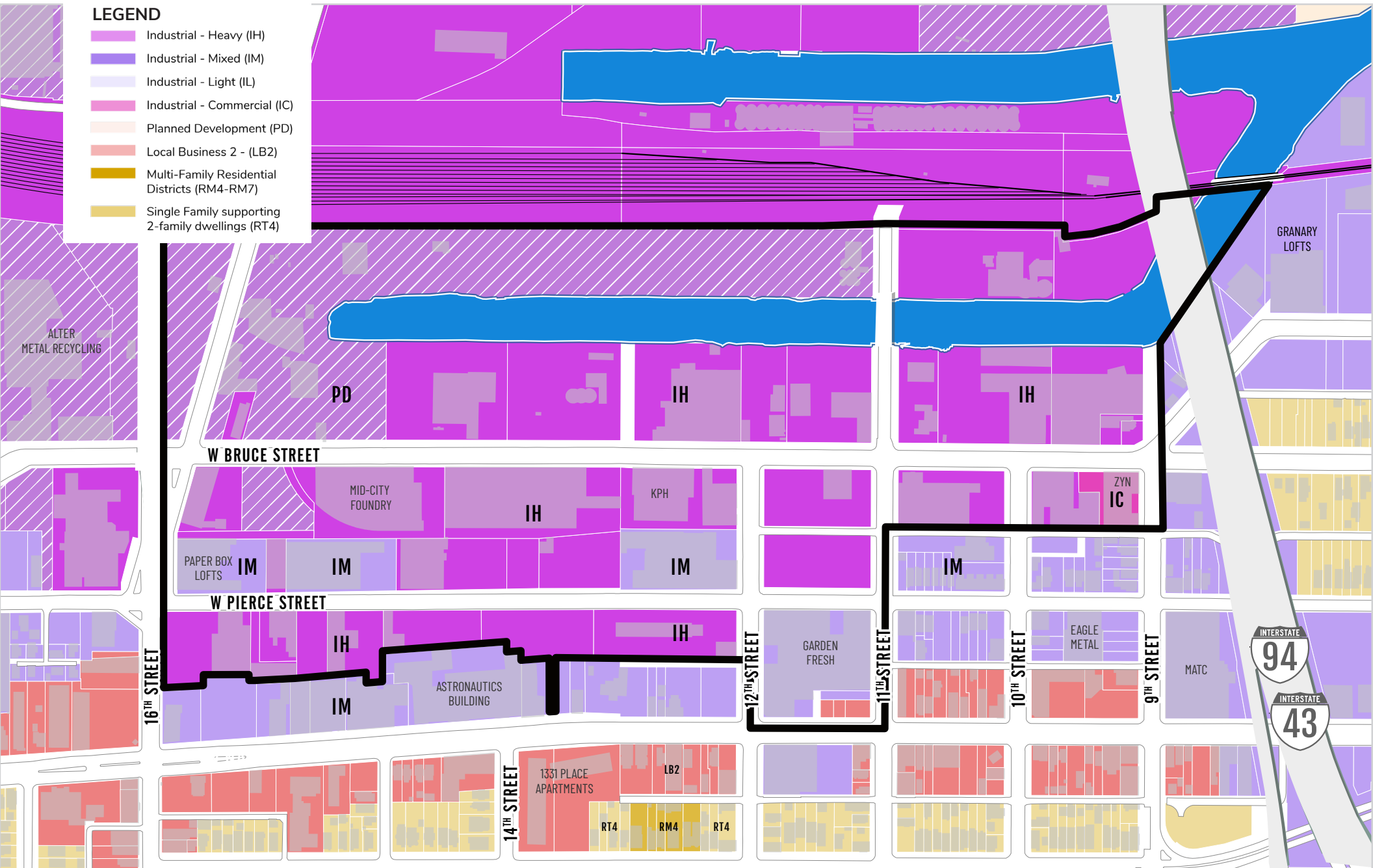
### **The Menomonee Valley Industrial BID wants to make sure all area land is safe and productive.**

There is simply not much land left for redevelopment in the Menomonee River Valley and the majority of the vacant or underutilized properties are costly to rehabilitate and will require some level of environmental remediation. The City of Milwaukee wants to ensure that even the most challenging properties in Milwaukee neighborhoods can contribute positively to their surrounding areas.

# Pierce & Bruce Sub-District – Existing Zoning

## LEGEND

- Industrial - Heavy (IH)
- Industrial - Mixed (IM)
- Industrial - Light (IL)
- Industrial - Commercial (IC)
- Planned Development (PD)
- Local Business 2 - (LB2)
- Multi-Family Residential Districts (RM4-RM7)
- Single Family supporting 2-family dwellings (RT4)



## What is “zoning”?

The purpose of the Zoning Code is to protect property and land use compatibility, implement new land use plans, and regulate the maintenance of properties.

Zoning categories define:

- What a parcel may be used for given its' size, location, and context
- Physical constraints or expectations for the parcel or buildings on site
- Expectations related to how a parcel interacts with its neighbors and surroundings (e.g. fencing, buffering, use of outdoor space, physical access to the site, and maintenance requirements)

## How does zoning protect local industry?

Development pressure to convert industrial land to other uses is present in every Industrial BID. Each of Milwaukee's Industrial BIDs experience redevelopment pressure from different types of land uses such as housing, retail, or entertainment. In some cases this conversion is desirable. In these areas, permissive zoning policy helps to smooth the runway for development that aligns with the new paradigm. The reality is that the footprint of industrial property in the City is shrinking because of this external pressure, and the conversion from non-industrial uses to industrial uses is extremely rare. Some of Milwaukee's industrial zoning districts are relatively permissive in that they enable mixed-use experimentation in areas that are transitioning to commercial uses or where appropriate.

Today, Milwaukee's industrial zoning classifies how different areas of the City should either be protected for industrial activity or mixed with other uses. This includes Industrial-Heavy (IH) – a zoning category that allows for higher intensity industrial uses that accommodate large outdoor storage needs or areas with specific harbor or rail access. It also includes Industrial-Commercial (IC) which allows a mix of industrial and commercial office uses with retail as an accessory use. Industrial-Mixed (IM) is the only industrial zoning category that does not explicitly require the primary use of a property to be industrial. This zoning category allows for a parcel to continue to be used for an industrial purpose, but also permits its conversion to a new, non-industrial use, including housing. The Paper Box Lofts in the Pierce and

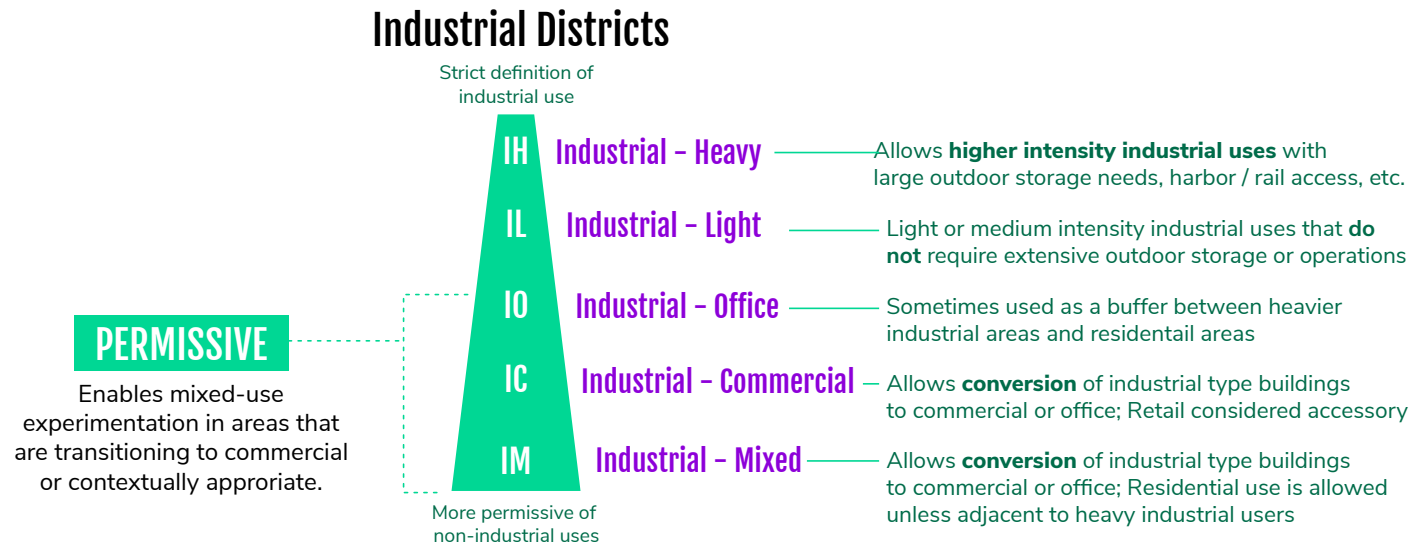
Bruce Sub-District offers an example of how a property zoned IM can lead to the adaptive reuse of a historically industrial building for a new residential purpose.

Permissive zoning policy presents benefits and drawbacks. In some cases, permissive zoning enables new activities in spaces that may no longer be suited for traditional industrial activity. However, commercial and certainly residential uses can crowd out industrial activity as these sectors pay more in rent than industrial businesses. The City of Milwaukee also needs to carefully consider the environmental hazards associated with past or current industrial activity when evaluating proposals for residential conversion, particularly within an older industrial area like the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District that has a history of environmental contamination.

## Pierce & Bruce Sub-District zoning

Most parcels within the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District are zoned Industrial-Heavy (IH). The northwest parcels, currently the location of Alter Metal Recycling, are part of a Planned Development (PD) which carries restrictions very similar to the surrounding Industrial-Heavy parcels. There are three parcels zoned Industrial-Mixed (IM) along W. Pierce Street. These parcels support industrial and non-industrial uses today. In 2022, the City of Milwaukee granted a rezoning request at 913 W. Bruce Street from Industrial-Heavy (IH) to Industrial-Commercial (IC).

Diagram below depicts spectrum of permissiveness within the Industrial zoning category.



## Area Assets

The Pierce and Bruce Sub-District offers a variety of assets and opportunities that make it a desirable area to operate an industrial business. Direct access to state and local truck routes and almost direct access to the I-43 Highway on and off ramps provide a great benefit to area businesses whose logistics network relies on these assets. Proposed enhancements to National Avenue (State Truck Route) and the I-43 Highway On/Off Ramps will further enhance connectivity to the Sub-district.

The Burnham Canal is an undeniably unique feature of this area with big plans for improvement already underway. The Canal will also provide a direct connection from this area into Milwaukee's network of urban water trails along the Menomonee and Milwaukee Rivers.

### LEGEND

- MKE Pierce Bruce Industrial District
- Highway On/Off Ramps
- State Truck Route
- Local Truck Route
- ... Water Trails
- ... Hank Aaron State Trail
- Paved Surfaces
- Future Projects

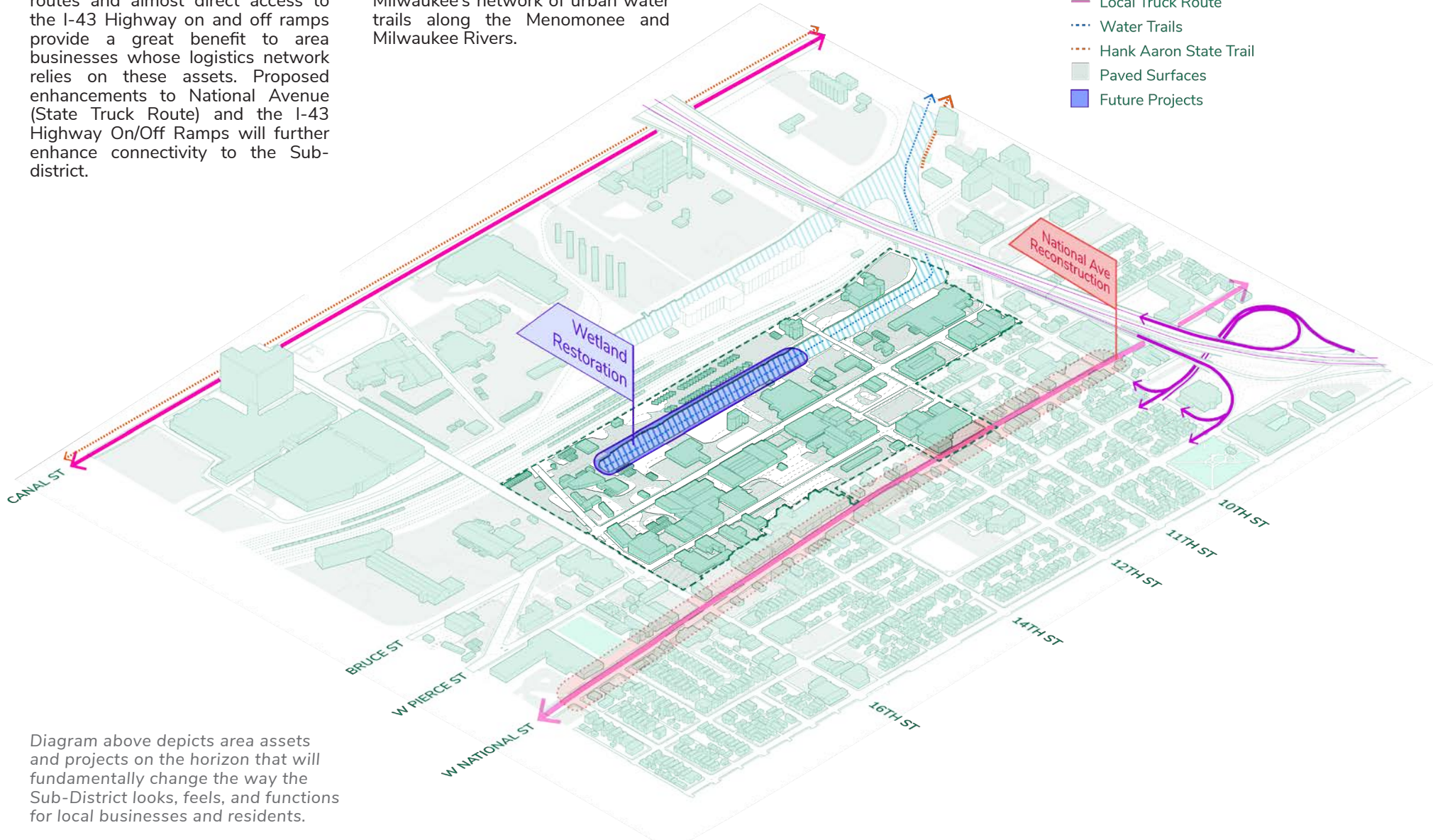


Diagram above depicts area assets and projects on the horizon that will fundamentally change the way the Sub-District looks, feels, and functions for local businesses and residents.



## More about planned & ongoing projects in the area...



### Burnham Canal Wetland Restoration Project

Status: Remediation Underway - Sediment fill complete!  
Lead: Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)

Burnham Canal is undergoing a multi-step process that includes remediating environmental contamination, creating a wetland base with clean gravel and sand, and later adding soil and wetland plants on top. Ultimately, MMSD will turn Burnham Canal into 6.7 acres of wetland. This project is part of a larger initiative to restore the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern (AOC). The initial phase of the project required MMSD to partly fill the Canal with clean sand and gravel to cover contaminated sediment. **This phase is now complete and the sediment needs time to rest and compress the soils.**

MMSD will solicit input on wetland design sometime in late 2024, construction of the wetland would begin in 2025.

Want to find out more? <https://www.mmsd.com/what-we-do/milwaukee-estuary-aoc/burnham-canal-wetland-restoration-project>



### National Avenue (WIS 59) Reconstruction Project

Status: Planning underway  
Lead: Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the City of Milwaukee Department of DPW plan to rebuild 2.6-miles of W. National Avenue (WIS 59) between 1st Street and 39th Street. National Avenue is currently an urban 4-lane, undivided principal arterial roadway. The proposed rebuild consists of improving safety measures for all modes of transportation, including walking and biking. Included in the project is a replacement of all roadway pavement, curbs, some sidewalk segments, and driveway approaches, as well as replacing storm sewers.

Want to find out more? <https://engagemke.com/national-avenue>



### I43 Highway On-Off Ramp Improvements

Status: Design Phase.  
Timeline: Construction is tentatively scheduled for 2025.  
Lead Agency: Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

WisDOT is proposing to resurface on/off ramps on I-43 in the City of Milwaukee in Milwaukee County from the Mitchell Interchange to the Marquette Interchange.

Want to find out more? <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/se/43ramps/default.aspx>

# UNDERSTANDING THE AREA

## Public Engagement Process Overview

The study was initiated in June 2023 and was conducted over 5 months. During this time, two meetings with a Public Advisory Group (PAG) and two public meetings for area businesses and residents were held, in addition to a series of stakeholder interviews with area business owners and representatives from nearby neighborhood resident organizations.

## Stakeholder Feedback

Comments received from stakeholders are summarized into two primary categories: Area Benefits and Area Concerns. Participating stakeholders included area business- and property owners, near neighborhood residents, project partners, and more. Stakeholders were asked a variety of questions about the benefits and challenges experienced in the area as a place to run a business, work, or live (nearby). Numbers associated with each benefit or issue below refer to relevant physical locations within the Sub-district as noted on the map on the following page.

## Area Benefits & Concerns

Stakeholders shared the following comments related to **AREA BENEFITS** and **CONCERNS** related to the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District:

### AREA BENEFITS

#### 1 Desirable location and highway access for logistics

*"Having a fleet of vehicles on-site, easy access to freeway, and central location make this attractive to industrial uses."*

- Area Business Owner

Business owners moving goods through the area rely on easy access to the highway. Many also noted that although the area feels central to Milwaukee, traffic congestion is rarely an issue.

#### 2 Desirable, accessible workforce in the surrounding areas.

*"We like the area...we have local residents working at our facilities. It is convenient being off the freeway, and not within the intensity of the downtown area."* - Area Business Owner

Discussions with business owners revealed that many businesses benefit from the opportunity to draw a local workforce from adjacent neighborhoods.

#### 3 Long-established industry operates smoothly, particularly in the northeast corner

The northeast corner of the study area has the settled feel of an industrial campus. Area businesses strive to operate smoothly and independently among neighbors with the same goals. The primary users of W. Bruce Street near S. 16th Street are long-established industrial businesses. Several businesses operate within several parcels, or across W. Bruce Street and W. Pierce Street. Stakeholders share the sentiment that this area of the Sub-District feels the least likely to change anytime soon.

#### 4 The canal is a unique asset

Stakeholders agree that the Burnham Canal is a unique feature, and express a desire for a future where the canal becomes a true amenity for the area. Today, it is seen as an eyesore and a liability for many property owners.

#### 5 Parking isn't a big issue here right now

*"New uses could create additional congestion."* - Stakeholder quote

Stakeholders agree that most of the time parking is available within a block of one's desired destination. However, many participants expressed concern that a more mixed-use environment might add to parking congestion in the area.

#### 6 Pierce Street is the preferable east-west bike route through the district

W. Pierce Street provides the most direct route for cyclists traveling east to west, north of National Avenue. This path connects Mitchell Park to the 6th Street protected bike lane. Although the condition of the pavement and poor street lighting were flagged as safety issues for cyclists, W. Pierce Street is preferred to W. Bruce Street, which has a reputation for heavy truck traffic that can be intimidating for cyclists. There is general agreement that National Avenue, today, is not comfortable for most cyclists.

### AREA CONCERNS

#### 7 There are real and perceived safety issues in the area

*"We need more people around to make it feel inhabited...feel like someone's keeping an eye on things"*

- Stakeholder quote

Several business owners engaged in the study share recent experiences with theft from vehicles and outdoor storage yards in the Sub-District. Many business owners point to a lack of activity as one source of the problem. Several business owners described additional security measures they have taken for their own properties, as well as an informal communication protocol between businesses when safety issues arise.

#### 8 The streets and viaducts are very dark at night

*"Lighting could be improved. We've got truck drivers that come in the middle of the night. We have to keep our truck gate locked."* - Business owner

Almost every stakeholder group noted the lack of lighting as a top issue in the Sub-District. Lack of adequate street lights was cited as an issue of real and perceived safety. Lack of lighting under the 16th Street viaduct and areas under the I-43 highway structure were often described as "intimidating," coupled with personal anecdotes of drug dealing and loitering observed in these areas.

#### 9 Trash accumulation, debris, and dust on the streets and sidewalks

Stakeholders noted several locations where trash accumulation has been an issue. Stakeholders also mentioned that trucks traveling along W. Bruce Street, in particular, kick up dust and drop debris into the roadway.

#### 10 Illegal dumping and encampments on vacant lots need consistent attention

Issues of encampment and illegal dumping on vacant properties were mentioned by stakeholders. These issues were also observed by the project team during a tour of the area.

#### 11 Cars drive too fast through this area

*"Bruce Street has the most traffic, some people speed down this road, which is something to consider. Pierce is far less trafficked than Bruce."*

- Stakeholder quote

Many stakeholders mention seeing speeding vehicles, drag racing, and disregard for area stop signs.

#### 12 Land use conflicts already exist in the Sub-District

Business owners point to the intersection at W. Pierce Street at 12th Street as the source of congestion and safety concerns, primarily around the end of the school day when buses and parents queue for pick-up at the Academy of Excellence School.

#### 13 The edge of the canal is unattractive

Many stakeholders noted that the current condition of the canal's edge is poor with back of operation and overgrown landscaping facing the canal. Several individuals questioned if the wetland rehabilitation investment would be successful without some additional clean-up of private property adjacent to the canal.

## Area Benefits & Concerns

### LEGEND

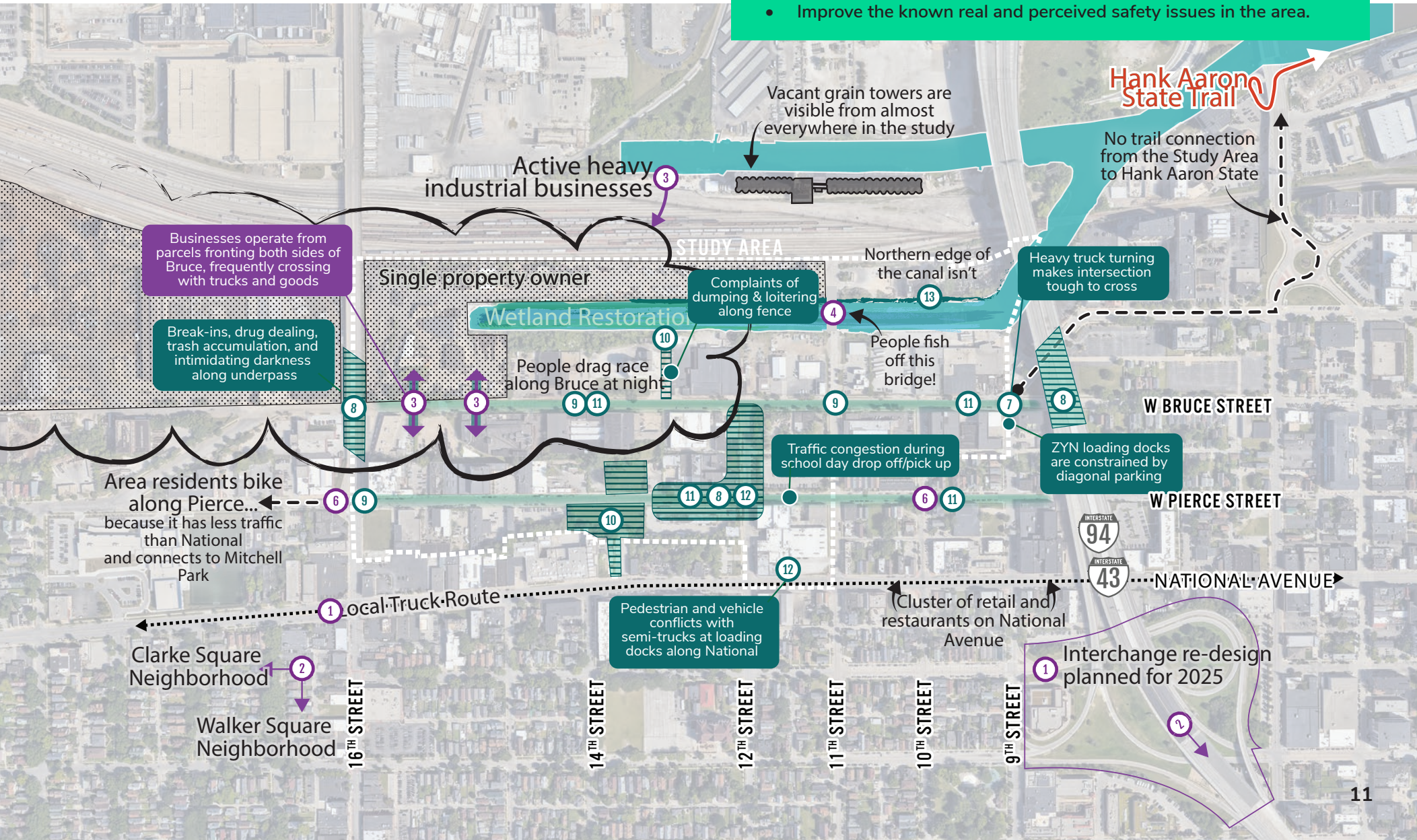
- AREA BENEFITS
- AREA CONCERNS
- BUSINESS-SPECIFIC CONCERN

Several of the map labels indicate a point of concern or physical issue related to a particular business or property. These comments were shared with the project team and are documented as part of the engagement process.

## GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

Stakeholders were asked what kinds of improvements would make this area a better place to run a business, work, or live (nearby). Three primary goals emerged from the conversations with local stakeholders:

- Make sure the projects planned for the area have the greatest possible positive impact on the area.
- Ensure that the area can continue to support long-standing businesses, even as the area changes.
- Improve the known real and perceived safety issues in the area.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Pursue rezoning two sub-areas to more permissive industrial zoning
2. Expand public access to the Burnham Canal
3. Explore potential streetscape and intersection improvements
4. Mobilize resources to address real and perceived safety issues in the district

# RECOMMENDATIONS – PIERCE & BRUCE SUB-DISTRICT STUDY

## RECOMMENDATION 1: Pursue rezoning two sub-areas to more permissive industrial zoning

### AREA 1

Area 1 includes parcels fronting the south side of W. Pierce Street between N. 16th Street and S. 12th Street.

Through planning analysis and stakeholder engagement, the Study found the following related to the existing use, perceptions, and attitudes about Area 1:

- General agreement that Pierce Street in this area already contains a mix of uses and is less isolated than Bruce Street.
- Stakeholders noted Pierce Street is a preferred East-West connection for cyclists through the area, and provides a direct connection to Mitchell Park to the west.
- Parcels along this block are more narrow and shallow than most properties zoned Industrial-Heavy in the Menomonee Valley.
- These parcels also lack unique access to the waterways, rail, or highway infrastructure representative of other Industrial-Heavy zoned parcels.
- In the future, land use conflicts may arise with the current Industrial-Heavy zoning in this area, particularly on the south side of the street. Parcels fronting National Avenue (Industrial-Mixed zoning) could be redeveloped into residential or mixed-use projects without an adequate transitional buffer to the parcels zoned Industrial-Heavy, north of Bruce Street.
- Creating additional opportunities for mixed-use or residential conversion is not critical within this area because of the existing properties zoned Industrial-Mixed to the south, along National Avenue.

There was general agreement among stakeholders who participated in the Study that zoning could be more permissive in Area 1.

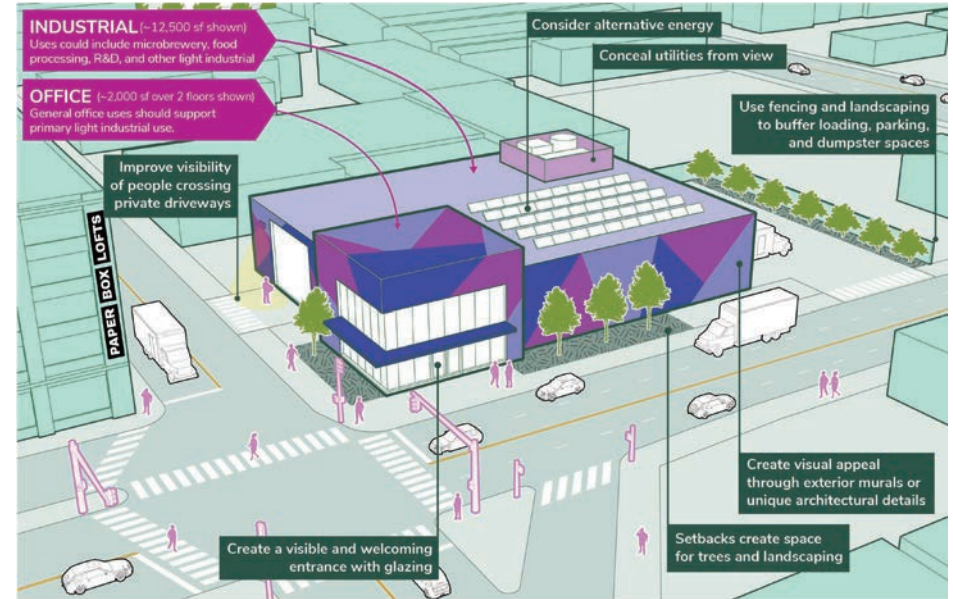


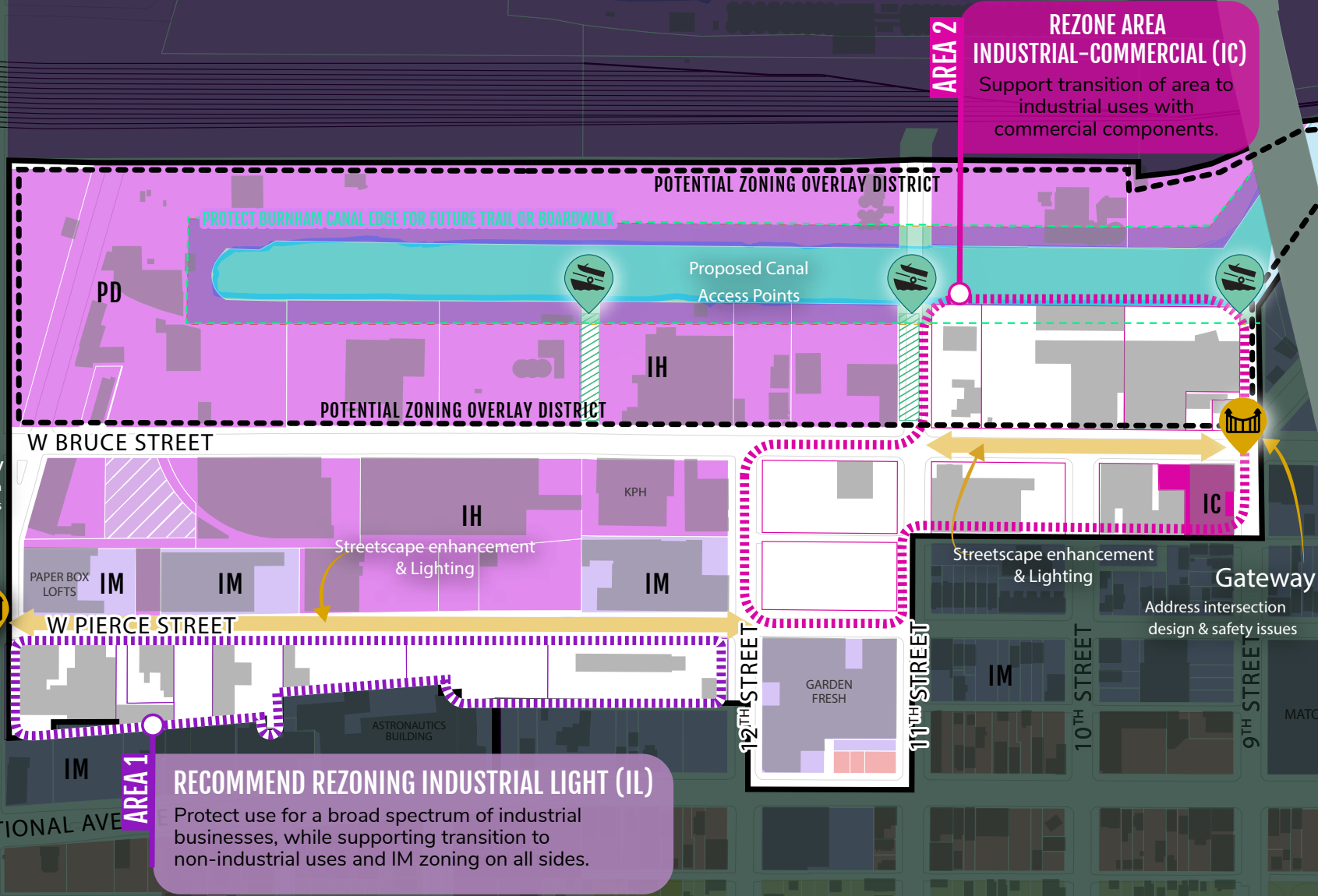
Diagram above depicts redevelopment scenario for 1575 W. Pierce Street under proposed rezoning to Industrial-Light (IL).

### AREA 1 RECOMMENDATION: Rezone parcels in Area 1 from Industrial-Heavy (IH) to Industrial-Light (IL).

#### Why rezone to Industrial-Light?

- Continue to protect land in this area for the broadest possible spectrum of industrial use. IL is the most restrictive zoning category after Industrial-Heavy - meaning the most protective of industrial uses. IL-zoned properties typically have smaller lots and less demand for outdoor storage or parking for heavy vehicles and equipment relative to IH.
- Align future uses with the existing context which includes a mix of industrial businesses that already meet the standards of Industrial-Light zoning, and non-industrial uses including the Academy of Excellence Elementary School and Paper Box Lofts (both IM zoning).
- Create a buffer between heavy industry to the north and anticipated growth of mixed-use development along National Avenue. IL uses require more extensive buffering from adjoining residential areas.

# Zoning Recommendations – Areas 1 & 2



## AREA 2

Area 2 includes parcels fronting W. Bruce Street between S. 12th Street and S. 9th Street on the south frontage, and S. 11th Street and S. 9th Street on the north frontage.

Through planning analysis and stakeholder engagement, the Study found the following related to the existing use, perceptions, and attitudes about Area 2:

- Residential context to the east and south, and the only area with a regular grid street pattern.
- Stakeholders expressed keen interest in creating access points to the Burnham Canal to support future recreational access to the water. Among the three potential public access points stakeholders preferred locations at S. 9th and S. 11th Streets were preferred.
- Bike access to the area from S. 6th Street; Walkable to 6th Street destinations.
- Although these parcels offer unique access to a waterway and rail yard—typical of IH districts—neither access point can support industrial logistics. The Burnham Canal is no longer considered navigable for commercial or industrial purposes, and S. 11th Street is not a formal access point to the rail yard north of the study area.
- Parcels along this block are more narrow and shallow than other IH properties in the Menomonee Valley.
- Creating additional opportunities for mixed-use or residential conversion is not preferred within this area because of the existing Industrial-Mixed to the south and east, which allows residential redevelopment.

There was general agreement among stakeholders who participated in the Study that zoning could be more permissive in Area 2.

## AREA 2 RECOMMENDATIONS: Rezone parcels in Area 2 from Industrial Heavy (IH) to Industrial Commercial (IC).

### Why rezone to Industrial-Commercial?

- **Continue to protect land in this area for industrial use.** Industrial-Commercial (IC) zoning protects the use of these parcels for industry but expands the ability for an owner to convert older industrial buildings to commercial and office uses in support of or related to the primary industrial use. IC zoning does not anticipate the same intensity of parking demand that would be expected in a district that is zoned Industrial-Office (IO)
- **Limited, accessory retail is more welcome in the “IC” zoning category. Industrial-Commercial zoning welcomes some retail uses, so long as these are an accessory to the primary industrial use of the site.** As properties turn over and new businesses come into the district, Area 2 would become the preferred zone within the Sub-District in which to locate industrial businesses with more people-facing functions, such as accessory retail. This may encourage an increase in pedestrian activity in the area and generate economic activity.
- **Recognize the unique urban character in this sub-area. The St. Paul Design District in the Menomonee Valley represents some of the ideal outcomes in an IC District.** These areas have an urban character and are more pedestrian-scaled than other, vehicular-traffic-dominated corridors, with smaller and mid-sized buildings and minimal setbacks. This area of W. Bruce Street shares many of these qualities.
- **Align future uses with anticipated pedestrian activity in the area.** By down-zoning this area, a buffer of lighter industrial uses is created between the existing heavy industry to the west and the adjacent and established residential area to the south and east.
- **Industrial-Commercial (IC) zoning limits outdoor operations or use of outdoor space for storage beyond Industrial-Light (IL) or Industrial-Heavy (IH) zoning categories.** Reinforcing high-quality outdoor spaces and minimizing operational noise makes sense in an area with increased foot traffic and outdoor recreation.

Other area recommendations are provided based on planning analysis and stakeholder opinions raised through this process.

## RECOMMENDATION 2:

### Expand public access to the Burnham Canal

Stakeholders engaged in this study agree that it is critical for the City and partners to pursue planning to complement and leverage the wetland restoration initiative. This includes creating ways for the Canal to become a recreational amenity with public access, such as a kayak/boat launch, and a longer-term vision that includes a trail or boardwalk along the water's edge. The location and physical form of this recreational amenity must be the subject of further study. Critical steps toward a future vision for the Burnham Canal should include:

#### NEAR TERM: Pursue opportunities for public access to the Burnham Canal.

- DCD, MVP, and partners to pursue recreational water access points (boat/kayak launch, etc.), including outlining the planning process and identifying funding to make recreational access points a reality. The City is working with MMSD and WDNR to explore different opportunities for public access along the perimeter of the wetland.
- MVP to engage local property owners to clean up the rear lot water frontage, overgrown weeds, collection of litter, and tidying up outdoor storage visible from the canal and proposed access points.

#### MIDTERM: Consider a Potential Site Plan Review Overlay Zone (SPROZ) to guide redevelopment along the Burnham Canal.

- Consider ongoing Burnham Canal edge improvements and a potential recreational trail or riverwalk using the City's existing Site Plan Review Overlay Zone (SPROZ) as a tool to guide the redevelopment of properties fronting the canal over time.

#### LONG TERM: As properties along the waterfront redevelop, construct segments of a recreational trail or riverwalk.

- MVP and DCD to continue to encourage redevelopment along the Burnham Canal in keeping with the established Overlay Zone as properties become available.
- If a waterfront pathway amenity is realized, the City's Multimodal Unit should plan and construct an on- and off-street network of bike/ped pathways to connect the Burnham Canal amenity area to the Hank Aaron Trail.



Image above shows the view from the 11th Street bridge over the Burnham Canal, looking east.



Image above shows the view from W. Bruce Street, north toward the Burnham Canal (just beyond the tree) along a vacated utility pathway between two parcels.

# Burnham Canal - Long Term Vision

**PLACEMAKING**  
Consider mural or other silo activation

OVERLAY DISTRICT RESTRICTS DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A DEFINED DISTANCE ALONG THE CANAL

PUBLIC ACCESS & BOAT / KAYAK LAUNCH

**ZONING OVERLAY**  
Parcels with water frontage become part of a new Zoning Overlay District to accommodate a waterfront trail.

IMPROVE CONNECTIONS TO POTENTIAL WATERFRONT ACCESS POINTS

ADDRESS INTERSECTION DESIGN AND SAFETY ISSUES

16<sup>TH</sup> STREET

W BRUCE STREET

W PIERCE STREET

NATIONAL AVENUE

14<sup>TH</sup> STREET

12<sup>TH</sup> STREET

11<sup>TH</sup> STREET

10<sup>TH</sup> STREET

9<sup>TH</sup> STREET

ASTRONAUTICS BUILDING

KPH

GARDEN FRESH

ZYN

GRANARY LOFTS

1331 PLACE APARTMENTS

*"I plan on living in this area for years to come and thank you for the recommendations for improving public access to the canal! I think that you presented a clear case and agree with the proposal."*

- Near Area Resident (Quote from the Public Meeting 02)



## Understanding these regulatory tools...

The primary focus of this study is to analyze the Sub-District and surrounding areas to determine if the current industrial zoning is appropriate given present and anticipated changes to the area. Consideration of rezoning properties in the Sub-District based on the recommendations of this study is expected. Two regulatory tools play a role in these recommendations: parcel rezoning and the creation of a Site Plan Review Overlay Zone.

The City of Milwaukee's Department of City Development (DCD) would initiate and manage a process to rezone parcels or create an overlay district in the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District area.

### Zoning or Rezoning a parcel or area:

Rezoning is the process of changing a parcel's assigned zoning category. Businesses operating on a site that is rezoned to become a non-conforming use are considered "grandfathered in" to the area. The use will have legal non-conforming status provided there is an occupancy permit for the use on file with the Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS). This allows the owner to continue to use the property, but there may be some restrictions on the ability to make changes to the use such as intensification or expansion of the use. Board of Zoning Appeals approval might be required if there is a proposal to make changes to the use or expand a legal non-conforming use.

In this case, rezoning would be used to guide the mix of uses in the area toward lighter industrial uses at the edges of the study area in closest proximity to established commercial and residential areas to the east, west, and south. The process to rezone parcels in the Pierce-Bruce Sub-District may be initiated by DCD following the release and adoption of this study. If the City chooses to move forward with recommendations to

rezone properties, DCD will initiate the Zoning Map Change process. Impacted property owners would be given notice via individual mailings, DCD and MVP would make an effort to connect with businesses and property owners in the area. The process includes public hearings at the City Plan Commission and the Zoning, Neighborhoods, and Development Committee meetings before going to the full Common Council for consideration.

Existing property owners are not required to make changes to their properties if they are rezoned. However, the new zoning expectations are exercised when the current or new owner of the parcel redevelops the property for a new purpose, or when major redevelopment takes place. There may be some restrictions on the ability to make changes to the use such as intensification or expansion of the use

**Timeframe: NEAR TERM (1 year)**  
**Process unfolds over the year following the release and adoption of this plan.**

### Creating a Site Plan Review Overlay Zone:

Overlay zones provide an opportunity to create new development projects that are more compatible with their neighbors, are designed to be pedestrian-friendly in both design and scale, and will encourage creativity, variety, and excellence in design and layout. Site Plan Review Overlay zones provide an opportunity for adding design standards over and above those required in the base zoning, including improved landscape buffers. Design standards are minimum requirements that are required to be implemented by each property owner redeveloping within the zone.

The City of Milwaukee and its partners have placed a great emphasis on the full utilization and appreciation of the Milwaukee River. The City has used the SPROZ regulatory tool over the years in an effort to create a continuous system of Riverwalks and recreational trails on both sides of the Milwaukee River. The SPROZ tool was previously used in the Menomonee Valley to realize recreational amenities including the Menomonee Valley Riverwalk. More information about the Design Guidelines for this existing trail can be found at the Menomonee Valley Riverwalk Design Standards:

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/DCD/Planning/PlansStudies/AreaPlans/MenomoneeValley>

In the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District, an Overlay Zone would ensure the physical design of future redevelopment projects along the edge of the Burnham Canal will accommodate and enhance a future recreational trail, boardwalk, or riverwalk, and complement other recreational assets planned for the area.

The process to create an Overlay District would follow any effort to rezone parcels in the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District area and solicit the input of affected property and business owners.

An overlay zone proposed for the area surrounding the Burnham Canal may include:

- A defined amount of space from the water's edge development is restricted.
- Define what a trail or boardwalk network might look and feel like.
- Define the physical conditions of buildings and outdoor storage visible from the Canal.
- Preferred plantings and vegetation along the waterfront edge of properties.
- Preferred lighting and site circulation infrastructure.

An Overlay Zone only applies when a property is redeveloped. Redevelopment typically happens after a property is sold to a new owner, but can be initiated by the current owner investing in improvements to their own property. An Overlay Zone would set design standards when major redevelopment takes place- typically valued at about 70% of the assessed value.

Projects within a Site Plan Review Overlay Zone must go before the City Plan Commission for approval. Design Standards for each Site Plan Review Overlay Zone are approved by the Common Council and are used as the basis for review and approval. Projects may also apply for a deviation from a performance or design standard of a Site Plan Review Overlay Zone.

Find out more: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/OverlayZones/SP>

**Timeframe: MIDTERM (2 years)**  
**Process would follow the effort to rezone parcels in the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District.**

# RECOMMENDATION 3:

## Explore potential streetscape & intersection improvements

### Improve the street condition and quality.

- W. Pierce Street is home to Paper Box Lofts, a multifamily development, the Academy of Excellence elementary school, and is a known bike route through the area for nearby residents. Improvements to the pavement and sidewalks and ensuring the visibility of striping and pedestrian infrastructure at intersections are critical improvements in this area. (MVP, DPW, DPW)
- W. Bruce Street supports a higher volume of heavy truck traffic through the Sub-District study area. Pavement condition, lighting, and additional street sweeping and debris removal would improve conditions for vehicles along W. Bruce Street. (DPW)

### Redesign intersections and streets where trucks and people mix.

- The W. Pierce Street and N. 16th Street and W. Bruce Street and S. 9th Street intersections are gateways into the Sub-District. Gateway Intersection improvements should include improved pavement, markings for bicycles, sidewalk repairs and additional street lighting. (DPW, DPW)
- Work with area business owners to reconsider truck circulation through the study area. Coordinate circulation strategy with both the National Avenue Reconstruction project and the future redesign of the I-94 / I-43 on/off ramp. (DPW, DPW) Critical intersections to consider include:
  - W. Bruce Street at S. 9th Street
  - W. Pierce Street at S. 12th Street
  - W. Pierce Street at N. 16th Street/S Muskego Ave
  - S. 9th Street at National Avenue
  - National Avenue between S. 11th Street and S. 12th Street (loading docks)

- Consider a future traffic analysis focused on the street network east of S. 11th Street and looking specifically at street design and network connectivity to support truck circulation to and from area businesses as the area changes. Today, S. 9th Street is a critical route for large trucks from the existing highway to access businesses on W. Bruce Street. This means the W. Bruce Street intersection with S. 9th Street supports a lot of truck turning movements. Intersection design and safety enhancements can ensure conflicts do not arise as pedestrian volume increases through the area. Should traffic volume become a significant challenge, potential changes to the street network—including one-way to two-way conversion or the removal of diagonal parking planned in coordination with local businesses—could alleviate traffic congestion and improve pedestrian safety at this intersection. (MVP & DCD)

### Welcome more pedestrian activity.

- In the future, the Burnham Canal wetland restoration and changes to land use in the area may increase traffic. Changes to street and intersection design should be considered to alleviate or mitigate potential safety conflicts. (DCD & DPW)
- Shared Parking Under Highway 94/43: Work with Milwaukee County DOT (MCDOT) to explore shared parking facilities under the highway structure and security enhancements to existing spaces. (DCD, MCDOT)
- Encourage the growth and stabilization of the retail environment along National Avenue to better support the daily needs of area workers and residents. (DCD)
- Streetscape design and parking regulations at the eastern edge of the study area should be re-evaluated as retail along S. 6th Street grows. Side streets are likely to support additional parking and circulation. (DPW)

Other area recommendations are provided based on planning analysis and stakeholder opinions raised through this process. The streetscape recommendations below are not yet planned or funded but will be considered by the City's Multimodal Unit ("DPW" - part of DPW) following this plan's completion. DPW regularly evaluates and prioritizes corridors for multimodal improvements. Elements related to National Avenue and connecting intersections will be considered as part of the National Avenue reconstruction project. The National Avenue project is led by the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation projected to begin construction in 2026 and last about 2 years.

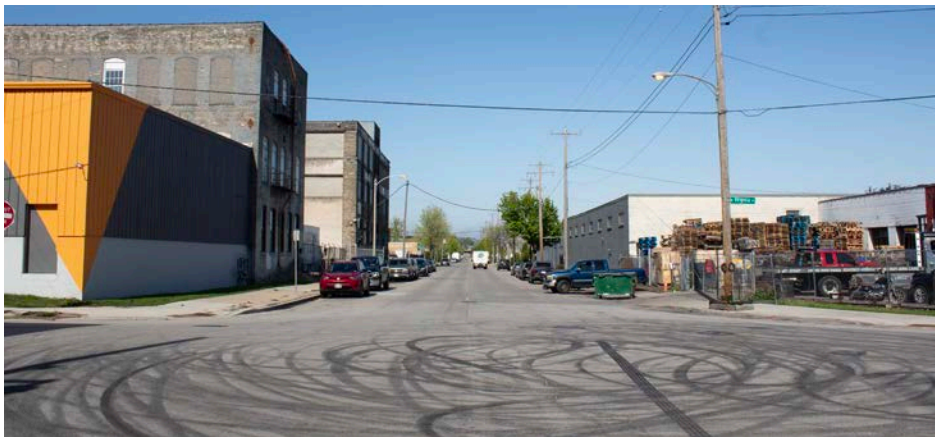


Image (left) shows the 9th Street intersection with W. Bruce Street, looking west. Tire marks in the intersection are evidence of the high number of truck turning movements taking place at this location. These marks may also be evidence of drivers drag racing and "donuts" in this intersection illegally, a safety issue to which many stakeholders called attention.

# RECOMMENDATION 4:

## Mobilize resources to address real & perceived safety issues in the district

### Improve lighting along W. Pierce Street and W. Bruce Street.

- Improve lighting throughout the study area. Lighting has the potential to improve the real and perceived safety of the area for all stakeholder groups. (DPW)
- Encourage the installation of security or lighting infrastructure on private property. There is precedent for cost-share with a local BID to install lighting, which could accelerate the process. (MVP)
- Viaduct improvements are needed along Bruce Street under the 16th Street Viaduct and should include regular debris removal and improved lighting. (DPW)

### Clean up the streets & open spaces.

- Increase the presence of the Menomonee Valley Partners Stew Crews. (MVP)
- Engage local property owners to improve the appearance of exterior front and side yard storage, condition of fencing, and landscaping maintenance. (MVP)
- Organize regular neighborhood litter pick-up in partnership with local residents and businesses. (MVP)
- Promote funds available for facade improvements and neighborhood beautification. Clarify if/how these funds can be applied to fencing, signage, and other exterior site improvements. (MVP)

### Increase safety & security presence.

- Establish a centralized digital resource to share crime alerts and in-the-moment information with area property owners and businesses. Promote this broadly among the stakeholders. (MVP)
- Work with property owners to do a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) walk-through in partnership with the Milwaukee Police Department to identify safety and security improvements needed in the area. (MVP, Milwaukee Police)

### Maintain vacant property

- Continue regular mowing and upkeep of vacant, City-owned property. (DCD)
- Consider pursuing redevelopment of land under the I-43 / I94 highway structure for shared parking serving the area. (DCD, MCDOT, WisDOT, MMSD)
- Due to intensive site remediation required for redevelopment, as properties north of the Burnham Canal become available, consider acquisition for future redevelopment as a public amenity or open space. (Partners, DCD)



Image above shows the view from W. Bruce Street, looking west, under the N. 16th Street viaduct. Stakeholders agree this location is in need of lighting, safety, and aesthetic enhancements.

# IMPLEMENTATION

Many local voices helped shape this plan; BID neighbors, employees, businesses, community organizations, City staff, and more. The City and project partners would like to extend a "Thank you!" to everyone who contributed to this plan by participating in an interview or who shared their thoughts and insights online or at a public meeting.

The Department of City Development (DCD) will proceed with the rezoning process for both Area 1 and 2, as outlined in this Study. DCD will also work with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to refine a plan, identify funding, and initiate policy changes to realize the long-term vision for the Burnham Canal.

### Implementation Partners

Several partners will be critical in the implementation of recommendations in the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District Study, including:

**DCD:** The City of Milwaukee's Department of City Development

**MVP:** Menomonee Valley Partners, Inc.

**DPW:** The City of Milwaukee's Department of Public Works

**MCDOT:** Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

Acronyms representing these partners follow each of the actions for Recommendations 3 and 4.

DCD and MVP look forward to a continued effort to improve the Pierce and Bruce Sub-District.

