

Plan for the Brewers Hill/Harambee Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District

Exhibit B

Brewers Hill is a three by six-block area located on a steep rise just west of the Milwaukee River and north of Downtown Milwaukee. It was a subdivision carved out of the original Kilbourntown in the 1850's, and soon became an important residential enclave sandwiched between the factories that lined Commerce Street and the bustling retail centers of then-Third Street and North Avenue. Business owners and laborers lived side by side in the 19th century, leading to a mixture of grand houses on large lots next to closely spaced workers cottages and duplexes.

When Brewers Hill was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, the nomination stated 'Its core of Greek Revival and Italianate, single-family, brick or frame houses constitutes the most remarkable assemblage of architecture of its type remaining from Milwaukee's early years.... chiefly in it's variety of building types and concentration in a small, exclusively residential area'.

Although many of the original houses survived the decline of the post WWII years, the city was forced to demolish a number of abandoned buildings in the 60's and 70's, leaving gaps in the streetscape of Brewers Hill. Over the last 10 years, new houses have been built to fill most of those gaps, bringing new homeowners to the area. Also, proximity to cultural and entertainment centers have attracted young and 'empty nest' buyers to condos and townhouses carved out of old factories and warehouses, as well as to new construction on both city-owned and privately-held acreage.

Already the rapid growth of the Brewers Hill area has begun to change its character; increased traffic and street parking, noise, loss of open/green space as new construction takes up vacant land, and skyrocketing taxes are among the challenges facing the residents. Most recently, the threat of oversized condo complexes towering over the old houses galvanized neighbors' objections, and focused attention on the need for a long term plan for the area. The same issues are already spilling over into adjacent areas west of Brewers Hill, and will eventually affect all the surrounding neighborhoods; consequently, we believe this is a prime opportunity to include those areas in the overlay district.

The Harambee Neighborhood, which overlaps with Brewer's Hill, is expected to experience the most new housing development. Harambee's boundaries are Holton, on the east, N. 7th Street on the west, Burleigh on the North, and Walnut on the South.

Harambee is a neighborhood of impressive resources, including substantial homes, active commercial areas, residents, and community based organizations that are committed to neighborhood revitalization and a strong cultural heritage. The southern portion of the community also includes the Halyard Park neighborhood, a suburban-style subdivision of spacious homes and large lots. This neighborhood was built between the late 1970's and mid-1990s and has symbolized new life in the heart of the central city.

Originally farmland, the Harambee neighborhood was settled between 1850 and 1890. Nearly all of the early residents were German immigrants who eventually populated a trading center known as Williamsburg. Urban settlement came to the area in the 1870's as the city limits expanded northward. In 1891 Williamsburg, by then a suburban community of blue-collar workers, was annexed to Milwaukee and become a neighborhood.

Following expansion, the first Black families arrived in the 1930's. Thriving business corridors such as "Bronzeville" grew in the area of what is now called King Drive and Walnut. By the 1970's Black's were the largest group in the vicinity. Europeans remained, while there was a swelling Hispanic community in the blocks just west of Holton Street. As the number of minorities heightened, Germans and Europeans moved to the northern portions of Milwaukee. The community established churches, new businesses and developed a distinct cultural district. (Adapted from the 2003 Harambee Neighborhood Strategic Plan).

Today the community is predominately Black American with a growing White and Hispanic population. The median household income is approximately \$19,573. The employment exclusion rate is over 50%, with a substantial amount of Black males unemployed in the area.

An overlay district that will encourage continued investment in the existing housing stock as well as guide the growth of carefully planned new construction is essential to the success of our neighborhood. It will also serve as a long-term blueprint for managed growth in the areas north of Brewers Hill.