

Milwaukee Avenue Transitional Commercial Development Area Concepts

Context

As identified in the Community Land Use section of this comprehensive plan, there are a number commercially zoned areas located along important arterial corridors that have struggled to maintain economic viability and are defined by vacancies and various states of disrepair as a result. In many cases these areas have a dominant, auto-oriented character that is characterized by large and frequent curb cuts expansive areas of concrete or asphalt paving, and a lack of landscaping or parking lot buffering along public frontages, greatly diminish the pedestrian experience and causing a notable negative impact on community character.

Several segments of Milwaukee Avenue are particularly notable for their poor site conditions and have been identified as warranting further examination of land use policies to address these known issues. To help test and illustrate potential redevelopment options and urban design enhancements in these locations, a specific location along the east side of Milwaukee – between Rockland and Lincoln – was targeted for further study. Shown on the facing page, the specific opportunity site is comprised of roughly two-acres of C-3 zoned land that contains a mix of low-intensity commercial uses. The development concepts shown on the following pages explore both commercial redevelopment/reuse strategies as well as transitional land use strategies. Implementation of these alternatives could occur on a parcel by parcel basis over time, or collectively as a planned development (PUD) where greater control can be exerted over key site plan elements – such as curb cuts and shared parking areas.

Opportunities and Constraints

- Busy arterial corridor frontages provide high-visibility for businesses, but also require thoughtful urban design treatment to mitigate negative effects of fast moving vehicles.
- Both sides of Milwaukee Avenue should ultimately incorporate streetscape improvements, including a landscape buffer between the roadway and the sidewalk, new street trees, and improved streetscape furniture, and lighting.
- Variations in building setbacks can provide strategic opportunities for outdoor seating or additional landscape buffering.

- Many lots along Milwaukee Avenue are shallow and hemmed in by established residential uses to the east and west presenting an on-going challenge to commercial uses that require surface parking.
- In locations with a rear-abutting alley, efforts to relocate or reorient access and loading activity away from the primary frontage can help to improve pedestrian conditions.
- While some buildings may be functionally obsolete or in advanced states of disrepair and require redevelopment, opportunities to maintain existing commercial building fabric should also be considered as a way to help boost local and independent businesses through lower cost rents, but also high visibility.
- Though generally defined as an arterial, commercial corridor portions of Milwaukee Avenue may present a unique opportunity to provide new attainable, workforce housing opportunities that are proximate to downtown and important Village institutions, such as Advocate Condell Medical Center.
- Concepts explored for this area may present a model for enhancing other arterial corridors within the community – for example along east Illinois Route 176, between Milwaukee Avenue and North 5th Street, as well as the commercial area on the east side of Milwaukee Avenue between East Ellis Avenue, and Parkview Drive.

Primary Development Objectives

- Commercial Corridor Reuse/Redevelopment. Focus new commercial development at high-visibility corner locations, and revitalize extant commercial development along Milwaukee with corridor frontage enhancements to create a more attractive and walkable environment.
- Medical Office Infill / Redevelopment. Explore opportunities to redevelop vacant or under-utilized properties for with alternative commercial uses, such as medical-related office space, specifically in the vicinity of Advocate Condell Medical Center. The Milwaukee Avenue Study Area is an excellent location for these medical uses with offices for physicians and related facilities along with possible second story residential to address shortages in housing at an attainable rate.
- Residential Redevelopment. Redevelop persistently vacant/under-utilized properties along corridors with residential development in the form of two-to-three story, walk-up or alley-loaded townhomes. Free-standing commercial use or mixed-use development may remain at corners with higher visibility.

Milwaukee Avenue Study Area

STUDY AREA

NORTH MILWAUKEE AVENUE/IL ROUTE 21

PRAIRIE AVENUE

EAST LINCOLN AVENUE

EAST ROCKLAND ROAD

0' 100' 200' 400' NORTH

Corridor Development

Concept A

Concept A seeks to revitalize the existing commercial corridor through new development and targeted streetscape enhancements that would support the form and intent of a more neighborhood-oriented mix of uses. New development would relocate parking to the rear or sides of commercial buildings and utilize the existing alleyway as an access point. Where possible, existing buildings that complement a more pedestrian-oriented pattern of development—such as the True Value Hardware property—would be revitalized through facade improvements and the introduction of upper-story uses, such as office or residential. This approach would help to support local businesses and neighborhood serving uses that may require lower rents. Concept A also explores the inclusion of alternative commercial use types such as medical-related office space, which may be attractive in this location due to its proximity to Advocate Condell Medical Center and downtown. Commercial-oriented medical uses—commonly referred to as ‘Medtail’—are a growing use type in commercial areas as service providers look to adapt their brand and user experience through increased visibility and a greater focus on aesthetic character.

Concept Highlights

- A New commercial use.** Redeveloped commercial building with roughly 3,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial or service use. Depending on market demand, the building could include one or two additional stories with for office or residential use with roughly four units per floor. The new building is reoriented towards the primary frontage with roughly 18 surface parking spaces provided in back.
- B New Shared Parking Lot.** New shared parking areas are introduced to efficiently increase parking, while also improving pedestrian character. The reorganized lot with roughly 13 spaces would allow for limited curb cuts off of Milwaukee while still maintaining proper site access.
- C Maintain Existing 2-story True Value Hardware Building.** The existing building would be maintained and enhanced through facade and frontage improvements and a re-organized shared parking lot with 14 spaces. Renovated and potentially expanded upper-story office or residential use would complement roughly 5,250 square feet of ground-floor commercial use.



- D New Corner Commercial Building.** New 5,000 square foot commercial or medical service building at one or potentially two-stories, depending on use. Streetscape improvements and architectural embellishments are included to help anchor the building at its prominent corner location. A shared, 24-space surface parking lot would offer access from Milwaukee Avenue but utilize the rear alley for circulation.
- E Rockland and Milwaukee Intersection Enhancements.** High visibility pedestrian crossings, and corner branding/wayfinding elements are introduced to help calm traffic and improve aesthetic character.
- F Corridor Gateway Element.** A new monument or wayfinding element would help to announce arrival into the village core.
- G Planted Roadway Median.** Potential introduction of a raised median in select areas where curb cuts have been removed to help calm traffic and break up broad expanses of pavement.
- H Milwaukee Avenue Streetscape Enhancements.** Reconstruction of targeted areas along Milwaukee Avenue to help promote walkability and an overall improved community character. Envisioned changes include introduction of a planted buffer between the sidewalk and roadway, additional parking lot screening, decorative elements, and reduced curb cuts.



Milwaukee Avenue Concept A



Corridor Development

Concept B

Concept B explores alternative land use strategies on over-extended vacant and under-utilized commercial sites that would help to bolster existing commercial uses and address broader housing needs. This concept shows portions of the block being redeveloped over time with townhomes and/or low-rise mixed-use buildings in a more traditional development pattern where possible. Commercial use would be prioritized at higher-visibility corner locations. The envisioned residential units would have a similar design and character to other attached single-family or multi-family building types recommended in this plan, however their location along Milwaukee would likely result in a more attainable price structure in support of an important housing policy goal. In addition to enabling improvements to the corridor's character, this approach would also push the official 'arrival point' into the community's commercial core further to the north, resulting in a more pronounced entry sequence.

Concept Highlights

- A New Corner Multi-Family Development.** Redeveloped corner property a new 3-story building containing with four to six-units total. Tuck-under garage parking on the first floor provides 2 spaces per unit. Garages are solely accessed from the rear alleyway, eliminating curb cuts on Milwaukee.
- B New Townhomes.** Attached single-family units with first-floor garages are also shown filling in parcels with under-performing commercial uses. The envisioned units are two to three-stories tall and offer roughly 2,500 square feet. Additional guest or overflow parking is provided in the rear of the property and accessed from the existing alley.
- C Existing 2-story True Value Hardware Building Reuse.** The existing building would be maintained and enhanced through facade and frontage improvements and a re-organized shared parking lot with 14 spaces. Renovated and potentially expanded upper-story office or residential use would complement roughly 5,250 square feet of ground-floor commercial use.



- D New Corner Mixed-Use Building.** New two to three-story mixed-use building with roughly 2,000 square feet of ground-floor retail at the corner of Rockland and Milwaukee. Portions of the ground floor, and the upper-stories would feature 10 to 15-residential units. Streetscape improvements and architectural embellishments are included to help anchor the building at its prominent corner location. A shared, alley-loaded, 32-space surface parking lot would provide adequate parking for both businesses and residences.
- E Planted Roadway Median.** Potential introduction of a raised median in select areas where curb cuts have been removed to help calm traffic and break up broad expanses of pavement. Branding and cultural elements, such as gateway signage and/or public art could also be incorporated.
- F Milwaukee Avenue Streetscape Enhancements.** Reconstruction of targeted areas along Milwaukee Avenue to help promote walkability and an overall improved community character. Envisioned changes include introduction of a planted buffer between the sidewalk and roadway, additional parking lot screening, decorative elements, and reduced curb cuts.
- G Rockland and Milwaukee Intersection Enhancements.** High visibility pedestrian crossings, and corner branding/wayfinding elements are introduced to help calm traffic and improve aesthetic character.
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Milwaukee Avenue Concept B

