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New Urbanism as Redevelopment Scheme: New Urbanism's Role in Revitalization of Downtown Milwaukee

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NEW URBANISM AS REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME: NEW
URBANISM'S ROLE IN REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN
MILWAUKEE

by

Leila Saboori

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ABSTRACT
NEW URBANISM AS REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME: NEW URBANISM'S
ROLE IN REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE

by

Leila Saboori

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013
Under the Supervision of Professor Joseph Rodriguez

By the turn of the twentieth century persisting decay of many large American urban centers signaled the failure of redevelopment efforts to solve inner city problems and to stop destructive patterns of suburban sprawl. This serious concern persuaded many urban specialists to study the history of urban redevelopment in the United States in order to examine the urban problems and to discuss alternative solutions to the demise of U.S. cities. The past two decades have seen a growing turn toward New Urbanism in the revitalization of urban neighborhoods; as an alternative to conventional suburban development and social and environmental problems. The New Urbanism ideally tries to create “community by design” and highlights the value of traditional, walkable, dense, and interconnected mixed-use neighborhoods. For the period of 20 years the city of Milwaukee has relied on neo-traditional and New Urbanist planning to remake its image and promote its downtown as a center of cultural and economic wealth.

Many critics have questioned the role of New Urbanism in improving Milwaukee's landscape and distressed atmosphere, while the city has not grown significantly and racial disparities in income and employment and other "quality-of-life indicators" are highly noticeable in Milwaukee and stand as some of the primary features of the city's urban landscape. The major goal of this study is to examine and evaluate the New Urbanism's role in revitalization of downtown Milwaukee. For this purpose the study tries to respond to these questions; how do the advocates of New Urbanism and the city leaders in Milwaukee interpret New Urbanism? And how do they perceive the impact of New Urbanist planning on the city's physical and social structure?

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of urban history in the post war period, in spite of intensive redevelopment efforts most of American central cities have been greatly suffered from poverty, joblessness, segregation, and other social problems; whereas, suburban edges of the cities have been encouraged to prosper.

Many different reasons contributed to the urban decline in the post-World War II period. New technology, especially the automobile, changed the patterns of travel in a way that undermined downtown's dominance as a business center. Additionally, due to prosperity of America many citizens chose to enjoy living in larger houses on larger lots outside the city. A significant part of the American urban decline can be traced to U.S. transportation and housing policies that changed the market place and encouraged decentralization.

In general two groups of urban specialists discussed the demise of U.S. cities in their writings and predicted the future of the cities. The first group, including scholars such as Jon Teaford, does not offer an optimistic view about the future of the urban cores; the "rough road" of urban revitalization did not, in fact, lead to "renaissance." Renaissance, Teaford conceded, remains an "elusive goal." ¹

The second group, including scholars like David Rusk, argues our cities are almost dead and that the only way to revive them is with outside intervention, such as massive amount of federal money or political proposals to expand city borders through regional government or annexation.²

There is another viewpoint that disagrees with both of these groups. Urban specialists like John Norquist are in this category; they claim U.S. cities have been damaged, but they are far from terminal. This standpoint calls for less outside intervention and tries to change the discussion from how to help our dying cities to how the “still-vital cities” add long-lasting value to the United States.³ Their solutions mainly point toward New Urbanism and further sustainable urbanism. New Urbanism enforced a shift from car dependent, residential subdivisions toward dense, walkable, mixed use neighborhoods based on traditional model of the city. Passell argues New Urbanist designers are applying an understanding of the relationship between the build environment and social life that urban sociologist along with urban historians and others still strongly debate.⁴

The methodology used in this paper involved qualitative methods, including interviews with New Urbanists and city leaders and people involved in planning of city of Milwaukee, local newspapers, internet sites. The city of Milwaukee selected as a case study due to its leaders’ supports for adaptation and implementation of New Urbanist principals into the city’s development plan. The purpose of this research is to examine and evaluate the role of Milwaukee’s New Urbanist planning and zoning in revitalization of its downtown. For this purpose the study tries to

respond to these questions; how do the advocates of New Urbanism and city leaders interpret New Urbanism? And how do they perceive the impact of New Urbanist planning on the city's physical and social structure?

New Urbanism promotes the city's urban design agenda and transforms some parts of the city into an upper- and middle-class landscape; "while cultural critics point to an observed nostalgia, homebuyers have been willing to pay premium to escape conventional suburbia."⁵ New Urbanist planning and zoning, however, seems blind to those challenges that face a highly segregated city. This study discusses some of the problems and impediments to further growth of downtown Milwaukee.

The second chapter discusses how urban specialists respond to the demise of the U.S. cities and redevelopment efforts, then talks about the emergence of New Urbanism as an alternative. The third chapter discusses New Urbanism in Milwaukee and talks about the most important New Urbanists projects in the downtown. The fourth chapter presents the study's analysis and evaluation relying on the interviews; population and median household income by using Geographic Information System for a period of 40 years from 1980 to 2010; and finally by looking at the concept of walkability as one of the principals of New Urbanism to examine the walkability of downtown Milwaukee. The fifth chapter covers the problems and impediments that undercut New Urbanism in Milwaukee and discusses the city officials' responses to the New Urbanism's criticisms. And finally the last chapter presents the study's conclusion.

Chapter 2

STATE-OF-THE-ART LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Responses to Urban Decline and Revitalization

Jon Teaford in his book, *The Rough Road to Renaissance* (1990), provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of urban revitalization and post war renaissance in twelve major American central cities from 1940 to 1985 by focusing on local efforts and policies. He describes the various difficulties on the path of revitalization in order to demonstrate that “the road to renaissance was not a straight course.”⁶ In contrast, urban leaders followed many different directions in search for revitalization. Sometimes the search for the renaissance proceeded with a big optimism and energy, whereas the other times, “it almost seemed a lost cause.”⁷

During the late 1940s and early 1950s the aging cities optimistically planned for a recovery, assuming that a physical renovation of the city could remove the devastated problems in the inner city. However, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, skepticism was taking place of the earlier optimism. New office buildings were emerging in downtown’s streets; but during these years, the consequences of the federal urban renewal and interstate highway programs made the bad situation even worse for the residents of the inner city. Many believed that physical renewal was not enough to solve the problems, social renewal was also required. Therefore,

during 1960s programs for “rehabilitating human behavior”⁸ also joined the physical redevelopment. Thus, human renewal started by great hope under federal government’s War on Poverty.

In 1970s, however, human renewal programs seemed to be less successful and even more destructive than physical renewal programs. Racial tensions formed riots, crime rates increased and poor remained poor. Consequently, “in the battle for the control of the cities, decay appeared to be advancing while revitalization was in retreat.”⁹In the early 1980s the downtown building boom and the rehabilitation of some inner city neighborhoods again brought hope to the central city, for instance Baltimore called itself Renaissance City and Pittsburgh claimed to be in the middle of its second renaissance; yet the signs of decline still remained in the inner cities. Although, revived cities like Baltimore or Pittsburgh were profiting some group of society, but “much seemed to remain the same for those at the bottom of the social ladder.”¹⁰ Despite the intensive investment in the physical renewal of the city, “the promised new era did not arrive.”¹¹

The existing settings over the time encouraged suburban edges of the U.S. cities to prosper, while “the inner cores have been allowed to emulsify.”¹² According to Teaford, although during 1940 to 1985 the urban hubs continued to operate American economy, the central cities were not the center of American life as they were in the past. He concludes that after more than four decades of planning and implementation, the concept of renaissance still remains a hot topic for

policymakers, and the journey along the road toward that “elusive goal” is still continuing.

Marc Levine in his study, *'A Third-World City in the First World': Social Exclusion, Racial Inequality, and Sustainable Development in Baltimore* (2000), describes the history of urban revitalization in Baltimore, as the best example of a city that has experienced *the rough road to renaissance*. Baltimore was titled Renaissance City during 1970s and 1980s because of its successful Inner Harbor downtown revitalization. However, by the 1990s, despite the success of the revived Inner Harbor, the economic and social problems in Baltimore were estimated as high as those in Third World countries. The study discusses the formation of three Baltimore within the Baltimore city; Renaissance City, the revived Inner Harbor and waterfront with all the luxury facilities for tourist attraction; Underclass City, populated mostly by blacks and suffering from social and economic distress; and finally attractive suburbs that were sprawling out very fast.

Levine's study highlights the difficulties of sustainable urban development; problems such as, “racial inequality, social exclusion, and metropolitan polarization.”¹³ Yet, he is optimistic that the new regionalism strategies supported by the state government and the city's business elite will help urban decline and suburban sprawl in Baltimore. He believes Smart Growth might provide “a substructure that would enable strategies such as downtown redevelopment and community building to work better than they have in the past.”¹⁴

Rusk's three strategies in his book *Inside Game/Outside Game: Winning Strategies for Saving Urban America* (1999) seek to improve inner city neighborhoods and their residents by achieving a more equitable share of risks and benefits among cities and suburbs. He believes racial segregation and urban sprawl perpetuate poverty cycles while playing inside game- focusing on programs aimed to reduce poverty inside the city- is a losing strategy. Rusk claims controlling suburban sprawl, circulating regional fair-share housing programs and tax sharing among cities and suburbs are the *winning strategies for urban America*. As he argues the problems of American cities are directly related to fragmented political, economic, and land-use choices of federal, state, and local entities. He emphasizes on his strategy regard to "regional coalition to reduce sprawl as the most manageable of his three policy strategies."¹⁵ However, according to Michael Greenberg, Roland Anglin, and many others there is almost absolute prediction that such coalitions often fail to work collectively in the existing political atmosphere.

Why the cities, their residents, and the urban form have been stigmatized in the United States? Norquist in *The Wealth of Cities* (1998) answers to this question by explaining the relationship between suburban growth and urban decline; started by segregated suburban housing, developed with federal subsidies, and then subsidized highways came to service the commuter communities, followed by retail shopping malls, and eventually the workplace moved to the suburbs in the form of office parks. As a result, almost all of the cities in America experienced decentralization and disinvestment in their inner cores.

The design was not the only destructive factor in American cities; Norquist claims “as the cities deteriorated physically they also lost their sense of purpose. Remedies intended to revitalize instead overwhelmed the productive assets of cities. Social services, public housing, welfare schemes, and other efforts at artificial respiration became bigger and more important than the cities and their people.”¹⁶

American cities have been associated with problems of poverty, social injustice, and decay; unfortunately there has been an expectation by many people including city officials that the cities will fail to solve their problems. Norquist, however, believes doomsayers have been wrong and confirms Michael Porter’s argument. With respect to economic distress of most of American urban centers, Porter (1995) argued inner cities can compete in the market place very well by exploiting their natural advantages including “physical location, access to regional clusters, demand conditions, and human resources.”¹⁷ Norquist believes that over the years “city leaders have tried to motivate taxpayers, through the federal government, to give cities money by appealing for sympathy.”¹⁸ He claims “the federal record on transportation is abysmal and the government should consider complete defederalization.”¹⁹ In addition he claims state and federal interventions in markets, “though sometimes well intentioned, has on balance hurt cities,” he introduces free market as “one prescription for urban success.”²⁰ According to Norquist cities should be built on their own values as “a setting for commerce and culture” and not “on pity.”²¹ The natural advantages of cities such as diversity, proximity, choice, community, and markets are the most important privilege that

could allow cities to lead an “economic and cultural renaissance in the twenty-first century.”²² His solutions particularly point toward New Urbanism as an alternative.

2.2. New Urbanism as Alternative

New Urbanism began as an informal network of architects with a common educational background and emerged as an urban design movement in response to automobile dominance. American landscapes resulted from intended and unintended outcomes of Euclidean zoning—“the strict segregation of urban function and their typical forms”—²³and federal highway policy in the post War II period. New Urbanism tends to combine urban and architectural codes to produce a place where people want to use intensely and on foot. By recruiting planners and architects New Urbanists developed their new interdisciplinary design process—the charrette—and turned zoning codes to form-based codes. Norquist calls it “probably the most significant accomplishment of the CNU so far.”²⁴ They also addressed environmentalist criticisms of conventional suburban development and the perceived absence of community by highlighting compact development and walkability in their designs. Moreover, the movement has struggled to meet the demands of the private market for housing and the requirements of real estate finance simultaneously.²⁵

New Urbanists leaders Calthorpe, Duany, Moule, Plater-Zyberk, Polyzoides, and Solomon among others formed the Chicago-based Congress for the New

Urbanism (CNU) in 1993. The Charter of the New Urbanism was issued in 1996 to make their vision official:

The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighbourhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighbourhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice.

We represent a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals. We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.

We dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighbourhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment. ²⁶

The CNU members have certainly advocated using the New Urbanism as a means to redevelop urban areas. According to New Urbanist principles some essential household needs should be accessible within a five- to ten- minute walk from any one's home, schools, playgrounds, and ideally public transportation should also be accessible on foot. Pedestrians should experience enjoyable walks and this happens when proportioned outdoor rooms formed by the street, the sidewalk, and

the exteriors of homes. Pedestrians should also be pleased about the variety of in design detail, the informal contact with neighbors encouraged by front porches and density, and the sense of *eyes on the street* (Jacobs 1961) that adequate window area and the proximity of houses can imply. Jacobs's concept, *eyes on the street*, as Passell claims "offered compelling explanations for the social function of urban form, thereby undermining any planning that failed to take such complex notions into account." ²⁷Elements of the physical structure of the city and the relationship between them according to Passell represent "unique and uniquely material solutions to complex social problems."²⁸

Although the New Urbanism has been introduced as an alternative to our urban problems, it has confronted significant Criticisms. In his recent book, *Building New Urbanism, places, professions, and profits in the American metropolitan landscape* (2013) Passell discusses the confrontation of New Urbanism with liberal, conservative, and architectural criticisms. There are three major criticisms in liberal critics' writings:

That the movement, in its ambition, has come to serve the republican forces of evil; that the focus on design entails the commodification of community and the de-politicization of the development process; and, that the rhetoric of community taken up by the movement has historically been used- and will continue to be used- to exclude and deprive.²⁹

Conservatives go up against "elitist and authoritarian,"³⁰and focus on question of choice while talks about American's preference for suburban life style and automobility. Some conservatives have argued that New Urbanism is mostly "venues for aestheticist, urbanite elite."³¹ Despite their complaints, the

conservatives could not be a large obstacle for the New Urbanism because they have been partly agreed with the New Urbanism's orientation toward traditional small towns and neighborhoods. Both Zinsmeister and Langdon in their studies (1996) identified New Urbanism's potential as a traditional alternative.³² "Conservatives uncritically accept the connection between tradition in planning and design and traditionalism in values, a connection inherent in the New Urbanism's claims about the ties between built form and behavior."³³ Liberals also appreciate the movement's traditionalism "as an improvement upon the suburban status quo."³⁴

Furthermore, New Urbanism has faced more criticisms in the field of architecture. Some of architects stand against New Urbanism and believe "the confusion of precedent and nostalgia opens the New Urbanism up to accusations of regressive politics from a generally progressive design field."³⁵ The New Urbanism as it has been practiced involves cooperation between designers, developers, and government, but this cooperation has been considered "a violation of the design field's principles."³⁶ They claim to do too much and accomplish too little, that is another criticism of the New Urbanism in the field of architecture.³⁷

Despite confrontation with significant criticisms, which cast doubts on the efficiency of New Urbanism as an alternative to our urban problems; the movement has survived and considered popular architectural and planning movement in the United States. In addition, Sustainable Urbanism has been introduced as "a logical successor to the ideas and thoughts put forward by the New Urbanism movement."³⁸

Chapter 3

NEW URBANISM IN MILWAUKEE

3.1. New Urbanist Plan and Projects

Cities like Milwaukee, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo, which were industrial centers, job centers, did not really see significant population growth in the period of 30 years, from late 1960s to late 1990s. Most of the cities lost population; urban population moved from the centers to suburban places, but as a whole the region did not grow. This pattern resulted in disinvestment in the central cities and redistribution of where people live and where they shop. Milwaukee was one of those cities that sprawled out but did not really grow. According to Park from 1960 to 1990 the land area that was consumed in the region for development increased more than double, population however only grew less than 10 percent.³⁹ That represents significant disinvestment in the city while people left the city and moved to the new lands in the suburbs.

In Milwaukee the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and the Greater Milwaukee Commission among other organizations were trying to convert Milwaukee to be more like the suburbs, for one reason they felt people were living in the suburbs because they wanted some certain kind of living conditions. The results were tearing down the old building, chasing the poor people away from

the downtown, getting rid of the residential, and basically turning the city into suburban office parks. Norquist acknowledges that their plan was “one of the worst performing plans in the America.”⁴⁰

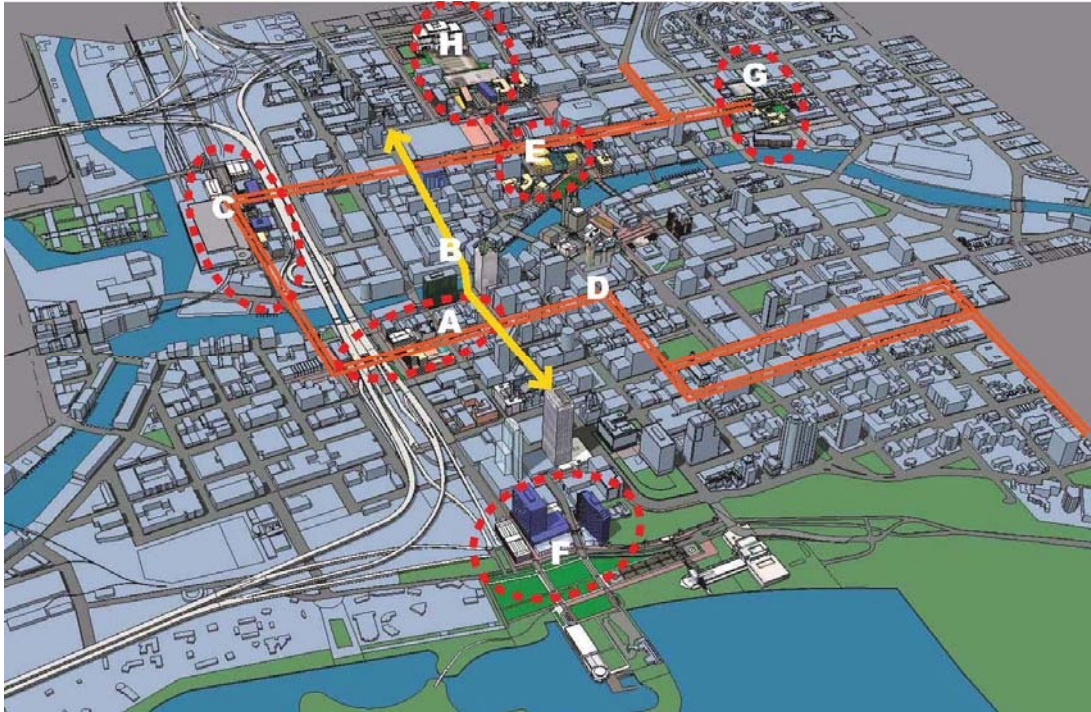
The former mayor of Milwaukee John Norquist held the office from 1988 to 2004 and in 2004 the CNU office moved to Chicago and Norquist was hired as president and CEO. Thus, there is obviously strong connection between the development of New Urbanist principals within the city of Milwaukee and the primary principals that were established in the New Urbanism. Norquist claims cities should be built on their own values as “a setting for commerce and culture.”⁴¹

In spring 1999 the CNU held its annual conference in Milwaukee; instead of exclusively focus on urban design; “the Milwaukee programme – titled ‘*The wealth of cities*’ – titled the emphasized strategies to strengthen the physical, economic, and social aspects of the urban environment as a whole.”⁴²

Like so many other American cities, Milwaukee is just now rediscovering its own urban strengths, rebuilding its riverfront and encouraging middle-class homeowners to move back to the inner city. Can Milwaukee and other cities continue to lure homeowners and employers back from the suburbs? . . . [this conference] will look at what Milwaukee and other cities have done to *remake themselves as centers of cultural and economic wealth.*⁴³

In order to remake Milwaukee as a centre of cultural and economic wealth the plan aimed to remake the downtown as a symbolic heart. The city’s Downtown Master Plan sought to “orchestrate this vision by emphasizing the potential to enhance the downtown area as an amenity-rich ‘traditional’ neighbourhood where people ‘live, work, learn, and play’.”⁴⁴

The Downtown Plan highlights the need to take highest advantage of the downtown's particular possessions such as "the river and the area's 'rich architectural legacy,'" the plan also cited potential to introduce 'catalytic projects' that will provide the city with more marketing advantages. (Figure 1)



Catalytic Projects	
A	- Broadway Connection
B	- Wisconsin Avenue Strategy
C	- Station Plaza
D	- Downtown Streetcar
E	- Pere Marquette Square
F	- Lakefront Gateway
G	- Haymarket Square
H	- Kilbourn Extension to MacArthur Square

Figure1: Catalytic Projects, Downtown Plan, 2010 (Provided courtesy of the city of Milwaukee Department of City Development)

The 1999 Downtown Master Plan was reviewed and updated in 2010. Downtown Comprehensive Area Plan identifies priorities for neighborhoods, districts, corridors and catalytic projects, based on analysis and substantial public participation.⁴⁵The New Plan's goal is:

To better reflect the times, this plan update will reexamine unfinished business from the 1999 plan and redirect some of its proposals, build upon successes of the Plan, as well as acknowledge a new landscape with new challenges. To this end, the broad goals of this plan are to make downtown Milwaukee more: Centered, place-oriented, connected, and dense. In short, the overall goal is to elevate downtown Milwaukee into a regional and nationally recognized urban center known for its livability and innovation.⁴⁶

New Urbanism and its principals have significantly changed the urban form and physical structure of the downtown Milwaukee. In order to examine how New Urbanist principals have been adopted and implemented in the downtown some of the most important New Urbanist projects have been studied.

Milwaukee River has been considered a key amenity for redevelopment since the late 1980s. In 1988 the city of Milwaukee opened RiverWalk Initiative to connect the Milwaukee River to the city's urban fabric through new residential and commercial developments. In the 1990s, 3.1 mile pedestrian walkway constructed along the Milwaukee River and through the entire downtown. The Riverwalk significantly renewed interest in the riverfront and aroused downtown housing boom. Developers of condominiums and rental units find the possibilities particularly attractive. In 2002, "increased residential development tops the list of the downtown Plan's objectives, and approximately 2500 new residential units have been constructed or planned since 1997."⁴⁷

Milwaukee's Convention Centre with its "German Renaissance-style" facade, named Delta Center, opened in 1998 in downtown district. It has been one of the visible changes in the city's landscape as a result of neo-traditional and New Urbanist vision. (Figure3)



Figure 3: Milwaukee's Convention Center (Provided courtesy of Sightlines Newsletter)

One of the major recommendations for Milwaukee Downtown Plan was removing the Park East Freeway. The complete demolition of freeway and its replacement with a landscaped boulevard encouraged by a campaign that mayor Norquist started. In 2002, "demolition began and the removal of the spur and reconstruction was accomplished with \$45 million through a variety of federal, state, and city sources."⁵⁰ Norquist says "it saved money to remove it, rebuilding the

freeway could cost three times as much as tearing it down.”⁵¹ The freeway replaced with McKinley Boulevard and under direction of Peter Park, the former planning director of Milwaukee, the previous street grid was put back together. The redevelopment project, however, has drawn major critical attention due to its difficult and slow implementation process. Park claims:

The Park East redevelopment has been guided by a form based code, there is some issues about why the city has not fully gone through the replacement process, but in general I think it has been very positive example of New Urbanism’s supporting of exclusion of unnecessary public infrastructure and making way for new downtown investment.⁵²

Rocky Marcoux, Commissioner of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development (DCD), generally does not oppose freeways, he argues freeways are necessary and the cities absolutely have to have freeways. However, he claims some of the placements of freeways in Milwaukee were not well thought out, the goal was to design a transportation system that works most efficiently for moving cars and transporting goods but did not take into account the impact they literally had on the neighborhoods. “Park East Freeway should never have been built.”⁵³ And finally Greg Patin, the current Downtown Plan manager in the DCD, expresses his opinion about the Park East replacement project:

This was a beautiful plan but it did not take into account the steps to move it ahead; do not blame the plan, blame the implementation process.⁵⁴

Menomonee River Valley plan was another major Downtown Plan. According to Rocky Marcoux, Menomonee Valley development plan has been very successful as a manufacturing strategy. He explains that the city is buying a lot of older lands that have industrial legacy and are highly pollutant because the private sector will not by

them, it is not profitable for them to buy those land and clean them up. “We have invested about 36,000,000 dollars largely in tearing down the buildings there and cleaning environmental and getting them ready for the new companies to come back, build their factories and provide jobs for the residents in the neighborhood.”⁵⁵

The local news also pointed out the success of the plan:

Milwaukee's Menomonee River Valley has landed a host of new and relocated companies in the last ten years. Local officials are optimistic job growth, as well as environmental and residential improvements in the area will keep going strong.⁵⁶

Beer Line B, which lies to the north of the Park East Freeway extension and west of the Milwaukee River, is an example of conversion of Brownfield inner city sites into a new neighborhood with fashionable apartments and condominiums, which introduce new housing, public wealth, as well as providing new public amenities. In 1998, the Beer Line B was designed by New Urbanist architecture Dan Solomon and John Ellis of Solomon E.T.C. in San Francisco under leadership of the Department of City Development. “Drawing upon a modern, industrial aesthetic, named ‘prairie-style industrial’; the project provides evidence that New Urbanist planning principles are not dependent on neo-traditional style architecture.”⁵⁷ According to Park:

When you look at the Beer Line what you see is a new neighborhood on what was the formal industrial land in much polluted area. We cleaned it up, we cleaned the river, and we opened the dam, so the Milwaukee River had restored itself and the nature had cleaned the river above the dam and what you see is that area is a new neighborhood that connects old neighborhoods to the new neighborhoods. It represents an example promoted by New Urbanism doing public Charrette that came up with a good plan that supported what people want; it is also a good example of how the New Urbanism shapes policy.⁵⁸

The city's leaders hail increases in residential units and real estate values as evidence of "Milwaukee's vitality and the 'return' of jobs and residents." However, according to Kenny and Zimmerman (2003) as middle-class and upper-middle class move to the area, developments like Beer Line B raised concerns about gentrification and displacement.⁵⁹

Among the outstanding developments, the warehouse conversions of Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward present an example of "effective marketing of 'authenticity'."⁶⁰ Conversion of lofts in the Third Ward, as Kenny and Zimmerman (2003) cited in their study, produced the fastest-growing census tract in the metropolitan area and such investments in the five years between 1995 and 2000 helped triple the District's property values.⁶¹ Historic preservation, landscape designs such as streetscapes and street ornamentations, as well as Riverwalk that connects the Third Ward to the downtown are among the major Urbanist elements influenced livability and economic growth in the Third Ward.

According to Kenny and Zimmerman (2003) during his visit of Milwaukee economic development specialist Richard Florida pronounced Milwaukee *cool* as a result of potential evidences in the Third Ward's "pubs, coffee houses and funky renovated old warehouses'."⁶² He encouraged city leaders to take advantage of the city's traditional buildings as an economic development strategy. He confirmed that the city's landscape is capable to offer opportunities to attract the "members of Creative Class, members of which he argues are key to economic development."⁶³

Milwaukee's Public Market in Third Ward was another recommendation on downtown plan; it was built and opened in 2005. The Public Market has been a unique and successful example of New Urbanist projects which works very well. Park describes it as "a totally new development that did not exist before."⁶⁴

Downtown housing units and condominiums added to the downtown created much more vibrant downtown. Planned development such as Brewers Hill Commons and East Pointe Commons were built on empty lots based on New Urbanist principals and encouraged rapid growth in the downtown housing market.

⁶⁵

New Urbanism also influenced public housing projects in Milwaukee. For instance, HUD's HOPE VI Program reconstructed two notorious housing projects in Milwaukee, Hillside Terrace and Lapham Park (Carver Park). The projects were guided by New Urbanist principals intended to decrease the 'density of poverty' and 'remove the stigma of the projects.'⁶⁶ As Patin and Harris, current Downtown Plan managers, describe "they opened up the housings to street grids; they took out appropriate rescale housing, they blended it in with downtown not to isolate it, front porches were built, and all the things you should do to feel like a good housing."⁶⁷ Westlawn revitalization housing in Silver Spring demonstrates the most recent influence of New Urbanist in housing projects. It was designed as an anti-urbanist model, "it looked like housing for poor people and the idea that it is for poor people stigmatizes the poor people lived there, which caused more social barrier."⁶⁸ Patin and Harris believe the form of housing for the people who are in

assistance should be the same as other housings in the neighborhood; however, the buildings may not be rich in the material or details.

Preserving lakefront as a public park according to Marcoux is another way that the city has significantly advantaged itself; he believes that was an excellent idea and has increased Milwaukee's quality compare to other cities. "Chicago has done a magnificent job in doing that but it is difficult to get there, if you are not living outside the Loop."⁶⁹ As Patin and Harris explain, for connectivity purposes they are extending the street grids of the city down to the lakefront and promoting the lakefront development. They also came up of with some recommendations and some visual imagery of how to connect the developments along the lake and transform unfriendly areas to a more beautiful urban waterfront.⁷⁰

Chapter Four

EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. How Do the Advocates of New Urbanism Define It?

In many respects the New Urbanists may have a little dissimilar understanding of the New Urbanism and New Urbanist planning; Milwaukee city leaders and planners in the past and present were asked to describe the New Urbanism during the interviews. Norquist describes New Urbanism:

It is a movement trying to restore urban form to the built environment. In the United States a lot of urban design practices were corrupted and corroded particularly after World War II. For example, the basic streets grid and the juxtaposition of farmers with neighborhoods were corroded by separate use zoning, and street design was trying to make streets to the highways. These were things that undermine urbanism and these happened largely by intervention of federal government. So we have been trying to undo the damages that federal government did to the cities during the last sixty years.

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Park claims New Urbanism responds to national, state, and local policies that have made it difficult for the cities to thrive and that have in fact promoted suburban sprawl in not just growing cities but also cities that were not growing in population. He believes:

New Urbanism is a movement of multidisciplinary interest; architects, planners, developers, politicians, engineers, environmentalist and ordinary citizens, who are really trying to promote reinvestment in the cities and to deal with further unsustainable development and suburban sprawl. ⁷²

He also claims New Urbanism fundamentally at its core is about sustainability and sustainable development.

Marcoux, claims:

New Urbanism is really the old urbanism, what we are trying to do is to return to the purest form of the urban center. We are just simply returning back to what made cities great to begin with, at least from a planning and architectural standpoints. The urban that we value is dense, compact walkable city. Density is very valuable, density is one of the advantages of urban form because you get the people to concentrate in an area and you get a higher economic output from that area, so it means all the people have to have wealth.⁷³

Robert Greenstreet, chair of City Development in Milwaukee, says:

New Urbanism in term of content and its principles is nothing more than restoration of traditional sensible principals of community and city development. New Urbanism is a clever way of doing the best part of city development, all of which were known but in reality were somewhat forgotten by plans in the late century. The goal is to focus on a greater level of livability in the city.⁷⁴

Greg Patin believes:

New Urbanism is all about traditional planning, land use, and urban form. The physical form of the city has a large impact on how you develop it, how you plan it. New Urbanism also is meant to promote mixing of uses; it seems New Urbanism is something that perceivably had been always around the city in the older city centers. Older cities are New Urbanism in action.⁷⁵

And Finally Robert Harris says:

New Urbanism is going back to an urban form as oppose to what they were getting at 1960s and 1970s, where we had the surface parking lots separating the street edge and the building and we had more single used, Euclidian type uses.⁷⁶

All of the study's participants agreed that the New Urbanism did not create any new ideas about urbanism, it basically is a return to the old, traditional urbanism and it is trying to mend the city. Park is the only person that does not talk about this return

and in his description he only stresses convergence of multidisciplinary groups of society in order to promote reinvestment in the city and fight urban sprawl. In addition, he is the only person in this group that talks about the link between New Urbanism and sustainability. Norquist emphasizes restoring the urban form, while blaming federal government's intervention for encouraging anti-urbanist developments. Norquist basically advocates traditional urban design and opposes conventional suburban style including unpleasant elements like giant parking lots positioned in front of buildings, lack of sidewalks, pylon signs, and disorienting jumbles. Like other New Urbanists Norquist advocates mixed-use neighborhoods, civic-oriented and lively downtowns, environmental quality protection, and alternative transportation, particularly light rail. The CNU introduced Norquist as someone who "had preached for years that cities can capitalize on their urban form."⁷⁷ He argues simple elements such as predictable and consistent architectural rules, mixed uses, sidewalks, grid patterns, attractive public places, windows, and front porches make places more livable and help the cities "to continue to foster their traditional strengths."⁷⁸

The New Urbanism as Norquist describes focuses on both inner city and suburb; however, the other city officials only stressed on the New Urbanism in the city.

We can have urban place in the suburbs like down town Cedarburg in Ozaukee County, a very successful urbanism in the suburbs with perfect coding, zoning, and street size. This is also true of Kinnickinnic Avenue in Bay View and Brady Street in Milwaukee. So we try not to juxtapose city against the suburb; urbanism can be either in the city or the suburb.⁷⁹

Norquist describes Kinnickinnic Avenue as a clean and friendly neighborhood with sidewalks on each side and buildings relate to each other in a way that creates a sense of destination and community. While none of the other people I interviewed mentioned it.

Marcoux uncritically highlights the role of New Urbanism in creating traditional, dense, compact, and walkable city which form the purest form of urban center. His view is a little different than others since he looks at New Urbanism as a good way to bring more people back in the area where they have something to be proud of, the identity of the city. Greenstreet describes New Urbanism as a clever way to restore the traditional architecture and planning principals that were forgotten in the late century. His definition shows his positive view toward the New Urbanism while a blame for forgetting the principals in the late century. Patin also talks about New Urbanist principals as a way to go back to the old traditional urban centers. Harris says the same as others by referring to the damages of 1960s-1970s in the city.

4.2. How Do the Advocates of New Urbanism Perceive Its Impacts on the City?

Peter Park, planning director of Milwaukee from 1995-2003 and the CNU member since 1994, talks about some of the primary areas that the New Urbanism and the CNU has been particularly influential and changed what has been happening in the United States. First, recent transportation policy; the CNU strongly supports

transit oriented development and promote more walkable and pedestrian-friendly options for development of the city by compact development including public transit, light rails, commuter rails, bus transit, walkability, and cycling. Moreover, Highway to Boulevard Initiative, which is part of the CNU, promotes freeways out of the cities and helps to repair the fabric of neighborhoods that were corrupted by the federal highways passing through them. Both Norquist and Park strongly stand against federal highway system. Norquist mentions Toronto's transportation system as a system that offers a rich variety of choices; people can drive, ride, bike, or walk to almost any location in the metro area, and believes driving a car should be "a travel choice, not a necessity."⁸⁰ He believes the major disadvantage and weakness of Milwaukee is the lack of good transit system.⁸¹ Not only Norquist says that but all of the other people that I interviewed expressed concern about the lack of transit in Milwaukee. The New Urbanists efforts to improve the transit system in Milwaukee have failed; the next chapter will discuss it in detail.

According to Park, the second area that the CNU has been more influential than other groups or profession is within the area of land development codes or zoning codes. He believes Post World War II codes in general promoted urban sprawl; they promoted single use, low density, separation of uses, they promoted unnecessary parking lots. "These were really anti-urban perspective. The CNU has introduced form-based codes, which is significant change from the past. It has been CNU and the New Urbanism that really introduced whole new approaches and

paradigms to the conventional anti-urban system, the system that still is a problem in the most cities in America.”⁸²

Norquist likewise claims the remarkable role of the New Urbanist policies and zoning codes in shifting the anti-urban conventional development. The current downtown managers, Patin and Harris believe form based planning is great, however, form based zoning or New Urbanism as a zoning tool is very difficult to implement, because it does not embrace adequate definitions for the today’s land use needs. For instance the New Urbanist codes never talk about where to build a gas station, “it basically just says that is not permitted while that is not the reality.”⁸³ Patin and Harris also acknowledge the fact that the New Urbanist codes do not deal with the needs of economic diversity, the uses for the lower class are not in their plans for example they excluded resale shops.

Milwaukee is a city of 96 square miles, according to Park. From economic development and job perspective downtown in 1999 represented about 20-25 percent of redistributed value of the whole city.

We put a high priority on investment and reinvestment in downtown. We focused on more downtown housing, reusing the empty office building or empty loft building; Historic Third Ward and the River walk was a big part of the strategy to create a new amenity to connect the downtown.⁸⁴

The city leaders over time have strongly supported the notion of making Milwaukee’s downtown a center of economic and cultural wealth. For this purpose the Downtown Master Plan was updated in 2010. According to Marcoux “the plan is strongly based on the New Urbanist principles, good planning that should apply to city planning.”⁸⁵ Incorporating New Urbanist principles in planning they have

completed a land use plan for all the square miles of the city. In each of the 13 area plans they included catalytic projects that are located within the context of each plan. Marcoux says “we are very proud of that effort.”⁸⁶ Greenstreet also shows positive view of the Downtown Plan and mentions that “the downtown plans have been structured based on general agreement with population, with community around it. They are collective ideas of all of the people who invested in the downtown emotionally financially or etc; so, they reflect what people want to see in downtown.”⁸⁷

Park believes the New Urbanism has significantly improved Milwaukee. He claims the success of Beer line B housing, Riverwalk, Park East Freeway removal, downtown housing and restaurants and etc, created much more vibrant downtown. Therefore, “the downtown has become a much more interesting place for the ‘creative class.’ That idea has been very supportive in Milwaukee.”⁸⁸

Greenstreet claims New Urbanist principles as they are obvious in the New Urbanist developments in the state of Florida tend to be thing like a layout of small towns, the size of roads, the relationship between public realm to the driving realm, the size of houses and relationship between houses, those kind of principles are less pertinent to a developed city. Riverwalk is one of the obvious examples of New Urbanism. He believes some of the principals, plans, and concepts are applicable only when there are new opportunities, when there are new developments. Greenstreet argues “these are in mind of city planners; but they had much less

opportunities to integrate level of principals because there is not much development today.”⁸⁹

Patin and Harris believe the New Urbanist plan helps to mend the city by talking about solid neighborhoods in the east of Milwaukee River with reasonable portion of mixed uses lands. However, as they explain “the blocks in the west of the river are much more complex, there is no neighborhood there, no residential; we cannot just infill it with residential. It has never been a market friendly sector.”⁹⁰

Marcoux also mentions the popularity of market in the east side. The contrast between development of the east and the west side of Milwaukee River is cleared in the map of land use. (Figure 4).

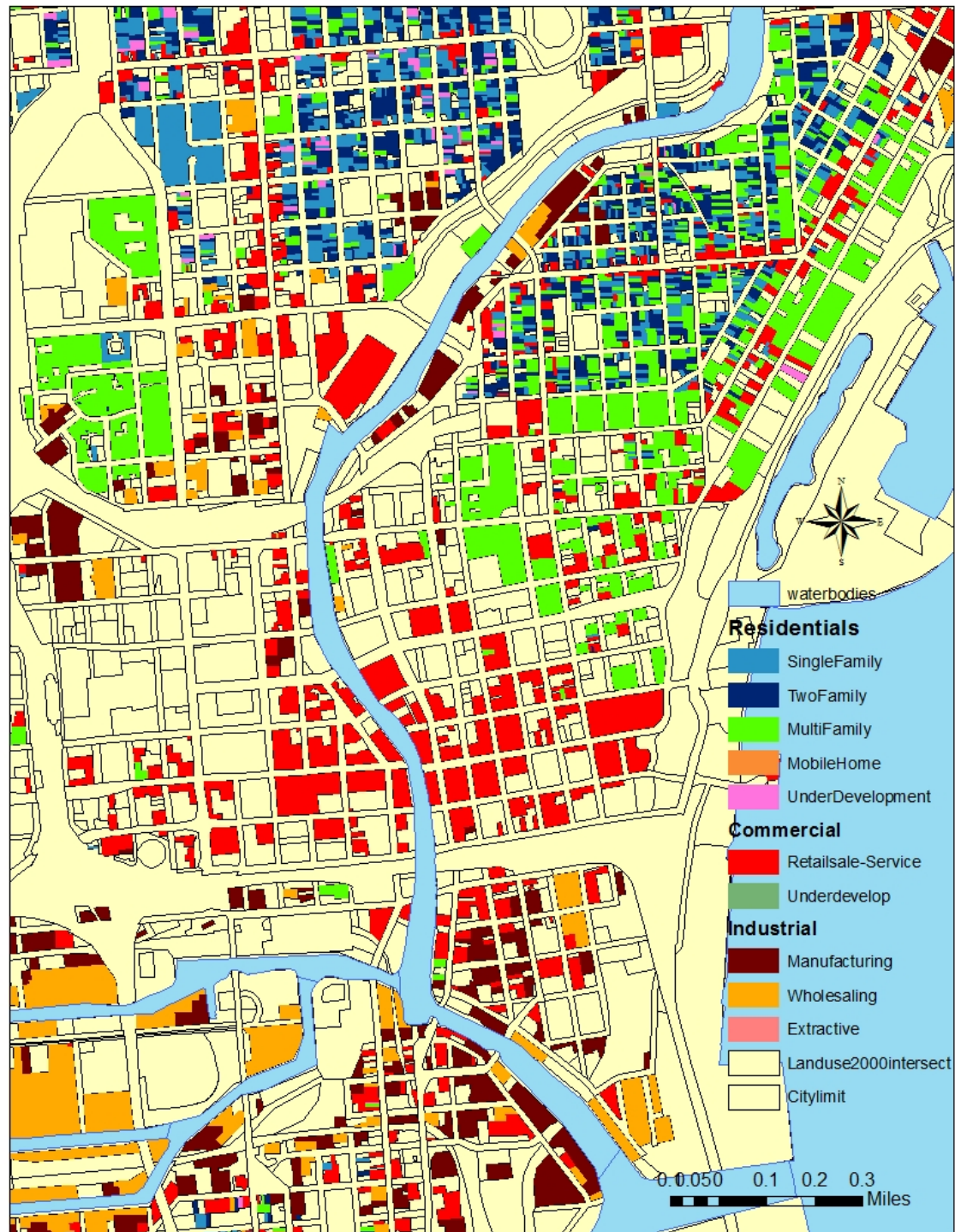


Figure 4: Contrast between Development of the east and west side of the river (map by Leila Saboori)

The advocates of New Urbanism offer their views and the way they understand New Urbanist planning. The current city officials involved in the city planning seem to be more critical to the city' New Urbanist plan and give more detail about how they think New Urbanism has influenced Milwaukee. Their talks and actions show a great deal of effort in improving Milwaukee's landscape. But they do not stress on the New Urbanism' claims about the ties between built form and behavior. Greenstreet explains:

Aspirationally, the principals of New Urbanism are about community, livability and bigger issues but, the broader the issues, the more sophisticated it becomes. You can say they are trying to help everything but the specific cause or link between a better environment and creation of jobs is frankly kind of long line. With these principals cities would be better place to live, which means they would be a safer, a nicer place to live, which means more people love to live there, which means cities become a wealthier place. But there is a cause or stretch that you can only claim so much from the principals, the fact that they are good and positive principals and frankly they do not have any negatives that I can see.⁹¹

4.3. Population Change

After understanding the views of Milwaukee officials about New Urbanism this study intends to assess the impact on the city. During his tenure as a mayor of Milwaukee, Norquist strongly supported the return of professional, middle-class from the suburbs to the city, where they can enjoy the "richness of the urban landscape and lifestyle" as compared to the "ersatz countryside . . . on the edge".⁹² The New Urbanists stated as a goal attracting people back to the downtown. Milwaukee's population has been examined for a period of 20 years from 1990 to

2010. In Figure 5 boundary of the downtown is identified. As it shows population of parts of the downtown increased but much of it declined.

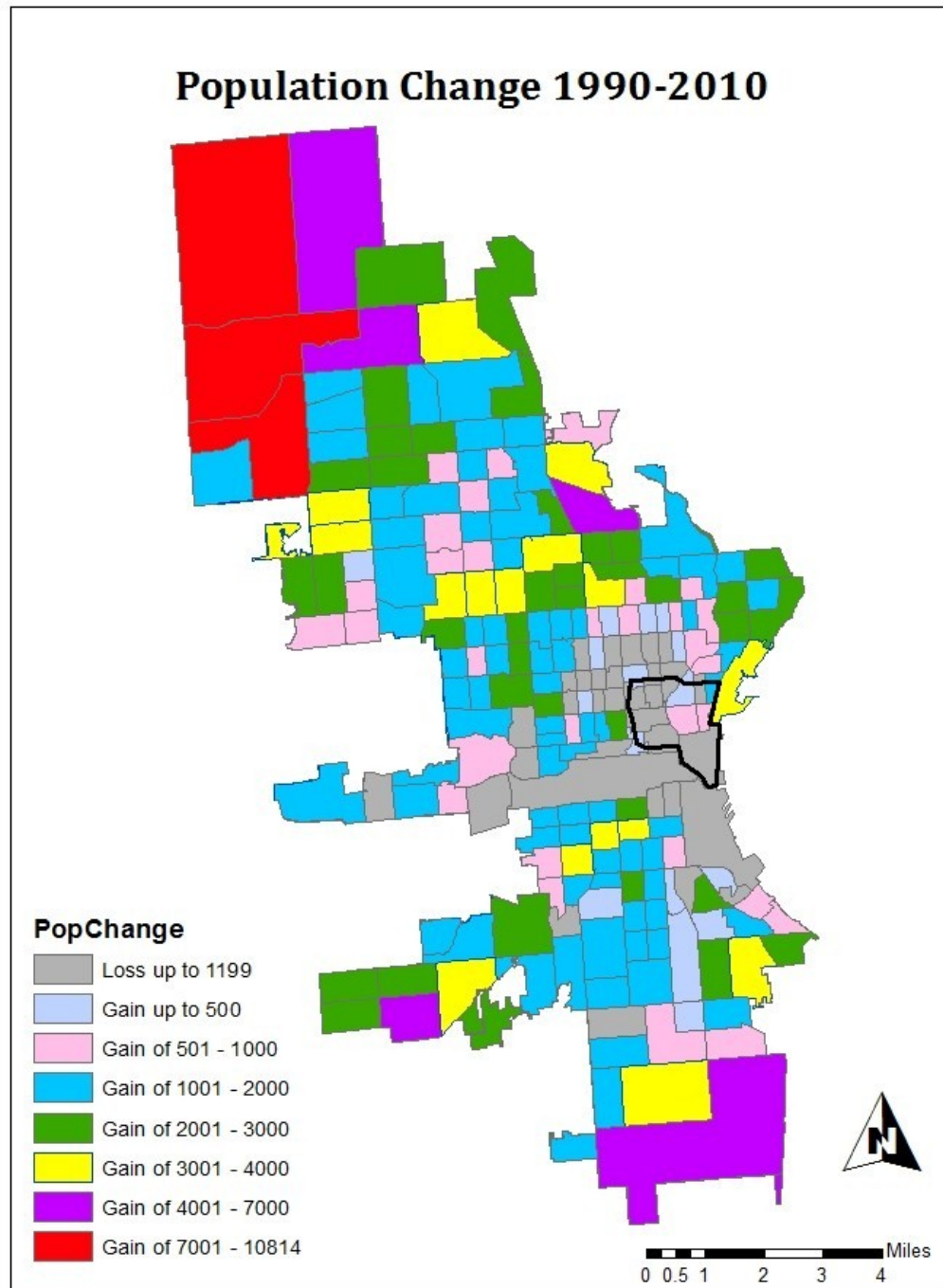


Figure 5: Population Change in Milwaukee 1990-2010 (Map by Leila Saboori)

4.4. Walkability, Measurement of Success

Certain large American cities like New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Portland, or other special places proved to be on the right track. However, in the small and mid-sized cities, where most Americans spend their lives, the decision making system is still problematic and often unable to respond to urban problems. Jeff Speck (2012) believes the reason is either the absence of planning or that decision making is disconnected from planning.

Speck's book, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time* (2012), explains "what is wrong with most American cities and how to fix it. It is about what works in cities. And what works best in the best cities is walkability."⁹³ While the physical and social benefits of walking are numerous, most importantly walkability contributes to urban vitality and can be considered an indicator of that vitality. After several decades spent redesigning different sections of the cities in order to make them more livable and more prosperous; Speck narrowly focuses on walkability as a potential issue and argues if the city "get walkability right, so much of the rest will follow."⁹⁴ He believes a set of comprehensive "simple design fixes" can reverse decades of "counterproductive policies and practices" and lead to a new period of street life in America. These fixes as he discusses make downtown living attractive to a broader range of people. His argument is based on General Theory of Walkability, as it explains how a walk should be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. Below is the summary of the ten steps of walkability as he discussed:

1. Relegating the car to its proper role is essential to reclaiming our cities for pedestrians. 2. Mixing the uses, placing the proper balance of activities within walking distance of each other in order to provide a reason for pedestrian to decide to walk. 3. Use parking to a city's benefit. 4. Let transit work, walkable cities rely on transit utterly. 5. Protect the pedestrian with block size, lane width, turning motions, direction of flow, signalization, roadway geometry, and a number of other factors that all determine a car's speed and a pedestrian's likelihood of getting hit. 6. Welcome bikes, Walkable cities are also bikeable cities. 7. Shape the space, people enjoy open spaces and the great outdoors. But people also enjoy, a need, a sense of enclosure to feel comfortable as pedestrians. 8. Plant trees. 9. Creating active streetscapes and facades that invite walking. 10. Cities must make a conscious choice about the size and location of their walkable cores, to avoid squandering walkability resources in areas that will never invite pedestrians. ⁹⁵

According to Speck "Walkable city is not just a nice, idealistic notion. Rather, it is a simple, practical-minded solution to a host of complex problems that we face as a society." He argues if the city promotes a higher quality of life in the downtown; it can be the first step to create a center of attention for new residents and jobs.

Speck (2012) claims:

There are many ways to measure the success of a city, but the hallmark of a vital downtown is pedestrian culture, also known as "street life." There is no better leading indicator or contributor to urban success. Fortunately, New Urbanism discourse has advanced to the point where I do not need to prove this claim. ⁹⁶

4.4.1 Is Downtown Milwaukee Walkable?

Another way to assess the impact of New Urbanism in the city is to examine the walkability of downtown. Greenstreet, chair of City Development, speaks about principles that are now established within the Milwaukee's updated Downtown Plan (2010). One of the obvious New Urbanist principal regarding to public realm is

promoting much more pedestrian friendly building edges. Wisconsin Avenue for example has promoted high level of activation and streetscape improvement.

All buildings now have to have a certain percentage of activated street front, that seems like it is kind of obvious but if you look at some of the particular parking garages of the 1960s-1970s they basically just present a blank concrete wall and very raw parking facade to the street which basically desensitizes that area and makes a very regressive environment, whereas now we are trying to make sure that all kind of buildings in the streets have shops or other kind of activities that make them pedestrian friendly.⁹⁷

Therefore, creation of activity is really important to the planning of Milwaukee, another factor that Greenstreet discusses is transparency, sharing public and private realm by windows, “if there is something in the pedestrian edge you can see through it, you can see people are moving around, which make a very traditional city experience.”

There are aspects of the downtown such as proximity that enable walkability, but Greenstreet claims “walkability is not just a question of physical distances it is also question the quality of that particular walk.” He mentions one example of unpleasant walk in Milwaukee, the distance from Clybourn Street to Third Ward is not very far but people do not walk there because of the freeway and parking area between the two destinations. In addition, he acknowledges that sometimes it is quite difficult to meet the urbanist criteria for certain kind of structures, such as parking garages, to incorporate one hundred percent activity on streets. One example as he states is parking garage for East Wisconsin and Clybourn; “while there was requirement to have activation on the street, there were no points to add shops along that edge because no one will go there. What were required were basically

large window and display spaces to give us at least some sense of activity in variety.”⁹⁸

As Marcoux explains, a dense walkable city ought to have a good transit system. Milwaukee’s lack of good transportation encourages people to drive and decrease the possible walks.

Harris argues that the design of the inner city’s intersections has influenced walkability in the city. Many intersections in the middle or late twentieth century were designed exclusively for cars; many feature a right turn by pass, which makes the intersections more difficult and ugly for pedestrian. “We are trying to make more balanced intersections, not just for cars but for pedestrian and bikes.”⁹⁹

Patin and Harris also discuss how they are developing continuous streets grid system and promoting walkability in Milwaukee.

We are trying to adopt it where we can the idea that having streets not to start with the car, but having to start with the sidewalks, bicycle’s paths and what is left with the car; as oppose to a lot of very wide one way streets, we have done some recent successes to reverse in Wells Street, State Street, they were wide one way and now are two way streets. They are more in human scale now. ¹⁰⁰

In the current plan the street is considered a setting for human activity; the planners focus on street as a place with store fronts and good pedestrian activity. They are trying to implement prioritizing streets system, a system of 1, 2, 3 street types based on the need of buildings and sites to engage the pedestrians and in some cases activate that environment. “This has been the beginning step to introduce our plan to our zoning. That will have a lot of effects on the urban forms.”¹⁰¹

One of the recommendations for downtown, as it is presented in the Downtown Plan (2010), is conversion of Wells Street into a “complete street” with bike lanes and wider sidewalks. (Figure 6 and 7)



Figure 6: Wells Street (Provided courtesy of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development)



Figure 7: Proposed Complete Wells Street (Provided courtesy of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development)

The recent updated Downtown Plan, 2010 indicates more concerns than other plans about physical form of downtown. For example, chapter three of the plan focuses on the topic of place and place making, “place making is critical in continued urban success.” Place making means creating urban form that gives you sense of enclosure, activation, and identity; giving people a reason to be there with a cafés, a museum, shops, etc. The plan illustrates many efforts to identify and enhance the sense of place in the downtown and to locate places that lack a sense of place. Connection between those places with strong sense of place is the base of the downtown plan.¹⁰²

Patin and Harris also talk about difficulties of promoting walkability in downtown. “Downtown is a collection of nodes, connection of different walkable places is difficult. We are trying to make more walkable streets and corridors in various ways, landscaping, grazes, lighting, building facade along the sidewalks, closing windows and activation.”¹⁰³ Greenstreet also says:

If you look at Milwaukee’s street you see a lot of old building fabric there which has quality. The question is how to link these to Cathedral Square and lakefront.¹⁰⁴

Like other New Urbanists Greenstreet believes walkability in many respects aided by strong public transport system that is a very good system to take people through all of the major areas of downtown and link them together “in a simple and predictable way.”

Greenstreet, Patin, and Harris all acknowledge disconnection of high quality places in the downtown Milwaukee. This problem is as well as cited in the new Downtown Plan:

The majority of plan participants agreed that downtown Milwaukee contains a number of bright spots - "camp fires"- that make Downtown an attractive and engaging place. The problem is that few of these points are connected to one another, lessening the economic and social impact in the Downtown and making Downtown more of a one-stop shop rather than a meaningful place.

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Milwaukee's land use density map (Figure 8) shows the accessibility of high residential density to high office density and other zones in the city. The question is whether people can walk from their homes to works? Whether there are zones of high pedestrian activity in the area? The presence of parking lots and vacant lots also decrease the possibility of walk in the city.

The east side of river with reasonable portion of mixed use lands is in a fair condition regarding to the concept of walkability, distance between most of jobs and residential areas which are illustrated by circles in the map , pedestrian activities, having no vacant lots, prove it by some means. However, the most problematic landscape in the central Milwaukee, west side of the river, has not been developed in a proper way. The land use map demonstrates the lowest density of residential blocks and vacant lots in this part (Figure 8). Harris believes Milwaukee needs more people living in its downtown particularly in the west side.¹⁰⁶

As it is also mentioned by the some of the people I interviewed and is presented in the downtown plan (2010), downtown center district will require additional density, pedestrian amenities, and commercial destinations or

destination retail “to not only anchor the downtown as a whole, but to provide a unique brand a look and feel that is distinct and identifiable for residents, businesses, employees, and visitors alike.”¹⁰⁷ The lack of strong transit system is one of the responses of city officials to the lack of connectivity and therefore lack of walkability in many downtown areas.

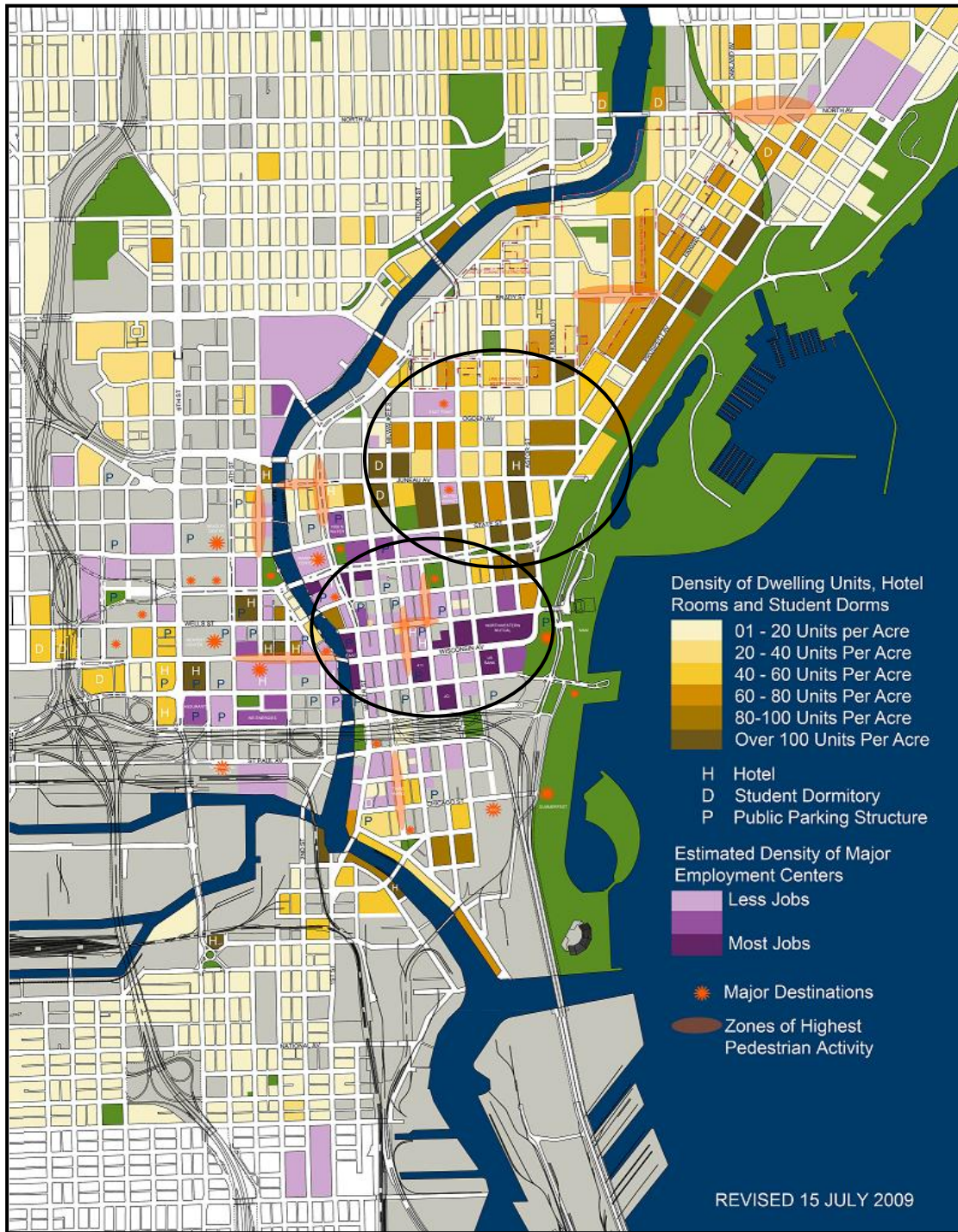


Figure 8: Land use density, Downtown Milwaukee (Provided courtesy of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development)

Chapter Five

WHAT UNDERCUTS NEW URBANISM in MILWAUKEE?

5.1. Problems and Impediments

According to the New Urbanists, New urbanism has advanced urban design and transformed significant portions of Milwaukee into upper class and middle-class landscapes; “while cultural critics point to an observed nostalgia, homebuyers have been willing to pay premium to escape conventional suburbia.”¹⁰⁸ Also as Norquist asserts “escalating real-estate prices indicate that people who have money are increasingly drawn to the best of urban life.”¹⁰⁹ On the contrary, many critics questioned the role of New Urbanism in improving the physical and social structure of the city.

5.1.1. Serious Social Problems

Marcoux argues suburban sprawl and white flight created racial separation in Milwaukee, which is a real issue for the city. He explains the majority of minorities that live in the State of Wisconsin in fact live in the city of Milwaukee. According to Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), the median household income in

Milwaukee is above national average for the United States, yet the city of Milwaukee titled the fourth poorest city in America, “you can imagine what kind of wealth is in the suburbs.”¹¹⁰

According to Joel Rast, director of Center for Economic Development at University of Wisconsin Milwaukee:

The Milwaukee region remains one of the most segregated metropolitan areas in the country, with more than 90 percent of African Americans living in the city of Milwaukee.¹¹¹

Marc Levine, senior fellow and founding director of Center for Economic Development at University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, expressed concerns about unemployment rate:

“Our analysis of employment data shows that Milwaukee has had among the worst job creation records of any big city in the U.S. for over a decade, so it is not surprising that poverty numbers have worsened, especially during the worst recession since the Great Depression.”¹¹²

Two years later in 2012 Levine’s study indicates:

No metro area has witnessed more precipitous erosion in the labor market for black males over the past 40 years than has Milwaukee. Racial disparities in male employment had grown wider in Milwaukee than in any metropolis in the nation. Black males are more concentrated in the metro area’s central city in Milwaukee (or, put another way, fewer live in the suburbs) than in any of the other metropolitan areas.¹¹³

Critics argue that the city’s leaders hope to obscure these conditions by marginalizing the existing issues of class and race, nostalgically celebrating traditions and working class heritage in combination with New Urbanist planning to restore the old dense, walkable, and mixed used neighborhood and city. What is

obvious is that focusing on urban design and form is not the only solution to the complicated urban problems in Milwaukee.

5.1.2. Responses to the Criticisms

As it was discussed before New Urbanism, as it has been articulated and practiced, has confronted with significant criticisms from different standpoints. Some of the major criticisms to the New Urbanism are, commodification of community and the de-politicization of the development process, venues for aestheticism, violation of the design's field principals, marginalization of serious issues of race and class, being expensive and exclusive, and finally that "they claim too much and accomplish too little."

Norquist argues that "the federal record on transportation is abysmal. The government should consider complete defederalization."¹¹⁴ In addition he claims state and federal interventions in markets, "though sometimes well intentioned, has on balance hurt cities," he introduces free market as "one prescription for urban success."¹¹⁵ This highlights the way that the city officials planned to solve the urban problems, which attracted attention of many critics such as Kenny and Zimmerman, they call Norquist's claims radical and believe Norquist and Jane Jacobs "share a *laissez-faire* attitude and disdain for bureaucratic intervention, celebrating cities as the engines that drive economies."¹¹⁶

The New Urbanists and the city officials respond to the criticisms and strongly advocate New Urbanist efforts in Milwaukee. Park believes New Urbanism

cannot solve all the problems; poverty is different social problems. “New Urbanism has done more to addressing and improve the condition where people live to reduce poverty, to avoid impoverish condition and to help redevelopment and encourage the reinvestment within the poorest neighborhoods.”¹¹⁷

Marcoux acknowledges that in some places New Urbanist designs have excluded people because some of them tend to be more expensive, “they are generally as a rule more expensive. But also likely to last longer, to hold the market value they have a higher initial value as well, which is more taxed base generated development.”¹¹⁸ He mentions affordable housing units in the city and the reconstruction of public housings such as Carver Park based on New Urbanist design, which is mixed with units for people in assistance, units for workforce housing market rate rental and other market rate renting. In Milwaukee as he states New Urbanism has been really effective, “we have used it in almost all of our public housing and Westlawn is the most recent one, what we are trying to make sure is that by using our public housing we could demonstrate to the private sector that if we can do it in public housing you could do it everywhere and we have done that.”¹¹⁹ Marcoux also says:

What we build as New Urbanist development is for everybody, if you gentrify you will not help yourself. Cities are where a mixture of human being is there, mixture of gender, income, and races. That is the beauty of the city. We have to make sure to do not use New Urbanism to zone out poor people. The criticism is fair unfortunately for a lot of cities but it is not fair for Milwaukee. What we have been able to do here is to leverage the old urbanism to a better urban fabric without it being exclusionary. We are doing it some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city and also we are doing it in some the most affluent neighborhoods of the city.¹²⁰

Greenstreet claims New Urbanist principals that the city of Milwaukee is committed to achieving such as increased street activity, transparency, good quality, streetscaping, connectivity and walkability can be embedded and transfer to any level of development; it could be a public housing, middle class condominium or upper middle class resort in the Florida coast. It is not just for upper-middle class, there are many affordable housing units in the city. He believes the recession has certainly affected growth of some of their projects in Milwaukee. Before 2008 as Greenstreet states the city put in about 500 to 800 condominiums in the downtown which has brought population, tax based wealth, restaurants, and stores in to the downtown.¹²¹

Park states it is true that there are New Urbanist communities that are really expensive but “the reality is that if you make something good the market will pay and if you make something cheap the people will pay cheap prices. One thing that New Urbanism has done is that it has created the value that people desire, it created what people wants and the market responds by paying for it.”¹²² He also believes New Urbanism has created a wider variety of affordable housing and a wider opportunity for business development than conventional system has done in the past. Park says:

The critics who would say that New Urbanism is exclusive, is just expensive, they just have been very selective in what they look at and they are completely in misunderstanding about the value that the New Urbanism has brought, which is changing the wrong pattern of development in America.¹²³

Norquist also strongly advocates the New Urbanism by saying:

We have gone to several real estate cycles that at some points have been less popular for poor but, it doesn't mean it is exclusive. I do not think that is accurate at all. In creating a New Urbanist place, competition sometimes happens; there were not affordable units in some of the developments because the design was so well. Just because we made places that a lot of people want and the market raises the price, it does not mean they are deliberately faulty. Critics are questioning New Urbanism compare to what? I do not know of any movement and efforts that has made to this extent by yet.¹²⁴

Patin and Harris claim there is not much growth in Milwaukee, compare with other major cities, because there is not market force and real estate activity in Milwaukee as much as Chicago or New York. In Milwaukee this is true about the noticeable contrast between developments in east and west of the river; the market and real estate are more popular in the east of the river. This is also true about the Park East redevelopment project combined with the recession that killed market forces that the city needed for further developments.

The Shops of Grand Avenue is one of most obvious example of dying mall in the downtown Milwaukee. The Grand Avenue Mall was opened in 1982 determined to bring the city's commercial core back to life. But, the mall lost its charm and its revival still is a hot topic in the city of Milwaukee. By referring to Garreau's Edge City in 1991, Norquist states that "enclosed megamall seems dated." People, as he claims, are rediscovering the attractiveness of main Street and choosing the urban form. Some malls have been redesigned into urban forms by the addition of streets, sidewalks, and buildings with parking hidden behind, Massachusetts and New York have examples of this transformation. Norquist suggests the same for Grand Avenue Mall in Milwaukee.¹²⁵

5.1.2.1. Implementation

Critics of New Urbanism in Milwaukee argue that the New Urbanism has not been impacting the city substantially. One way that the advocates of New Urbanism respond to this criticism is that although the New Urbanist planning and urban design principals in general intended to create more appealing urban environment; in reality, at times their implementation is difficult or almost impossible. Sometimes the plan over simplified the implementation process, but in reality it is totally different. Patin, based on his experience in planning and implementation, claims in some places for variety of reasons, such as topography of land, cost, and location of development, it is not practical to implement New Urbanist principals such as, street level activity, or transparency. Patin believes “New Urbanist, form based, planning is great but form based zoning or New Urbanism as a zoning tool is very difficult. He argues the problem is that the downtown plan is a bit rigid, the plan did not take into account a lot of details.”¹²⁶ For example New Urbanist planning “never talks about where to build a gas station, it basically just says that is not permitted while that is not reality, reality is that in most cities we are going to end up with these uses which are hard to put in New Urbanistic codes.”¹²⁷

Park East Freeway corridor west of the river remains mostly vacant more than eight years after demolition of the Park East spur. (Figure 9, 10)

Park East Freeway was demolished in 2002 intended to be a setting for form-based, mixed use developments. It has been part of Milwaukee’s Downtown Plan, but, many of the blocks have remained vacant for about nine years after demolition

of the Park east spur. Patin believes “there is nothing wrong with Park East plan; the problem is no one figured out of the land disposition.”¹²⁸ Almost all of the privately owned sectors are developed. But, the problem is that most of these lands in the plan are county owned lands and one of the major reasons for this long time vacancies is the “restrictions imposed on county-owned properties that require developers to pay union scale wages and hire local residents.”¹²⁹

The only solution to this problem is that the Milwaukee County should put its lands up for sale without restrictions because by keeping these parcels under control of county, nothing will be built on them. Thus, the lack of land sell procedure of the county lands is what kept it from being filled in. Patin claims “in the master plan like this, this was a beautiful plan but it did not taken into account the steps to move it ahead; do not blame the plan blame the implementation process.”¹³⁰ The DCD is trying to get coordination between levels of government for further development.



Figure 9: Park East vacant lots (Photo provided courtesy of Journal Sentinel file photo)

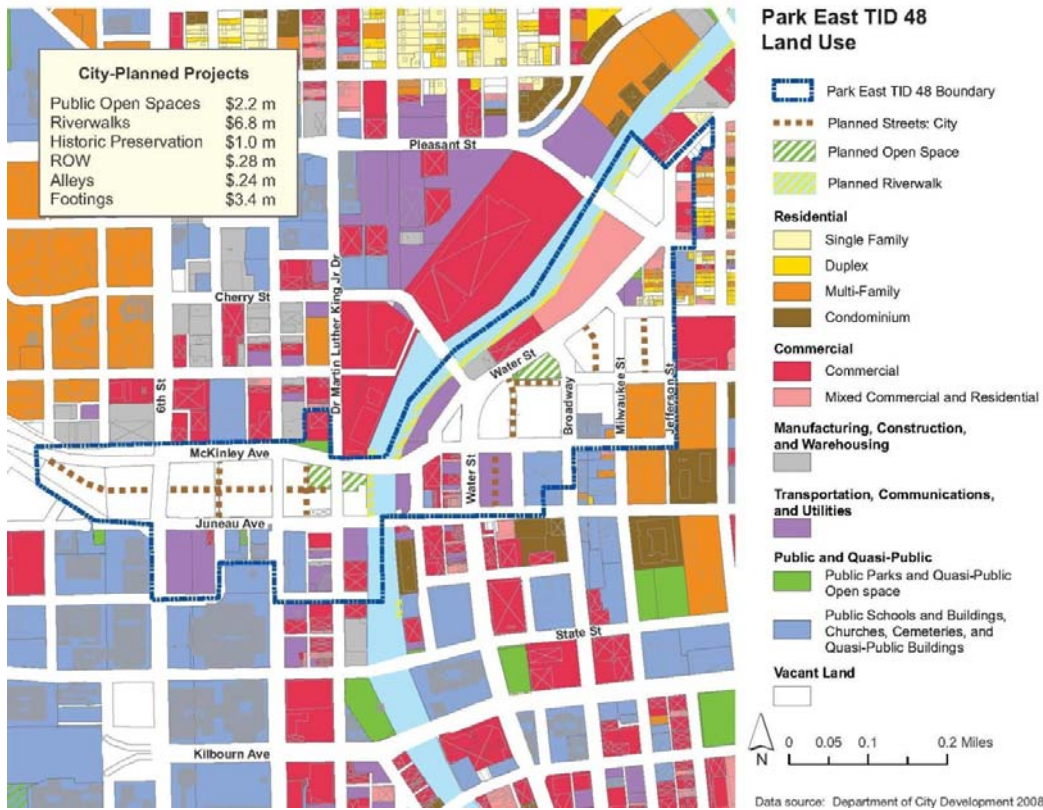


Figure 10 : Map provided courtesy of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development

5.1.2.2. Lack of Transit

“We are 25th dense city in the U.S. yet, we are the only city that does not have fixed rails. We believe that is a very strong impediment to our continuing growth,” Marcoux says.¹³¹

One of the major disadvantages for New Urbanist concept in Milwaukee as oppose to many other cities is that Milwaukee does not have a good transit system. Not only Marcoux says that but all of the other people that I interviewed expressed concern about the lack of transit in Milwaukee. Norquist states that “the lack of transit is the major weakness of Milwaukee.”¹³²

First, Milwaukee County’s bus transition system has not been funding at a satisfactory level. Second, Milwaukee does not have commuter rail; people living in suburbs all drive into the city which is a pressure on freeways and caused parking problems in the city. Milwaukee also has experienced difficulty to get its streetcar on the ground.

As Marcoux explains, a dense walkable city ought to have a good transit system; if that is not provided, like in Milwaukee, it would be a major disadvantage. How do people move from one point of the city to next point? They have to drive and consequently they need ample parking in the city. He believes “cities with good transit system proved the point that New Urbanism works, Boston is the best example.”¹³³

Milwaukee is among a few major American cities without commuter rail or light rail. A light rail system was recommended for Milwaukee County in 1990s, but

“conservative AM talk radio and opposition in Waukesha County blocked further study of light rail for Milwaukee.”¹³⁴ The city leaders are working hard to implement their plan for light rail system; this plan is part of the updated Downtown Plan.¹³⁵

5.1.2.3. Parking

With respect to the group of critics that claim New Urbanism does not work, Marcoux argues, the biggest complaint comes from the developers who want to be able to have large amount of parking surrounding particularly the commercial real estate and retails. They believe people will not come to the retails unless there is adequate parking.

The city does not have as much land as the suburb to build ample parking and the city leaders try to make sure they get the highest profit from downtown lands. Marcoux says “that does work to our disadvantage from a development standpoint, because developers want the parking number one; when we say surface parking is not permitted a lot of developers will not come in downtown. We have been resistant to turn in the vacant lots to parking. We are pro good development; we are pro urban style development.”¹³⁶ Greenstreet also talks about how their efforts to narrow some of the streets failed because of some pushback like the heavy demand on parking.

As oppose to the New Urbanist concept about removing the parking lots from the edges of streets and hiding them at the back of buildings, there are several critical landscapes in the downtown Milwaukee, which is also part of Downtown

Plan. For example, critical redevelopment sites, the surface parking lot at Fourth Street and Wisconsin Avenue, located between Boston Store and the Delta Center and the surface parking lot at Mason Street and Jefferson Street. (Figure 11 and 12)



Figure 11: The surface parking lot at Fourth Street and Wisconsin Avenue placed between Boston Store and the Delta Center (Provided courtesy of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development)



Figure 12: The surface parking lot at Mason Street and Jefferson Street (Provided courtesy of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development)

5.1.2.4. Perception

One of the other problems in Milwaukee rooted in negative perception toward inner city. In suburban edges there is a perception about downtown that there is always crime there, it is dirty, it is hard to park, or a lot of other expressions, which Patin believes are not reality. “We do not have a problem with crime, we do not have a problem with parking, and we do not have a problem with affordability in downtown. The biggest problem is our own message of perception. You can fix a block if that is bad but it is hard to fix the perception.”¹³⁷ Marcoux similarly claims people do not come to downtown because they feel parking is not there, it is not convenient or it is not safe. This perception is one the reason that suburban shopping center such as Mayfair mall is one of the most popular shopping destinations in the region. As Marcoux says “most of people that go to the Mayfair mall, by the time they park their car and actually walk to the entrance of mall have already gone farther on foot than they would if they were shopping in downtown.”¹³⁸

In general the New Urbanist projects and efforts in Milwaukee make it clear that the New Urbanist developments and planning promotes the city’s unique advantages such as fine architecture and walkable streets, and celebrates particular moments of American urban history when city centers were full of life, progress that concerned well-being of community dominated urban politics, people relied on their own capabilities rather than government help, and “‘genuine’ community was rooted in the humanly scaled streetcar neighborhood.”¹³⁹ What is missing in this

picture of Milwaukee's social life at the end of World War II as Kenny and Zimmerman argue is the fact that the city was overwhelmingly white and that there were approximate abundance of working class jobs are missing. "At that time, city's population consists of small fraction of African Americans and they were restricted to a tightly bound ghetto, where overcrowded housing and a restricted participation in the local labor market were the order of the day. Nostalgia is not so safe when it informs attempts at urban reconstruction."¹⁴⁰ According to the critics of New Urbanism in the field of architecture "the confusion of precedent and nostalgia opens the New Urbanism up to accusations of regressive politics from a generally progressive design field."¹⁴¹ The New Urbanism as it has been practiced involves cooperation between designers, developers, and government, but this cooperation has been considered "a violation of the design field's principles."¹⁴² Park believes New Urbanism care more about urban design as a whole rather than "just simply architecture."¹⁴³

A far more complex combination of factors have been associated in decline of the city of Milwaukee than bad design and the automobile, factors such as racism, lending practices, and interests of private contractors to get more profit from suburban developments.¹⁴⁴ The city's New Urbanist-guided policy plan drew a blank on these issues. Kenny and Zimmerman believe this is a critical exclusion, given that racial issues strongly affected urban transformation in Milwaukee in the postwar decades, "including white flight, redlining, block busting, the decline of the public schools and the attending capital drain and depreciation of the central

city.”¹⁴⁵ The New Urbanist leaders “fail to consciously articulate issues of race and racism in their primary texts, while being exclusively preoccupied by the fraying of the physical and social fabric of dominantly white and middle-class suburbia.”¹⁴⁶

The building landscape creates a contest among different groups of society, and the result of the competition indicates whose values and interests prevail.

“Milwaukee’s contest invokes the racial and class politics of the metropolitan area and thus exposes the veiled issues of race and class.”¹⁴⁷

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

During the course of urban redevelopment history in the post war era, city's civic and business leaders have gone to different directions in search for revival. New Urbanism emerged as an architectural and planning movement and has been considered an alternative to suburban sprawl and urban and environmental problems. Milwaukee presents a unique case study. The city has embraced the New Urbanism for about twenty years and the city leaders strongly have supported New Urbanist planning, trying to remake the downtown as a center of cultural and economic wealth. Their efforts have promoted the city's unique advantages such as the River and traditional and architectural heritage. However, they have been unable to completely implement the city's plan for many different reasons; the city has not been able to implement its transportation plan and the city leaders believe that is a huge impediment to the further growth of the city. Milwaukee has also greatly suffered from social and economic problems, which cast doubts on the link between build environment and social life that the New Urbanism claims to achieve.

New Urbanists claim that New Urbanism has advanced Milwaukee's urban design agenda, producing new urban amenities, more housing, preserving the traditional and high value buildings, promoting walkability, streetscapes, street-level activity, restaurants, bars, etc in the downtown, which contributed to a higher

economic profile and quality of life in the central area. This study shows most parts of the downtown lost population during 1990-2010, but some parts in the east side of the Milwaukee River gained population, the east side also is relatively walkable with reasonable mixed land uses. The city leaders do not emphasize on the conditions in the west side of the Milwaukee River, where has not been developed in a proper way and have had the lowest residential density in the downtown area during the twenty years of New Urbanist planning. There are vacant lots, parking lots, a dead mall (Grand Avenue Mall), and just a few residential blocks there, also it has not been walkable and a market friendly sector. The result of this study shows that the downtown business district will require additional density, pedestrian amenities and commercial or retail destinations in order to connect the high quality places, be more walkable, and attract more people in the city.

Although the city has applied New Urbanist principals in order redesign some of the public housing in the city, in general New Urbanist planning and zoning seems blind to those challenges that face a highly segregated city. There is no place in them for economic diversity because the plan does not consider the uses and the places that are required for lower class residents. For instance, there is nothing wrong with resale shops but New Urbanist code do not deal with these kinds of thing and another world ignore them. Apparently, the politicians want to limit some certain kind of uses.

The city leaders offer different views about their understanding of the New Urbanism's goals. They are also different in defining the successful New Urbanists

efforts and projects in the city. Some mentioned reinvestment as a goal, some merely focused on physical restoration, while other mentioned livability and community issues.

Norquist believes cities that support and give emphasis to their urban form are more and more appealing to people making choices about where to live and work.¹⁴⁸ This attention has given to the city of Milwaukee for twenty years and the most recent Downtown Plan still vigorously support urban form and New Urbanists codes; however Milwaukee still need more people in the downtown, it was titled the fourth poorest city in the U.S.; racial disparities and unemployment rate stand as a feature of Milwaukee's landscape. The focus on promoting urban form obviously is not enough for solving the urban problems; to revive the downtown Milwaukee the New Urbanist efforts need to be accompanied by other social programs.

The city leaders hope to obscure the distressed conditions by marginalizing the existing issues of class and race, with focusing on traditional development and New Urbanist planning to restore the old dense, walkable, and mixed used neighborhood to the city. However, what has caused the urban decline in Milwaukee seems to be more complicated than the corrupted urban design and automobile dependency. The issue of race and racism for instance seems to be a critical issue to be considered for further growth of downtown Milwaukee.

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