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Executive Summary

This plan document was developed at the request of the Gladstone Park Chamber of Commerce and the aldermen of the 45th and 39th Wards (Alderman John Arena (45) and Alderman Margaret Laurino (39)). Peterson is the dividing line between these two wards with the 39th ward being north of Peterson and the 45th ward south.

Starting in late 2015, members of the Department of Planning and Development met with the chamber at their regular monthly meetings where various elements of this plan were discussed and potential development proposals were analyzed. A public meeting was held early in the winter of 2015/2016, which highlighted the new express bus service planned for the corridor as well as encouraging local residents to discuss the current retail environment, the types of business and services they would wish to see, and ideas for other improvements to the corridor. Further meetings with the chamber, aldermen and community members took place throughout 2016 and this document has been revised to reflect their input.

Evolution of retail corridors in Chicago

Thinking about the city as a whole, retail corridors have evolved in certain specific ways after World War II. As more households owned cars and relied on them to an increasing degree, retail development changed to better serve the needs of drivers. Grocery stores became larger and provided a greater range of goods and included parking lots to accommodate the increased volume of cars. Stores specializing in particular foods (be it fruits and vegetables, meats, baked goods or grains) largely disappeared. As the retail needs were met in fewer larger stores, the smaller storefronts typical of Chicago retail streets into the 1920s and 30s became less viable for retail. At the same time the residential dwellings above these storefronts became less attractive due to the increase of auto traffic on retail streets and the availability of inexpensive single family homes further out from the city center. In many cases, several adjacent, smaller, two and three story retail buildings along arterial streets would be torn down and replaced with a strip center: a single story retail building with convenient off-street parking in front. With the growth of online retailing and the existence of major shopping centers in former industrial parts of the city and in nearby suburbs, the total demand for retail along major streets has decreased. The impact on the ground is a fairly regular pattern where the intersections of major streets still support retail but segments of these streets in between have become something else. Depending on the neighborhood, this ‘something else’ may be several different things, the older multi-story buildings may now be entirely residential with the storefront enclosed in some way to provide the ground floor resident some measure of privacy. In other cases, the old buildings may have been torn down and replaced with a new, all residential building. In other cases, a new public building (police station, library or school) may occupy this frontage. At other times, the building is torn down and the lot remains vacant.

In recent years, this pattern of retail redevelopment has changed somewhat. Some retailers are recognizing the value of old small scale retail buildings and the upper floor units may be attractive to renters because they are comparatively affordable and may be close to transit and other amenities. However, while the need for retail stores may have declined, the need for locations for eating, drinking and entertaining has increased. In many cases, bars, restaurants, and smaller performance theaters value the old storefront buildings and may expand beyond the first floor to provide roof top or outdoor dining spaces.

Also, certain types of buildings lend themselves to adaptation, resist adaptation or –partly due to the quirks/attractiveness of their design and use- continue to support the use for which they were originally designed.

Thinking of any retail corridor then, here are some pertinent questions to consider:

- To what extent are the basic retail shopping and service needs for local residents being met in the corridor?
- Where are the nearest shopping centers and larger format retail stores?
- Are there unique businesses which distinguish this retail district from others?
- Are there businesses or cultural institutions which are attracting people from beyond the immediate neighborhood (and do they linger to shop)?

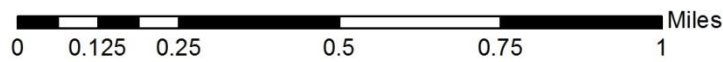
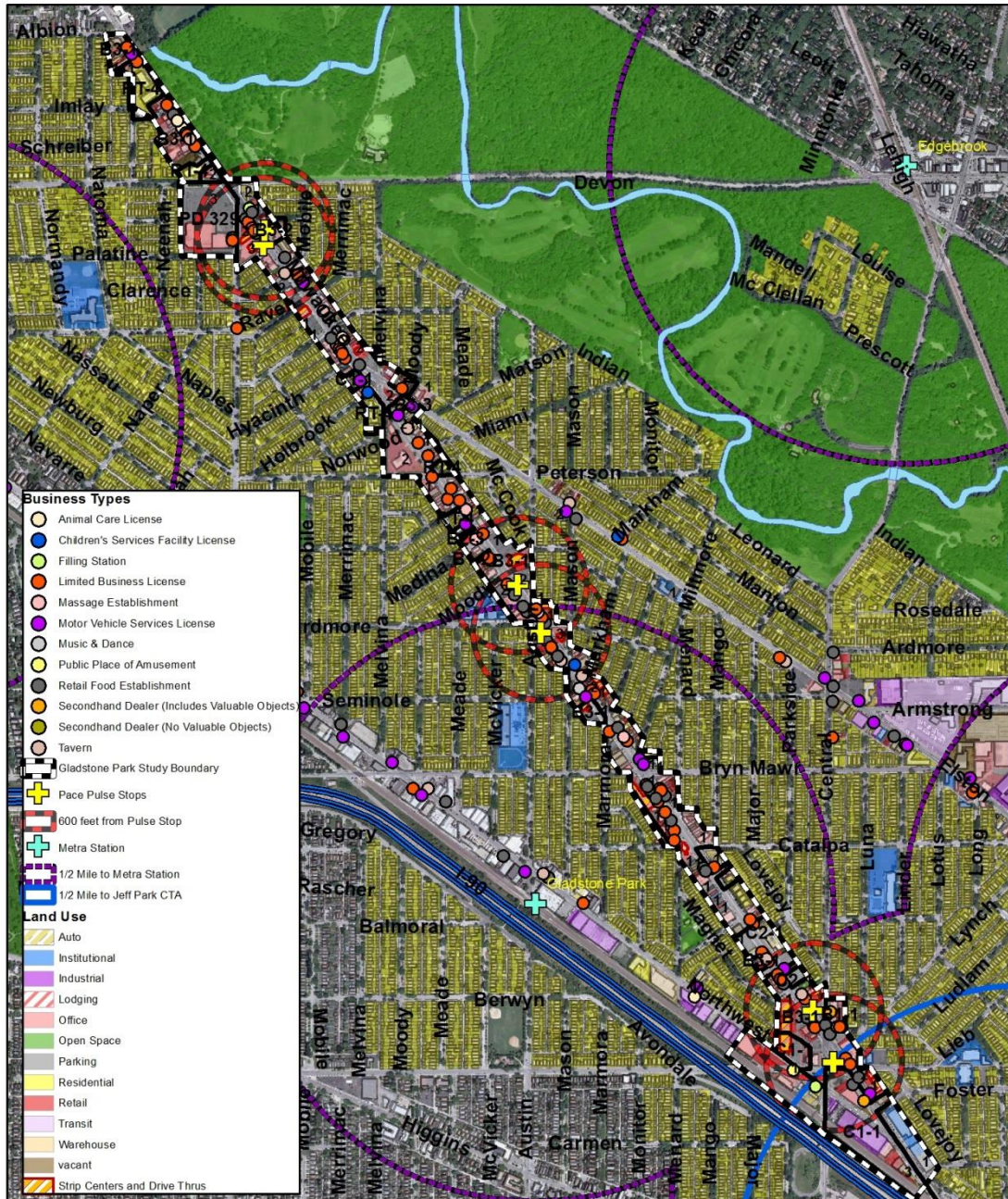
- Does the corridor reflect the ethnic, religious and other demographic characteristics of the neighborhood?
- What common building types are present in the corridor and are certain types more prevalent than in other parts of the city?
- Are there unique buildings which serve as local landmarks and help define the neighborhood?
- How is the public way (the road, sidewalks and parkway) different from the Chicago standard?

Study Area

A two and a quarter mile stretch of Milwaukee Avenue from the Kennedy Expressway to the city limits north of Devon Avenue.

Kennedy Expressway to City Limits

Milwaukee Avenue in Gladstone Park: Study Area



Background

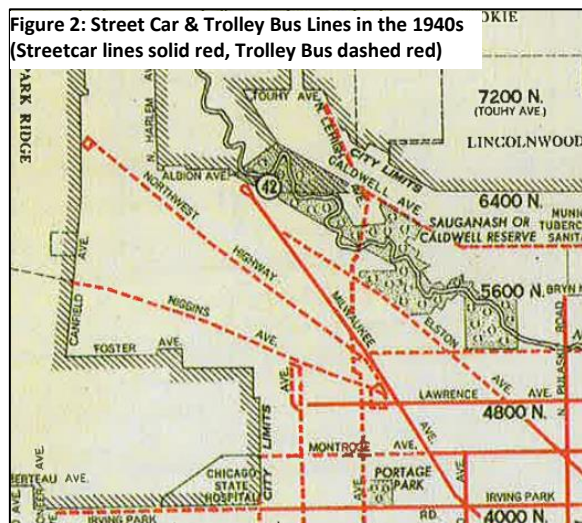
History



Milwaukee Avenue was among the very first streets established in the northwest side and (as the current name suggests) was an important route between the largest cities of Illinois and Wisconsin. Portions of the road were tolled in the 19th century resulting in the creation of Elston Avenue as a bypass. A third diagonal street (today's Northwest highway) paralleled the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad tracks.

By the 1870's, small independent towns had developed at train stations along this railroad. Gladstone Park along with the rest of Jefferson Township was annexed by the City of Chicago in 1889.

Well into the late 19th century these diagonal streets were the only streets in the area. By the start of the 20th century, the overall growth of the City had reached the southern edge of Gladstone Park and the diagonal streets continued to be the most important thoroughfares because of their importance in connecting other communities and because the railroads, the North Branch of the Chicago River and other obstructions made it difficult to connect north-south and east-west streets to adjacent communities.



In the 1920s, as part of the implementation of Burnham and Bennett's 1909 Plan of Chicago, more than 100 miles of major streets were widened or extended. Milwaukee Avenue -north from Foster- was one of these. This widening was relatively easy because most of the private property along this segment of Milwaukee remained undeveloped. On the other hand, many properties along Northwest Highway, particularly near railroad stations. However, Milwaukee was the one street in Gladstone Park to have a streetcar which ran 24 hours, 7 days a week from Devon all the way south to downtown Chicago, putting the Six Corners at

intersection of Milwaukee Avenue, Cicero Avenue, and Irving Park Road and Jefferson Park business districts at Lawrence and Milwaukee in easy reach. In 1932 Emmett Whelan Pool became a summertime destination at the end of the Milwaukee Streetcar lines. Superdawg opened in 1948 as a summer only establishment to serve those going to the pool and became a year round operation

starting in 1950. Both Northwest Highway and Elston Avenue had trolley buses: electric buses which drew power from overhead lines.

In the late 1930s, much of the property fronting Milwaukee remained vacant, particularly north of Ardmore, even as residential streets and homes were developed to either side. Little nodes of two and three story buildings with ground floor retail and upper story apartments popped up where the streetcar stopped. Because of its width, Milwaukee was not an attractive street for single family homes. It was not until the early 1960s that all of the property on Milwaukee filled in, making it one of the last areas within the city to be developed. Elston Avenue remained largely residential with some retail as it neared Milwaukee. Beyond these diagonals, the rest of the land was filled with single family homes, houses of worship, schools and parks. These essential characteristics have changed little over the past 60 years.

In the near term, Milwaukee Avenue will become more friendly to alternate modes of transportation. In the past year, painted bike lanes have been added between the on-street parking and the travel lanes for motor vehicles and, as discussed later in the document, PACE will begin an express bus service in 2017 in addition to the current local bus service.

Figure 3: Milwaukee Avenue in 1938: Devon/Central to Austin/Ardmore



The Characteristics of Milwaukee Avenue in Gladstone Park

Given the great length of this segment of Milwaukee, it is clearly not a single retail corridor but more-or-less a series of distinct nodes each of which contain distinct buildings and businesses. At the same time there are characteristics which differentiate this segment of Milwaukee Avenue from other retail corridors in Chicago and some near term projects are likely to make it even more distinctive.

- The very wide right-of-way with two travel lanes in either direction, on-street parking on both sides of the street and center turn lanes throughout
- Very complex intersections at the north (Devon and Nagle) and south (NW Highway, Central, Gettysburg and Foster) ends and a challenging merge of Elston and Milwaukee near the middle.
- The presence of relatively large number of buildings (banks, gas stations, funeral homes, and hot dog stands) with porte-cocheres or canopies sheltering cars and people from the elements.
- The shallow depth of the lots fronting Milwaukee Avenue (as a result of the widening of the right-of-way in the 1920s).
- The large number of dental, medical, and real estate offices.
- The number of large signs, billboards and other visual elements (eg the Super Dawg mascots) many of which are for businesses unique to the corridor.
- The lack of competing retail 'main streets' nearby.
- The proximity to a number of major shopping centers in the city and suburbs
- The lack of additional sites in the corridor for larger format retail stores.

The wide street, overall low scale of buildings, shallow lots, unusual car-oriented architecture, and the profusion of signs create an environment more similar to major streets in Los Angeles than older, traditional retail streets in Chicago.

Recent Development Trends

Figure 4: Newer residential buildings at Rosedale and Milwaukee



Overall, the rate of redevelopment in the corridor has been relatively slow. In the past ten years, few buildings have been torn down and few new buildings have been constructed. These 2 flats at the southwest corner of Rosedale and Milwaukee in the image above are part of the citywide trend of residential infill on arterials away from major intersections.

Market Data

The portion of Milwaukee south of Bryn Mawr is within the 60630 zip code. The Realtors Property Resource (RPR) Trade Report identifies more than 63% of the households as City Lights, 16.3% as Pleasantville, 7% as International Marketplace, 4% Downtown Melting Pot and 4% Old and Newcomers. The first two segments constitute 80% of the households.

'City Lights' households are described as price and health conscious with a preference to bank in person versus online (though they usually have high-speed internet at home) and shopping at Walmart and warehouse clubs. Most households own one vehicle and use some public transit.

'Pleasantville' households are generally older families with the bulk of their children over 18, with high household incomes, a love of gardening and a propensity to drive larger imported vehicles.

Within the 60630 trade area, specialty food services, liquor stores, health and personal care stores, used merchandise stores and office supply stores are identified as plentiful. Many types of stores are indicated to be scarce, particularly shoe stores, department stores, clothing, lawn and garden, furniture and building material stores.

The remainder of the corridor north of Bryn Mawr is within the 60646 zip code. The RPR Trade Area Report identifies the same top two segments as in 60630: City Lights and Pleasantville, but these combined represent only 60% of the households with Exurbanites (17.5%), Top Tier (12.8%) and Savvy Suburbanites (5.1%) filling out the remainder. Overall the median household income (\$74,724) is nearly \$20 thousand more than in 60630.

The Exurbanite segment is similar to Pleasantville, with few children still at home (or with no children), a love of gardening and a preference for organic foods and larger, imported cars.

Within this trade area, liquor stores, office supply, used merchandise stores and health and personal care stores are the only businesses which are relatively plentiful, with all other types identified as relatively scarce, meaning that most residents must leave the immediate area in order to purchase these items or receive a particular service. As with the other trade area, only a handful of stores are plentiful (in this case: bars, department stores, used merchandise stores, grocery stores and health and personal care stores). All other types are scarce.

Looking at recent census data for these two zip codes reveals a high degree of ethnic diversity which is not necessarily evident from the businesses on the street. Nearly 28% of the residents are foreign born coming from countries in Europe (especially Poland), Asia (particularly the Philippines, but also Korea, India, Vietnam and China), and Latin America (mostly Mexico, but a nearly equal number from all the other Spanish speaking countries in Central and South America). There is also a fairly substantial

population from Puerto Rico. Forty-four percent of all households speak a language other than English at home, though two-thirds of those households are fluent in English.

Between the two trade areas, it is notable that apparel (both shoes and clothing), building material and supply, furniture and home furnishings stores, sports/hobby/music stores, full service restaurants and gas stations are scarce. Given the lack of large development sites and the shallow lot depth due to the widening of Milwaukee Avenue, some businesses (such as building material and department stores) simply would not be able to find a home in the corridor. Other uses may be scarce (like gas stations, auto supply and fast food restaurants) but have enough establishments in or near the corridor that residents wouldn't want to see more.

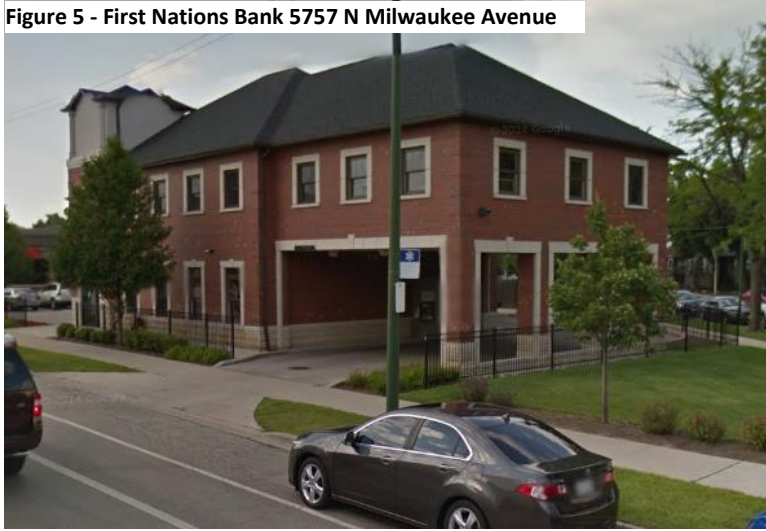
In a chamber hosted community meeting held in the winter of 2015, residents were particularly interested in more full service restaurants, performance theaters, toy stores, pet care, cafes, hardware stores.

In terms of ethnic restaurants, on this stretch of Milwaukee there are four Mexican restaurants, three Italian restaurants, one Korean/vegan restaurant, one Persian, a Spanish (tapas) restaurant and a Chinese restaurant. There are no Filipino restaurants but two nearby (one at Devon and Caldwell and another at Foster and Higgins). There is a Polish deli and bakery on the street and a restaurant close to Milwaukee on Elston as well as a Red Apple Polish buffet restaurant north of Devon. In general then, with the possible exception of Polish foods and services, people will have to travel outside the corridor to access most ethnic goods and services.

In many cases, there are commercial districts or major stores nearby which are serving the residents' needs. Super H Mart in Niles supplies a wide variety of Korean foods, merchandise and services. The business district around Belmont and Central is the largest Polish retail district in the city. Until recently there were no concentration of Filipino businesses in the City, but the overwhelming success of the Seafood City (a Filipino equivalent to H Mart) on Elston near Cicero and Jollibee (a Filipino Chicken Restaurant) in Skokie would seem to confirm that there is pent up demand for Filipino food in the northwest side.

Gladstone Park Distinctive Building Types

Figure 5 - First Nations Bank 5757 N Milwaukee Avenue



Banks with Drive Throughs: There are at six buildings of this type along the corridor. All of them are two stories in height and feature covered port-cocheres for drivers using ATMs or bank tellers. Often, the second floor extends over these drive throughs. These buildings display a variety of architectural styles from colonial to modern. All of them provide a large number of surface parking spaces and are among the largest commercial buildings in the corridor.

Figure 6 - Colonial-Wojciechowski Funeral Home 6250 N Milwaukee



Funeral Homes: There are two funeral homes both of which occupy large parcels of land on the west side of Milwaukee and include large amounts of parking and are designed to make the assembling of cars for funeral processions. Stylistically, both buildings borrow from suburban, residential building styles.

Figure 7 - Superdawg 6363 N Milwaukee



Superdawg: This is undoubtedly the best known Gladstone Park business in the Chicago region. As with the other two local building types, this is designed to accommodate drivers and –stylistically- would be very comfortable along a major road in Los Angeles.

Common Chicago Building Types Prevalent in the Corridor

Figure 8: 5675 to 5691 N Milwaukee Avenue



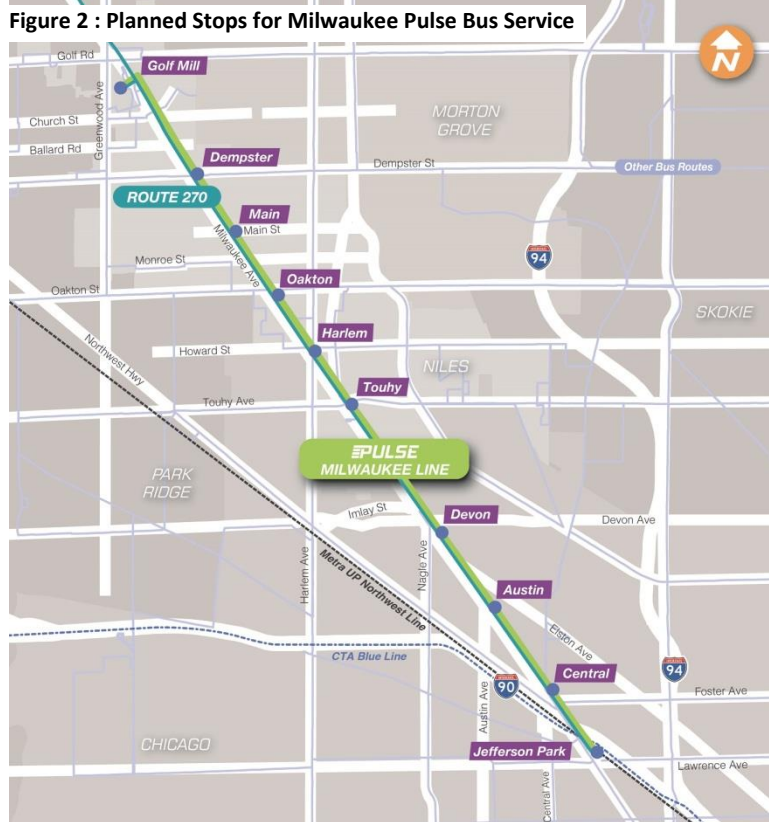
Strip Centers: There are at least 6 strip centers in the district. Most of these buildings date from the 1980s and 1990s and few of them meet current landscape standards. In most cases, it would be nearly impossible to meet the current landscape standards and retain any off-street parking.

Figure 9: 5700 block of N Milwaukee



Storefronts with Apartments: Given how the late this stretch of Milwaukee was developed, it is interesting these buildings exist at all. Where they do exist, they tend to be clustered together near intersections where the Milwaukee Avenue street car stopped, such as this stretch on the west side of the 5700 block of North Milwaukee. As much as possible these buildings should be retained whether the ground floor contains an active business or not.

Pace Pulse Milwaukee Line



Bus Service along the corridor is scheduled for a significant upgrade with the introduction of the Pace Pulse Bus Service in 2017. This will be a limited stop service with a total of 10 stops between the Jefferson Park Transit center and the Golf Mill Shopping Center in Niles. There would be three stops northbound and three southbound stops in Gladstone Park near these intersections: Central and Foster, Austin and Ardmore, and Devon and Nagle. Each station will feature distinctive signage and shelters and have a raised platform to facilitate entering and exiting the bus. Construction of these facilities is to take place this year. The existing local bus service would continue and extend beyond the northern terminus of the Pulse bus.

For residents of Gladstone Park, this new service would make work commutes to downtown Chicago more convenient and reduce travel times. It would also make shopping trips to Golf Mill easier, particularly if smaller, lighter items are being purchased.



Figure 10: Concept for Southbound Pulse Stop at Central and Foster

General Recommendations

Land Use

- Encourage ground floor retail or other active uses in proximity to nodes where Milwaukee intersects other streets and where the Pace Milwaukee Pulse Bus will have stops:
 - Central/Foster/Northwest Highway
 - Nagle/Devon
 - Austin/Ardmore
- Allow new buildings up to four stories with upper story apartments or condominiums to increase the number of potential customers and overall activity within the corridor.
- Increase the number of full service restaurants and small scale retail establishments, particularly those businesses which reflect the cultural and ethnic characteristics of local residents.
- Expand retail and eating venues which serve attendees at local places of worship and funeral homes.
- Attract more cultural institutions especially those providing classes and instruction as well as representing the heritage of local residents

Regulatory

- Consider ways to accentuate on premise signage, storefront treatments and other advertising to create a standard color palette and design approach for such elements to create a more consistent 'Gladstone Park' character.

Parking and Transportation

- Explore ways to maximize use of existing off-street parking lots to serve multiple users, particularly lots around banks and funeral homes.
- Create locations for on-street, diagonal parking on side streets adjacent to commercial buildings.
- Work with CDOT to expand the Divvy bike share program to add stations at the Jefferson Park Transit center and in proximity to the nodes served by the Pace Pulse bus.

Management

- Explore means to increase funding for the local chamber to expand opportunities for local economic development.
- Increase number of festivals and other seasonal/temporary events.

Lower Third: Milwaukee Avenue: Northwest Highway north to Bryn Mawr

Distinctive Businesses

American Science and Surplus is the most unusual business at the south end while Andy's Deli & Mikolajczyk Sausage Shop Inc. south of Catalpa is among the oldest operating food stores for Polish foods and groceries in general. Both draw customers from well beyond the Gladstone Park neighborhood.

Distinctive Architecture

The church was the curved roof on Gettysburg just east of Milwaukee and currently occupied by the Church of the Chicagoans and the House of Flowers flower shop at the corner of Central and Gettysburg are the most unusual buildings in this stretch and are an interesting contrast of a very modern concrete building to a more informal collection of wood buildings. The Associated Bank is one of the distinctive drive-through bank buildings within the corridor.

Development Sites

The vacant lots on the east side of Milwaukee south of Parkside are likely to become a car dealership again.

Nearly all the property south of NW Highway between Milwaukee and Central is for sale. Apparently, this may be developed into a public storage facility, but –given the proximity to the Jefferson Park Transit Center- a mixed use development with residential may be appropriate.

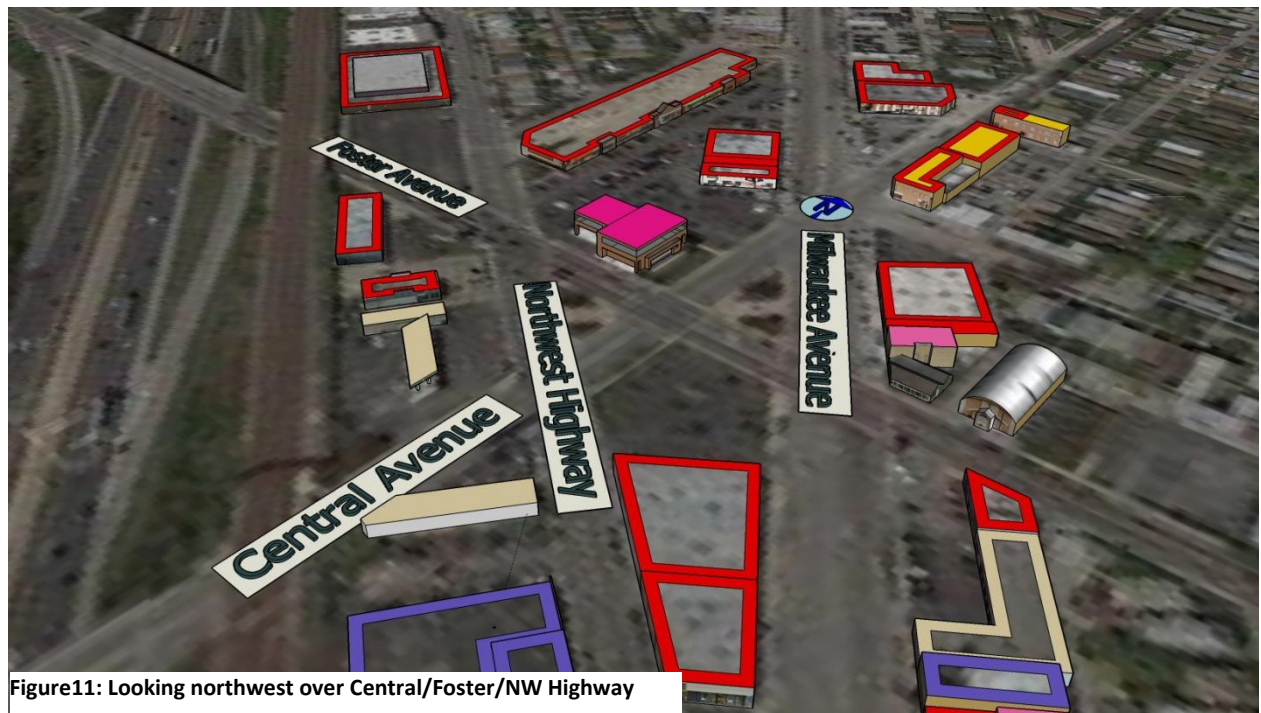


Figure11: Looking northwest over Central/Foster/NW Highway

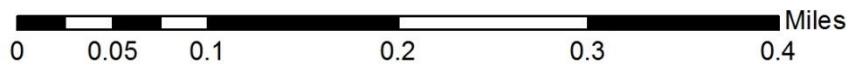
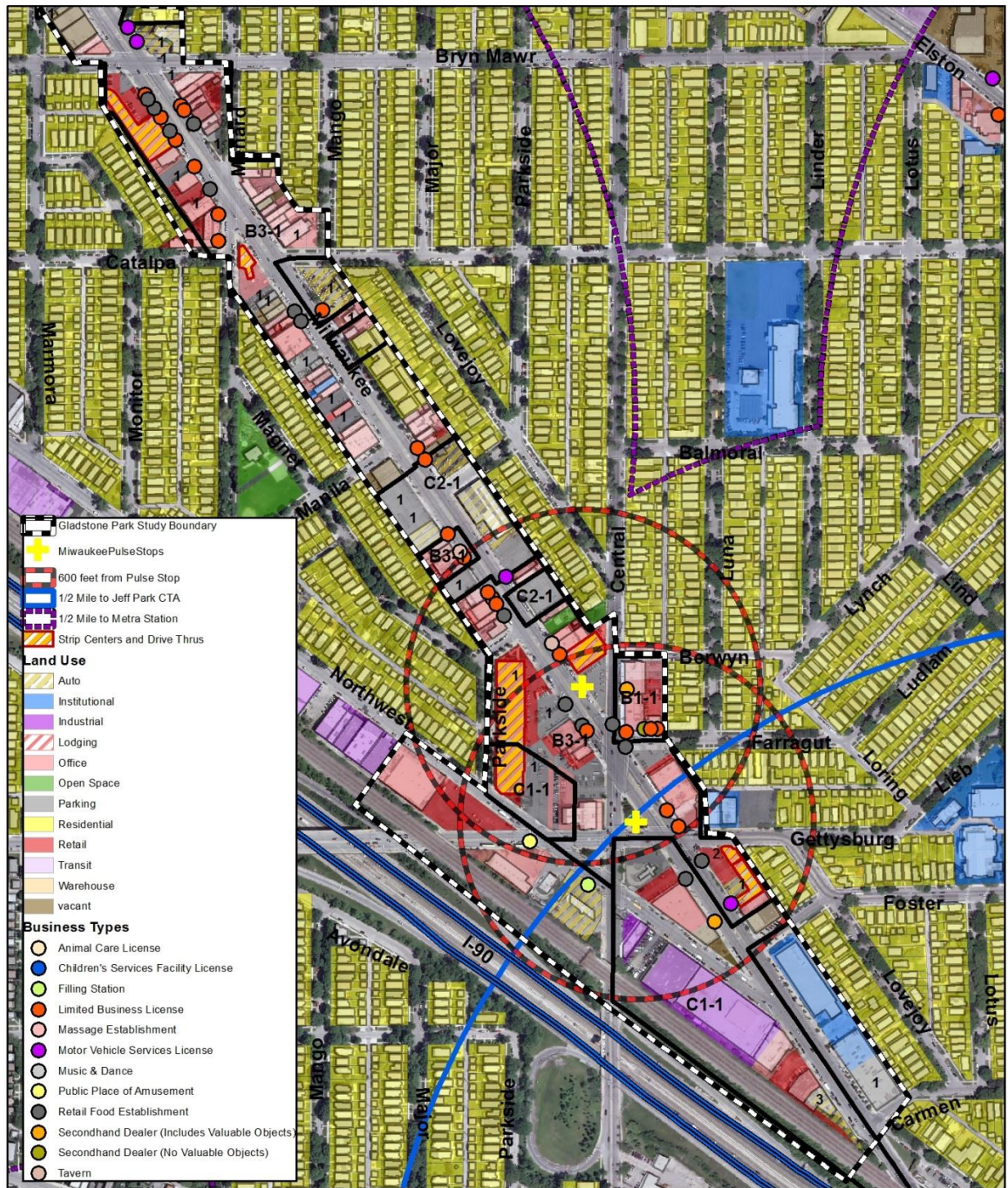
General Characteristics

This segment of the study area had the highest level of access to transit, as every property is within a half mile of the Jefferson Park Transit Center or the Gladstone Park Metra Station.

The retail node at this intersection is very well defined in every direction, with the interstate defining the southern and western boundaries and a clear change to residential to the east and north along Central and Gettysburg. A reestablished auto dealer north of the hardware store on Milwaukee might help increase customers to the existing store and would fill a business niche identified as lacking. This node contains the most Auto related business, which makes sense given the number of major streets intersecting and the proximity to the expressway. All of the businesses would be within 600 feet of the Milwaukee Pulse bus stops proposed for this intersection. Retail buildings are outlined in red, gas stations, auto parts and auto repair shops are outlined in beige. Banks and office spaces are outlined in pink. Industrial uses are outlined in purple. Buildings with upper floor residential have yellow roofs.



Milwaukee Avenue in Gladstone Park: Lower Third



The Middle Third: Bryn Mawr Avenue north to Elston Avenue

Distinctive Uses

The Artorium, a private family run arts center offering classes in various media in the evening, and Eagle Soccer club stand out as the most unusual.

Distinctive Architecture

The west side of Milwaukee on either side of Ardmore is the longest strip of traditional Chicago-style retail within the corridor. The First Nations Bank and Chase Bank on the east side of Milwaukee are large distinctive bank buildings.

Development Sites

There may be no significant development sites but there are several vacant (or marginally used) storefronts which should be reoccupied. At the same time many new restaurants have moved into this segment including BurgerBelly in the strip center at Markham and Milwaukee

Other Issues

Compared to the lower third, there are fewer parking spaces available to the general public. It would be worthwhile to consider ways in which parking spaces at the funeral homes or banks could be used by retail customers and to consider expanding on-street parking on side streets by creating diagonal parking adjacent to commercial buildings.



Figure 13: Austin and Ardmore looking southwest

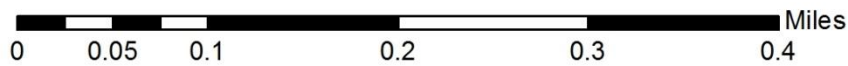
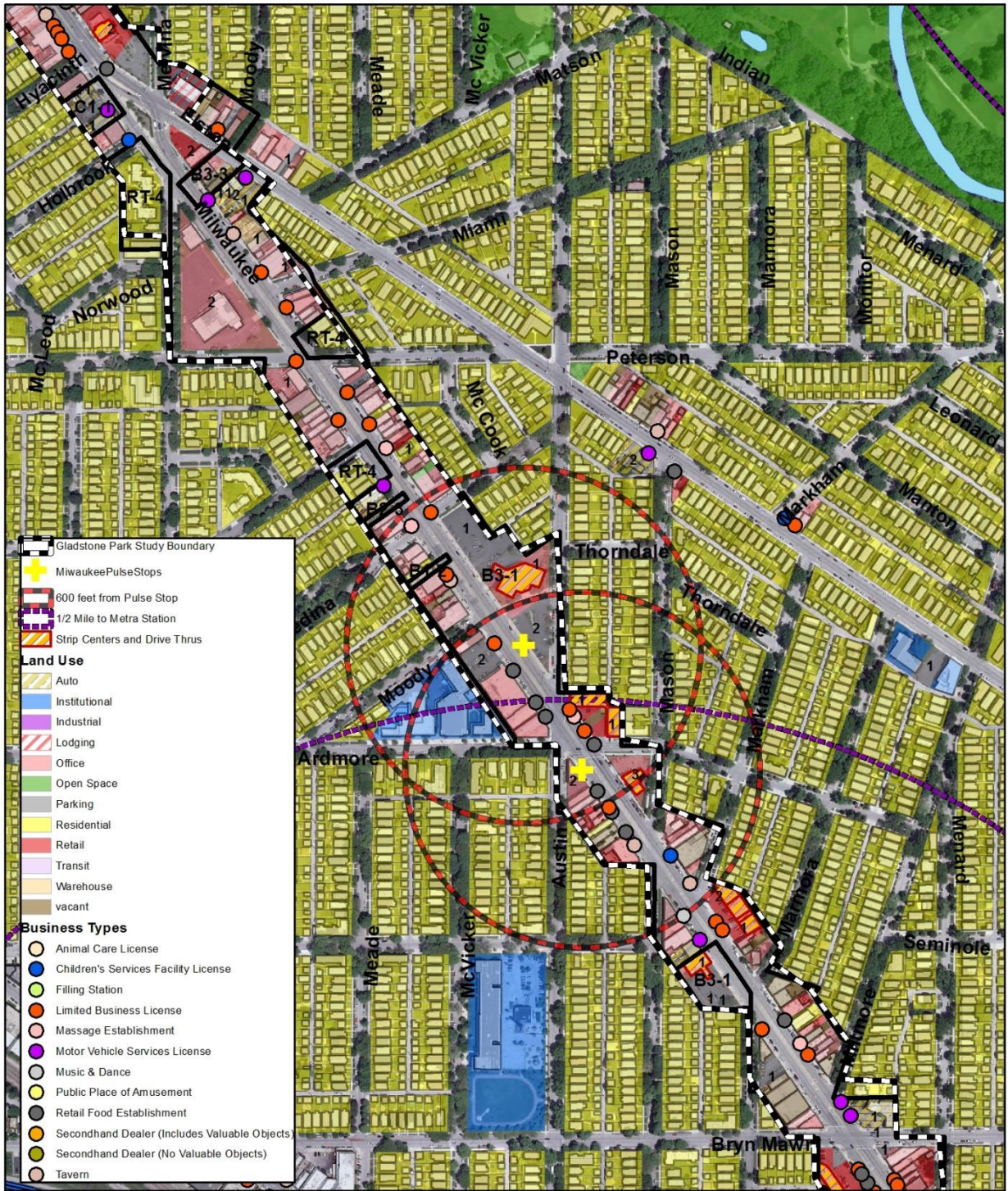
General Characteristics

The segment south of Ardmore is within a half mile of the Gladstone Park Metra Station.

Main retail node in the middle third is centered on Austin and Ardmore. The west side of the street is much more pedestrian friendly than the east side. Chase Bank (outlined in pink) in the lower right of the image) has a large number of empty parking spaces during much of the day.

Retail buildings are outlined in red. Banks and office spaces are outlined in pink. Industrial uses are outlined in purple. Buildings with upper floor residential have yellow roofs.

Milwaukee Avenue in Gladstone Park: Middle Third



Upper Third: Elston Avenue to the City limits

Distinctive Uses

Superdawg is one of the very few remaining hot dog stands which offers service to customers' cars.

Distinctive Architecture

Superdawg distinctive fiberglass sculptures as well as the protective canopies and building are one of the most recognizable in the northwest side. It is also notable that the largest residential buildings are near the northern end of Milwaukee. This includes a three story apartment building just north of Devon and two four story buildings with ground floor retail/office just a bit south of Superdawg.

Development Sites

The owner or property south and east of Milwaukee and Raven is exploring redevelopment of his properties.



Figure 14: Devon and Milwaukee looking west

General Characteristics

No part of this segment is within a half mile of a train station, though every property would be within a mile of either the Edgebrook, Norwood Park or Gladstone Park Metra stations. However, the lack of transit notwithstanding, this segment contains the tallest buildings and the greatest concentration of residential units in the entire study area, at the same time, it also has the largest parking lot and greatest concentration of retail space.

Retail buildings are outlined in red. Gas stations, auto parts and auto repair stores are outlined in beige. Banks and office spaces are outlined in pink. Industrial uses are outlined in purple. Buildings with upper floor residential have yellow roofs.

