

**DETROIT  
FUTURE  
CITY**

# MILWAUKEE JUNCTION DISTRICT FRAMEWORK STUDY

May 2019

A Framework Study for Industrial Adaptive Reuse and Workforce  
Development in the Milwaukee Junction area in Detroit







Image Source: Goodwill Industries

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was initiated by the Detroit Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to develop a framework for the equitable growth and development of the Milwaukee Junction district in Detroit. LISC engaged a planning team led by Detroit Future City and including Smith Group and Mass Economics to produce this report. Community engagement for this study was led by Vanguard CDC with support from the DFC planning team. Thanks are due to the many Milwaukee Junction stakeholders who participated in the planning process and whose input and insights shaped the recommendations contained herein.

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# 1.

## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1900s, the Milwaukee Junction district was the center of automobile manufacturing in Detroit. More than 20 auto-related businesses were clustered around the junction of the Milwaukee and Grand Trunk railroad lines from which the neighborhood took its name. Today, the automobile industry has mostly left Milwaukee Junction although many of the early 20th century buildings remain, either vacant or repurposed for other uses.

After many years of decline and neglect, Milwaukee Junction is seeing a new influx of investment. This new activity has prompted some media outlets to label the area as Detroit's "next hot neighborhood." The district's location at the intersection of the Midtown, New Center, Tech Town and North End neighborhoods makes it a logical area for growth as Detroit's current wave of redevelopment radiates out from the city core.

In 2018, the Detroit Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) engaged Detroit Future City (DFC) to facilitate a framework study process for Milwaukee Junction, the results of which are reflected in this report. Working with Vanguard CDC, a local community development corporation serving the North End community, including Milwaukee Junction, and consultants from SmithGroup and Mass Economics, DFC engaged a broad cross section of area stakeholders to develop recommendations intended to inform the development process within the district.

This report represents a starting point for strategic action that Vanguard, LISC and other area stakeholders can use to set priorities and guide decision making. Other key stakeholders include the City of Detroit, private business

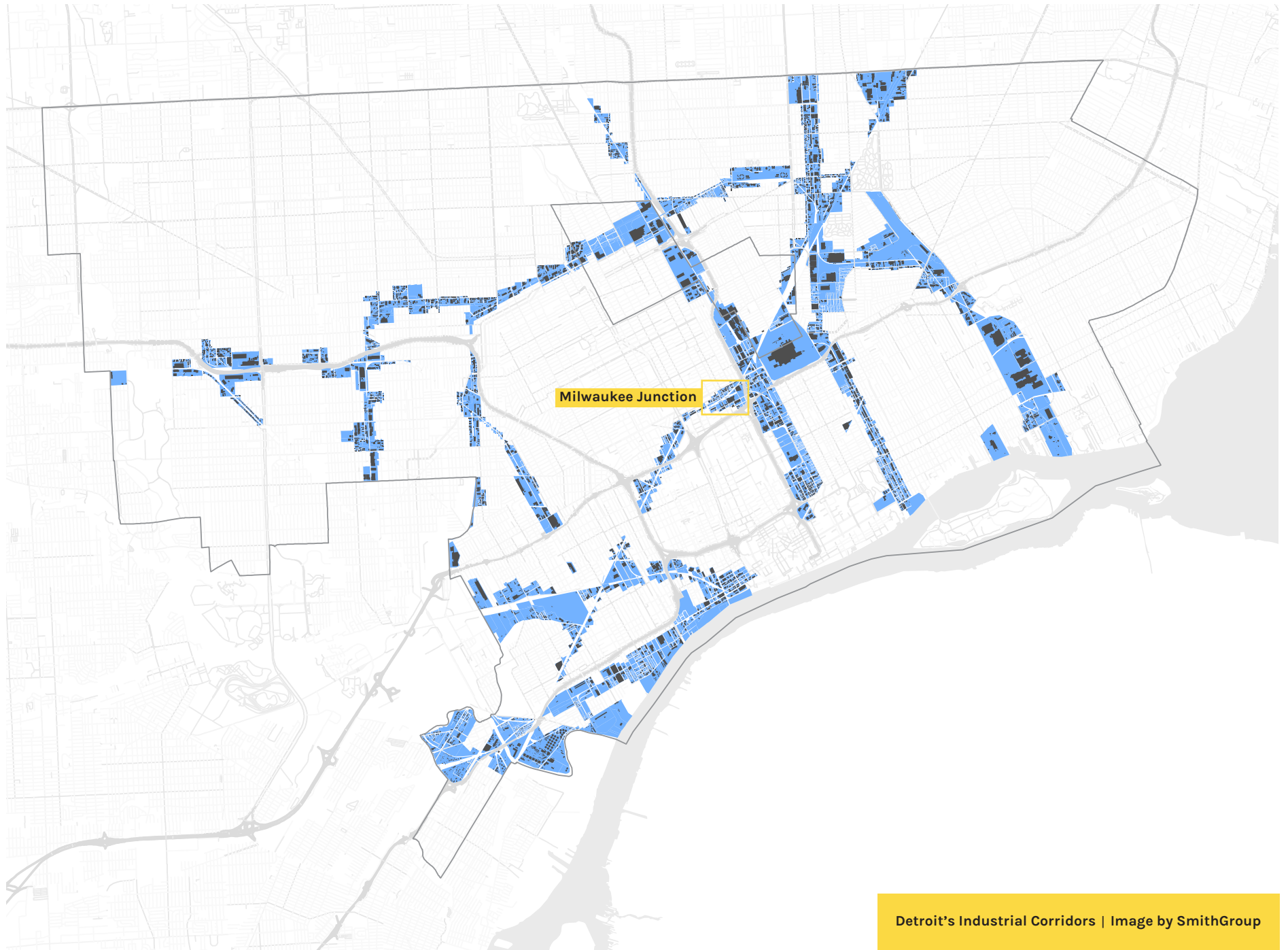
owners and developers, the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum, numerous art and music organizations, workforce development organizations such as Goodwill Industries, non-profit housing providers and area residents.

The overall goal of this report is to chart a path toward equitable development in the Milwaukee Junction district, harnessing the momentum currently underway to create economic opportunity for lower-income residents and small businesses while fostering a vibrant mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood.

This document features:

- A market-based and community-informed physical development framework for the Milwaukee Junction district that encourages real estate development and business investment to create jobs that are accessible to local residents.
- Recommendations for physical improvements and real estate development opportunities, with key strategies for publicly-held and nonprofit-held land.
- A summary of other recommendations based on input from local stakeholders including residents, businesses, developers, government and non-profit organizations involved in the planning process.





Detroit's Industrial Corridors | Image by SmithGroup

# 2.

## DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

The Milwaukee Junction Framework Study Area is part of an historic industrial neighborhood in Detroit, nested between the North End, New Center and Midtown. The Framework Study Area is bound by East Grand Boulevard to the north, Woodward Avenue to the west, Interstate I-94 to the South and Interstate I-75 to the East, covering an area of approximately 0.3 square miles.

There is currently no universally recognized set of boundaries for the Milwaukee Junction district. Although the Study Area is referred to throughout this report as “Milwaukee Junction”, the industrial district immediately east of I-75 is also often referred to as a part of Milwaukee Junction and Milwaukee Junction itself is considered a sub-district within the larger historic North End neighborhood. The City of Detroit also recognizes the portion of the Study Area south of Piquette Street as Medbury Park.

It is not the intention of this report to redefine the boundaries of Milwaukee Junction but rather to take a closer look at the core of the district and to highlight some of the relationships between the core area and adjacent neighborhoods.

Milwaukee Junction was the heart of the early automobile industry in Detroit. The area’s industrial heritage remains clearly visible, although the majority of industrial activity has left and many of the historic industrial buildings have been demolished over the last few decades.

Before the most recent wave of new development, the area had already

begun to attract artists and musicians, and became known as the home of techno music in Detroit. These roots are still present in the form of the Tangent Gallery, Underground Resistance, Electric Studio, Submerge Records and other art, music and cultural organizations.

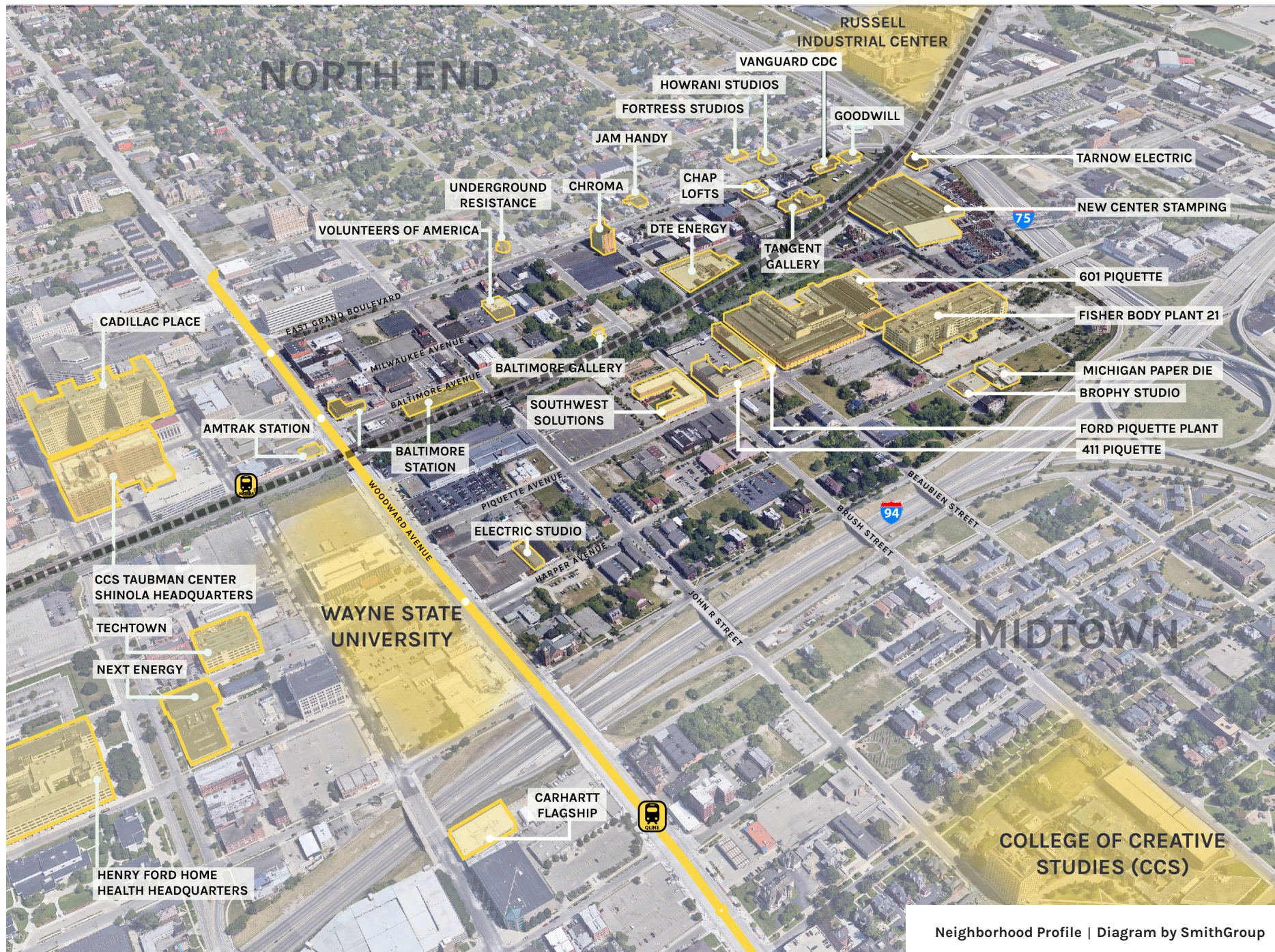
Overall, the study area is sparsely populated, home to approximately 521 residents living in 244 households. Median household income is \$15,304, well below the Detroit median income of \$26, 249. Most residents are currently concentrated in a few multi-family affordable housing developments, although new market rate units are currently under development.

Milwaukee Junction Framework Study Area Demographics

	Milwaukee Junction	Detroit
Population	521 (2017)	673,104 (2017)
Pop. Density	1,736 people/sq. mi.	4,900 people/sq. mi.
Race / Ethnicity	African-American: 87% Other Races: 13.0%	African - American: 82.7% Other Races: 17.3%
Median HH Income	\$15,304	\$26,249
Working Age Pop.	58%	51%
Unemployment Rate	24%	8.7%

Data Source: ESRI GIS Community Analyst 2018 Per Study Area Boundary





Neighborhood Profile | Diagram by SmithGroup



The area is home to 68 businesses employing a total of 852 employees. The unemployment rate for current residents is nearly 24% and relatively few district residents are employed within the district.

Although most industrial uses have left the area, there is still one large metal stamping plant, as well as a small number of construction contractors, a metal plating company and a tool and die maker dispersed among the new lofts, restaurants, design firms, art galleries and offices.

There are also several nonprofit and community-based organizations located in the area, including Vanguard CDC, Volunteers of America, Goodwill Industries and Southwest Solutions. These organizations offer services to low-income and vulnerable households seeking employment, housing, and other resources. Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance also owns property in the area that they plan to develop for mixed-income housing.

Milwaukee Junction is close to several large employers and institutions, including Wayne State University, Henry Ford Health System, the State of Michigan, College for Creative Studies and Tech Town. The area is served by DDOT bus service and the Q Line streetcar, which runs along Woodward Avenue with Q Line stations at Amsterdam, Baltimore and Grand Boulevard. It is also home to the city's only commuter rail station at Woodward and Baltimore.



Recent Developments in Milwaukee Junction | Diagram by SmithGroup





**Method Development**  
6540 Saint Antoine Avenue  
Mixed-use (Residential and Retail)

1



**Method Development**  
2863 East Grand Boulevard  
Mixed-use (Residential and Retail)

2



**JacobsStreet**  
"207 East Baltimore"  
207 East Baltimore Avenue  
Residential Lofts

3



**Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation**  
6568 Woodward Avenue  
Mixed-Use (Retail and Offices)

4



**The Platform**  
"Baltimore Station Phase 1"  
6402 Woodward Avenue  
Mixed-use (Residential and Retail)

5



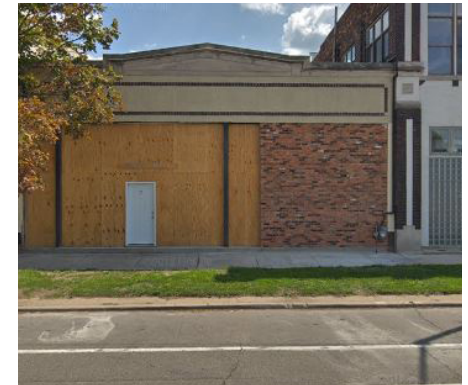
**The Platform**  
"Baltimore Station Phase 2"  
66 Baltimore Avenue  
Mixed-use (Residential and Retail)

6



**The Platform**  
"Chroma"  
2937 East Grand Boulevard  
Creative Office Space and Retail

7

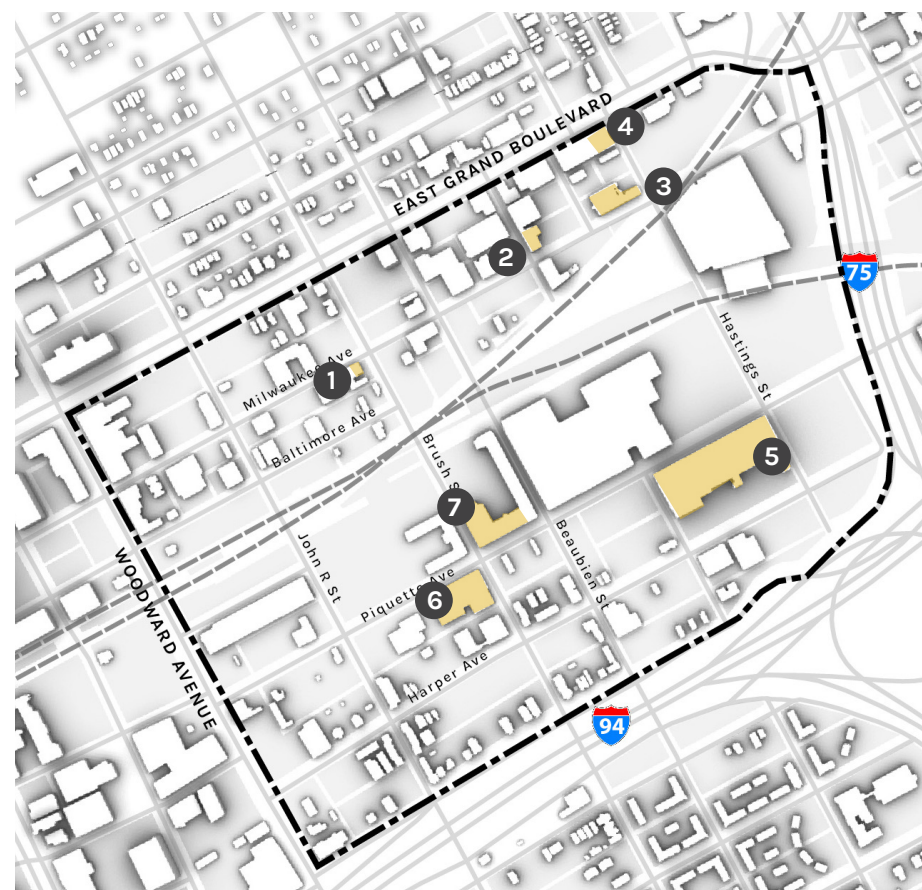


**Batch Brewery**  
2841 East Grand Boulevard  
Brewery

8

Method Development Images from Crain's Detroit | Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation Detroit Office from Midtown Inc. | Images of The Platform Developments from The Platform Website | Other Photos by SmithGroup

Milwaukee Junction is on the cusp of dramatic change. These areas, long home to some of Detroit's poorest households, are attracting new development drawn to their abundance of vacant property and close proximity to the city core. For new growth to evolve equitably, it will be necessary to protect the rights and interests of current residents, artists and small businesses and to create pathways of economic opportunity for these stakeholders.



Underutilized Properties in Milwaukee Junction | Diagram by SmithGroup





**318 East Milwaukee Avenue**  
Brick Masonry & Wood Cladding  
5,948 SF / 3 Stories / Built 1923  
**Fair Condition**  
Owner: CLK Milwaukee LLC

1



**603 East Milwaukee Avenue**  
Brick & Reinforced Concrete  
6,883 SF / 2 Stories / Built 1926  
**Good Condition**  
Owner: BISG Faily Limited Partners

2



**715 East Milwaukee Avenue**  
Glass, Brick, Reinforced Concrete  
19,661 SF / 3 Stories / Built 1930  
**Good Condition**  
Owner: Robin Buckman

3



**2821 East Grand Boulevard**  
Glass, Brick, Reinforced Concrete  
11,116 SF / 3 Stories / Built 1920  
**Poor Condition**  
Owner: Dennis Kefallinos

4



**Fisher Body Plant 21**  
Glass, Brick, Reinforced Concrete  
120,575 SF / 7 Stories / Built 1919  
**Poor Condition**  
Owner: City of Detroit PDD

5



**321 Piquette Avenue**  
Brick Masonry and Stone  
42,176 SF / 1 Story / Built Unknown  
**Fair Condition**  
Owner: City of Detroit PDD

6

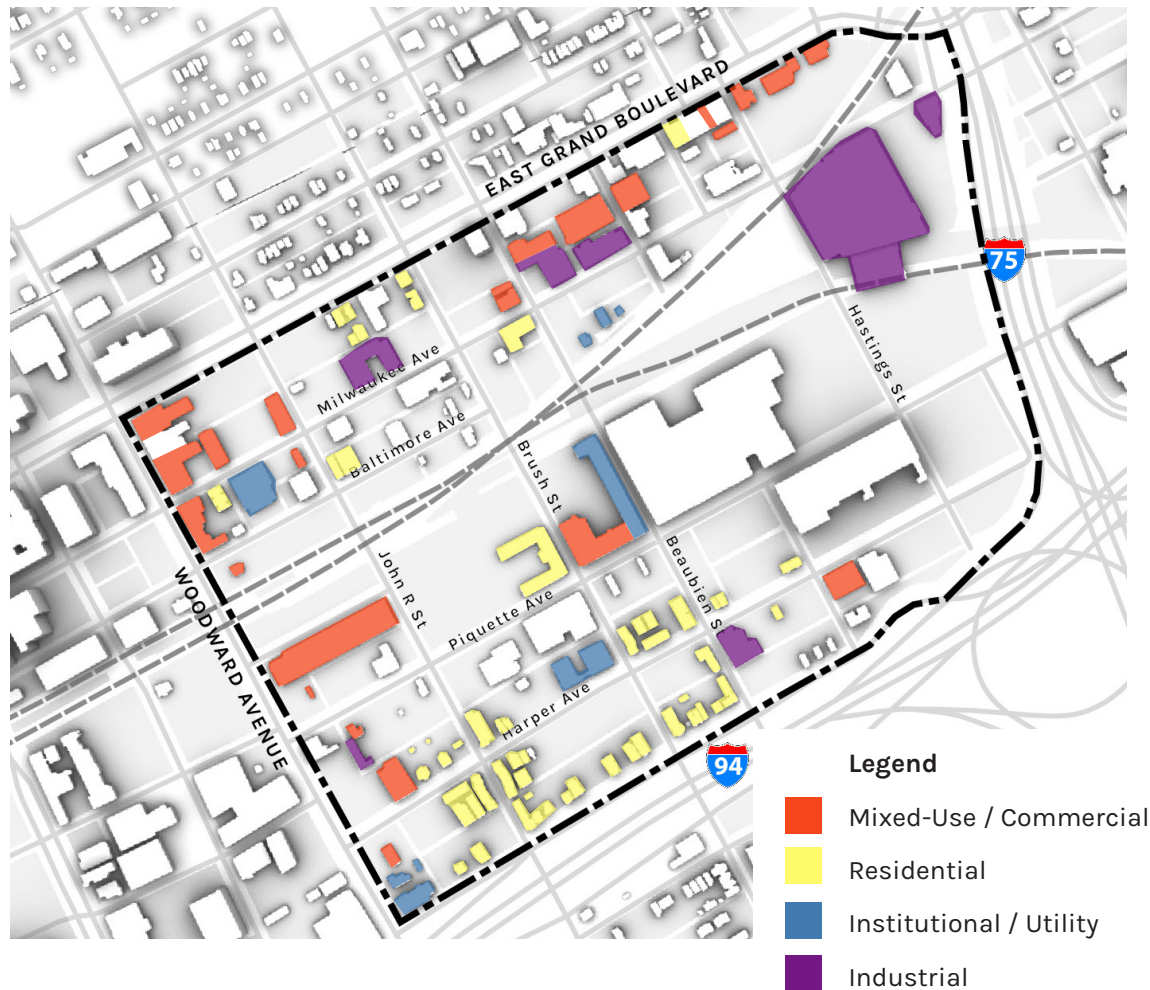


**411 Piquette Avenue**  
Glass, Brick, Reinforced Concrete  
20,000 SF / 4 Stories / Built 1920  
**Good Condition**  
Owner: The Platform

7

## PARTIAL LIST OF ACTIVE BUSINESSES

Aids Partnership Michigan	Industrial Electric
Anew Life Prosthetics-Orthopedics	J E Electric
Arted Chrome Plating	James Martin Chevrolet
Bartlett Arborist Supl & Mfg	Maurice's High Tech Automotive
Black Family Development	Michigan Paper Die Inc
Brophy	Miller Protection
Brown Community Builders	Milwaukee & John R Auto Repair
Bucharest Grill	Mld Construction
Comprehensive Sleep Solutions	New Center Stamping Inc
Contemporary Electric Detroit	Oakland Ave MBC
Deltatek Inc	Pettes LLC
Dencap	Piquette Square
Detroit Nipple Works Inc	Pure Decontamination
Detroit Rentals	Ralph C Wilson Enterprises
DIs Discount Pharmacy	Roby's Shoes
Eightfold Creative	Southwest Solutions
F C Washington & Son	Stepladder Designs
Finishing First Solutions	SUBWAY
Ford Piquette Avenue Plant	Tangent Gallery
Fred Barton	Techteam Global Inc
Genesis Villas	Volunteers Of America
Goodyear Auto	White Castle
Individual Benefits	Zs Villa



Active Programs in Milwaukee Junction | Diagram by SmithGroup





Image Source: Goodwill Industries



## SUB-DISTRICT CLUSTERS

The Study Area can be understood as comprised of three overlapping sub-districts: a mixed-use creative cluster north of the rail road tracks, an industrial business cluster in the southeast quadrant of the district and a more residentially-oriented cluster in the southwest quadrant.

These sub-districts are inextricably linked to the area's past and to its emerging future as a place in which businesses, residents, and creative entrepreneurs can not only coexist, but leverage each other to promote equitable neighborhood development. The resulting mixed-use district can be a prototype, not just for Milwaukee Junction, but also for other evolving industrial districts across the city.

### CREATIVE ENTERPRISE CLUSTER

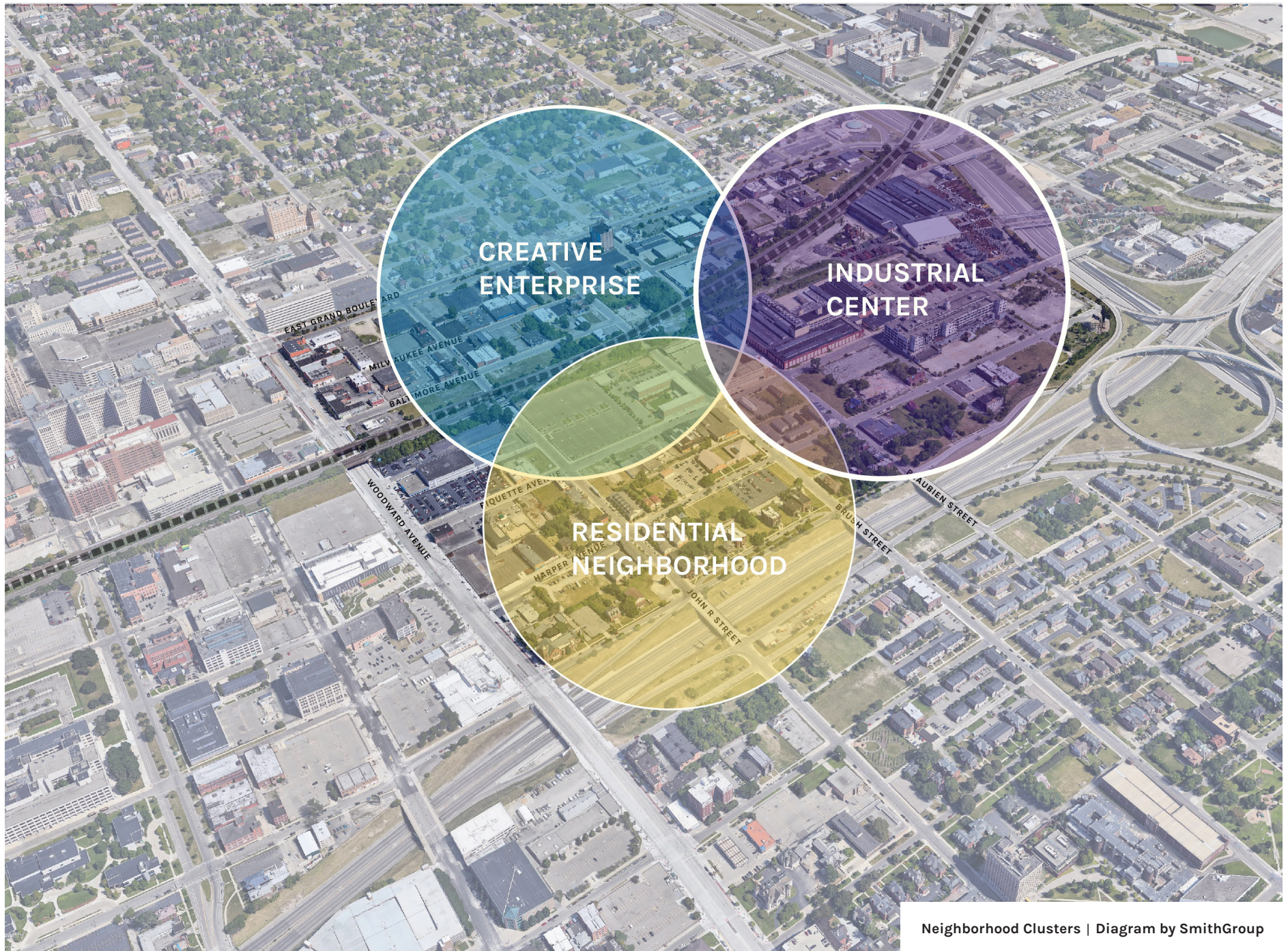
Most of the new development activity in Milwaukee Junction has been focused in the area between East Grand Boulevard and the railroad tracks. This is where most of the arts and music businesses are located, spilling across East Grand Boulevard into the North End. Local developers such as Town Partners and The Platform have been very active in the area. Town developed a cluster of buildings between East Grand Boulevard and Milwaukee St, although some of these buildings have since been sold to Method Development, which has announced a \$20 million redevelopment plan for these properties. The Platform is currently renovating a multi-story warehouse at Beaubien and East Grand Boulevard to house office space for co-working and creative

businesses as well as a multi-level food hall. The building will be known as Chroma, deriving its name from the multi-colored mural that adorns its western face. The Platform owns additional properties in the area and their web site states that their vision is to “catalyze historic Milwaukee Junction as Detroit’s preeminent neighborhood for the creative class.” The Platform is also developing Baltimore Station 1 & 2, a mix of retail and housing uses, along Baltimore Street just east of Woodward and has other investments in the area.

In 2018, most of the property in this cluster was re-zoned from Intensive Industrial use (M4) to Special Development District use (SD2). The new designation is intended to encourage greater density, a mix of uses and improved walkability. This rezoning was in response to the growing number of non-industrial projects being developed in the area and is consistent with zoning changes in nearby Midtown. Although there are still many vacant buildings in this cluster, renovation plans are either underway or planned at several. New businesses moving in include a brewery and a marketing company, each planning to occupy empty space along Grand Boulevard.

Most recent area development (whether completed, underway or announced) has been focused around the food and beverage, arts and entertainment and business support service sectors. Retail uses are largely centered around Woodward Avenue with some mix of housing and retail under development at the Baltimore Station projects. Method Development’s recently announced projects include a mix of office,





Neighborhood Clusters | Diagram by SmithGroup



residential, retail and hospitality uses.

There has been a strong presence of grass roots art and music organizations in Milwaukee Junction for many years. The area is known as the hub of Detroit's techno music scene, which has had a major impact on music world-wide. Submerge Management, for example, operates a building at 3000 East Grand Boulevard that houses Submerge Record Distribution, conference space, rehearsal rooms and the world's only techno music museum. Submerge and related businesses draw thousands of visitors each year from around the world.

A coalition of grass-roots art and music organizations have been working together to strengthen the art and entertainment aspects of the area's economic base. They believe that a vibrant art and music scene will not only support local artists but draw visitors from around the region and around the world. One organization, known as the Detroit-Berlin Connection, has promoted ties between the techno music communities in Detroit and Berlin and points to Berlin as an example of a place where the nightclub and music scene has had a tremendous positive impact on the local economy. This group has advocated for the lifting of the 2:00 am curfew on the sale of alcohol, arguing that a late-night music scene would be a boon to the local economy.

Along with rising property values and new development come inevitable fears that some existing businesses will be displaced due to rising rents. While businesses that own their own buildings can benefit from rising property values or may opt to take advantage of rising values

to sell their properties and relocate, businesses that must rent space may not have an option to stay as costs rise. There are already signs that some small businesses and organizations are leaving Milwaukee Junction due to rising rents. Preserving some low-cost space for small, locally-based, entrepreneurial businesses, artists and non-profit organizations will be necessary to avoid economic displacement and retain the character of the district. It is important that the artists and organizations that created the dynamic cultural scene within Milwaukee Junction can remain and thrive there. This will require financial support for their programs and capital projects.

Most new housing development in this cluster has been market-rate and loft conversions. The Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance, a local affordable housing developer, has announced plans, however, to construct a mixed-income development on Milwaukee Street utilizing Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).

Surface parking is widespread throughout this cluster, including several lots that serve as satellite parking for businesses located outside Milwaukee Junction. This use is incompatible with the vision of a mixed-use walkable district. As development continues within this cluster, these parking sites should be considered for new infill uses that reinforce the pedestrian experience. Satellite parking should be relocated elsewhere, or consideration should be given to constructing multi-level parking decks to concentrate parking uses.

## EAST GRAND BOULEVARD

East Grand Boulevard is a broad historic boulevard linking Milwaukee Junction to the North End, New Center, and the Henry Ford Medical Campus. It is also the major east-west surface street connecting the Study Area to the east side of Detroit and terminating at Jefferson Avenue at the foot of the MacArthur bridge to Belle Isle.

The street currently has three lanes of travel in each east-west direction plus a parking lane on each side and a large landscaped median down the center that incorporates left turn lanes. There are striped bike lanes on each side of the road without any buffering from moving traffic or parked cars.

The median is modestly landscaped, primarily with small trees and grass. This is in stark contrast to the boulevard median west of Woodward in New Center and adjacent to Henry Ford Medical Center, which are more extensively landscaped. There are few street trees along the sidewalk areas and the sidewalks are narrow.

A long-term plan for upgrading the street design and pedestrian environment along East Grand Boulevard should be developed. This plan could be designed to be implemented in phases as development within the area continues to grow. Any new landscaping would have to include a plan and resources for ongoing maintenance, however.

In the short term, the elimination of one travel lane in each direction could make room for parking protected bike lanes, which have become



East Grand Boulevard Looking East From Woodward | Photo By Smithgroup



the city's new standard. Consideration should be given to adding street trees along the sidewalks and widening the sidewalks where appropriate.

Signage, banners and other neighborhood marketing elements could be added as an early sign of revitalization. Vanguard CDC is already planning to establish a neighborhood monument sign at the corner of Woodward and East Grand Boulevard.

Most of the East Grand Boulevard frontage on the south side of the street was recently rezoned to SD2 Special Development District Zoning while the north side of the street remains zoned as B4 General Business. Consideration should be given to rezoning the property abutting the north side of the street to SD2 zoning as well. This would encourage a similar pattern of development on each side of the street and help limit uses that would be incompatible with a pedestrian-oriented commercial district.

Many of the buildings along East Grand Boulevard are included in the Jam Handy/North End-East Grand Boulevard Historic District, a locally designated district. Jam Handy is an historic film production studio that has been converted into a popular event space. Although this study focuses on the area south of East Grand Boulevard, efforts should be made to unify the north and south sides of this thoroughfare into a cohesive commercial corridor.

While many historic buildings have been lost to demolition, many

early 20th century buildings remain. These existing historic structures are one of the chief assets of the district and efforts should be made to preserve historic buildings whenever possible. Infill development within the area should also respect the scale of the existing historic architecture and seek to restore a lively and continuous street wall.

## WOODWARD AVENUE

Woodward Avenue is Detroit's central artery and the spine connecting Milwaukee Junction to New Center, Midtown, Wayne State University and Downtown. Because of these connections to Midtown and New Center, Midtown Detroit, Inc. (MDI) has been actively pursuing revitalization plans along this area of Woodward for several years. MDI has purchased and is actively developing several buildings between Baltimore St. and E Grand Boulevard, including 6568 Woodward which is the new home of the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation and Co.Act, a non-profit support center affiliated with Wayne State's Tech Town. These blocks are covered under the New Center Commercial Historic District, on the National Register of Historic Places. MDI's efforts are reactivating long-vacant storefronts with new retail and other uses and their leadership in this area should be supported.



Woodward and East Grand Boulevard, at Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation Detroit Office | Image Source: Midtown Detroit Inc.



## INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS CLUSTER

Most of the property in the southeast quadrant of Milwaukee junction remains zoned for industrial use. This zoning, along with the presence of existing industrial businesses and proximity to the I-75 and I-94 interchange, make this area less desirable for housing and retail development. However, there is an opportunity to retain current industrial uses and cultivate new manufacturing businesses that have the potential to employ Detroit residents, perhaps in a campus-like development integrating existing buildings with new construction.

This area is home to New Center Stamping (NCS), which manufactures body panels and other components for the auto industry and employs more than 200 workers, 70% of which reside in Detroit. NCS was recently purchased by Soave Enterprises, which has announced plans to expand and add a second shift.

NCS occupies the former Fisher Body Plant #37 built in 1919 located at 950 E. Milwaukee. The nature of the metal stamping business requires large staging areas for metal rack and dies. The racks and dies occupy more land than the building itself. Currently NCS's property spans I-75 and connects to property on the east side of the freeway.

MDOT's proposal to reconfigure the I-75/I-94 interchange would result in changes to NCS's site and a shrinking of NCS's footprint. City agencies such as DEGC and PDD should engage proactively with NCS management to retain NCS and accommodate their expansion while

minimizing negative impacts on the surrounding area.

Two other large factory buildings sit vacant adjacent to New Center Stamping: the former Fisher Body #21 at 6051 Hastings and the former Fisher Body #23 at 601 Piquette. Fisher Body #21 has been a symbol of Detroit's industrial decline and occupies a highly visible site at the intersection of two major freeways. The building is owned by the City of Detroit and is slated for demolition, although demolition is not imminent due to high costs. The building continues to attract interest from developers, but recent structural and environmental assessments suggest that the building would not be economically feasible for redevelopment without extraordinary subsidies.

The fate of this site is critical to the future of this cluster. The property is currently blighted, poorly maintained and hazardous. Without some plan for redevelopment, this site will be a drag on the redevelopment of adjacent parcels. In the interim, more effort should be made to secure and maintain the property.

601 Piquette has approximately 445,000 sf of floor area, primarily high-bay manufacturing space. It occupies 13.5 acres of land. This property is privately owned and is currently marketed for sale. While the building remains empty, the parking lot is leased for periods of time for truck and trailer storage.

It will likely be difficult to find a single user for this building given its size and age. A more productive strategy would be to consider

subdividing the space for multiple users. This strategy has been applied successfully at developments such as Keystone Commons outside of Pittsburgh where a former Westinghouse factory complex now houses 40 individual industrial businesses. There are other examples where this industrial building type has been converted to office use or to creative maker space, such as at the Circle City Industrial Complex in Indianapolis. A recent survey of “small-batch” manufacturers in Detroit conducted by Design Core in partnership with the Urban Manufacturing Alliance identified a growing market for small to medium sized industrial spaces to support expanding entrepreneurial manufacturers.

## PIQUETTE AVENUE

Piquette Avenue from Woodward to Hastings was declared a National Industrial Historic District in 2004. In addition to 6051 Hastings and 601 Piquette, other contributing buildings include 461 Piquette, now the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant museum, 411 Piquette, a former Studebaker factory now owned by The Platform and converted to office use, and 234 Piquette, the former Autocar Service Building now vacant and owned by the City of Detroit.

Another former Studebaker Factory at 201-285 Piquette was destroyed by fire in 2005. In its place is now Piquette Square, a permanent supportive housing facility for homeless veterans, and a large parking lot served by shuttles for Downtown workers.



New Center Stamping Employees | Photo by Crain's Detroit



## FORD PIQUETTE AVENUE PLANT MUSEUM

The Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum is housed in a 1904 building where the Ford Model T was designed and first built by hand. The building was dedicated as a Motor Cities National Heritage Area site in 1996, placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 and declared a U.S. National Historic Landmark in 2006. The museum highlights the early history of Ford Motor Company, and also features vintage automobiles from other companies that built cars in the Milwaukee Junction area, including Studebaker, Packard and Regal. Open year round, the museum attracts thousands of visitors from all over the world each year. In addition, the museum is a popular space for weddings and special events.

The museum is owned and operated by the Model-T Automotive Heritage Complex, Inc., a non-profit organization. The organization saved the building from demolition almost 20 years ago and has been steadily restoring it ever since. They currently have an ambitious plan for capital improvements. The museum has also purchased several vacant lots on the south side of Piquette Street with plans to construct off-street parking to serve museum patrons. Careful attention should be paid to the design of any new off-street parking to consider issues of edge treatment, pedestrian experience and storm water management.

The museum is located three blocks from the Amsterdam Q Line Station, but currently the walk from Woodward Ave. is inhospitable for pedestrian visitors. The museum has begun developing plans to

upgrade the pedestrian experience through streetscape improvements, district signage, educational tours and interpretive activities that integrate the museum more directly into the surrounding neighborhood.

Overall, the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant is a very important asset and activity generator for Milwaukee Junction. Its plans for capital improvements and placemaking activities should be fully-supported.

## AUTOCAR SERVICE BUILDING

The former Autocar Service Building at 234 Piquette is vacant and owned by the City of Detroit. Until a few years ago, it was used as a storage facility by the city's Department of Parks and Recreation. Since 2016, plans have been in the works to develop this building into a "deconstruction hub" that would house the non-profit Architectural Salvage Warehouse of Detroit (ASWD) and other related uses. ASWD provides demolition and deconstruction services, job creation and training programs, and retail and wholesale sales of salvaged materials. In addition to providing job opportunities to low-income Detroiters, ASWD supplies reclaimed building materials to dozens of architects, builders, designers, furniture makers, artists and other entrepreneurial businesses based in Detroit.

Although the development concept put forward by Reclaiming Detroit, the joint venture that proposed the deconstruction hub, appears to be stalled due to lack of funding, the intention should not be abandoned.





Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum Interior | Photo by Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum



As one of the few city-owned buildings remaining in Milwaukee Junction, 234 Piquette offers an opportunity to create a space that advances community goals outside the pressures of rapidly changing market forces. Rather than simply offering this building to the highest bidder, the city should continue to pursue a developer that will insure long-term affordability of commercial space for non-profit organizations or small entrepreneurial businesses and support job creation for Detroit residents.

## RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER

The residential quadrant of the neighborhood varies substantially from the character of the other two clusters within Milwaukee Junction. While most of Milwaukee Junction has a distinct industrial flavor, this cluster still has remnants of the residential neighborhood as it existed prior to the construction of I-94.

The residential cluster is primarily focused on Harper Ave. and along the Edsel Ford (I-94) Service Drive. This area is also sometimes referred to as the Medbury Park neighborhood. The area has two large subsidized housing developments. Genesis Villas is a 70-unit town-home development, financed with Low Income Housing Tax Credits and serving households at or below 60% of the area-wide median income. Piquette Square is a 150-unit apartment building providing permanent supportive housing for homeless veterans.

Other existing housing is split between a few remaining single-family homes and small multi-family buildings. Rising rents in nearby Midtown has sparked the renovation of some apartment buildings in the residential cluster of Milwaukee Junction and some renovated units are renting for as much as \$1.65 per square foot. However, other buildings in the area are vacant and severely blighted.

Most vacant land in this cluster are single-family lots where homes have been demolished. Currently the Detroit Land Bank Authority owns 31 of these parcels and several other sites are controlled by the Planning and Development Department. As property values in the neighborhood increase, these publicly-controlled parcels should be leveraged to ensure long term affordability at a range of income levels within the area. Promoting a diversity of incomes should also include providing for a range of housing unit sizes and types.



Genesis Villa Exterior | Photo by SmithGroup





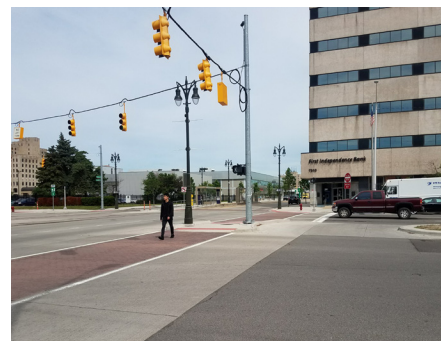
# ZONING

The Study Area contains a variety of zoning classifications. In 2017, portions of the area were rezoned from M4 (Intensive Industrial) to SD2 (Special Development District). A Special Development District enables the neighborhood to integrate high-density, mixed-use development to promote a more diverse and active area. According to the Detroit Zoning Code, “The SD2 District is designed to encourage a complementary mixture of uses including residential, business, and office uses that are compatible in a neighborhood center.”

Many parcels south of the rail road line remain zoned for industrial activity (M4 and M3) even though some of this property has already transitioned away from industrial use. The site of the former Studebaker Plant at 201-208 Piquette, for example, has been converted to multi-family housing for homeless veterans and a satellite parking lot for downtown workers.

M4 zoning allows for intensive industrial uses which are not appropriate in proximity to residential uses. Consideration should be given to changing the property zoned M4 west of Hastings St. to a less intensive industrial zoning such as M1 or M2, or even SD2 for properties east of Beaubien. Consideration should also be given to rezoning the north side East Grand Boulevard to SD2 as discussed above..

The City Planning Commission is conducting a comprehensive review of its zoning classification system, although this review will not change the current zoning maps at this time. It would be worthwhile for stakeholders in Milwaukee Junction to participate in this review process to ensure that local interests are represented.



**B4 is predominately along Woodward Ave & East Grand Blvd, allowing for a wide range of business uses.**



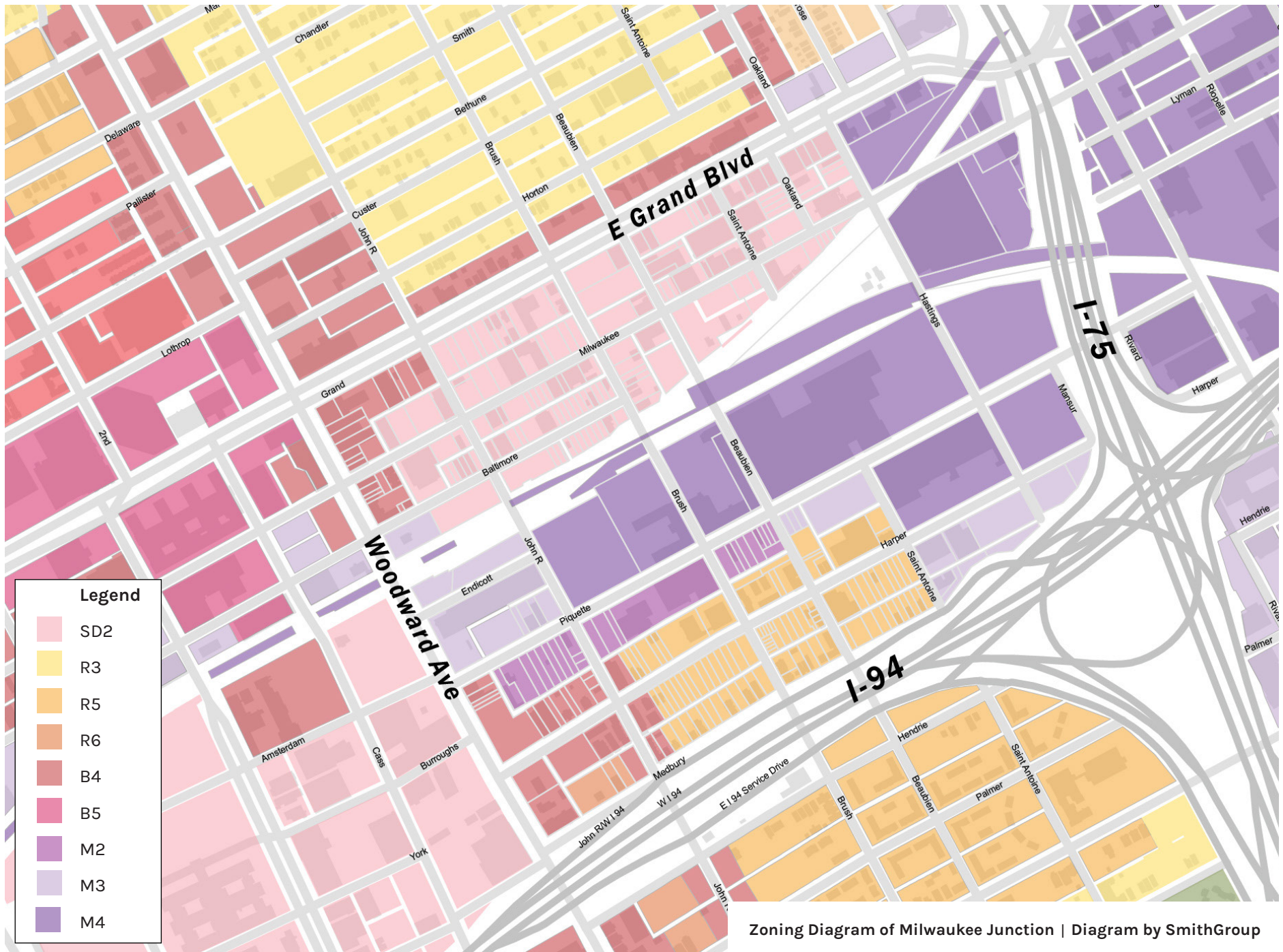
**R2 is largely located to the south, characterized with subsidized multi-family housing.**



**SD2 Zoning offers opportunities for more developments and more robust programs.**



**M4 remains a large zoning typology as industrial activity is still active within the area.**



Zoning Diagram of Milwaukee Junction | Diagram by SmithGroup



# OPEN SPACE

Parks and open space are an important aspect of any neighborhood. This is especially true in urbanized areas where private residential outdoor space is limited. There are currently no public parks or other public open spaces within Milwaukee Junction. While some private developments are planning to incorporate open space into their projects, space should be set aside for public open space as well. These spaces need not be large; in highly urbanized areas such as Milwaukee Junction this open space can be in the form small parks and plazas.

## MILWAUKEE STREET RAILSIDE PARK

In the area north of the railroad line, there are a few publicly-owned remnant parcels that could be considered for open space development. A triangular-shaped lot on Milwaukee between the Tangent Gallery and the railroad line is already used informally like a park. This is an excellent opportunity to create new open space at a relatively low cost. A small corner lot at 335 E. Milwaukee is also city-owned and could be considered for a small park, although this site may have more development potential.

South of the rail line, the pattern of development is less predictable as there are no current development plans for several large parcels. The large number of DLBA-owned properties allows some flexibility to incorporate public open space in future development planning, however.

The city-owned Autocar Service Building property offers another opportunity for public space. This site contains two structures as well

as some land without structures. Development of this site could include public uses, such as a food court or marketplace, that have both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Future development of the Fisher Body #21 and 601 Piquette sites could be developed with a campus-like approach, given the size of these parcels. A portion of the decommissioned rail right of way just north 601 Piquette (currently owned by New Center Stamping) could be considered for open space development as part of a larger campus plan. To the extent possible green buffering between the freeways and other uses should be incorporated into an overall open space strategy for the district.

Any park and open space option in the neighborhood should also consider connections to non-motorized transportation networks and how they can provide benefit an added benefit for residents.



Tangent Gallery Outdoor Installation | Photo by SmithGroup



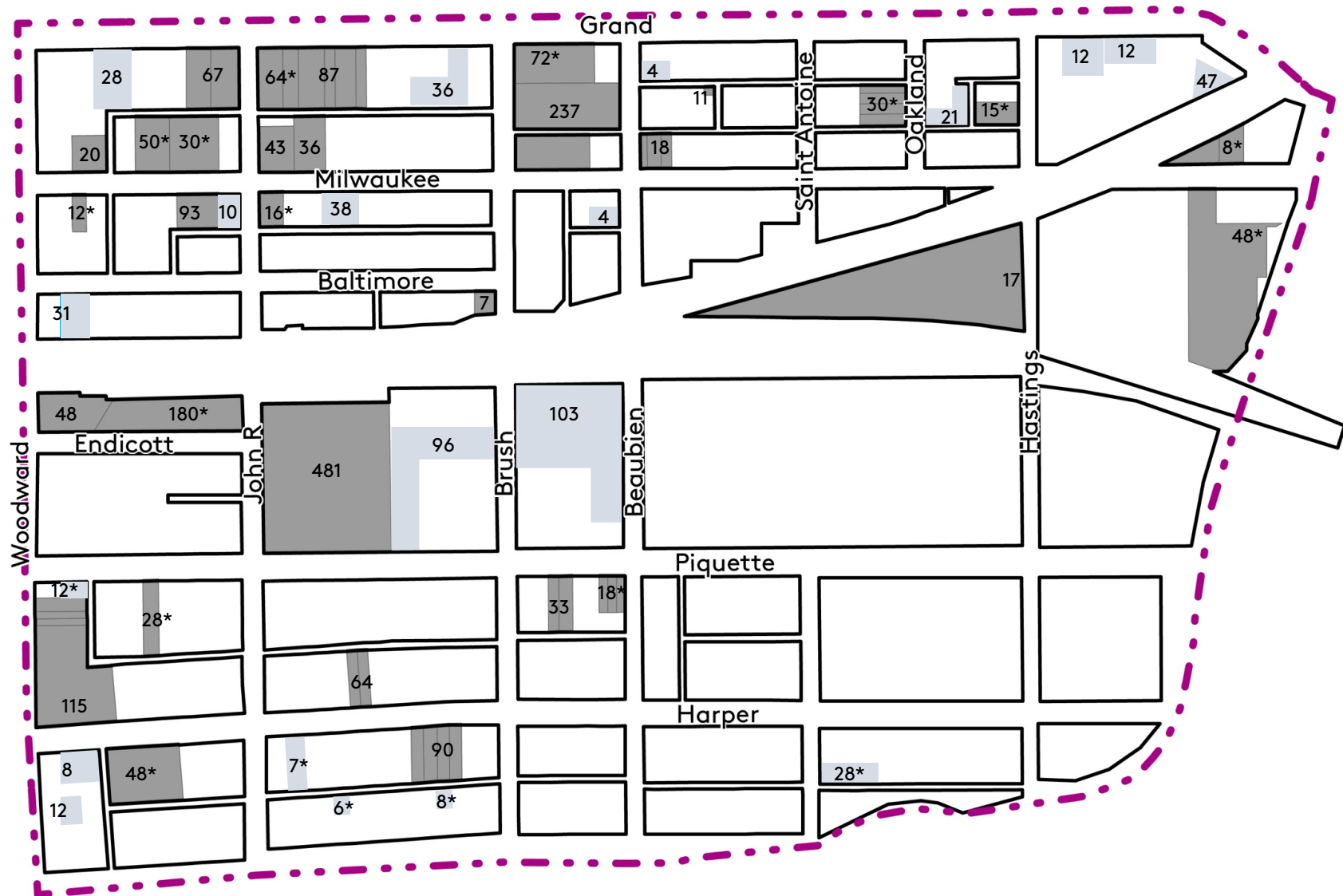
# PARKING

Surface parking lots are one of the most visible and common land uses in Milwaukee Junction. When coupled with vacant land and buildings, these lots create gaps in the building fabric and pockets of inactivity. In some cases, these lots serve the customers and employees of the adjacent businesses. However, several large surface lots are used for satellite parking for business located outside the area. New satellite parking should be discouraged, and as the area continues to develop, consideration should be given to building infill development on existing lots.

There is currently free street parking throughout the district, but with new development will come additional parking demands. This issue will be especially acute in the area north of the railroad line. A long-term parking strategy should be developed to plan for shared and public parking and consideration should be given to using parking structures to concentrate parking.



Photos by SmithGroup



### Milwaukee Junction Parking

■ Parcel used primarily for  
Parking

■ Parking that is an  
accessory

Total Off-Street  
Parking 2018\*: 2,579

Total Off-Street  
Parking 2010: 1,105

\*Number of parking spaces was estimated  
Source: Detroit Future City



DETROIT  
FUTURE  
CITY



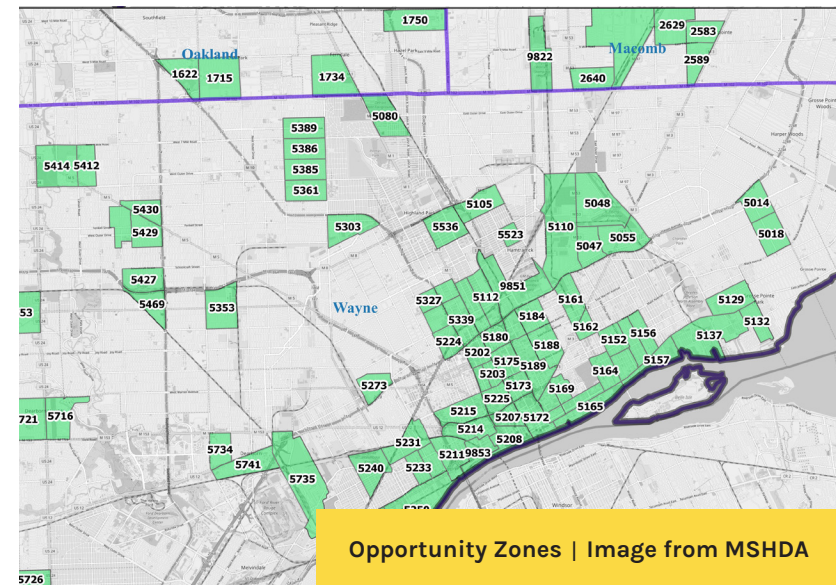
# OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Opportunity Zones are a new financial incentive that could spur additional investment in Milwaukee Junction. Opportunity Zones were authorized by a provision in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act tax reform bill. Zones are designated by States, subject to the approval of the US Treasury Department and are designed to encourage private investment in economically distressed areas by offering favorable tax treatment to long-term capital investments made in designated zones.

To maximize the tax benefits for the investor, investments must be made by the end of 2019. Because Opportunity Zones are still so new, developers and investors are just beginning to understand the full potential of this financing tool.

Opportunity Zones align with census tracts and there are 69 designated zones in Detroit, including the Milwaukee Junction study area. The Platform's Chroma Building in Milwaukee Junction recently included financing from a newly created Opportunity Zone Fund, one of the first such investments in Michigan. It has also been reported that Method Development is utilizing an Opportunity Zone Fund to finance their planned development in the area.

This new financial incentive may prove to be an important tool for spurring investment in distressed areas and Milwaukee Junction is well-positioned as a district to attract these funds.



# STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

In November 2017, the City of Detroit passed a Post-Construction Storm Water Management Ordinance to establish new requirements for on-site stormwater management practices within new developments over a certain size.

The primary objective of this Post-Construction Stormwater Management Ordinance is to reduce the amount of stormwater entering the city's combined sewer system. This is necessary to help the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department meet permit obligations to develop stormwater controls and reduce or prevent untreated combined sewer overflows (CSOs).

The new ordinance applies to all land development (new development and redevelopment) that creates or replaces one-half acre (21,780 square feet) or more of impervious surface. Projects that meet this threshold must develop and submit a Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) as part of the overall site plan and construct approved stormwater management practices as part of the development.

For sites that pose extraordinary difficulty for compliance, options for alternative compliance may include offsite mitigation or payment of an in-lieu fee. Offsite mitigation involves constructing a stormwater practice elsewhere in the city. In-lieu fees involve paying a one-time fee to the City in lieu of constructing a stormwater management practice.

Many of the vacant sites within Milwaukee Junction exceed the half-acre threshold which will trigger the ordinance requirements. Developers

should be encouraged to think creatively about design approaches that incorporate green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) in ways that create new amenities for the site and district. District-wide stormwater management strategies, including shared off-site mitigation, should also be explored.



### 3.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

As new development takes root in Detroit, a key consideration is whether current Detroit residents can have access to and benefit from the jobs that are being created. There are two organizations located within Milwaukee that provide workforce training: Goodwill Industries and Volunteers of America. Goodwill Industries operates a satellite office out of the North End Career Center at 2777 E. Grand Boulevard, where its Flip the Script and Center for Working Families programs are housed. VOA operates Veterans Service Center at 253 E. Milwaukee that provides housing, job training and supportive services for veterans. It also operates a job training program in the health professions out of a nearby office in New Center. While neither of these programs is geographically targeted to the Milwaukee Junction and North End communities, efforts should be made to connect local residents to these opportunities.

As noted earlier, the growing restaurant and hospitality sector may present an opportunity as more of these types of businesses locate in Milwaukee Junction. As these businesses open, an intentional effort to hire from within the surrounding community could be mutually beneficial to the business and neighborhood alike. Although manufacturing has declined as an activity within Milwaukee Junction, this remains a viable use with potential for growth and job creation. Industrial activity is not a thing of the past, but instead an evolving economic enterprise that increasingly values innovative production models, technology, skilled workforces, and the ability remain flexible to respond to changing market needs. Manufacturing remains a very important sector for Detroit and the region. Although separated by the I-75 Freeway, the Milwaukee Junction

study area is part of a larger industrial employment district running north of Detroit's Easter Market to the Hamtramck border. Industrial zoned land in the south east quadrant of the study area offers the opportunity to attract new light industrial uses, although care should be taken to address potential impacts on nearby residential uses.

New Center Stamping, the largest remaining auto-related manufacturer in the area has recently announced plans to add a second shift and expand its workforce. The company already employs approximately 200 people, 70% of whom are Detroit residents. Property condition and potential redevelopment costs likely preclude the reuse of the Fisher Body #21 building for manufacturing uses. However, the building at 601 Piquette could potentially accommodate multiple small manufacturing businesses within a single structure.

An analysis conducted by Mass Economics identified eight industry clusters that could be prioritized for Milwaukee Junction, based on a combination of factors including:

1. High percentage of jobs requiring only a high school diploma or Associates degree
2. Average wage of at least \$15.00
3. Industries that have been growing in Detroit or are expected to grow further
4. Avoiding clusters with a small presence in Detroit, indicating difficulty of attraction

Within a 2-mile area of the study area, 50% of residents have a high school diploma or less and 79% Associates degree or less educational attainment. By focusing on jobs that require relatively low educational attainment but still pay a living wage, there is a greater likelihood that job creation efforts could benefit nearby residents.

Based on these criteria, Mass Economics identified the following industry clusters for attention:

<u>Cluster</u>	<u>Description</u>
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics (TDL)	Moving materials, wholesaling, warehousing
Metals	Manufacturing of raw metals, metal parts, and finished metal goods
Construction: Contractors	Residential, commercial and infrastructure building
Construction Materials Manufacturing	Manufacture of building materials, such as wood, concrete and plastic products
Food Processing and Manufacturing	Manufacture of food and beverages, including pet foods, specialty food products, bakeries and breweries
B2B Support Services	Facilities, recycling/waste, repair, and business support services
B2B Professional Services	Professional services to support businesses, such as real estate, accounting, property management and advertising
Paper Products and Paper Packaging Manufacturing	Manufacture of cardboard and stationary paper, paper packaging, and other paper products
Shared Workshop / Makerspace	Shared workshop/makerspace for industrial, design, creative uses (e.g. firms, entrepreneurs, artists, residents)

Cluster Opportunities Identified | Chart by Mass Economics



An intentional strategy for job creation and workforce development should be pursued. Elements of this strategy should be:

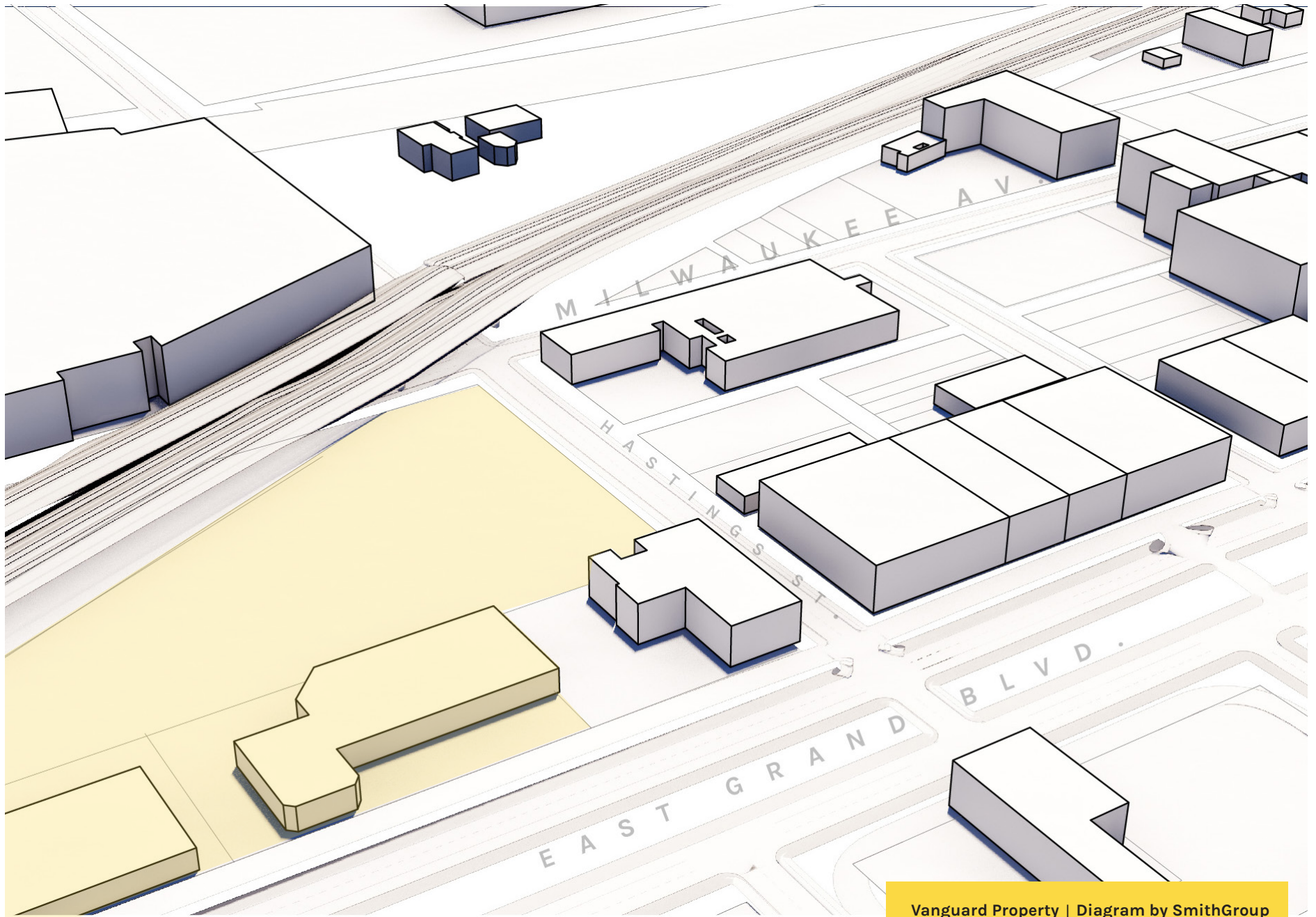
1. Connecting with local employers (and incoming businesses) in Milwaukee Junction and the surrounding area to better understand their workforce needs and the potential to employ local residents
2. Connecting employers and residents through workforce programs that provide job training and readiness skills, including Goodwill Industries, Volunteers of America, and others.
3. Working to retain and grow existing area businesses, especially ones that employ Detroiters
4. Targeting business attraction efforts at business clusters that have the potential to provide quality jobs for local residents
5. Encouraging local entrepreneurship through preservation of affordable commercial space, co-working space, and entrepreneurship and incubation programs
6. Preserving affordable workforce housing within Milwaukee Junction and encouraging new housing that serves a range of households and incomes.

## VANGUARD COMMUNITY CAMPUS

Vanguard CDC owns two buildings and a vacant parcel in the northeast corner of the Study Area. They own 2777 East Grand Boulevard where Goodwill Industries operates its North End Career Center, 2795 East Grand Boulevard where their own offices are located, and undeveloped property behind their office building with some frontage on Hastings Street. Vanguard has recently recruited Rebound Construction and Cocoon Detroit as tenants in their office building and are seeking additional tenants as well. Cocoon Detroit is a co-working business that offers desk space for entrepreneurs.

Goodwill Industries would like to expand its operations to add additional workforce training programs and could use as much as 30,000 additional square feet. They would prefer to expand in their current location within Milwaukee Junction, as this location is central for Detroit and easily accessible to their client base. Goodwill has initiated discussions with Vanguard CDC to explore possibilities for expansion within the current Vanguard campus.

A feasibility study should be conducted to determine the optimum approach to developing Vanguard's properties, which could include accommodating Goodwill's expansion plans and adding other commercial and community-focused uses.



Vanguard Property | Diagram by SmithGroup



## 4.

# DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Milwaukee Junction is a dynamic district with many active stakeholders and organizations. However, the area could benefit from greater coordination between stakeholders regarding neighborhood improvement activities and district marketing.

Vanguard Community Development Corporation is a 25-year old organization serving the historic North End community including the Milwaukee Junction neighborhood. Vanguard has developed more than 131 units of affordable housing, rehabilitated more than 20,000 square feet of commercial space, and operated a variety of youth, education and enrichment programs. Vanguard currently operates programs for housing, economic development and community engagement. Detroit LISC is providing support to Vanguard to increase the engagement and coordination of stakeholders in the Milwaukee Junction district and to serve as Commercial District Manager for the area.

An important first step would be to organize quarterly meetings with business owners and other stakeholders in the area to improve communications and address issues of common concern. These meetings could also be used to cultivate relationships between area stakeholders and the City of Detroit. The City's Department of Neighborhoods and DEGC Business Liaison representatives assigned to City Council District 5 should be invited to participate. Vanguard CDC could take the lead on convening and publicizing these meetings, ultimately exploring the possibility of a establishing a district-specific business association, if supported by local businesses.

Vanguard is interested in pursuing affiliation with the Michigan Main Street program operated by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). MEDC manages a statewide Main Street program to assist communities interested in revitalizing and preserving traditional commercial districts. The program provides technical assistance for communities desiring to develop their own local Main Street program by utilizing an approach pioneered by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Main Street Approach integrates activities addressing physical design, economic development, marketing, and local organization into a comprehensive strategy for revitalization. . The Main Street model requires active participation from a broad range of businesses and neighborhood stakeholders to be effective. A Main Street district could be centered around East Grand Boulevard, including both the north and south sides of the street, but could also extend to adjoining blocks on Milwaukee and Baltimore Streets.

## NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY AND BRANDING

Milwaukee Junction has begun to gain notoriety as a creative arts district and a rapidly redeveloping neighborhood. A positive neighborhood identity and brand image can help attract new investment and residents and give current businesses and residents a sense of neighborhood cohesion.

Vanguard has secured the domain name [www.milwaukeejunction.org](http://www.milwaukeejunction.org) and is developing a website and social media platform to serve as a source of news regarding neighborhood businesses, district activities and events, and

other information relevant to area businesses, residents and stakeholders. In the long run, the area would benefit from greater coordination among various stakeholders with regard to messaging and promotional activity.

Vanguard is also moving ahead with plans to install neighborhood identification signs on East Grand Boulevard at Woodward and at I-75. Building upon the district's image as a center for art and music, Vanguard is working with the renowned Detroit-based artist Carlos Nielbock to design and install the signs which will also be important works of public art. Neilbock is the founder and owner of C.A.N. Art Handworks, specializing in ornamental metal design.

The area already has several examples of public art which reinforces its image as an art district. Vanguard is also pursuing additional public art installations for the railroad viaduct at Hastings and Milwaukee Street. The viaduct is currently perceived as dark, foreboding and dangerous for pedestrians. Vanguard proposes to commission Olayami Dabls, another well-known Detroit artist to develop a work of public art that would transform this viaduct. Dabls is the president of the MBAD African Bead Museum and has numerous works of public art installed throughout the city of Detroit.

Promotional events, such as a music or art festival, can also be used to emphasize the unique characteristics of the Milwaukee Junction district and expose more people to the area. Plans are already in the works for a music festival that will highlight the varied music traditions of the North End and Milwaukee Junction.

In addition to art and music, automotive history is another important

element of Milwaukee Junction's image. The Ford Piquette Avenue Plant museum is central to keeping this part of the area's history alive. The museum is interested in spearheading an effort to make the area's automotive heritage more visible through district signage, wayfinding, and interpretive installations and activities.

Branding and placemaking activities are most effective when they are built on a broadly shared vision among district stakeholders. Care should be taken to encourage coordination and cross organizational collaboration whenever possible. Coordination with the City of Detroit will also be necessary, especially whenever physical improvements or installations are



Goodwill Career Center Opening | Image Source: Crain's Detroit



# 5.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND EARLY ACTIONS

This study outlines a number of recommendations for short- and long-term actions that will advance the goal of growing a more vibrant and equitable Milwaukee Junction district. The list below represents a summary of general recommendations discussed within this report as well as possible early-action strategies and catalytic projects to accelerate the equitable development process, based on input received from stakeholders throughout the planning process.

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Encourage development of a vibrant, mixed-use, mixed-income district within the study area, while respecting the area’s rich historical legacy and protecting the interests of current residents, businesses and organizations.

2. Reinforce existing sub-district clusters, concentrating creative enterprises north of the rail line, developing job creating manufacturing uses in the southeast quadrant and developing new housing options on vacant land in the southwest quadrant.

3. Discourage expansion of satellite parking lots and encourage infill development on existing lots to create greater density and improve the pedestrian environment.

4. Prioritize preservation and adaptive reuse of historic building stock over demolition wherever possible.
5. Support existing businesses and organizations and help them grow. Assist businesses and organizations in danger of displacement due to rising rents and property values.

6. Preserve or develop long-term affordable commercial space for small businesses. Create an incubator program to provide support for entrepreneurial and small business growth.

7. Preserve affordable housing within Milwaukee Junction and encourage new housing that serves a range of households and income levels.

8. Invest in public infrastructure and streetscape amenities throughout the district, with special emphasis on the East Grand Boulevard corridor and the pedestrian connections to the Q Line streetcar stations.

9. Change the zoning on the north side of East Grand Boulevard from B4 to SD2, to mirror zoning on
- the south side, and encourage development of a unified commercial corridor.

10. Change the zoning of some areas currently zoned M4 (Intensive Industrial Use) to discourage industrial uses that would negatively impact surrounding areas, while still allowing clean industries and light manufacturing uses.

11. Utilize surplus public land to create accessible public open spaces at strategic locations.

12. Connect local employers, incoming businesses, workforce development organizations and local residents to better understand workforce needs and increase the potential for local employment.

13. Encourage greater coordination and collaboration between neighborhood stakeholders. Develop mechanisms for ongoing community engagement and representation in decisions that effects the future development of the area.

## EARLY ACTION PRIORITIES

1. **Establish a District Management Program** : Detroit LISC is supporting Vanguard CDC to increase the engagement and coordination of stakeholders in the Milwaukee Junction area and to serve as Commercial District Manager for the area. In this role, Vanguard CDC will convene regular meetings with businesses, residents, organizations and other stakeholders, including the Department of Neighborhoods District 5 Manager and DEGC District 5 Business Liaison. The job of a commercial district manager is to facilitate the engagement of area stakeholders, serve as a liaison to government agencies on behalf of the district, and catalyze action around common goals. Vanguard CDC should lead an effort to affiliate with the Michigan Main Street program to access technical assistance and training support from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Vanguard also plans to establish a district web site and social media platform to improve communications within the district and promote the district to outside audiences.
2. **Promote Workforce Development And Employment Opportunities For Local Residents** : Create a program to connect local residents with local jobs. Involve workforce training programs such as Goodwill Industries and Volunteers of America, as well as community organizations such as Vanguard and local employers. Begin outreach to local businesses to understand workforce needs and hiring practices. Utilize jobs fairs and a variety of communications tools to reach residents in Milwaukee Junction and the surrounding areas.
3. **Support Short-Term Placemaking Activities And Plan For Comprehensive Improvements** : Vanguard is already planning a variety of placemaking activities including the installation of neighborhood signage and public art. Vanguard is also working with other local organizations to plan a summer music festival. These activities can be an excellent way to engage residents and visitors and to connect businesses within the district. The Ford Piquette Avenue Plant museum has also identified several placemaking activities that would highlight the automotive history of the area. These include efforts to install historical markers and interpretive elements in the area surrounding the museum and installing signage and other streetscape amenities to improve the pedestrian experience along Piquette Avenue. More substantial placemaking activities, especially those involving long term physical improvements, will require additional planning. For example, streetscape upgrades will require the engagement of the City Planning and Development Department and Department of Public Works. This planning should build in a process for community engagement to gather input on design and functionality issues from a broader constituency. Fundraising will be necessary, as this planning will require the assistance of professional consultants.



## CATALYTIC PROJECT IDEAS

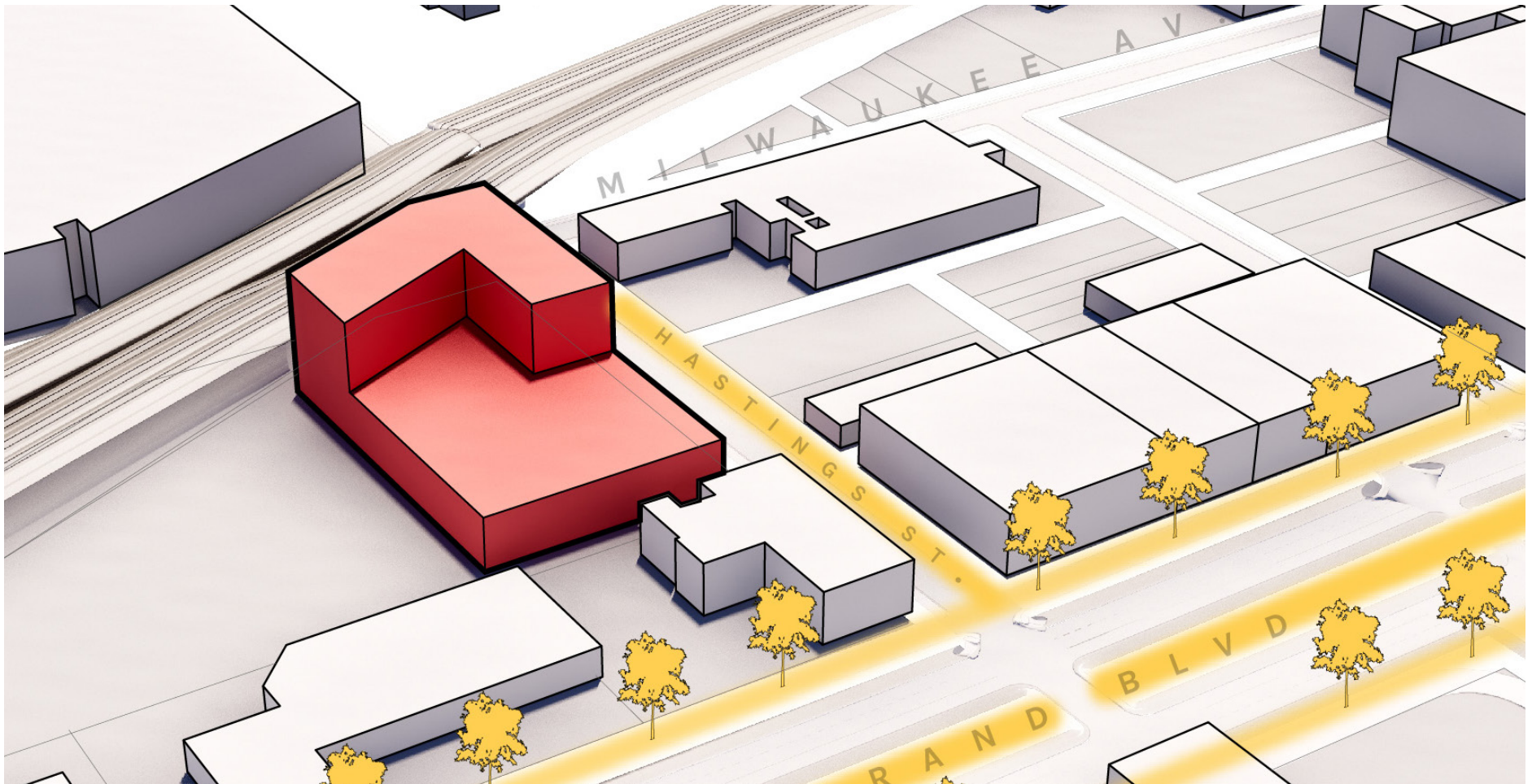


### AUTOCAR SERVICE BUILDING - 234 PIQUETTE

The Autocar Service Building is located within the Piquette Avenue Industrial Historic District. The Autocar company was one of the early auto manufacturers located within Milwaukee Junction. Currently owned by the City of Detroit, the building was previously used as a warehouse for the Department of Parks and Recreation. The property is 2.14 acres in size and has two structures totaling 60,000 square feet. Until recently, this property had been proposed for us as a “deconstruction hub” to be operated by a non-profit organization as a center for material reclamation and workforce development. While it appears that the deconstruction hub concept may be deemed infeasible for lack of funding, the City should seek out other non-profit developers to utilize the site to advance the goals of equitable development in Milwaukee Junction. The building could be utilized to create affordable space for entrepreneurs, business incubation and job training. One concept could be a food hall that allows small-batch entrepreneurs to sell their products to district employees and residents. The food hall could also be a job training facility to assist jobseekers moving into growing industries such as hospitality, food production and packaging.

Rendering by SmithGroup





## VANGUARD COMMUNITY CAMPUS

Vanguard CDC owns four properties near the intersection of East Grand Boulevard and I-75. One building (2785 East Grand Boulevard) houses Vanguard's organizational office and has additional space to rent. Other tenants currently include a construction company and a co-working space. This building has approximately 12,000 square feet of floor space. A second 10,000 square foot building (2777 East Grand Boulevard) is rented to Goodwill Industries, which operates the North End Career Center from this facility. The third property (905 East Milwaukee) is partially undeveloped land behind the Vanguard building, with frontage on Hastings Street. This property is 1.8 acres and includes a parking lot serving the Goodwill Program. A fourth small triangular piece of land (2753 East Grand Boulevard) lies just east of the Goodwill building. Vanguard is interested in exploring the development of this site into a community-serving campus. A study should be conducted to determine the optimum approach to developing this property. One proposal currently under consideration is to accommodate the expansion of the Goodwill Industries job training and workforce development programs, which has a need for approximately 30,000 square feet of additional training space. Vanguard is also interested in exploring opportunities for community meeting space and business incubation facilities.

Diagram by SmithGroup





## MILWAUKEE STREET RAILSIDE PARK

The City of Detroit owns a small triangular piece of land at 660-716 East Milwaukee, just south of the Tangent Gallery. The 0.2-acre site has been informally adopted by the artists of the Tangent Gallery, who have added installations and seating to site. Its odd shape and location abutting the rail line make this an inappropriate site for building development but would make an excellent site for permanent open space. The park could also be used in combination with a segment of the street for public events and festivals. The City should work closely with Tangent Gallery and other area arts organizations to reimagine this space as an extension of Milwaukee Junction's artistic community.

Rendering by SmithGroup





## FORD PIQUETTE AVENUE PLANT MUSEUM

The Ford Piquette Avenue Plant is one of the most important automotive heritage sites in the world. The building was saved from demolition by a non-profit organization that has been renovating the building over several years. The museum has identified \$3.5 million dollars in needed capital improvements. It is important to maintain this building as an historic landmark as well as educational resource for the community. Among the planned improvements is a new surface parking lot across the street from the museum. This lot is large enough to trigger the new Post Construction Storm Water Ordinance. This site should be developed in a way that creates a new district amenity and utilizes green stormwater infrastructure to handle storm water and reduce ongoing DWSD drainage charges.

Image by the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum





The background image shows a prison wall with graffiti. The graffiti includes the word 'KLE' in large, stylized letters on the left, and a large, stylized face on the right. The wall is topped with barbed wire. The sky is blue with white clouds. In the foreground, there is a paved road with white lines.

## APPENDIX



# LOCAL ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

In order to understand the current vision and future identity of the Milwaukee Junction Framework Study Area and identify emerging changes in development that can support the proposed framework, local stakeholders were engaged to understand short- and long-term actions and goals. Stakeholders included residents, businesses, developers, government agencies, and non-profit organizations that impact the planning process. These engagements ranged from one-on-one interviews to larger district-wide workshops.

## INTERVIEWS

One-on-one interviews established opportunities for constituents to highlight their vision for the Study Area and the role of their own organization in the district. Stakeholders interviewed included:

- Eric McDonald, Next Energy
- Ed Siegel, JacobsStreet LLC
- Pamela Martin-Turner and Lisa Tucker, Vanguard CDC
- Chris Bray and Cleo Bradley, Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance
- Ned Staebler, TechTown
- Alex Smith, New Center Stamping
- Dietrich Knoer, The Platform
- Keith Bennet, Goodwill Industries

- Chad Forsyth, Brad Atchinson, and Dawn Revyn, Volunteers of America
- Damon Jordan, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation
- Nathan Ford and John Baldauf, HNTB (MDOT Consultant)
- Nancy Darga, Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum

## WORKSHOPS

Larger group sessions were used to gain broader input into the planning process and helped define area strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Three meetings were held to engage business and property owners and two additional public meetings were focused on resident input. Meetings were held on:

- August 22, 2018
- September 12, 2018
- September 13, 2018
- October 3, 2018
- December 18, 2013

In order to understand the advantages and disadvantages within the Milwaukee Junction Framework Study Area, key stakeholders were engaged in a SWOT analysis to garner perspectives on the neighborhood's viability outside of site and data analysis.

These workshops established broad themes that prompted a focused discussion about the future vision of the Milwaukee Junction Framework Study Area. These themes were presented to stakeholder groups, particularly the active business owners and residents of the area. By considering each theme in isolation, specific priorities, projects, and actions were identified to be included and considered in the final Framework Study.

#### **MILWAUKEE JUNCTION'S CURRENT IDENTITY**

One central component to the engagement conversations was to understand the current identity and perception of the Milwaukee Junction district. Like many neighborhoods in Detroit, the geographic boundaries are subject to debate, and the perception of the district is far from unanimous. The residents and stakeholders reported that:

- Milwaukee Junction is part of a larger geographic footprint that extends across I-75.
- Some view North End as the area north of East Grand Boulevard, while others see Milwaukee Junction included in the North End.
- Milwaukee Junction has a rich automotive and industrial history. There are several historic sites in the area, including the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant museum.
- Some view Milwaukee Junction as dirty, unsafe and home to many vacant and dilapidated buildings. Others view Milwaukee Junction as a gritty but up-and-coming area with a strong arts and culture community

#### **THE FUTURE OF THE DISTRICT**

The community work sessions highlighted goals and outcomes to be realized in the future vision of the Milwaukee Junction Framework Study Area, including:

- A dense, mixed-use walkable neighborhood that builds on the historic nature of the district
- An innovation district that supports creativity and business, and an arts and cultural district that supports music and visual arts.
- A place for families that is clean, blight-free and safe.
- A tourist destination based on arts, culture, music and automotive heritage
- A district for living-wage jobs that can employ local residents in the adjacent communities, namely the North End

Community engagement should be viewed as an ongoing process. Initial stakeholder interviews were conducted by the Detroit Future City consultant team and Vanguard CDC has continued to reach out to other businesses, residents and stakeholders through one-on-one visits beyond the initial data gathering period. This additional input will be incorporated as implementation of the framework study gets underway.



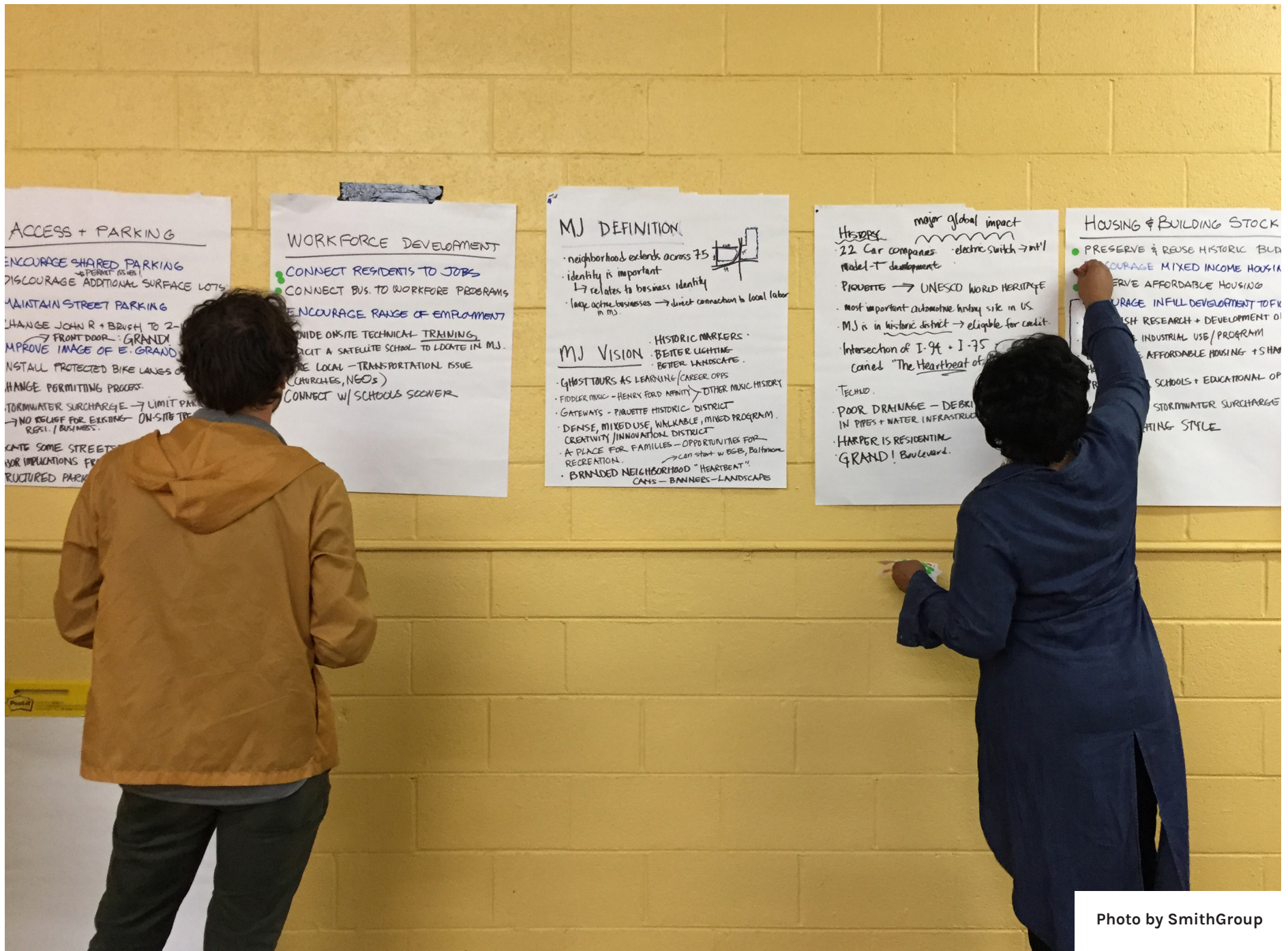


Photo by SmithGroup

	<b>Business Owners Feedback</b> who operate business in or near the Framework Study Area.	<b>Residents Feedback</b> who live in or near the Framework Study Area.
<b>ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RETAIL</b>	<p>Provide artist housing and program in industrial buildings to support existing arts, culture, and music uses.</p> <p>Advertise businesses in the area.</p>	<p>Provide a variety of high quality businesses and providers: laundry, dry cleaner, grocery store, pharmacy, beauty shop, child care, hardware, health clinic, recreation center.</p>
<b>HOUSING AND BUILDINGS</b>	<p>Preserve &amp; reuse historic buildings.</p> <p>Encourage mixed income housing that maintains neighborhood affordability. Preserve the existing housing mix into development.</p> <p>Encourage infill development to fill gaps. Build more affordable housing</p>	<p>Ensure that new housing is affordable and redevelopment does not displace current residents.</p> <p>Create a variety of housing types: tiny houses / single family / multi-family / senior housing /mixed income. Strive for a 20-30% neighborhood affordability.</p>
<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<p>Connect local residents to jobs and existing businesses to workforce programs. Encourage range of employment, and provide technical training.</p> <p>Prepare for schools and educational opportunities, connect with other institutions to establish research and development opportunities.</p>	<p>Incumbent local workforce training for all ages, including seniors. Provide entry level training and advancement opportunities.</p> <p>Establish a business center (with wi-fi, computers, resources, IT and coding training, job boards, etc).</p>
<b>ACCESS AND PARKING</b>	<p>Improve the image of East Grand Boulevard through landscape and traffic calming measures.</p> <p>Consider the conversion of the railway to a trail that connects to Midtown / Wayne State University.</p> <p>Improvement district-wide stormwater management, especially on Harper, Piquette and Beaubien.</p>	<p>Improved transportation to connect workers to opportunities</p>
<b>Identified Undesirable Changes and Programs included</b> heavy industry, incinerator, liquor stores, marijuana dispensaries, disruptive night life, community gardens, two-way street conversions, additional churches,		



# AREA STRENGTHS

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1. Proximity to Downtown, Midtown, New Center and North End, all of which are experiencing an increase in investment.
2. Current wave of new investment bringing new people and businesses to the district
3. Proximity to institutions and job centers such Henry Ford Hospital, Wayne State University, The Detroit Medical Center and the Detroit Cultural Center.
4. Located at the intersection of two major surface roads (Woodward and E Grand Boulevard) and two interstate highways (I-75 and I-94).
5. Proximity to public transit. Served by the Q-Line streetcar as well as regular DDOT bus service. There are three Q-Line Stations in the neighborhood. Detroit's only Amtrak passenger train station.
6. Many early twentieth century buildings that can be rehabbed and provide the district with historic and aesthetic character.
7. Authentic arts and cultural scene rooted in organizations and institutions such as The Underground Resistance, The Jam Handy, Tangent Gallery, Electric Studio and the Russell Industrial Center.
8. Important auto heritage site that draws visitors from around the world

# AREA WEAKNESSES

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1. There is currently a high level of vacancy and many vacant sites and buildings have no active development plans. Some buildings are being held for speculation with no foreseeable plan for reuse.
2. Large industrial buildings are difficult to redevelop given size, condition and contamination issues and create a blighting influence.
3. Surface parking dominates some areas of the district creating gaps in the building fabric and undermining the pedestrian experience
4. Proximity to freeways and the trash incinerator pose air quality issues and an active rail line raises issues related to noise.
5. The rail line divides the Study Area, creating a pedestrian barrier between the north and south halves of the district. The rail line right of way is not well maintained and rail bridge underpasses are dark and uninviting.
6. The area lacks basic amenities such as grocery or convenience stores to serve local residents and workers.
7. Public infrastructure is in generally poor shape. Streetscapes lack pedestrian oriented amenities. Grand Boulevard is wide and uncondusive to pedestrian activity.
8. There is a limited skilled labor workforce within the existing population of the Study Area, so residents have limited access to jobs. It is also difficult to link residents to jobs with the big adjacent employers.

# AREA OPPORTUNITIES

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1. Increased development activity is building market momentum and makes additional projects easier to finance and develop.
2. Increasing business, resident and visitor populations will help support business growth, pedestrian activity and safety.
3. Large tracts of City and DLBA-owned land could accommodate larger scale redevelopment
4. Current surface parking lots could be redeveloped more intensively to accommodate future growth.
5. Current arts and cultural businesses could be the basis for future intensification as a cultural and entertainment district
6. The early stage of area revitalization allows planning to accommodate mixed-income housing, affordable commercial space, and workforce development considerations.
7. Vacant and underutilized land allows for planning to incorporate public open space and connection to the city's growing greenway and open space network.
8. Inspiring transformation of existing underutilized rail line and viaduct into a greenway that connects to Detroit's larger off-road greenway systems. Incorporate opportunities for green space, areas for recreation and other public spaces.
9. Invest in growing a skilled labor force to improve local access to jobs. Directly tie job training programs to employment anchors and emerging opportunities in the area. These workforce opportunities should directly apply to the local population.

# AREA THREATS

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1. Rising property values and rents could lead to displacement of some current residents and businesses.
2. If large, vacant buildings remain undeveloped, they will have a negative impact on the development potential of surrounding sites.
3. Additional historic buildings could be lost to demolition due to deterioration and the high cost of restoration and site remediation.
4. MDOT plans to rebuild the I-75/I-94 Interchange in the next decade will disrupt current circulation patterns and negatively impact adjacent property owners.
5. The current market demand for parking coming from Downtown, Midtown, and local large-scale employers could keep some prime development sites tied up as parking for the foreseeable future
6. Proximity to the freeways and trash pose environmental quality threats that also influence development decisions. Previous industrial uses also pose environmental hazards that threaten redevelopment opportunities.
7. Current M4 Zoning allows for intensive industrial uses that would be incompatible with increasing residential, office and entertainment uses.



**DETROIT  
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# MILWAUKEE JUNCTION DISTRICT FRAMEWORK STUDY

May 2019

A Framework Study for Industrial Adaptive Reuse and Workforce  
Development in the Milwaukee Junction area in Detroit

