

THE 30TH STREET CORRIDOR

**A Transformative Infrastructure Project in
the Heart of the City of Milwaukee**



**Evan Goyke
State Representative
18th Assembly District**

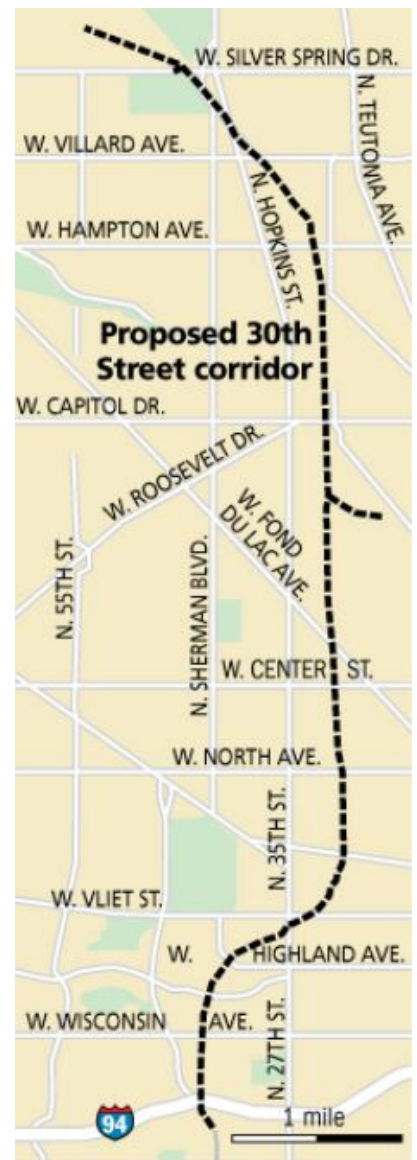
INTRODUCTION:

The State has the ability to ignite equitable development for generations through the purchase and stewardship of the railroad line that runs north-south through Milwaukee and defines the 30th Street Industrial Corridor ("Corridor"). Purchasing the rail line will spark redevelopment and reduce disparities by accelerating the return of quality job opportunities to many neighborhoods that need them the most.

This document makes the case that infrastructure can lead the way to long-term, positive development throughout Milwaukee's 30th Street Industrial Corridor.

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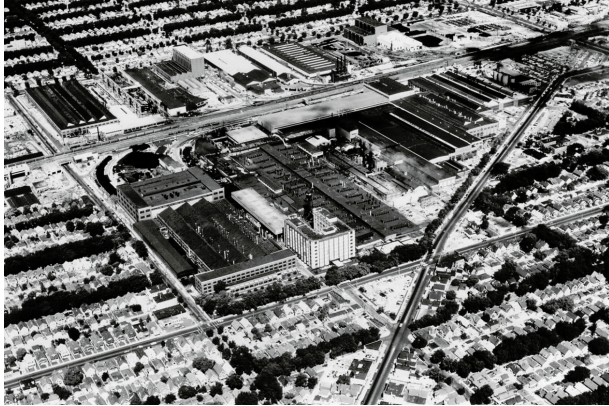
Representative Evan Goyke is currently serving in his fifth term in the State Assembly, representing the 18th Assembly District on Milwaukee's north and west sides. Each session, Representative Goyke has been appointed to committees focused on the criminal justice system and is currently the ranking Democrat on the Joint Finance Committee.

Prior to his election to the State Assembly, Representative Goyke served as a trial attorney in the Office of the Wisconsin State Public Defender in Milwaukee, where he provided legal representation to defendants in a large range of criminal cases.

He is a 2009 graduate of Marquette University Law School.

BACKGROUND

The Corridor was once home to tens of thousands of quality jobs and some of Wisconsin's most iconic businesses. The relocation and outright loss of those jobs over the last fifty years is a central cause of Milwaukee's current racial and economic disparities.



*A.O. Smith, left, was one of Milwaukee's largest manufacturers and an anchor tenant of the Corridor.
The same property today, right, has been cleared and is poised for redevelopment*

The State's leadership on this transformational project will begin to achieve the important goals of equity and racial justice. There is no other physical investment that can have both an immediate and long-term positive impact to reduce racial disparities in several different areas – or reach so many different neighborhoods and zip codes in Milwaukee with one action. Local leaders stand ready to partner with the State to ensure the success of this project, but those partners require the State's initial investment and commitment to the transformational vision of what the Corridor can become.

PROPOSAL

The State of Wisconsin purchase and own the Glendale Line that runs north to south on the North Side of the City of Milwaukee. The purchase includes the rail tracks, bridges, overpasses, and right-of-way along the entire line. The rail line is currently owned by the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR).

The purchase may exceed \$10 million. Funds may be used from several sources including the American Rescue Plan Act,¹ Freight Railroad Preservation Program, or a combination of funds.

VISION

The development of the Corridor is a layered, multi-jurisdictional effort, anchored by the rail infrastructure that unites the Corridor's stakeholders and neighborhoods.

¹ LFB Memo: [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#) – “Allowable Use of Funds” beginning on page 4

Investments in transportation, housing, public safety, public health, and economic development will take place in a coordinated and collaborative effort to transform the Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods.



The City of Milwaukee has an extensive redevelopment plan for much of the Corridor

These efforts will be sparked by the State's purchase and ownership of the rail line but local leaders, led by the City of Milwaukee, will take the primary governmental role in most of the development projects. The City of Milwaukee has invested tens of millions of dollars to prepare the Corridor for redevelopment.²

To help guide development projects an organization structured like the Menomonee Valley Partners should be formed.³ This organization should include stakeholders and anchoring businesses that are already working within the Corridor. The lead partner should be the Corridor Corporation Business Improvement District already working hard at redeveloping the Corridor.⁴

A critical addition to the collaborative effort will be ensuring that resident and neighborhood voices are centered in the process. Unlike other industrial corridor redevelopment projects, the Corridor includes several neighborhoods with longtime residents.

These residents deserve a seat at the table to help ensure equitable development. To that end, a philanthropic grant has already been secured to study and prepare an equitable development plan to prevent the displacement of current residents and businesses. Additionally, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has applied for federal funds to strengthen the equitable development plan and design plan for the Corridor.

Public ownership is essential to the success of future projects as competition for resources is steep. Public ownership ensures a willing, collaborative, and transparent process for equitable land use and development. Without public ownership, additional costs, delays, and outright barriers may stagnate or prevent many parallel developments from occurring.

In 1999, visionary stakeholders came together to create Menomonee Valley Partners, a public/private partnership with a mission of revitalizing the Menomonee River Valley for the benefit of the greater Milwaukee community. Twenty years later, the Menomonee River Valley is a vibrant and thriving community



² [MKE 30th Report](#)

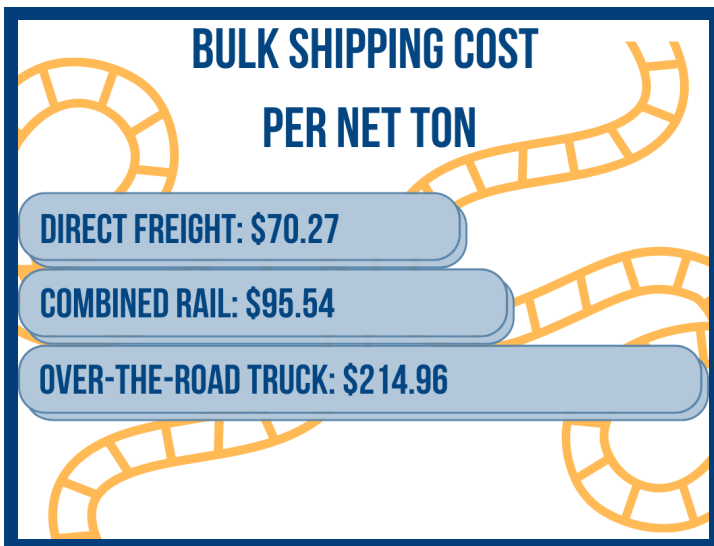
³ [20 Years of Transformation](#)

⁴ [The Corridor](#)

THE CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT OFFERS MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATIVE GROWTH

Corridor Ownership & Freight Rail Improvements Trigger Job Creation

Access to freight rail can substantially reduce logistical costs for businesses, especially manufacturers. Estimates place freight rail at roughly half the cost of over-the-road trucking per ton.⁵ Providing state-of-the-art access to freight rail will give businesses a competitive edge to locate within the Corridor.



Freight service currently exists in the Corridor. As the owner of the rail line, the State would continue rail service through a lease with WSOR to continue operations in Southeast Wisconsin. The partnership between the State and WSOR is the cornerstone to the long-term success of the Corridor, with expanded modern freight rail serving as a key driver for economic development. The State of Wisconsin works closely with all freight rail operators and has

developed a statewide freight rail plan, which could help guide freight rail development in the Corridor and Southeast Wisconsin.⁶

Dozens of parcels throughout the Corridor are prime industrial development sites. Many have existing or former rail line spurs that were once used to provide freight access. Hundreds of acres of former industrial sites are owned by the City of Milwaukee or the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee. Both partners are heavily invested in the redevelopment of these properties. New rail spurs, or the development of existing spurs, can provide a unique advantage for the redevelopment of those parcels. New business developments could be centered around providing direct access to freight service.

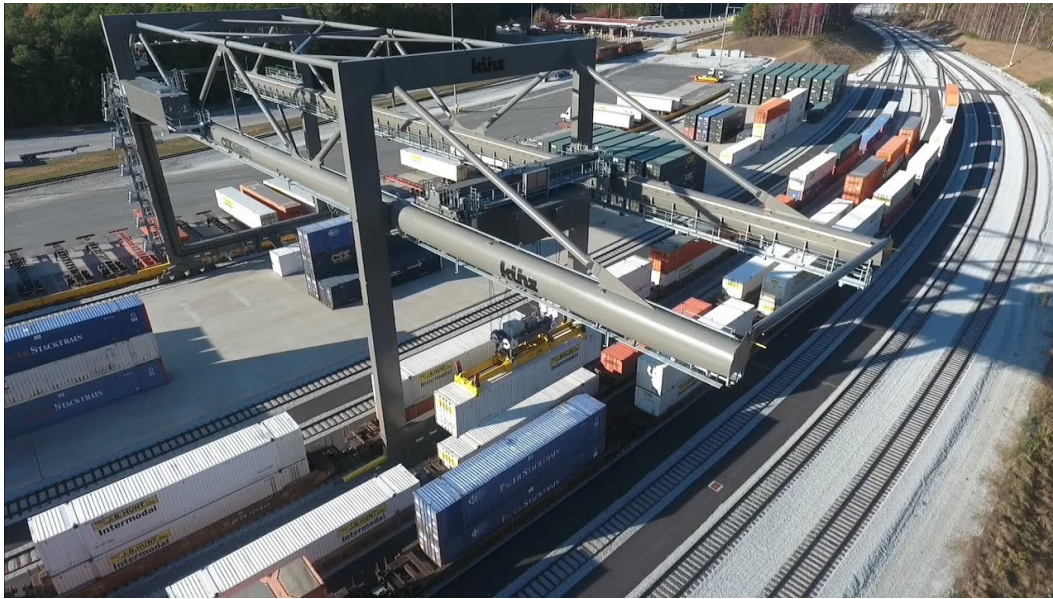


The parcel above, located just north of North Avenue, was once a utilized rail spur that is no longer active. Former rail spurs provide opportunities for new tenants within the Corridor

⁵ [RSI Logistics: "Comparing the Costs of Rail Shipping vs Truck"](#)

⁶ [Wisconsin Department of Transportation State Freight Plan](#)

Beyond direct access, modern freight rail services could include the development of an intermodal facility to connect over-the-road trucking and freight rail networks. An intermodal facility within the Corridor would connect freight rail to the Port of Milwaukee and General Mitchell Field, thus forming a network of shipping options by road, rail, water, and air.⁷ This would create a “logistics hub” that could serve a number of businesses within the region and drive economic activity to the Corridor.⁸

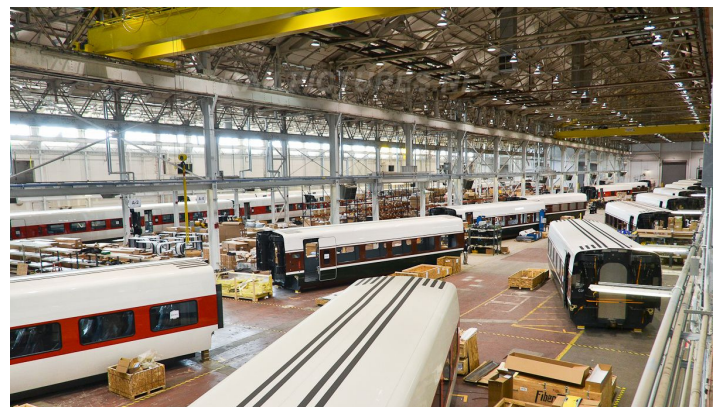


A modern intermodal station in Fairburn, Georgia (a suburb of Atlanta and near Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport)

Talgo America remains headquartered in the Corridor and uses the rail line to service train cars from around the country. Talgo is an expert in rail operations and can play an important role as a lead partner in the modernization of the rail service. The Corridor could be a catalyst for the development

'TALGO is hiring:' Rail company to add 60+ employees at its Century City Milwaukee facility

of passenger rail in Wisconsin. Infrastructure investments in freight rail could also accommodate the long-term goals for mass transit service.



A worker modernizing a train car (left) in the Talgo facility (right)

⁷ Business Facilities: [“North Dakota: Connecting to the World on Intermodal Rail”](#)

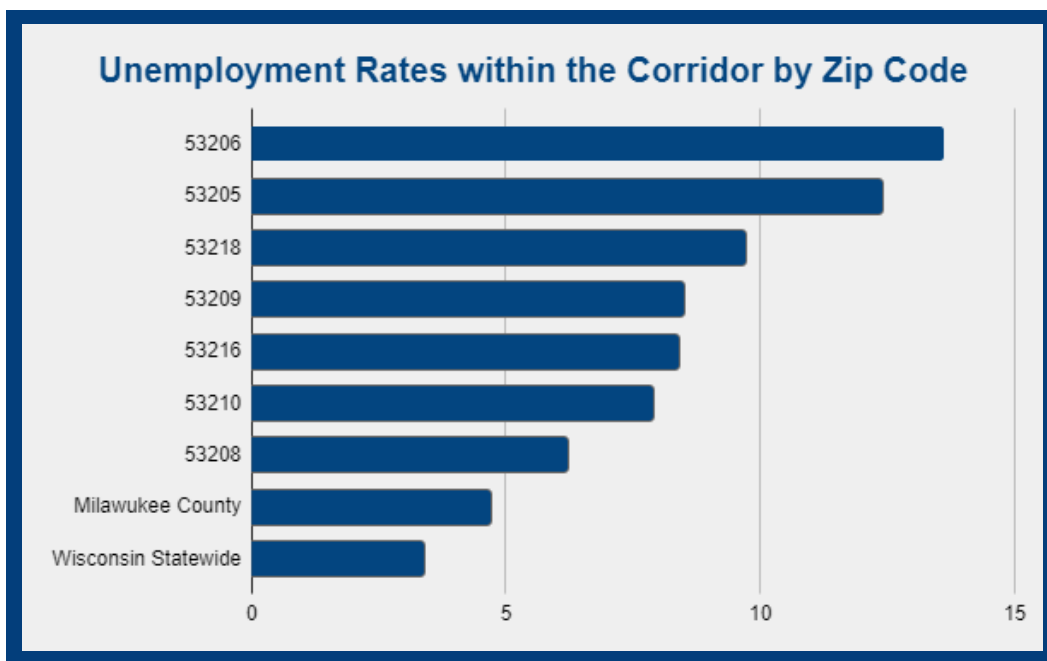
⁸ Urban Milwaukee: [“Railroad Merger is a Win for Milwaukee, Southeastern Wisconsin”](#)



In 2019, Talgo added to their Milwaukee employment base by expanding their business servicing and modernizing train cars from around the country. Talgo's operations, seen above, are a perfect example of how the Corridor's rail infrastructure can be used to the benefit of modern industrial and economic development

Surrounding neighborhoods can supply a modern workforce and locating quality jobs within the Corridor will directly combat high unemployment rates. In the zip codes along the Corridor, the unemployment rate is double, triple, or four times higher than the state's average.

The average income for workers in the Corridor, especially for workers of color, is below the City, County, and State averages. Returning thousands of quality jobs to these zip codes directly addresses the economic inequities that have persisted in these neighborhoods for too long.

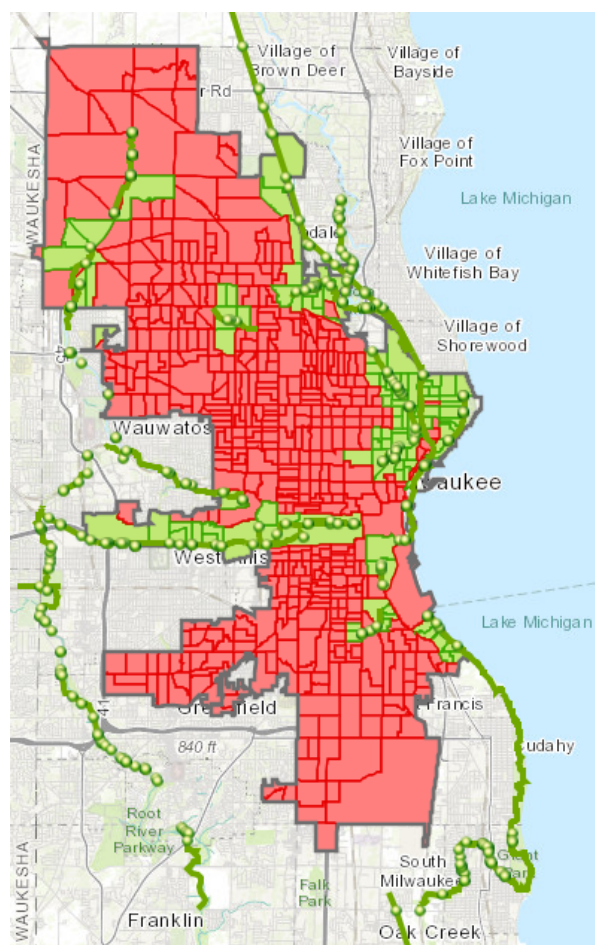


Corridor Ownership Accelerates Development of a Recreational Trail, Adding Equity and Access

The Corridor offers a street-separated, safe, and direct route for transportation and recreational use. Recreational trails provide a community asset that can promote public health, safety, and economic development. The trail would be a rail-with-trail, meaning the trail would run alongside the rail line separated by distance and barriers to ensure safety.

A recreational trail within the Corridor would provide access to safe outdoor recreation that currently does not exist in the area. A recent report published by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy documents the lack of access to safe recreational trails in the Milwaukee region. Affluent areas have better access to trails while the central city neighborhoods, predominately communities of color, lack access.⁹

A recent feasibility study has shown that the Corridor trail is possible.¹⁰ The trail within the Corridor would promote connectivity to several of Milwaukee's most popular trails. At the southern end, the Corridor trail could connect to the Hank Aaron State Trail, which is the region's most used east-west running trail with over 100,000 user trips per year.¹¹ The Corridor trail could also connect to Milwaukee County's Oak Leaf Trail, which has more than 1.2 million user trips per year.¹² The Beerline Trail could link the Corridor trail with the Havenwoods State Forest, Wisconsin's only urban state forest, and several County parks, schools, and childcare centers that are located along the Corridor.



The map above, included in the Reconnecting Milwaukee study, shows communities with recreational trail access in green, while those without access are shown in red. The majority of Milwaukee's residents of color live within the red areas with limited or no access



Connecting the Hank Aaron State Trail (above), the Oak Leaf Trail, and the new Corridor Trail would enhance transportation opportunities and break down barriers that currently divide and segregate Milwaukee

⁹ [Reconnecting Milwaukee](#)

¹⁰ [30th Street Corridor Shared-Use Trail Preliminary Feasibility Study](#)

¹¹ [Trail Counts](#)

¹² [Regional Nonmotorized Count Program - Transportation](#)

Wisconsin was the first state in the country to convert a rail line to a recreational trail and successful projects are found throughout the state. The concept of rail-with-trail continues to grow in Wisconsin, as well as across the country. A USDOT report documents rail-with-trail project growth across the country, in addition to best practices for their development.¹³ State and local transportation officials in Wisconsin contributed to this national report. There are rail-with-trail projects across the state, with several in Milwaukee, including portions of the Hank Aaron State Trail and Oak Leaf Trail.



The Oak Leaf Trail (above) is an example of an existing rail-with-trail in Milwaukee. The rail line in this picture is a branch of the Corridor. This rail-with-trail project runs along the active rail line for miles, beginning in Milwaukee and traveling through Glendale, Brown Deer, and becomes the Ozaukee to Sheboygan Interurban Trail

Urban rail corridors have been transformed through the development of recreational trails in similar communities. A great example can be found in Charlotte, North Carolina. Charlotte's Rail Trail is a 3.5 mile trail running alongside a new light rail line. The Rail Trail project has an inclusive design and development process with a focus on public art.¹⁴



Charlotte's Rail Trail, runs along-side the new light rail trains

Additional successful urban rail-with-trail projects in communities of a similar size to Milwaukee include the Met Branch Trail in Washington DC; the Lance Armstrong Bikeway in Austin; the Cedar Lake Trail in Minneapolis; the Parley's Trail in Salt Lake City; the Interurban Trail South in Seattle; and the Three Rivers Heritage Trail in Pittsburgh.¹⁵

¹³ Rails with Trails: ["Best Practices and Lessons Learned"](#)

¹⁴ Medium: ["How the Rail Trail Brought Life to South End"](#)

¹⁵ [New USDOT Report Provides 25 Years of Lessons Learned for Rails-with-Trails](#)

Portions of the Corridor are below street grade. While there are challenges presented by this topography, both the Minneapolis Midtown Greenway and the Detroit Dequindre Cut are hugely successful trails in below-grade rail corridors.

The Midtown Greenway and Dequindre Cut are also within neighborhoods similar to those in the Corridor, in cities similar to Milwaukee, and have each been a source of positive change and development in their respective communities.



Minneapolis Midtown Greenway: Before and After



Detroit Dequindre Cut: Before and After

Corridor Ownership Offers Opportunities to Improve Public Health

The industrial history of the Corridor leaves the area with environmental scars of a different era. Environmental remediation along the Corridor can repurpose parcels for redevelopment. An existing example is the Esser Paint Townhomes, 48 townhomes built along the Corridor on a former paint factory site.¹⁶ The land was heavily contaminated and the developer, working in partnership with the DNR, was able to remediate the land and build much-needed affordable housing. That remediation also positively impacts the soil and water quality in the surrounding neighborhoods.



The Esser Paint Townhomes, pictured above, were partly funded with tax credits through WHEDA and are a great example of the type of environmental remediation possible throughout the Corridor

Several neighborhoods adjacent to the Corridor have experienced flooding due to weakness in water infrastructure. Several opportunities exist within the Corridor to partner with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District (MMSD) to better divert stormwater and prevent flooding. A great example of this is the Green Tech Station, a transformed vacant parcel that provides hands-on environmental education. Green Tech Station also retains stormwater through underground cisterns, bioswales, and other flood mitigation efforts that are more sustainable, more attractive, and accessible for public use.¹⁷



Green Tech Station redeveloped the vacant parcel along the Corridor and turned it into a community asset, seen here hosting environmental education programming

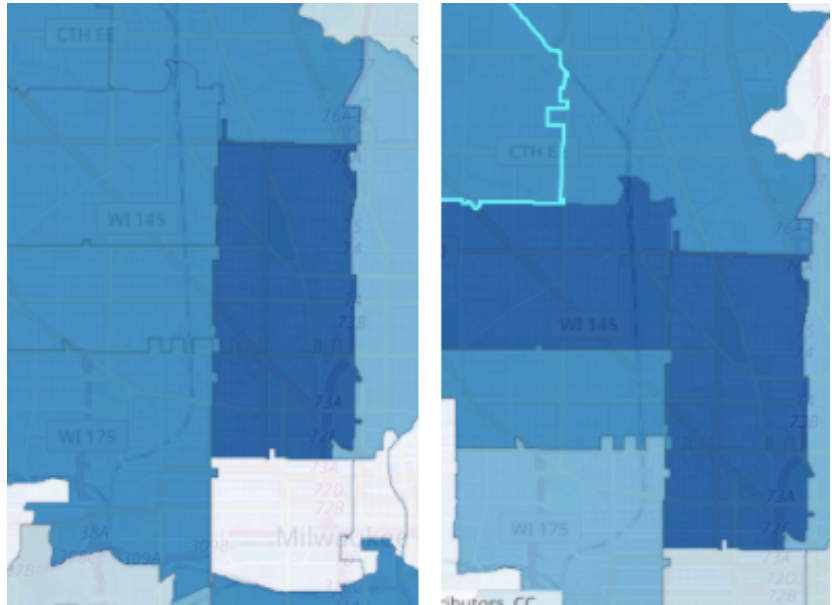
Beyond soil and water improvements, environmental investments within the Corridor also provide an opportunity to improve air quality.¹⁸ Thousands of new trees could be planted throughout the Corridor. The Green Tech Station project, which is only three acres, included planting 440 new trees. These efforts can improve air quality in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by high rates of asthma and respiratory disease.

¹⁶ [Milwaukee Independent: "Completion of Townhomes in Washington Park Highlights Efforts to Address Affordable Housing"](#)

¹⁷ [Northwest Side Community Development Corporation](#)

¹⁸ [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: "Parts of Milwaukee Region get a Failing Grade on Air Pollution from the American Lung Association"](#)

Opportunities for outdoor recreation can improve the health of individuals in surrounding neighborhoods through increased activity and exercise. With 15 County Parks within half a mile of the Corridor, a recreational trail can connect youth and adults to a network of healthy, safe places. Population health data for the neighborhoods surrounding the Corridor show some of Wisconsin's largest disparities in health outcomes. Access to clean air, water, soil, and a safe place to recreate can contribute to healthier outcomes and a reduction of current disparities.



These maps show the prevalence of diabetes (left) and obesity (right) in the zip codes along the Corridor and represent the areas with the worst outcomes for these categories in the metro Milwaukee region



Urban Gardens Transform Milwaukee Communities and Change the Way We Eat and Live

Brownfield remediation can also be used to improve access to healthy food. Cream City Farms has reclaimed a vacant lot along the Corridor at Brown Street. Their Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) program grows and sells healthy produce throughout Milwaukee.

Hundred Acre Farms inside Century City I¹⁹ has proved that growing nutritious food within the Corridor is not just an outdoor opportunity. This indoor urban farm will grow fresh and healthy vegetables to be sold in Milwaukee. Additional urban agriculture opportunities could be developed along the Corridor.



Century City I is the first new construction developed on the former A.O. Smith site. It is owned and operated by Good City Brewing, which hopes to expand and create a "food and beverage hub" in a modern industrial park within the Corridor

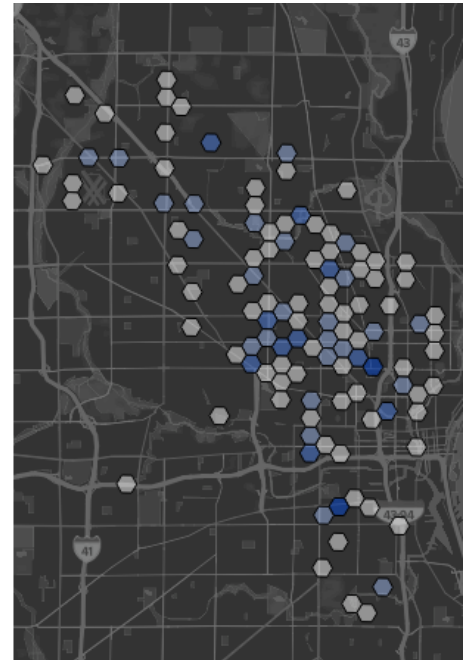
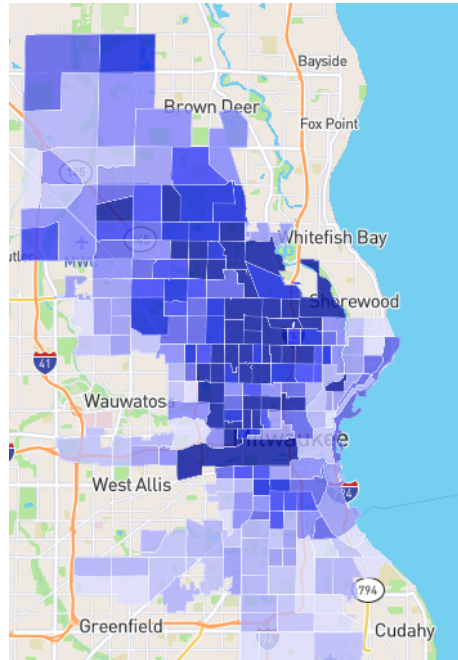
¹⁹ [Eyes on Milwaukee: Second New Building Proposed For Century City](#)

Corridor Ownership Offers Opportunities to Improve Public Safety

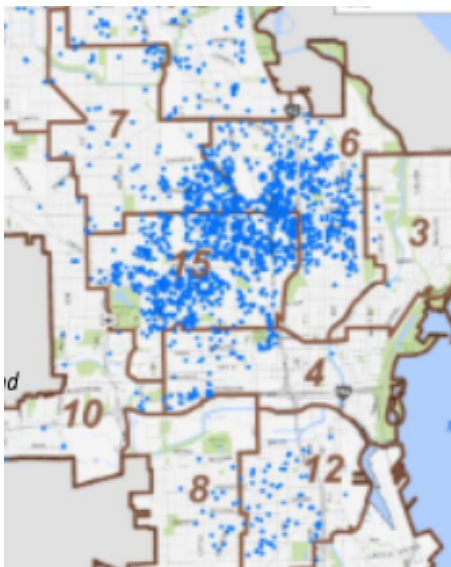
The zip codes within the Corridor have long ranked among Wisconsin's highest crime areas.²⁰ High vacancy rates in commercial and residential areas allow criminal activity to go unchecked.

The combination of new economic and recreational activity offer opportunities to activate currently vacant spaces. Whether for recreational, commercial, or residential use, reclaiming vacant or abandoned spaces will reduce criminal activity.

The recreational trail would include increased lighting and public gathering spaces, adding to the number of community members and stakeholders watching and monitoring properties within the Corridor.



The crime maps above show the density of overall crime (dark blue is a high rate of crime) and the dot map shows recent homicides in the City of Milwaukee.²¹



This map shows vacant parcels of land owned by the City of Milwaukee



At the corner of 29th and Auer, three consecutive homes are boarded up and vacant. These vacant homes sit two blocks east of the Corridor

²⁰ [Milwaukee Crime Rates and Statistics](#)

²¹ [Crime Maps & Statistics](#)

Traffic and pedestrian safety would be enhanced through the creation of safe, off-street crossings of more than a dozen busy city streets. A street-separated trail is safer for pedestrians and cyclists. By moving pedestrian and cyclist traffic from the busy city streets to a protected trail, accidents can be prevented. Traffic accidents and reckless driving have increased in the area, including accidents that led to the death of children.²²

Medical examiner: 4 pedestrians killed in crashes in less than a month

By Bill Mazon and FOX6 News Digital Team | Published January 24 | Updated January 25 | News | FOX6 News Milwaukee



Public ownership of the Corridor would also include ownership of several overpasses that span busy commercial corridors. These overpasses are aging, rusty, poorly lit, and contribute to unsafe driving conditions. New paint and lighting, with additional opportunities for public art, can calm traffic and increase safety.²³

One of the fatal pedestrian accidents covered in the headline above involved pedestrians crossing the intersection pictured here, Fond du Lac Avenue, as it passes under the Corridor. This intersection, like others along the Corridor is difficult to cross, poorly lit, and dangerous for both motorists and pedestrians



²² [In 2020, Milwaukee County had highest recorded traffic fatalities ever](#)

²³ [Visual Art: New Mural Will Brighten Dark Intersection](#)

Corridor Ownership Ignites Local Collaboration & Competitiveness for Grants

Local efforts to redevelop neighborhoods within the Corridor are active and ongoing. Local governments, alongside a number of community development organizations, business improvement districts, and neighborhood associations have worked together for years to improve the area. These organizations will be the engines of the development following the State's catalytic purchase of the Corridor. As outlined earlier, public ownership is essential to uniting these diverse stakeholders and accelerating progress.

Federal grants have played a major role in the development of similar infrastructure projects in Wisconsin. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants are competitive federal grants that could be targeted for projects within the Corridor. Importantly, applications are more competitive if the Corridor is publicly owned and projects are shovel-ready.

**FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE
BILL HIGHLIGHTS**

- **\$110 billion of new funds for roads, bridges, and major projects: repair and rebuild roads and bridges with a focus on climate change mitigation, resilience, equity, and safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians**
- **\$66 billion dedicated to rail improvement, including \$5 billion for rail improvement and safety grants**
- **\$1 billion to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure. The program will fund planning, design, demolition, and reconstruction of street grids, parks, or other infrastructure**

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act²⁴ was signed into law by President Joe Biden on Monday, November 15th, 2021. The infrastructure bill includes billions of dollars for projects that align with the purchase and redevelopment of the Corridor, including dedicated resources for freight rail improvements, bridge and overpass rehabilitation, complete streets, and trail development. The bill also includes \$1 billion for a first-ever program to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure.

State agencies can play an important role in future development. WisDOT, DNR, WHEDA, and WEDC, are all active within the Corridor already.²⁵ WisDOT and WSOR are partners in freight rail service. At the northern end of the Corridor, the rail line splits and the State of Wisconsin owns the rail line in both directions. WisDOT leases the use of the tracks to WSOR. Ownership of the Corridor would be an extension of the State's existing ownership of rail lines and their successful partnership with WSOR.



This map shows publicly owned railroads marked with the black outline. The orange color indicates that WSOR is the operator. At the North Milwaukee junction, the State owns the rail line in both directions and leases track usage to WSOR. This partnership would continue with public ownership of the Corridor

The Corridor purchase and development allows WisDOT to solidify this already strong relationship. In addition to the rail line, several state highways intersect the Corridor and feed south-east Wisconsin's freeway system.

The DNR owns and maintains two important connections for the Corridor. The Hank Arron State Trail is one of the most important and successful trails in Milwaukee. Havenwoods State Forest is a 237-acre forest that provides various recreational and educational opportunities. The DNR has also played a leading role in many of the environmental remediation projects within the Corridor.



The Community within the Corridor is the state's largest affordable housing project to date and sits along the rail Corridor in a former industrial site

WHEDA and WEDC have directed tax credits to the Corridor to promote housing and economic development. Wisconsin's largest affordable housing project, the Community within the Corridor,²⁶ is under construction and is funded in part by WHEDA tax credits. WEDC has ongoing partnerships with Community Development Corporations, Business Improvement Districts, and has invested tens of millions of dollars to start and grow businesses within the Corridor.²⁷

²⁵ WEDC: ["Community in the Corridor development reflects WEDC's focus on housing"](#)

²⁶ Biz Times: ["Community With The Corridor Project Could be Catalyst for Rebuilding Milwaukee's 30th Street Industrial Corridor"](#)

²⁷ Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: ["Milwaukee to Provide \\$2 Million for MillerCoors Office Renovations as Hundreds of Jobs Move to City"](#)

THE STATE IS THE CATALYST

The long-term redevelopment of the Corridor provides an opportunity to directly address Milwaukee's racial and economic disparities. Public ownership of the rail infrastructure will ensure the development is successful and equitable.

Public ownership of the Corridor sets the stage for local stakeholders and residents to take the lead and create the environment they wish to see. Returning thousands of quality jobs, creating needed affordable housing, and helping communities become safer and healthier won't happen overnight, but with a willing owner and partner, this large-scale change becomes possible.

The State can ignite development and hope for decades to come throughout Milwaukee's North Side with the purchase of the Corridor.

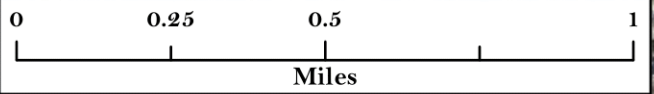


Walking the Corridor (sorry for the trespassing) over the years has revealed a different side of the City and a clear view of the massive potential for this project to positively impact Milwaukee for years

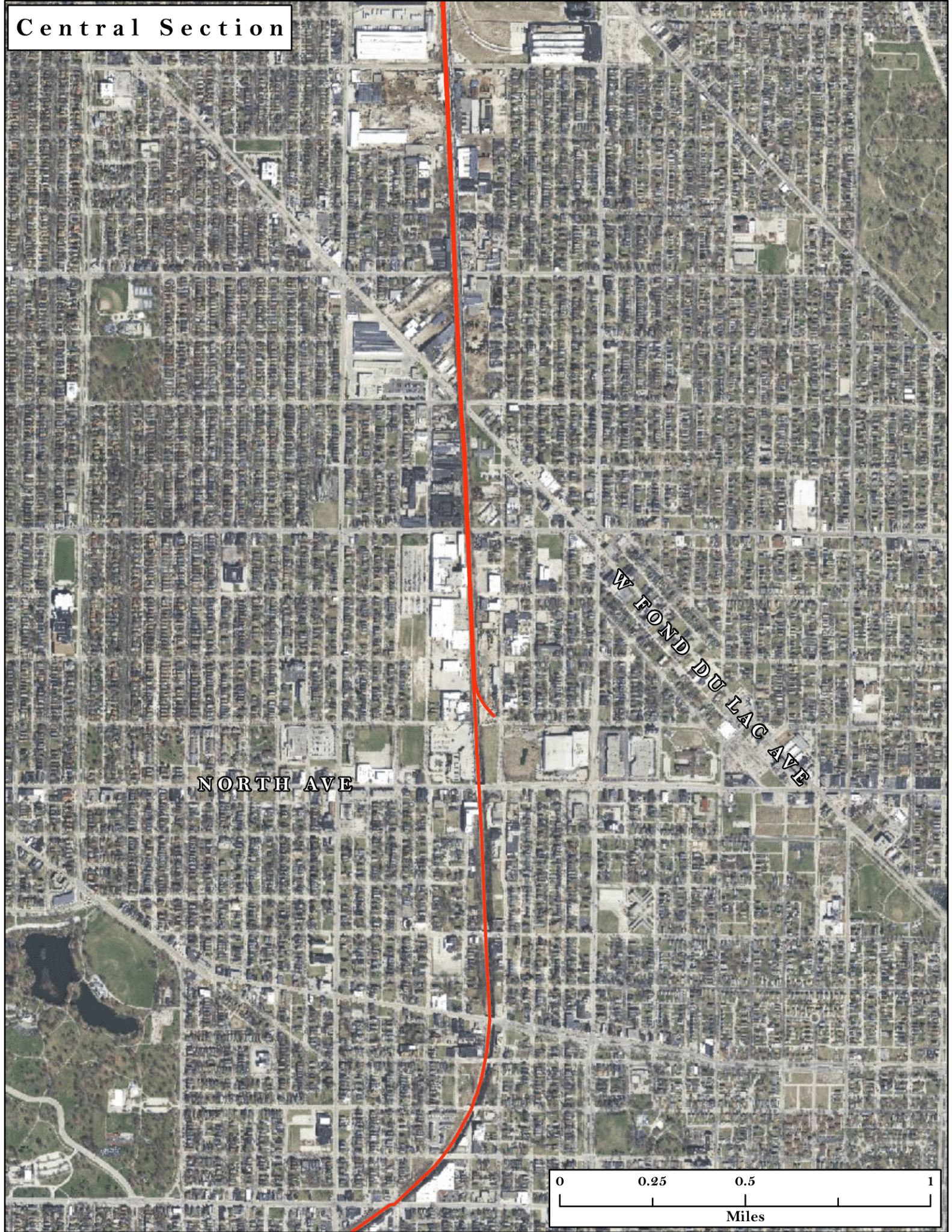
North Section



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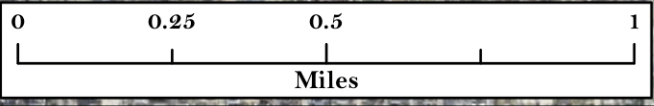


Central Section



NORTH AVE

W FOND DU LAC AVE



South Section



175

94

94

