Community Design Solutions, 2018-2020

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Community Design Solutions (CDS) is a funded design center in SARUP that assists non-profit agencies, civic groups, communities, and campuses throughout Wisconsin. CDS provides preliminary design and planning services to underserved communities and agencies. Students from SARUP work with Director, Carolyn Esswein, clients, and faculty to develop concepts that promote positive change, stimulate funding opportunities, and serve as a catalyst for continued investment.

**Community Design Solutions Projects**

**2018 - 2020**

Director, Carolyn Esswein

School of Architecture & Urban Planning

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

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The North Avenue Gateway BID stretches from Sherman Boulevard to 27th Street. It borders seven unique Milwaukee neighborhoods and experiences a tremendous amount of commuting traffic between Wauwatosa and Milwaukee’s East Side and Downtown. While surrounding neighborhoods such as Uptown and eastern parts of North Avenue have seen substantial redevelopment during the recent economic boom, this portion of North Avenue has not seen the same amount of investment. One reason for this could be that the last substantial planning effort occurred before the recession in 2008 and has not been renewed or revisited.

This collaboration between CDS, the North Avenue Gateway BID and the residents and business owners neighboring this 16 block stretch of North Avenue intends to provide new energy to development opportunities in this neighborhood. This is achieved through mapping exercises, community meetings, demographic research, development planning, and project design. The North Avenue Gateway Redevelopment Report includes a comprehensive description of the process undertaken by CDS to accomplish the goals of the BID.
Community Design Solutions (CDS) worked with the Northwest Side Community Development Corporation (NWSCDC) to develop visioning concepts for an Eco Tech Campus bounded by Capitol Drive to the south, 27th Street to the east, Hope Avenue (including the Century City Tower and DRS buildings just north of Hope) to the north, and the railroad to the west. Ultimately, two design schemes were developed that sought to preserve industrial uses in order to create and maintain jobs for local residents. Both schemes have a heavy focus on stormwater management elements, clean energy supplies, and a pedestrian focused scale to enhance Capitol Drive.
The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee and Travaux want to continue the investment momentum along Silver Spring Drive in the Havenwoods Neighborhood. Based on client input, CDS developed facade enhancement and development concepts for vacant or underutilized parcels along Silver Spring Drive.

Facade enhancements propose color, signage, murals/art, and lighting to activate the corridor and integrate it with the adjacent Westlawn Housing development.
Ronald Reagan IB High School leaders wanted to expand STEM classrooms and provide recreation facilities on site for their students. The goal of the design was to expand science labs, add an indoor fieldhouse for basketball and indoor recreation activities, and provide a usable outdoor field for practice and sporting events.

Before design schemes were developed, an input meeting was held with teachers, coaches, parents, and community members. Two design schemes emerged including floor plans, elevations, and aerials. The final concept included a gymnasium with three courts, indoor track, fitness center, weight room, locker rooms, offices, concession and lobby entrance, science labs, science classroom, outdoor soccer field, and a new parking lot.
Two community pool locations and designs were developed for the Village of Fox Point as they consider options for a new facility. The goal was a new pool facility that would expand and improve pool activities, pool conditions, and allow for events to be held year-round. Based on input from the Client, committee, and residents the program elements include a community pool, 6-lane 25 meter lap pool, diving well, splash pad, concessions, community room, lifeguard office/changing, admin office, locker rooms, ticket booth, and a new parking lot.
Visioning concepts were developed for several facades, vacant, and underutilized buildings along Center Street and Fond du Lac Avenue to spur investment discussion and opportunities. As a result of background research on the neighborhood and an input meeting with the client group, CDS proposed the following for the seven identified sites: two sites proposed as park enhancements, two as facade enhancements to existing buildings, and three were identified for new development. Streetscaping and pedestrian safety was an important aspect to each site proposal.
Frederick J. Gaenslen School is a K-8 school located on the west bank of the Milwaukee River, in the Riverwest neighborhood. The school has approximately 600 students, with around 39% of the students having special needs. This special needs population requires the addition of new features so the library is accessible to all students.

Gaenslen staff and MPS intend to create new energy and excitement within the library with four new ‘zones’ for reading within the larger space. This was achieved through measuring the existing library, researching ADA Design Standards, meeting with a small committee of Gaenslen and MPS staff, and the design of four separate installations, each with their own distinct “northwoods” character. Tactical materials were used in several of the stations.
As part of the Home Improvement Workshops initiative, CDS meets one-on-one with residents to discuss design ideas in Milwaukee neighborhoods. These free workshops are supported by local organizations including Layton Boulevard West Neighbors, Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, Agape Community Center, Greater Milwaukee Foundation, and City of Milwaukee NIDC.

Using images of residents’ houses, CDS employees sketch options for renovations including material changes, window upgrades, exterior repairs, landscaping projects, and new color schemes. Homeowners are then encouraged to document any improvements made and submit them to the ‘Most Improved Home Contest’ for a chance to win grants up to $1,000.
The collaboration between Community Design Solutions (CDS) and the Latino Veterans Legacy of Valor Foundation (LVLV) provided a vision and design concept for developing a memorial on the Milwaukee lakefront to commemorate Latino involvement in United States conflicts. Adjacent to other memorials, the lakefront location creates a unique opportunity to honor our military. The memorial design intends to provide a space to pay tribute to Latino veterans, educate the public on Latino involvement in major conflicts, as well as provide a space for celebratory events. The Latino Veterans Legacy of Valor Foundation stressed the importance of including a variety of cultural aspects within the memorial design: plaza space, covered structure, storytelling elements, seating, framed views, color, and art elements, all while providing a memorial experience.
Various color and materials options for the plaza

Memorial Wall

Everyday Experience

Various color and materials options for the plaza

Aerial view showing the crossroads of paths, memorial wall, and plaza
Community Design Solutions (CDS) worked with the Marketplace BID #32 on redevelopment opportunities for the North Avenue and Fond du Lac Avenue mixed-use corridors. The goal was to create visioning concepts for facade enhancements, new construction, building renovations, and streetscaping along North Avenue to spur investment opportunities. Background research included demographics, vacancies, traffic counts and public transportation stops, current vacancies, and in-progress redevelopment. A series of precedent studies were developed to explore opportunities for facade projects, adaptive reuse, pedestrian walk-ability, and traffic calming.
Facade Enhancements – signage, paint, lighting, and windows

Renovated Building for shared non-profit organizations, screen parking lot
Safari Homes and Refugee Services (SHRS) wants to develop new housing on a 22-acre parcel located at South 27th Street and Puetz Road in the City of Franklin. The concept master plan proposes how new housing can be integrated with preserved environmental features and create a sense of community. Commercial buildings are located along S 27th Street.

After the site planning phase, two housing concepts were developed including townhouse layouts, one three-bedroom option, and one four-bedroom option. Both layouts utilize the same building footprints, but each offer slightly different site layouts and amenities. The designs feature solar energy sources and views focused on the natural areas.
SSCHC has a 13.5 acre parcel of land adjacent to their Health Center that can serve as an amenity for the neighborhood. Based on discussions with the client, this project proposes a strategy that includes new housing options, civic uses, and takes advantage of the natural features and environmental amenities of the site.

The final design features five modern step-back apartment complexes, a nature center that offers views and connections to the future naturalized Kinnickinnic River, large preserved park area, and a mixed-use library with apartments above.
City of West Allis worked with CDS to redesign their City Hall interior to provide more efficient department interactions and a clear public check-in area. Through site visits, interviews with departments, and meetings with the West Allis City Hall administrators, two concepts were developed to address the space planning needs.

The main goals of the project were improving safety by minimizing public access, unifying departments with an open office layout, and creating a new main reception “welcome” area. The proposed layout focuses on adjacencies between departments with shared meeting areas, a defined public reception area, and improved work environments with an updated lounge and fitness space.

**WEST ALLIS CITY HALL SPACE PLANNING**

Client I City of West Allis
Staff I Jack Grover, Amanda Golemba, Lucas Dedrick

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Proposed IT Department Renovation

Main Reception Entrance and Kiosk Area

Open Department Floor Plan with Centralized Copy Center

New Employee Kitchen and Lounge
The overall goal established for the project was to determine how light industrial uses can be maximized on the site. Struggling to attract investment, site constraints include narrow site dimensions, existing power lines that cut through the site, and isolation of the site from the road and city infrastructure. With only one access point from North 60th Street, the parcel is bounded by single-family housing on the north, a large recreation parcel to the west, and Milwaukee Job Corps Center and a railroad to the south.

One concept provides a double loaded development, with central circulation for cars and trucks while the other concept confines the development to one side of the car circulation to create a stronger green buffer between the single-family housing and the development. Tiny homes for veterans is proposed at the entrance to the site.
Community Design Solutions (CDS) and the South 27th Street Business District Association worked together to provide a vision and design concept for a skate park that can serve as a site for national competitions, as well as the greater Milwaukee skate community. Additionally, CDS provided a design concept for redevelopment of several parcels of underutilized land along Loomis Road. The southwestern portion of the redevelopment was the former location of The Turf, a skate park that attracted professional and amateur skateboarders from around the world. The skate park design intends to provide a space to celebrate the former Turf, provide a multi-purpose indoor and outdoor skate park for the community, and provide a space for national skateboard competitions and events. For the skate park design, the client group stressed the importance of site history and for the design to include: skate competition area, multi-purpose spaces, indoor and outdoor skate parks, and art elements, all while providing an experience that harks back to The Turf.
How can vacant retail stores be reused to activate shopping centers and neighborhoods? The Granville BID and Alderwoman Lewis want to re-purpose a vacant Joann Fabrics store along Brown Deer Road into a hub of vendors, entertainment, and gathering. CDS developed a layout and design concepts that include opportunities for marketplace stalls, food vendors, daily pop-up stalls, cafe, events stage, computer docking work area, and future office and meeting rooms. Entrepreneurs can connect with local residents in a vibrant gathering environment.
The building owner would like to renovate the vacant building into a flexible meeting space for the neighborhood, a community kitchen, and apartments on the upper floors. A variety of seating and table layouts were explored, including a movable counter element. The garage door opens to an outdoor patio for additional seating. The front elevation is enhanced with windows, fencing, and lighting.
Redeveloping the vacant iconic corner building, 2673 N MLK Drive, to continue the investment along Martin Luther King Drive (MLK) is the primary goal of the visioning proposal. The BID wants to create a destination for residents and visitors that will activate the busy corner of MLK Drive and Center Street. Two concepts were presented to the BID board for review and discussion of market impacts, reuse options, and the best alternative for investment. Option 2, the office and podcast space on the ground floors, with residential on the upper floors, was selected. Option 1 included a restaurant and cafe on the ground floor and offices and housing on the upper floors. Renderings illustrate how the building could be redeveloped and become an asset for the area.
Victory Gardens envisions how to improve their outdoor classroom and work areas to better support their programming. Elements include additional seating, a stage, enhanced planting areas and water collection, expanded covered structure, public art, and a storage for gardening equipment. Movable seating allows for flexible use of the garden and play area. The garden entrance was enhanced with new stepping logs, a gate feature, and a variety of colorful, seasonal plantings.
For updating this church on N 38th Street, the site remains the same but now access from the parking lot is provided, along with a new entrance into the newly proposed cafeteria. The plan provides a renovated lobby, offices with a shared meeting area, and an addition with a kitchen and cafeteria. The lobby space provides a formal entrance and waiting area, while connecting views between the lobby and sanctuary, which features updated seating. The cafeteria and kitchen addition allow the community and neighborhood to enter the church through a back entrance, sanctuary, or from an internal hallway. The location provides a welcome location for picking up meals or gathering after church.
CDS was tasked with designing four initial design concepts for a 12.2 acre parcel, between Verona Avenue and Legion Street, in the City of Verona. With the EPIC campus bringing more activity to the community, there is interest in developing a town center, with activities for all ages. The development priorities include incorporating residential, commercial, mixed-use, civic uses and green space with a band shell. Each initial design concept focuses on a unique aspect: community center with pool, small scale commercial, makerspace and mixed-use development. After reviewing the initial concepts with the client, the mixed-use development concept was chosen as a base for each of the final three concepts, each also incorporating a community center, small scale commercial, and makerspace.
CDS has facilitated a total of 13 Community Design & Development charettes for commercial corridors in the Milwaukee area. The most recent charettes include Burleigh corridor, Five Points, Uptown Crossing, and Villard Avenue.

The charettes are an interactive process of gathering information from various sources and working collaboratively to develop catalytic projects for mixed-use commercial corridors. The process includes extensive community engagement, research, and site analysis in preparation for a one day design charette held at the UW-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning. Local architects, developers, property owners, lenders, city officials, artists, and community leaders gather to discuss and develop concepts for 5 to 6 sites that will revitalize the neighborhood and spur investment. Architectural teams that participated on the following pages include Engberg Anderson, Galbraith Carnahan, Kahler Slater, Quorum, SmithGroup, American Design, Kolb & Associates, Dan Beyer Architects, in.Studio, and Uihlein Wilson Ramlow Stein.
Uptown Valley

Uptown Crossing retail and housing

Uptown Crossing streetscaping and public spaces

Uptown Crossing adaptive reuse restaurant

Uptown Valley

Uptown Crossing housing

Uptown Crossing bank replacement with housing
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CHARRETTE
Client: City of Milwaukee & Neighborhood Organizations
Staff: Community Design Solutions

- Villard streetscaping and public space
- Villard food court
- Villard theater retrofit
- Villard pet store and retail
- Villard mixed-use retail and housing
- Villard theater
- Villard housing
The Historic Brewers Hill neighborhood is located just north of Downtown Milwaukee overlooking the Milwaukee River and city skyline. With recent improvements and close proximity to major arteries and destinations, the neighborhood is a pleasant experience for cyclists, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic; however, high speed traffic has created safety concerns for the neighborhood.

CDS proposed a series of improvement strategies that could minimize high speed cut-through traffic, promote safe cycling and pedestrian routes, and beautify the streetscape. The strategies focus on the streets between MLK Drive on the West, Holton on the East, North Avenue to the North, and Pleasant Street to the South. The proposed designs include phase I solutions (lower cost safety strategies) and phase II solutions (high cost, highly effective strategies). Phase I solutions include parklets, painted intersections, and highly visible signage. Phase II solutions include mini traffic circles, curb extensions, medians, paved crosswalks, and speed humps.
Originally created in the 1990s, the Victory Over Violence Park is being transformed into a healing place for urban trauma victims, as well as a gathering place for residents and community events. The park is a tribute to the work of Jennetta Simpson-Robinson, an impactful citizen and leader. Based on community input, the proposed design includes a variety of perennial gardens, walkways, and seating areas at the south end, showcasing the Victory Over Violence sculpture, mural, and future murals. The northern section provides a space for community events, food vendors, or relaxing and enjoying the game tables. Deshea Agee, Executive Director of the BID, is passionate about creating a place to make lives better for people living in the neighborhood and throughout the city. We look forward to seeing the vision become a restorative place for healing.
Additional programming and design priorities were needed for the Fondy Food Market, which is an open air farmers market on Milwaukee’s North Side. CDS provided the client with two site plan options showing parking circulation, landscaping and green infrastructure, and different play elements at the north and south ends of the pavilion structure. Other issues, including pavilion enclosure and decorative treatments for columns, were also considered.
ReFlo and CDS worked together on five sites per year for Milwaukee Public Schools. Staff from the schools participate in the visioning and design for their outdoor play spaces and classrooms. Stormwater features are key to enhancing water quality in the neighborhood.

All the designs re-imagine how outdoor educational spaces are used including stormwater management strategies. Some design interventions include permeable paving, sun sail shading systems, natural log seating, native bioswale plantings, rain catchment barrels, and covered outdoor classroom spaces.
REFLO SCHOOL PARKS
Client I Milwaukee Public Schools
Staff I Community Design Solutions

Academy for Accelerated Learning Playground
Neeskara Meditation Garden

Academy for Accelerated Learning Classroom

Allen Field Elementary Courtyard
Nathaniel Hawthorne Aerial
Enhancing two park spaces along Douglas Avenue was the next phase in the overall street improvement. Old trolley poles were integrated into the design of the corner pocket park, providing color posts during the day and an opportunity for unique lighting in the evening. Native plantings and seating provide a peaceful place to rest.

The second park was a bike parking and rest space along the bike path adjacent to Douglas Avenue. Color sun shades and poles were used to call attention to the hidden space. Low maintenance plantings and materials are recommended.
Inventors Brew Pub currently leases the American Legion Hall and serves as a gathering place not only for Veterans, but also for residents to learn about local Veterans while enjoying locally made beer. The owner wanted to convert the underutilized front lawn into outdoor living rooms that could be a destination for social activity. Programming opportunities include casual music, gaming, and an area for food trucks. The design concept celebrates the history of the Legion as well as the history of brewing on the site.
Melvina Park borders West Hopkins Street, south of West Melvina Street and north of West Vienna Avenue. The design proposal intends to capture the multi-generational potential of the neighborhood. The spaces are separated and connected by a multi-purpose track and a network of pathways. The various age specific spaces such as basketball courts, exercise equipment, and play equipment, are connected by a network of pathways, a multi-purpose track, and an open greenspace with a large stage. The park also features a large dog park in the northern corner.
The S 27th Street Business Association has a vision for creating a unique park experience at Wilson Park that will feature classic cars and native planting beds. A nod to the Historic 41 highway car shows, local artists will be commissioned to paint each vehicle. CDS developed a path system that allows visitors to meander through the various gardens and connects to businesses along S 27th Street. A labyrinth and shaded picnic area provide additional amenities.
The UWM College of Engineering & Applied Sciences has a vision to transform one of their existing computer labs into an updated innovation lab fit with the latest equipment and furniture. Two design schemes were developed to show different layouts and possible upgrades to the rooms. Both are focused on group collaboration tables where students are able to work together easily and effectively.
Additional study rooms are needed at the College of Engineering & Applied Sciences. Concepts were developed for converting an existing classroom into flexible study and learning areas. Scheme A integrates comfortable lounge furniture, along with computer stations, adjacent to two enclosed study rooms. Scheme B provides a movable tables that can be combined or remain separate depending on the size the study groups. Flexibility was key to accommodating different activities and study styles.
The UWM Pathway advising office is updated with color and modern elements to welcome students looking at prospective majors. CDS was contacted to help UWM re-imagine the waiting space and the exterior hallway wall. The current space had a lot of clutter and no social space. The new plan provides a more open waiting area for students and families. The design shows vibrant colors in the hallway and waiting space. CDS plans for new modern furniture, additional storage, and updated signage.
The Lubar Business School is updating and expanding current student spaces: Career Center, new Tutoring Center, and the first-floor hallway. The Career Center expanded into the west computer lab and the new tutoring center is more inviting and can accommodate more students. The updated spaces will help students feel more welcome in a brighter, more colorful space. The first floor hallway needed more seating for students between classes and was given a fresher more modern look.