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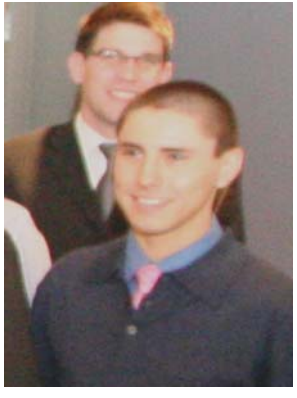
The Menomonee River Valley Redevelopment Initiative: Milwaukee's Green Heart of New Industry & Recreation



As the issue of environmental sustainability is at the forefront of popular discussion, urban and regional planners, architects, and landscape architects are in a position to showcase their design solutions for how cities should be planned and redeveloped—otherwise known as *sustainable design*. However, implementing sustainable design in real estate development and planning policy is easier said than done. Market forces, project financing, and zoning policy are the primary impediments to developing land in a more environmentally responsible way. Nevertheless, some forward thinking cities have managed to create and utilize innovative planning tools in order to accomplish sustainable development.

With the cooperation of local business leaders and community members, the City of Milwaukee has made it a priority to restore the polluted and vacant Menomonee River Valley as an ecologically and socially sustainable asset to the city. Historically, the Valley had been the industrial economic center of Milwaukee. In recent decades, however, the valley has suffered from a significant loss of the tenants and manufacturing jobs that had supported the city's diverse population. Consequently, the scars of heavy industry—severely polluted soils, abandoned factories, and a ravaged watershed—have left the valley badly wounded and unattractive to new investment.

Today, the Menomonee River Valley is in the process of a rebirth. Focusing on ecological remediation, livable-wage job growth, and recreational/educational opportunities, the city is moving forward with its goal of redeeming the Valley as a sustainable economic center. My investigation highlights the strategies utilized by the city in executing this plan, in particular the successes and shortcomings of innovative planning techniques.

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