

# Former Milwaukee Road Shops

PUB-RR-826

March, 2009

## Former Milwaukee Road Shops

3301 W. Canal Street  
Milwaukee, WI  
Milwaukee County

100 Acres

**Location: East of Miller Park along the Menomonee River, near Interstate 94.**

**A massive former industrial area is being transformed into an environmentally conscious business park, part of the largest brownfield redevelopment in Wisconsin's history.**

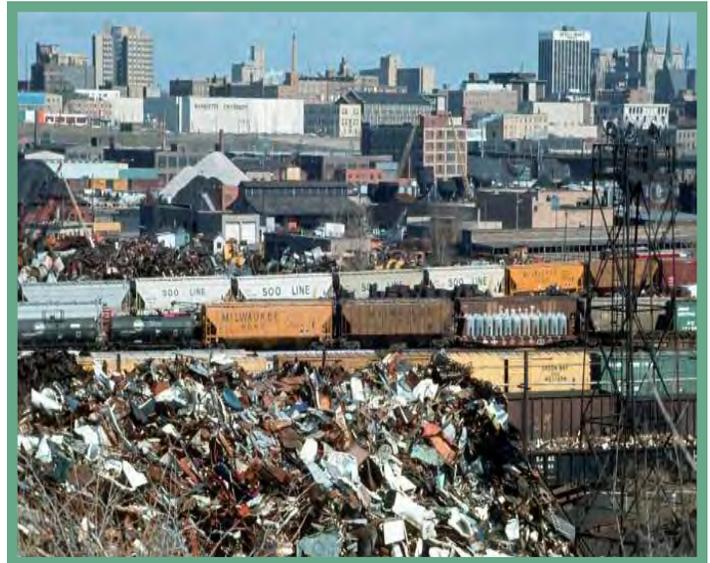
### History

Giving new life to the former Milwaukee Road Shops is a central component of the massive brownfields redevelopment in the Menomonee Valley. Like many brownfields, the site has an industrial history going back to the 19th Century. The Milwaukee Road rail yard was a hub where the company built and serviced train cars and locomotives for the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific lines. Large manufacturing plants sprung up nearby. In the early 1900s, the site employed as many as 3,000 workers. As the decades went by, changing economies and a decrease in the importance of rail traffic continually reduced the valley's industrial work force.

In 1985, the Milwaukee Road went bankrupt and the rail yard closed down. The property became vacant and many believed the area was very contaminated.

By 1998, the city of Milwaukee moved ahead with its plan to completely rejuvenate this once bustling industrial center. With the former Milwaukee Road Shops site a high priority for renewal, city and state-level planners held a competition to create a master plan for the revitalization project.

In 2003, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee acquired the site and began construction activities.



*Before remediation, the Menomonee Valley was home to the Milwaukee Road Shops rail car repair center (photo courtesy DNR).*

### Investigation & Cleanup

The lengthy history of industrial use at the Milwaukee Road Shops site suggested a potentially lengthy and costly cleanup. However, while there was significant soil and water pollution in certain hotspots, the overall contamination was very manageable. Petroleum proved to be the most prominent issue in the soil. Lead and chlorinated solvents were uncovered as well.

To remediate contaminated hotspots, crews removed the problem soil from selected areas. In an example of interagency cooperation, contaminated soil from the nearby Department of Transportation (DOT) Marquette Interchange project was also allowed to be used as fill on the former rail yard site. The contaminated soil was sandwiched in between clean fill to prevent any hazardous compounds from entering the groundwater.



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

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<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr>





The sun sets on the new Palermo's Pizza production facility in the Menomonee Valley (photo Courtesy: HTNB Consulting).

Long-term pollution controls include passive venting systems to prevent buildup of methane gas and extended groundwater monitoring. In addition, city officials have worked with incoming businesses to encourage the construction of environmentally friendly "green" buildings.

## Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the valley's Milwaukee Road Shops is moving forward with environmental and economic interests in mind. Goals set by the city and other development groups include creating a business and industrial park which will bring new jobs to the valley and retain existing jobs in Milwaukee. Plans for the property also keyed in on managing the storm water runoff for the site and creating extended green space.

Nearly 70 acres of the Milwaukee Road Shops and neighboring Airline Yards site is devoted to parks and green space. Selected green spaces were turned into playing fields, walkways and picnic areas. Other spaces were turned into wetlands and swamps, mimicking the natural environment of the riverside location. In addition, the Hank Aaron State Trail has been extended along the river.

Construction of the business park and green spaces is conducted with the goal of creating zero storm water runoff. The entire site is designed to divert all rain water to wetland meadows, where it will be filtered through a layer of crushed concrete, known as an infiltration gallery.

Several companies have already purchased property at the site: frozen pizza maker Palermo Villa Inc., manufacturer Charter Wire, and trade show display firm Derse, Inc. The

city is hoping for full capacity by 2011, bringing an additional 1,300 jobs and substantial tax revenue to the area.

Due to its size and environmental focus, the redevelopment of the Milwaukee Road Shops site has already earned numerous awards, including:

- *Excellence in Economic Development Award*  
International Economic Development Council, 2008
- *America's Best New Development Projects*  
Sierra Club, 2006
- *Analysis and Planning Merit Award*  
American Association of Landscape Architects, 2003

## Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance

A wide-ranging cleanup and redevelopment project of this magnitude could not happen without significant technical and liability assistance from federal, state and local authorities.

In addition, funding for Menomonee Valley Road Shops redevelopment came from the following sources:

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 108 Loan Guarantee	\$10,000,000
HUD Brownfield Economic Development Initiative Grants	\$2,000,000
EPA Clean Up Grant	\$200,000
EDA BCR Loan Fund	\$1,125,000
HUD Neighborhood Grant	\$1,950,000
WI DNR Sustainable Urban Development Grant	\$837,000
WI Department of Commerce Grant	\$1,250,000
Redevelopment Authority	
City of Milwaukee Loan	\$6,475,000

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