

Harley-Davidson Museum

PUB-RR-852

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Harley-Davidson Museum

501 W. Canal Street
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee County

15 acres

Location: The east end of the Menomonee Valley, an area with a long history of industrial use.

Desire to build a tribute to their iconic motorcycles led Harley-Davidson to put their new museum in the heart of Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley.

History

Harley-Davidson Motorcycles are revered throughout America and the world. Few other brands invoke quite the stirring images that come to mind when someone mentions the Milwaukee-founded company. In building a museum where visitors could explore more than 100 years of Hog history, the company looked to the heart of their hometown: Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley.

The Menomonee Valley is ground zero for major redevelopment efforts by the city of Milwaukee and the Menomonee Valley Partners (MVP). They partnered to take control of industrial and other brownfield properties near this long strip of land next to the Menomonee River. Among the sites which were available for redevelopment were the Morton Salt property, Lakeshore Sand Company and property owned by the Milwaukee

Department of Public Works on the eastern tip of the valley.

When the company decided to make the museum dream a reality, they worked with MVP and the city to purchase the eastern-most properties. The area was a convenient spot could accommodate large numbers of visitors, yet keep them close to downtown restaurants and hotels.



The former Morton Salt property in front of the Milwaukee skyline, before construction of the Harley-Davidson Museum (photo courtesy DNR).

Investigation and Cleanup

Site investigations revealed lower levels of contamination than one might expect. Lab tests revealed an area of high chloride levels — determined not to be related to Morton Salt — and some traces of metal in the groundwater. Remediation at the site consisted mostly of capping contaminated soils and repairing a dock wall that would prevent erosion into the Menomonee River.

During the cleanup and construction process, contractors made use of the nearby Marquette



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

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Interchange project to recycle roadway materials, reduce costs and save energy. Seventy-nine thousand cubic yards of fill from the interchange project was used to raise the site above the flood plain. Crushed asphalt and concrete were used to make road bases and fill in other sections of the property.

Other green initiatives included planting scores of native plants along the riverfront, and using non-impervious services as much as possible to allow rain water to filter through and avoid flooding problems.



The steel-beamed exterior of the Harley-Davidson Museum embodies the hard-working, industrial spirit of the company's legacy (photo courtesy DNR).

Redevelopment

Much like a Harley is distinct from other motorcycles, the company strove to make the \$95 million Harley-Davidson Museum different from other museums. The design features a gritty industrial façade with heavy usage of steel and brick. Inside, visitors are treated to Harley history plucked from the company's extensive archives, including some of the earliest motorcycles the company ever made, and a motorcycle owned by Elvis.

City of Milwaukee estimates put the number of potential annual visitors at 350,000, bringing an estimated \$31 million in additional spending to the area. Jobs created from those extra dollars could push the benefits even higher, creating just under \$5 million in annual tax revenue.

The Museum project has been well received in the community and earned several real estate honors, including:

2009 Project of the year
Business Journal Real Estate Awards

Top Project
Wisconsin Builder Magazine

2008 Mayor's Design Awards
City of Milwaukee

2008 Regional Impact Award
Wisconsin Commercial Real Estate Women

Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance

The success of the Harley Davidson Museum hinged on the cooperation between all parties, including Harley-Davidson, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Redevelopment Authority of the city of Milwaukee (RACM), MVP, and environmental consultants.

The DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program staff worked closely with all the project partners. Work began with a "green team" meeting to examine the environmental concerns and plan the logistics of cleaning up and achieving closure on multiple properties. To ensure cleanup work met state standards, an RR Program project manager worked to review the remedial action plan for the site.

To complete construction by their desired date, Harley-Davidson covered their own remediation costs. The city of Milwaukee also spent significant funds to move the Department of Public Works facilities to another location.

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