



March 14, 2021

Chicago Plan Commission
121 N. LaSalle St., Room 1000
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: 1201-1299 W. Concord Pl. – Fleet Portfolio, LLC
(Lincoln Yards, Life Science Building – Sterling Bay)

Dear Commissioners:

As the redevelopment of the high profile Lincoln Yards site begins, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on plans.

The Life Science Building marks the first building since the approval of the Lincoln Yards Planned Development. The project will set the standard for future Lincoln Yards buildings at a key, publicly-accessible river edge site. Of key focus are two points of non-compliance to river edge/trail design guidelines, which are especially relevant given the river siting in this extensive district and many parcel plans to come.

1. Ensure future connectivity/flow of bike and pedestrian trails beyond site boundaries:

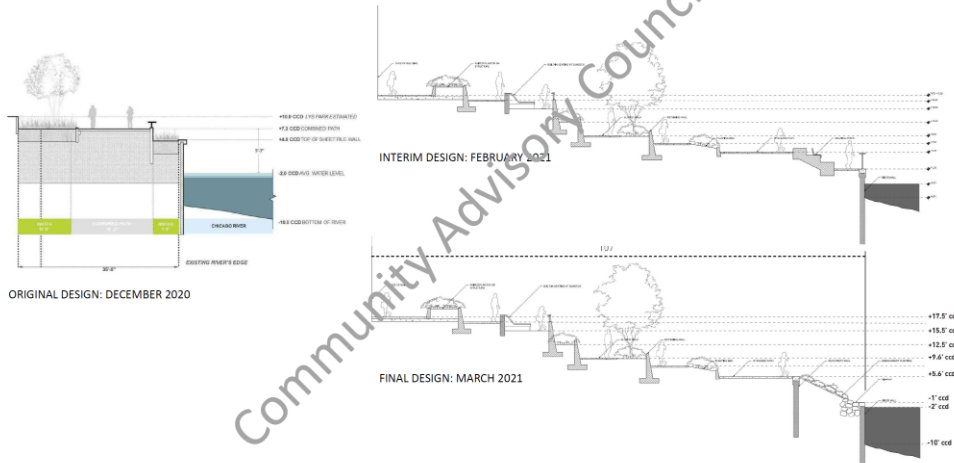
The current plan for a 16 foot wide ‘shared path’ does not conform to parameters in the *North Branch Framework Plan*, which prescribes:

Wherever possible, the river setback should include separate paths for people walking and biking to maximize functionality, and provide safe and beautiful spaces for all users” (North Branch Framework Plan 114).

Although the *Plan* allows for a shared-use trail “in instances where separated bicycle and pedestrian trails are not possible,” this deep parcel does not have a constraint that would dictate a shared-use pathway (114). As the first building in the west/south side of the river in Lincoln Yards, effort should be made to fulfill design standards which won’t create future bottlenecks. There are already plans to connect the trail to the 606 and Bloomingdale Trail system to the northwest and we can anticipate connection to Goose Island, the redeveloped Morton Salt site, and points south. The Bloomingdale Trail already experiences overcrowding. As the North Branch Framework Plan anticipated need for and prescribed separate paths, will the Life Sciences Riverwalk plan be adjusted to meet these priorities?

2. Prioritize naturalistic riverbanks providing riparian habitat and visual connection to the river from the Riverwalk: Although the presented riverbank plan features a natural edge, early iterations of the river edge treatment featured a high seawall least conducive to goals set out in the *City’s River Design Guidelines*. Note the iterations in river edge sections progressing from high, hard edge *to* gradually lowered connection *to* naturalistic slope.

LINCOLN YARDS SOUTH
Parcel G



However, the *existing* site in parcel G already features a semi-naturalistic sloped bank with an extremely low (often submerged) seawall toe. As such, the first two design iterations presented to the Community Advisory Council were non-starters. As prescribed in both the original and revised River Design Guidelines:

If the existing conditions of a site include a sloped riverbank, the sloped riverbank is to be retained and improved (Chicago River Design Guidelines (2019) 33).

A significant portion of the forthcoming Lincoln Yards Planned Development area includes naturalistic river edge. Future parcel plans should adhere to City Guidelines as a foundation.



Many other questions and opportunities for collaboration among neighbor, design, ecological, and recreational communities. We look forward to engagement with the City and the developer.

Sincerely,

Kate McCarter

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March 24, 2021

Noah Szafraniec
Supervising Zoning Plan Examiner
Department of Planning Development
Bureau of Zoning
City Hall, Room 905
121 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Proposed Development on Site G.1 (Life Sciences) of the Lincoln Yards PD

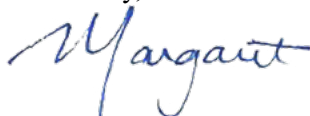
Dear Mr. Szafraniec:

Friends of the Chicago River has had the opportunity to meet again with the Sterling Bay team and review their most recent revisions to the proposed Site G.1 development at Lincoln Yards. We greatly appreciate the development team's work to incorporate many of the comments and concerns that were raised by Friends and our fellow environmental advocates about the design of the riverfront. We can see that effort was taken to think creatively about the river edge design and to add in more river sensitive features such as a naturally sloped river edge planted zone, native plant palette, stormwater BMPs, and reduced paved area. We believe that the current design concepts set a good example for the type of innovative strategies that should continue into future phases of Lincoln Yards. We continue to feel that it is important to establish a strong precedent for forward thinking river edge design in these early stages.

We also hope that the City will continue to think proactively about their role in this development and the surrounding public realm infrastructure that is their responsibility, including the broader vision for riverfront connectivity and public access. In particular, we think it is important that the City help the developer work with the property owner to the south (Home Depot) to facilitate a river edge connection to North Avenue. That connection would be highly beneficial to both existing and future employees of this area to reach the amenities to the east and multimodal connections on North Avenue, along a safe and protected river edge route. It would be a missed opportunity if the riverfront investments made on Site G.1 end there.

In conclusion, we are happy to see this first piece of the Lincoln Yards river edge improvements moving forward with the river as a celebrated natural feature placed prominently in their design. We are grateful for the team's willingness to continue a community dialogue with public advocates like Friends of the Chicago River to ensure our vision of a blue-green corridor of natural public open space to the benefit of people, wildlife, and a resilient future is achieved.

Sincerely,



Margaret Frisbie
Executive Director

To: Sterling Bay
From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group
Date: 4/8/2021

Re: Design Review Comments for Subarea G1 Riverfront Proposal

Thank you for taking the time to present your proposed design for Lincoln Yards subarea G1 with the River Ecology and Governance Task Force development review working group on March 30, 2021. The presentation provided Task Force members with an overview of the most current iteration of the building and riverfront site plan and highlighted the project's efforts to meet [The Chicago River Design Guidelines](#) menu of improvements criteria.

Following the presentation there was a 'Q & A' session that allowed for Task Force members to highlight specific areas of the plan, ask clarifying questions, and provide input. The following comments are representative of the group's feedback and include written responses via the Task Force's development review form, and verbal direction from meeting participants. These comments are structured to provide the following: 1) Broader ideas that emerged around the need for holistic riverfront design, 2) Comments on each of the three major criteria items for the River Design Guidelines menu of improvements: nature, recreation, and connectivity; and 3) Secondary feedback that falls outside those criteria.

Lincoln Yards as Precedent for a Naturalized, Holistic Vision

Subarea G1 represents the first opportunity for Sterling Bay to boldly state and set a precedent for how development, recreation, and robust ecological riverine habitats can coexist thoughtfully. This development sets the tone for all future development to follow as part of a much larger whole and what will be prioritized for future riverfront development. The riverfront here is not a standalone entity but works in conjunction with future riverfront development to the north as well as throughout Lincoln Yards. When viewed through this lens, the proposal could be simplified to avoid 'trying to do too much' in what will ultimately only be a small portion of the overall development. Rather than being a singular site that satisfies all the riverfront programmatic and habitat needs, Sterling Bay should consider prioritizing habitat and allowing programmatic features to be dispersed across other parts of the broader Lincoln Yards project. To that end, constructing a naturalized shoreline without metal walls is integral to advancing a naturalized, holistic approach, discussed further below.

Nature

The River Design Guidelines list multiple improvement items under the Nature menu, but three are elevated to priority status: *New Naturalized Shoreline*, *Stormwater Best Management Practices*, and *Aquatic Wildlife Habitats*. As noted above, the proposal does include a naturalized shoreline across most of the site's river edge, while keeping the metal retaining wall in the southern section to create an overlook. This limits potential for new high value habitat connectivity for both aquatic and non-aquatic species. There is opportunity for this project to create a true *New Naturalized Shoreline* and *Aquatic Wildlife Habitats* simultaneously. Potential solutions to address erosion concerns and prioritize habitats include creating a vegetated shelf, keeping a naturalized shoreline by cantilevering the overlook or removing the overlook entirely, , and creating emergent wetlands. In general, we would recommend an approach of "no new walls" along the riverfront. For improving aquatic habitats, multiple strategies can be employed to create linear shallows that would mitigate erosion from wave action while also sheltering the biota. In this example, the seawall would be cut at the height of the average boat wake (likely 1' higher than normal water level) simultaneously with the construction of a 3' deep "backwater" which would gradually become more shallow and eventually meet the riverbank. The Task Force includes a number of members experienced in this type of habitat design who are willing to provide more specific input to Sterling Bay as needed.

The presentation highlighted how the project plans to integrate stormwater management best practices that align with the River Design Guidelines. The installation of permeable surfaces for the hardscape is a go-to solution, but a robust maintenance and monitoring plan for the function of pervious surfaces needs to be in place. Without proper maintenance, porous areas can quickly fill with sediment and function like an impervious surface in just a few short

years. The maintenance plan should also consider how pathways will be maintained during the winter months, particularly with considerations to avoid or minimize salt entering the waterway.

Although not the main focus of the presentation, the renderings show a building to be primarily glazed curtain wall. This project, and future development proposals along the river's edge, should incorporate bird safety strategies to mitigate collisions close to the ground. Careful consideration of the building cladding and materials can contribute to ecological health, alleviate light pollution, and reduce energy use in tenant spaces.

Recreation

The proposal aligns well with many of the recreation menu items laid out in the River Design Guidelines. An often overlooked consideration for recreation space is when and how and when public access is permitted. It is unclear what agreements have already been made, but preventing public spaces from becoming 'public' in name only is integral to maximizing riverfront accessibility. Whether access is limited to park district hours, or delineated between through access and stationary access, the site should be easily visible and welcoming to the public. While this level of granularity may seem less urgent for site G1 as a stand alone project, it becomes especially important when considering how the multi-use path will connect to future extensions as the remaining sub-areas and riverfront parcels are developed.

Connectivity

As the pathway layout is currently proposed, the switchback ramp could lead to unsafe interactions between cyclists and pedestrians. Although the design incorporates a large stair, that could provide direct access for cyclists to the shared river edge path below, it is likely that both cyclists and pedestrians will use the switchback ramp for this purpose. Overlapping uses will lead to potentially unsafe or precarious situations for all users at numerous areas throughout the site. Obvious pinch-points with potential for collisions include: switchbacks, blind corners, and where the ramp crosses multiple stair landings. The design team proposed the use of signage to guide interactions between cyclists and pedestrians. Acknowledging the necessity to meet ADA requirements, and that only so much can be done to restrict unsafe user behavior, it is unlikely that signage alone would create *safe* connectivity through the site. We would recommend revisiting the design of some of the connection points for ramps and switchbacks to ensure that conflicts are reduced as much as possible and that safety is prioritized.

Secondary Feedback

The following input falls outside the River Design Guidelines criteria, but opportunities for overlapping solutions with the previously outlined feedback is evident. The project should attempt to restrict hardscape as much as possible and allow for additional softscape and planting areas. Not only would this align with the three River Design Guidelines criteria above, but would also reduce the 'office plaza' feel of the open space as it is currently proposed. The design team should also consider activating the ground floor and lobby with semi-public programmed spaces such as a cafe/restaurant or open seating. Allowing the outdoor space to bleed into the building will make for a more welcoming design as well as grounding the building to the site itself. Ultimately, what gets constructed on subarea G1, both indoor and outdoor, should be site (and river) specific.

Again, thank you for taking the time to present to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group. Your proposal is a good step towards enhancing the river and the riverfront, from both a land and river perspective. We appreciate the iterative approach your team has taken thus far and are thankful for the opportunity to provide comments and input to guide final design. Your consideration of the spirit of the River Design Guidelines is admirable. Lincoln Yards has the ability to set a precedent for a naturalized, holistic vision to maximize the potential of one of Chicago's most precious and recognized natural resources. We welcome the opportunity for feedback, offer our services in the future, and look forward to your responses.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Roubik
Assistant Commissioner, Central Region
Department of Planning and Development
121 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago, IL 60602

April 13, 2021

Dear Ms. Roubik:

The Lincoln Yards Community Advisory Council (LYCAC) is an advisory group made up of neighborhood representatives, community leaders, design professionals, and subject-matter experts. We meet regularly to provide recommendations and community input on topics ranging from public infrastructure design to traffic control to open space, among other issues. Our statement of principles focuses our work on Infrastructure and Public Transit, Natural Areas and Public Space, Affordable Housing, and Economic Development all of which will be viewed through a lens of promoting greater equity with marginalized communities throughout Chicago. We understand that the Plan Commission will be receiving a site plan presentation from the developer of Lincoln Yards at their upcoming meeting, and we are writing this letter to inform the Plan Commission about the planning process for this specific site plan and our expectations for how the plan will continue to develop.

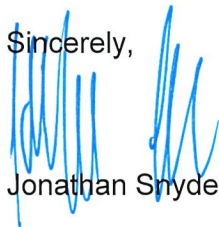
Sterling Bay has created a site plan for a new building located at 1201-99 W. Concord Place in Lincoln Yards South Sub-Area G. The proposed building is designed to support the life sciences industry in Chicago by providing lab space for this growing sector. The LYCAC reviewed the original site plan for the space and gave substantial feedback focusing on the seawall, landscaping, and Riverwalk connection. Sterling Bay's initial proposal showed a hard seawall edge with large overlook. The revised proposal incorporates a natural edge for the river while retaining a smaller overlook for pedestrians and bicyclists using the Riverwalk trail. The natural edge is a significant improvement from the first iteration shared with the LYCAC, and the revised plan has incorporated input from the LYCAC, Department of Planning and Development (DPD), the River Ecology and Governance Task Force, and other stakeholder groups.

While the site plan lays out the design for the physical infrastructure and public space adjacent to the river, it necessarily does not include all aspects of the plan of this facility nor the ways in which the site plan and this specific building will fit into the overall framework of the Lincoln Yards development and the expectations that the LYCAC has with respect to public transportation, public open space (including access to the river), affordable housing, and equity-based economic development. As the plan proceeds, the LYCAC will continue to focus on the issues described in the preceding sentence as well as the Development and Maintenance Agreement (DEMA) to ensure that each individual project and agreement makes proportionate contributions to the broader goals.

In order to fulfill our obligations to advise on developing plans for Lincoln Yards, the LYCAC relies on transparency and timely information from the development team. When Sterling Bay focused on Sub-Area G as the first facility to break ground (as opposed to what was approved for Lincoln Yards Phase I), it was done with minimal notification to the LYCAC just before a public announcement. Sterling Bay has subsequently provided greater notification to the LYCAC regarding other aspects of the project as a whole. We expect Sterling Bay to continue to consult with the LYCAC in advance of major changes to the phasing or land use of the Planned Development as it was previously approved by DPD and City Council.

This proposal was the first Site Plan to be reviewed by the LYCAC, and the review process proved effective and enabled community input that led to significant improvements. As development proceeds in Lincoln Yards, the LYCAC will continue to advise on site plan proposals as well as other aspects of the project with the goal of making the development a community-driven asset for the city as a whole.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Snyder, Chair on behalf of the LYCAC

Cc: Teresa Córdova, Chair Plan Commission
Margaret Frisbie, Executive Director, Friends of the Chicago River
Ald. Brian Hopkins, 2nd Ward
Fred Krol, Senior Counsel, Director of Government & Community Relations, Sterling Bay
Samir Mayekar, Deputy Mayor for Economic and Neighborhood Development