



## CHAPTER 3

# Vision and Guiding Themes



# The Vision

Chicago's Central Area has experienced extraordinary growth since 1980 and faces equally profound changes in the decades to come. By 2020 Chicago's Central Area will be:

## A Vision for Chicago's Central Area in 2020

### GLOBAL CHICAGO

#### *One of the World's Great Crossroads Cities*

Chicago will retain its role as one of the world's great crossroads cities, attracting businesses, residents and visitors internationally. Its Central Area will be a preeminent international meeting place, easily accessible from major destinations around the globe via expanded O'Hare International and Midway Airports.

Chicago's Central Area will remain the dominant business center in the interior of the United States. It will be the choice for companies seeking a world or U.S. headquarters site with a high quality work force, a supportive business environment, excellent transportation and infrastructure, convenient access to national and world markets, and an exceptional quality of life.

### REGIONAL CHICAGO

#### *Downtown of the Midwest*

The Central Area will be the "Downtown of the Midwest," the region's first choice for business, retailing, and entertainment. It will be a leading tourist destination, sought out for its cultural attractions, magnificent architecture, lively street and night life, and fine restaurants and shops. It will be a magnet for the best and brightest among the region's young people, who will enrich the city with their creativity, enthusiasm, and hard work. Its regional role will be strengthened as high speed rail is introduced into the Midwest.

### HOME TOWN CHICAGO

#### *The Heart of Chicagoland*

Downtown Chicago will offer an urban living experience matched by only a handful of cities in North America, with outstanding access to cultural opportunities and the excitement of city life without sacrificing security, convenience, or a sense of community. It will support economic and social diversity. It will embody a great city's capacity to awe and charm, to entertain, and to enlighten. The Central Area will remain the heart of the metropolitan area, the place where Chicagoans gather for celebrations. It will also be a place that reflects its great architectural legacy, with a clear commitment to preserving the best of its buildings and public spaces.

### GREEN CHICAGO

#### *The Greenest City in the United States*

Chicago's Central Area will be a model of sustainability for America and the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It will exemplify a commitment to transit first, be a smart energy manager, bring the use of renewable power and green technologies to the fore in new buildings, lead in the sensitive management of waste, and rebuild the bio-diversity of its open spaces, river and lakefront.



**Figure 3.1**  
Cermak Road today



**Figure 3.2**  
Cermak Road will become a higher density corridor connecting McCormick Place, Motor Row, Chinatown and the new neighborhoods in the Near South Side district.

# The Guiding Themes

The guiding themes for Chicago’s Central Area serve as the “rules of the plan.” They provide a basis for future development and a framework for making decisions.

## Theme 1 Development Framework

***Direct growth to create a dynamic Central Area made up of vibrant and diverse mixed-use urban districts***

- Extend the highest density office core into the West Loop around transit stations, services and the Chicago River
- Develop high-density, mixed-use corridors which extend from the expanded Loop and are linked to transit
- Support a diverse collection of livable neighborhoods and special places
- Preserve and strengthen the Central Area’s world-renowned architectural and cultural heritage
- Strengthen Industrial Corridors and Planned Manufacturing Districts
- Direct the growth of the Central Area’s educational institutions and provide opportunities for lifelong learning
- Promote and strengthen the Central Area’s world-class cultural assets

## Theme 2 Transportation

***Strengthen transportation connections to keep the Central Area easy to reach and get around***

- Make transit the first choice for people coming to the Central Area
- Improve the quality of the pedestrian environment
- Efficiently manage traffic circulation and parking to prevent gridlock
- Encourage alternative modes such as bicycles and water taxis
- Increase CTA and Metra capacity to bring workers to the Central Area.
- Improve national and international connections.

## Theme 3 Waterfronts and Open Spaces

***Expand and connect waterfronts and open spaces to create great public places.***

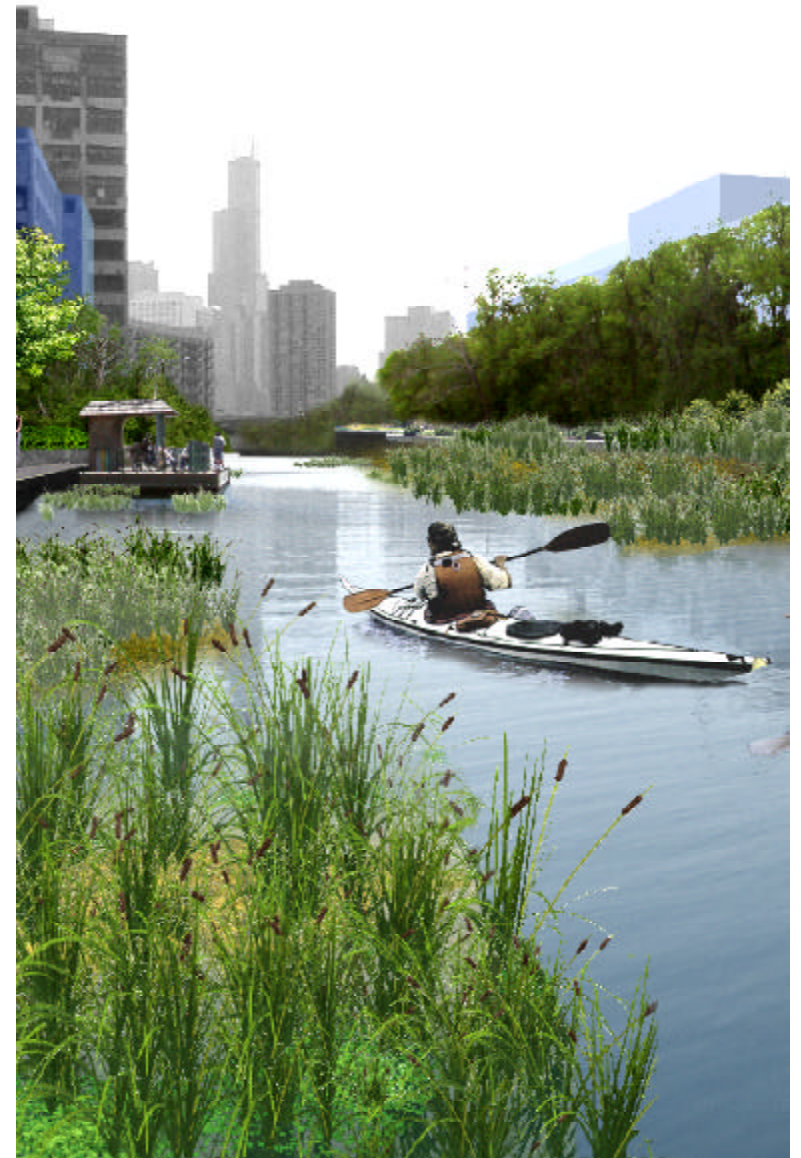
- Strengthen the Lakefront - Chicago’s great public space
- Develop the Chicago River as a premier public place and continuous open space system
- Create the next generation of urban and neighborhood parks to support the growing population
- Complete the Central Area’s framework of richly landscaped streets and boulevards



**Figure 3.3**  
Encourage the development of a new generation of energy efficient buildings and infrastructure.



**Figure 3.4**  
Ensure transit and inter-city access to the Central Area to provide a clear alternative to driving.



**Figure 3.5**  
Create new parks, greenways and a continuous riverwalk.

# Green Chicago: A Commitment to the Environment

## The Greenest City in the Nation

Almost 100 years ago, the Commercial Club of Chicago published the Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago, launching a series of improvements that gave Chicago international standing for the quality of its civic realm. This plan offers a new prospect: a Central Area with international standing for the quality of its urban environment. The Central Area will stand as a model of the relationship between environmental and economic sustainability. It will be a beautiful central city with high quality air, water and land, and a place where people will want to invest, work, play and live.

### REGIONAL BENEFITS

The three fundamental goals of this plan – directing growth to a central city comprised of dynamic mixed-use districts; emphasizing transit; and creating and enhancing open spaces and waterfronts – are part of a broader environmental policy with direct benefits to the region. This plan allows the region to:

- Make the most efficient use of the region's land, support already urbanized areas and preserve open space and agricultural land at the region's edge by limiting sprawl.
- Maximize the value of existing infrastructure and reduce regional expenditures on new infrastructure.
- Support transportation efficiency and improve air quality by allowing more people to walk, bike and ride transit to work.

### DEVELOPMENT: MANAGE LAND FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Develop mixed-use walkable districts with good transit access.

- Reduce dependence on cars by allowing people to live within walking distance or a short transit trip to work, shopping and entertainment.

Increase recycling and material recovery.

Promote Environmental remediation.

- Clean up environmentally challenged sites and bring them back to active, productive use.
- Encourage the use of clean and renewable power and alternative energy sources.

### Energy Efficiency

- Implement Chicago's citywide energy code to reduce energy use, improve energy efficiency, lower operating costs and reduce emissions.
- Take the lead by retrofitting City of Chicago owned buildings with energy saving equipment and installing solar panels.

Encourage the development of a new generation of energy efficient, resource conserving buildings and infrastructure in the Central Area.

- Promote environmentally sound "green design" and construction of new buildings following Green Building standards to conserve energy, water and resources
- Promote the use of recyclable materials, and create healthy indoor environments.
- Lead by example by implementing green design in the construction and operation of new City facilities.

### TRANSPORTATION: REDUCE DEPENDANCE ON CARS

- Locate job growth at the center of the regional transportation system to support transportation efficiency and allow more people to ride transit to work.
- Ensure transit and inter-city access to the Central Area to provide a clear alternative to driving.
- Increase the number of alternative fuel transit vehicles to reduce pollutant emissions.
- Encourage walking, with pedestrian-friendly streets, greenways and open spaces.
- Encourage bicycling with bicycle-friendly streets, bike paths and secure bicycle storage facilities.
- Limit downtown parking to prevent gridlock and improve air quality.

### OPEN SPACE AND WATERFRONTS: THE GREEN LANDSCAPE

The plan promotes:

- Create new parks, greenways and a continuous riverwalk.
- Expand streetscape and infrastructure greening.
- Encourage community greening of neighborhood parks, gardens and schools.
- Encourage rooftop gardens and planted balconies to reduce "urban heat islands."
- Restore natural habitats along waterfronts and open spaces.

### Waterfronts and Water Quality

- Make the Lakefront and the Chicago River models for nature-based recreation and environmental education.
- Restore fishable and swimmable water to the Chicago River by 2020.
- Implement good storm water management in the Central Area to help to clean river and lake water. New approaches to storm water control include green rooftops, wetlands restoration, swales, filters, trenches and detention basins at river and lake edges.
- Reconstruct river edges to ensure safe access to the water, while preserving valuable natural, historical and aesthetic features, and creating improvements that are friendly to paddlers.
- Support habitat continuity through the development of a greenway and waterway network that promotes wildlife survival and movement.
- Support bio-diversity through natural approaches to landscaping.
- Encourage residents to become stewards of the environment by educating them about the river, lake, land and conservation.