

STUDY AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Mid South:

The Mid South area lies between the South Loop and McCormick Place to the north and Hyde Park and the University of Chicago campus to the south. The study area is bounded by 35th Street, Lake Shore Drive, Martin Luther King Drive, and 43rd Street. While adjacent to Burnham Park on the lakefront, the Mid South neighborhood lacks regular and convenient connections to the Lake Michigan beaches and Lake Shore Drive. Rail transit service is also nearby, with Red and Green CTA Lines to the west, and Metra Electric Line tracks to the east, but much of the neighborhood is beyond the ideal walking distance to stations. With a majority of residential land uses, the study area lacks easy access to daily goods and services. Plan for Transformation mixed-income housing developments, along with private large-scale infill and redevelopment projects in the center of the study area, offer a significant opportunity to address a number of neighborhood transportation and access issues, to reconnect the neighborhood to the rest of the South Side and other destinations.

Near West:

The Near West study area is situated between the Kinzie Industrial Corridor, the United Center and Eisenhower Expressway, Union Park and Western Avenue; and is bounded by Lake Street, Ashland Avenue, Monroe Street, and Western Avenue. Redevelopment of the nearby West Loop neighborhood continues to spread west down Madison and adjacent streets, bringing new investment up to the eastern edge of the Near West study area. However, Ashland, Ogden, and the United Center create barriers to connecting the Near West and West Loop areas. Westhaven Park, a Plan for Transformation development site, is a success in creating its own revitalization momentum for the Near West area. Capitalizing on this, a new elevated CTA station on the Green Line at Damen and improved retail opportunities and amenities targeted at the neighborhood scale will work to reconnect residents of the Near West area to the city as a whole.

Near North:

The Near North study area sits between Lincoln Park, the Gold Coast, and River North; it is bounded by North Avenue, Orleans Street, Chicago Avenue, and Halsted Street. At present, this area remains “at the edge” between more recognizable neighborhoods and due to rapid and recent change, lacks its own identity. One new housing development in the study area takes its name, SoNo, from its location south of North Avenue, others from Old Town (Old Town Village I and II), and new high end developments continue to extend up the North Branch of the Chicago River from the River North area. As the Chicago Housing Authority’s Plan for Transformation progresses, the Near North’s process of making physical connections to these adjacent neighborhoods where existing Brown and Red Line CTA stations are located must overcome social distancing greater than the physical spaces that separate it. New mixed income housing developments will go a long way to bridging the gaps the legacy of public housing has left behind, as new residents seek out nearby shopping, dining, and employment opportunities. A new elevated CTA station at the heart of the area, coupled with other improvements to the public realm, will help a new community to emerge—a well connected, vibrant and livable neighborhood.



New housing developments in the Mid South (top), a historic church and a new mixed use building in the Near West (center), and a newer commercial center in the Near North (bottom).



COMMUNITY INPUT

Gathering of community input has been integral to crafting transit, access and urban design, and commercial development recommendations. The project began with an official kick-off meeting in November of 2007, where local issues and opportunities for each of the three study areas were identified and discussed.

IGAC and Task Force Meetings

Next, the Inter-Governmental Advisory Committee (IGAC), and three area-specific community Task Forces were convened by MPC to discuss the overall objectives and work plans for the project. The IGAC is composed of government agencies, elected officials, and the chairs of each area's Task Force. The Task Forces are composed of local community stakeholders.

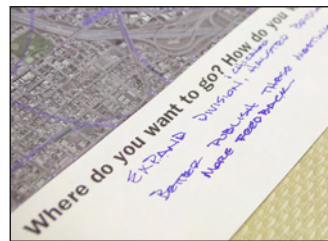
Simultaneously, existing transit services, facilities, and retail opportunities in each of the communities were inventoried and compiled in three Existing Conditions Reports (available online at www.ReconnectingNeighborhoods.org). The Task Forces reviewed and refined these documents and engaged in a visioning exercise to help develop ideas for improvements in each area.

Community Meetings

Shortly after the Task Force visioning exercise, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) led community-wide meetings in conjunction with Task Force members to solicit more recommendations for each study area. These community meetings employed a wide variety of community participation

tools to elicit community opinions. The complete results of these meetings are also available online at the Reconnecting Neighborhoods website.

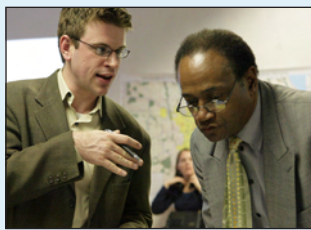
Based on this input, Preliminary Recommendations were developed (available online at the Reconnecting Neighborhoods website). A second round of IGAC, Task Force, and community meetings resulted in refinements to the preliminary recommendations. In a final round of Task Force, community and IGAC meetings in November of 2008, stakeholders were given the opportunity to hear the final recommendations. These recommendations were also presented to a larger audience during the Metropolitan Planning Council's *Building Successful Mixed-Income Communities Forum* in December of 2008, where national and local experts discussed new opportunities at the federal and state-level to support local efforts which connect affordable housing, public transportation, and workforce development investment.



The Reconnecting Neighborhoods project convened public meetings and used a wide variety of techniques to solicit community feedback, including key pad polling and group mapping exercises.



Mid South Project
Kickoff Meeting



Near North Task
Force Meeting



Near West Community
Meeting