



Mid South

In order to create a system which best connects the Mid South Area to the City as a whole, a Vision and set of complementary Planning Principles were created and refined based on input from residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders. These Principles then informed the development of the planning strategies. Together, the Vision, Planning Principles, and Strategies will serve as a guide for “reconnecting” the Mid South Area over the short (1-5 years), medium (5-10 years), and long-term (10-15 years). Principles and Strategies address Transit Service, Pedestrian Access and Urban Design, and Commercial Development.

VISION: RECONNECTING THE MID SOUTH

In the Mid South Area, the already-well established street grid provides pleasant and pedestrian-oriented retail streets along its major east-west connections; 35th, Pershing and 43rd. Pershing and 35th Street in particular have become local commercial nodes that serve both Oakwood Shores and established nearby neighborhoods along improved east-west transportation links. Improved bus facilities such as shelters and seating areas have been installed, along with landscaping improvements that complement new housing developments. Access to nearby Green Line train stations to the west have improved with successful redevelopment of commercial businesses in both renovated and new buildings in the areas immediately surrounding the stations. These infill developments and commercial concentrations are locally-owned and locally-patronized, welcoming residents and visitors to the area and serving their daily needs—dry cleaning, banking, grocery shopping, newsstands and restaurants. New and improved pedestrian bridges provide dramatic entry points to the lakeshore trail system from the Mid South Area, bringing greater access to the nearby recreational amenity and elevating the Mid South Area to a key gateway into the City from Lake Shore Drive. The “legacy” potential of significant South Side transit and public realm investments has been realized for all neighborhoods, even those located between major South Side destinations.



The [Mid South Study Area] which is bounded by 35th Street, Lake Shore Drive, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, and 43rd Street lies between the South Loop and McCormick Place to the north and Hyde Park and the University of Chicago campus to the south. While the study area is adjacent to Burnham Park on the lake, the neighborhood lacks regular and convenient connections to the lakefront and Lake Shore Drive. Rail transit service is also nearby to the west, but much of the neighborhood is beyond the ideal walking distance to stations. The study area was designed to focus particular attention on mobility and services in an area that sits between significant activity generators (such as IIT, Lake Meadows, and the University of Chicago), to ensure that all of the South Side is connected in the future.

TRANSIT SERVICE

Transit Improvement Principles have been developed that focus on improving access and service using the existing transit system currently in place, including CTA bus and rail. In the short term, further study is recommended to examine three potential long-term transit improvement strategies for the Mid South Area including: a new Metra station, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, and a local street car. All recommendations are depicted on the Mid-South Study Area Recommendations map to follow; the potential long-term recommendations will require significant further study and identification of funding sources. The Principles below are intended to provide policy direction consistent with the *Vision: Reconnecting the Mid South*.

Transit Improvement Principles

1. New and expanded transit service should focus on improving connections to and between major south side destinations, including the IIT area and Hyde Park, improving access for local residents to these commercial and employment centers.
2. Streetscape improvements and any associated elements should support transit users, transit accessibility, and current economic development plans.
3. Good vehicular access should be maintained throughout the neighborhood, but care should be taken to limit heavy traffic and bus lines to main thoroughfares in order to avoid speeding and cut through traffic in nearby residential areas.
4. Safe bicycle parking should be accommodated in several locations easily accessible to public transit such as bus shelters and train stations.
5. Access to existing transit stations and stops should be clearly marked and signed, encouraging local residents to utilize transit.
6. Accessible and informative shelters for bus riders should be strategically placed to encourage new and regular transit users.



Burnham Park east of the Mid South Study Area

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND URBAN DESIGN

The pedestrian accessibility and urban design principles provide an important tool for the Mid South Area to encourage transit usage and neighborhood vitality. These principles provide a framework against which the City can consider and evaluate both public and private improvement proposals for the area. They bring together many recommendations, including: pedestrian access and circulation considerations, landscaping and other site enhancements, effective integration of public uses and open spaces, and suggested streetscape and public area design features.

Pedestrian Accessibility Principles

1. The placement of commercial storefronts should consider visibility and accessibility from transit stops.
2. Other street-level improvements such as raised planters and decorative paving should work in concert with commercial storefronts, facilitating visits to the neighborhood shopping venues from nearby residents and visitors alike.
3. Where parking is provided on-site at commercial uses, a designated pedestrian access way from the public sidewalk should be provided.
4. Grade separated pedestrian connections to the lakeshore should be enhanced and signed clearly wherever possible;



additionally such crossovers should include provisions for bicycles.

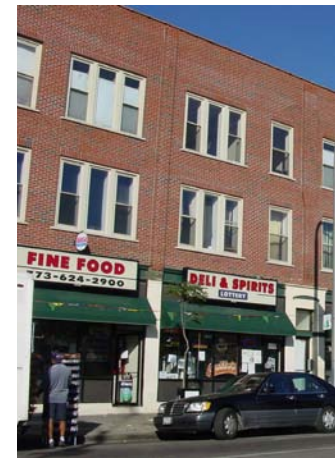
5. As sidewalk and bicycle lane upgrades are undertaken throughout the neighborhood, prioritize access to commercial areas, schools, parks and other activity centers.

Urban Design Principles

1. Plazas, seating areas, and public art installations should be accommodated in key locations to enhance the pedestrian experience, and maximize usable green space, particularly along the streets specified for retail development. Adequate benches and trash receptacles are key features.
2. Design controls should be enforced, especially for access to sites that include mixed use and commercial development, to ensure compatibility with existing historic structures and new housing developments.
3. Facade and signage enhancements at existing buildings and businesses should be undertaken to preserve and enhance the character of the study area and contribute to its visual identity, reflecting the rich history of the area.
4. A gateway treatment should be provided at the key entry point to the neighborhood from Lake Shore Drive to enhance and elevate the community's identity.
5. Way finding signage should draw visitors and residents alike from the lakeshore recreation area into the neighborhood, and in turn, draw visitors from the Green Line train stations into the neighborhood from the west.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Land use in the Mid South Area includes a variety of land use and development patterns. Throughout the area, residential infill development is underway, weaving new townhouse or mid-rise multi-family structures into the existing neighborhood fabric at a compatible density. Rehabilitation of existing residential structures is also occurring in many locations. Commercial and service uses



Lake Shore Drive (left) presents a barrier to pedestrian lakefront access. Local serving street fronting retail (right) may take advantage of facade grants to contribute to an improved visual identity.

are notably absent within the study area, except for a few isolated ground floor businesses in older mixed use buildings. Large-scale development in the study area includes three substantial Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) housing transformation sites, which offer an opportunity to address a number of neighborhood issues, particularly the study area's lack of easy access to retail and services. To this end, planning can help direct quality locations for new retail, rather than miss opportunities to add services to the community as the residential infill development process moves forward. Transit and pedestrian linkages to surrounding retail destinations will be equally important, as the Lake Meadows project directly to the north of the study area is developed with large scale commercial uses.

Commercial Development Principles

1. Both retail and residential infill development should be encouraged along the three primary east-west corridors (43rd, Pershing and 35th) to both support existing businesses that are present, and expand the retail vitality of the study area as a whole.
2. Small-scale shopping (dry cleaners, cafes, convenience stores) as well as larger stores should be located close to existing transit service so commuters and those without access to private autos may take advantage of neighborhood services efficiently. Access to bus stops and station

entrances should be considered as commercial and mixed use sites are designed.

- Public uses such as parks, schools and recreation centers should be maintained and enhanced in the study area to support both existing and new residential populations, with transit connections provided.
- Existing structures of historic value, such as the greystones lining Martin Luther King and Drexel Boulevards, should be preserved and enhanced to blend with and complement new development under construction in the area.



Three story townhomes line Bowen Avenue.

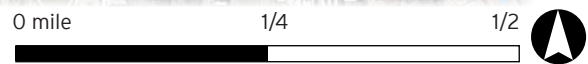


New and revitalized housing in the Mid South Area will contribute to new commercial opportunities. Clockwise from top left: Jazz on the Boulevard, historic greystones, Oakwood Shores, and scattered infill development.

It is important to note that, while the transit ridership estimate generated during the background phase of this process was focused on the potential of future Metra service, various alternative options for improving transit access and mobility have been developed. The physical and financial challenges of pursuing a new Metra Station at Oakwood Boulevard on the Metra Electric Line (construction costs between 20 and 30 million in 2007 dollars), coupled with the estimate that ridership would be quite low (between 45 and 85 weekday boardings), required that the planning process instead also consider a range of possibilities for improving mobility for neighborhood residents in the shorter term.

The Mid South recommendations summarized in this report reflect input received from the IGAC, Task Forces, and the community at large. The *Mid South Study Area Recommendations* map on the following page summarizes the Strategies identified through this planning process. A detailed description of each strategy is provided, followed by an Implementation discussion that includes a summary matrix of action items.





LEGEND

- Study Area Boundary
- Existing Transit Station
- Existing Transit Routes**
- CTA Green Line
- Metra Electric Line
- CTA Bus Routes
- 132 Bus Route Number
- Planned Future Development**
- Residential
- Mixed Use
- Public / Institutional

Transit Improvement Strategies

- 1** New express route to Loop
- 2** Extended service hours on #43
- 3** Extended route and service hours on #39/Pershing to access lakefront
- 4** Additional/enhanced bus shelters
 - Neighborhood stop
 - Retail node stop
- 5** Sidewalk/lighting enhancements near Indiana Green Line station

Potential Transit Opportunities

- 6** Long term potential for Metra Service
- 7** Long term potential for BRT Service
- 8** Long term potential for street car service

Access and Design Strategies

- A** Improve lakeshore access
- B** Streetscape enhancements
 - Retail streetscape
 - Key neighborhood route
- C** Improved intersections, Pedestrian crossings
- D** Gateway feature

Key Commercial Development Strategies

- I** 43rd Street corridor
- II** 43rd Street Green Line node
- III** Pershing corridor
- IV** Cottage Grove mixed use corridor
- V** Lake Meadows area redevelopment

TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Mid-South community members advocated for localized transit service that focuses on moving residents throughout the community and select transit routes that link the Mid-South area to other communities of import. The following transit improvement strategies are depicted on the Mid-South Study Area Recommendations map.

- 1** Consider implementing a new express bus route to the Loop. According to CTA data from 2007, bus use in the study area is high and is greater than ridership at nearby Green Line stations. Consistent with public input, this indicates that the community may support a new rush hour express bus route to downtown Chicago. This new route would collect passengers south of the study area along Stony Island and 47th Street. At 47th Street, the route would turn west to Cottage Grove and follow Cottage Grove north through the study area to 39th, turning east to Lake Shore Drive north and downtown. Other express options could be considered including a non-stop street express which avoids Lake Shore Drive congestion at the Museum Campus.
- 2** Extend the evening hours of service on the #43 43rd Street bus route. CTA is currently experimenting with extended weekday service on route #43 along 43rd Street. In March 2008, evening service on the route was extended from 7 p.m. to approximately 12:30 a.m. between 47th/Red Line and 43rd/Oakenwald. The service frequency on route #43 is every 20 minutes. This experiment is funded through the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, and will be evaluated periodically to review performance.
- 3** Consider implementing weekend service on the #39 Pershing bus route by operating only half of the weekday routing from the lakefront to the CTA Red Line at the Dan Ryan Expressway. In addition, investigate the possibility of building a bus turnaround on the lakefront. Currently, route #39 operates between St. Louis on the west and Lake Park on the east on weekdays only. To turn around on the east end and travel back west the bus operates on Ellis, 40th, and Lake Park. A new bus turnaround facility in the park east of Lake Shore Drive would provide transit access to the park and eliminate the on-street turnaround operation. Additionally, a lakeshore bus turnaround area can relieve nearby Ellis Street of unwanted bus turnaround traffic.
- 4** Passenger shelters located at bus stops greatly improve the waiting environment for CTA customers. Shelters shield waiting passengers from the elements and provide route and system information. New commercial developments should provide space for an adequate bus shelter or incorporate sheltering amenities in the new building's design. Commercial developments planned along existing bus routes should consider the needs of waiting bus customers in their design, to take advantage of the enhanced transit presence in these locations.
- 5** Accessibility to the existing CTA Green Line stations at Indiana and 43rd require improvements such as way finding signage, better lighting, and sidewalk reconstruction, in particular along 40th Street adjacent to the former railroad embankment.

LONG-TERM TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

While community members were interested in the possibility of a new Metra station on the Metra Electric District, the ridership projections completed as part of this study did not support the addition of a station. Additionally, community members were interested in seeing BRT and/or a streetcar introduced in the community in the long-term. All are considered long-term opportunities due to the need to build ridership levels and the high level of funding needed for implementation. However, the community should continue to study the possibility for additional service improvements in the event that increased development in the future could support the service and funding becomes available.

- 6** Study the long term potential for the introduction of Metra Service in the study area. Future development resulting in increased population densities may justify the introduction of Metra service within the study area. A future study related to the introduction of Metra service within the study area should be done in conjunction with a broader assessment of how service within this area may impact the entire Metra Electric District as well as considering other long-term community transit needs.
- 7** As the neighborhood and its surroundings continue to develop, consider the long term potential for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. Improve transit service along 35th and 39th Streets with more frequent or higher capacity vehicles and pre-paid boarding facilities. BRT service should provide connections to CTA's Green and Red line stations to the west and to the new Metra station on the Rock Island line just west of IIT at 35th Street.
- 8** Consider the long term potential for local street car service to improve transit options along Cottage Grove in the study area. A new South Side circulator route will provide connections to Hyde Park to the south and to other neighborhood destinations.

ACCESS AND DESIGN STRATEGIES

The urban design and pedestrian framework recommendations address the appropriate treatment for the public realm including enhanced connections for recreational opportunities, improved streetscapes, construction of plazas and gateways, and facade improvements. The access and design recommendations described below are shown on the accompanying map.

- A** Improve access to the lakeshore from the study area and increase bicycle and pedestrian links to the proposed harbor and its associated amenities slated for construction on the lakeshore. Concurrently, develop a strong network of bike lanes and pedestrian routes in the area with particular respect to accessing and directing users to the lakeshore. Capitalize on existing and new connections to the lake, such as the planned pedestrian bridge at 35th Street, and the planned improved crossover facilities at 39th and 43rd Streets. Additionally, improved signage alerting pedestrians and bicyclists to lakeshore access already available at the existing 35th and 43rd crossovers is needed.
- B** Improve the streetscape environment in targeted areas slated for retail development to enhance the feeling of safety and comfort for pedestrians, and provide public plazas, wayfinding features, or open spaces in conjunction with retail uses and transit stops. At key neighborhood routes, focus on providing well-maintained sidewalks, parkways and street trees. Local businesses should continue to take advantage of the facade improvement program available through QCDC. Access for emergency services should be a paramount consideration.
- C** Improve pedestrian crossings at key locations, with bumpouts, clear crossing areas, countdown signaling and traffic bollards particularly along Martin Luther King Drive and Cottage Grove at major cross streets.
- D** Establish a gateway feature welcoming visitors and residents to the neighborhood at Pershing from Lakeshore Drive and at 35th and Martin Luther King Drive. A successful gateway feature will provide the Mid South Area with a unique arrival identifier that can also serve to direct visitors to other places of interest in the area.

KEY COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Planning for key commercial areas is recommended to ensure that site-level development strategies coordinate well with transit and pedestrian movement patterns. Efforts must be made to direct retail to key locations along east-west corridors, particularly where it would provide residents with easy access to retail while walking from a transit station or bus stop. As the number of residential units within the community increases, the market for commercial uses will improve. In the near term, City assistance with land assembly, remediation or other financial incentives can speed the development of new mixed residential and commercial projects in high priority locations. Listed below and shown on the accompanying map are several recommendations with respect to commercial areas.

- I** Along the length of 43rd Street from Vincennes to Langley, there is sporadic retail infill. Participants in the planning program desire a concentration of small independent neighborhood-serving retail and mixed uses along this corridor.
- II** Mixed use development is desired in the area immediately surrounding the 43rd Street Green Line station; both the community and the task forces identify this area as a prime location for a thriving retail node, which is the subject of ongoing City planning efforts.
- III** With the scale of development at Oakwood Shores there is a need to provide a neighborhood retail node to serve this new population. Locating a commercial and mixed use node along Pershing would place the retail at the center of the community and make it easy to access from many parts of the study area and highly visible at a key neighborhood entry point from the lakeshore. Planned mixed use construction on the Oakwood Shores site will complement this new node.
- IV** Mixed use development at Cottage Grove-40th Street to 43rd Street-is planned to reflect the development character further south, building upon the established pattern at the 43rd Street corner.
- V** Access to commercial development north of 35th Street at Lake Meadows should be improved through connections and signage to the area as retail and service amenities increase and the area redevelops. A planned arts and recreation center at Pershing and 35th Street will complement this new development.

IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation of the study recommendations will be facilitated by prioritizing and phasing the associated action items and coordinated with the appropriate agencies. The matrix below outlines each action item and its recommended phasing timeframe, the identification of lead and supporting agencies and estimated costs, where applicable.

Because the action items are subject to change over time, flexibility should remain regarding implementation priorities, costs and timing. This matrix should be reviewed and updated periodically, and utilized to measure progress on realizing a “reconnected” Mid-South area in the coming years. Some actions will require further study and the identification of funding.

Community Stakeholders and Expert Panel participants

Implementation Actions-Mid South

identified the following Implementation Actions as top priorities:

- **Transit Improvement:** Conduct a feasibility study examining the long-term potential for Metra service; explore the possibility of a public-private partnership to conduct a feasibility study for a street car or bus rapid transit service to connect major south side destinations; implement express bus service from 63rd Street to 35th Street to the Loop via Lake Shore Drive.
- **Access and Design:** Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the lakefront, implement streetscape improvements along Cottage Grove extending south from 35th to 53rd, and initiate creation of a neighborhood gateway entrance from Lake Shore Drive.
- **Commercial Development:** Focus City efforts on attracting and supporting small business development along 43rd Street.

| | ACTION ITEM | LEAD ORGANIZATION | SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS | ESTIMATED COST (2008 \$) |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Short Term (1-5 Years) | | | | |
| Transit Improvement Strategies | Conduct studies regarding the long-term potential to improve access to and within the South Side, utilizing Metra and/or BRT or other transit modes. | City of Chicago | RTA, Metra, CTA, RTA, Alderman's Office | Further study required |
| | Explore feasibility of operating a street car along key commercial corridors (such as Cottage Grove and 35th) to support commercial activity and improve north/south and east/west connections. | City of Chicago | QCDC, CTA, DPD, private sector partners, Alderman's Office | Further study required |
| | Coordinate with ongoing Olympic “legacy investment” planning efforts. | City of Chicago | Alderman's Office, CTA, RTA | N/A |
| | Continue the extended service hours of the #43 bus. (Extended service was first offered in the Spring of 2008, 7:00p.m.-12:30 a.m. between 47th/Green Line/Red Line and 43rd/Oakenwald). | CTA | Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, QCDC, JARC | Currently funded by the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development |
| | Build a #39 bus turnaround in the 39th Street Beach parking lot. | CTA | Alderman's Office | \$3-5 million |
| | Improve bike parking at all train stations and bus stops. | CDOT | CTA, DPD, Alderman's Office | \$1,000 per bike rack |
| | Install additional bus shelters to protect riders from the elements and provide travel information at neighborhood stops. Ensure new developments include adequate space for bus shelters, or incorporate sheltered waiting areas into the building design. | CTA, CDOT | DPD, City of Chicago Street Furniture Program, Alderman's Office | \$15,000-\$20,000 per shelter \$15,000-\$30,000 per plaza area |
| Access and Design Strategies | Continue to promote facade and signage streetscape enhancements for existing buildings, including awnings and attractive storefront displays. | QCDC | DPD | N/A |
| | Design a gateway feature at Lake Shore Drive to mark the point of entry into the community. | DPD | CDOT | \$750,000+ |
| | Use effective and clear signage to improve access for lakefront visitors to the neighborhood's retail and commercial businesses. | CDOT | Park District, QCDC, DPD | \$300-\$700 per location |
| Commercial Development Strategies | Encourage the development of stores, such as dry cleaners and cafes, close to existing transit stops. | Private sector | DPD, QCDC | N/A |
| | Undertake appropriate zoning amendments to encourage commercial and mixed use development in the desired pattern. | DPD | Alderman's Office | N/A |
| | Conduct a study to understand the market trade area for the Mid South, to ensure appropriate and complementary commercial attraction and retention at all retail nodes. | DPD | QCDC, Alderman's Office, private sector partners | Further study required |
| | Support plans to develop an arts and recreation center at 35th and Cottage Grove. | Private sector partners | DPD, Alderman's Office, QCDC | N/A |
| | Support the establishment of independent retailers near the Green Line station at 43rd Street and along 43rd Street between Vincennes and Langley. | 3rd and 4th Ward Alderman's Offices, (study currently underway) | DPD, QCDC | N/A |

Implementation Actions-Mid South

| | ACTION ITEM | LEAD ORGANIZATION | SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS | ESTIMATED COST (2008 \$) |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Mid-Term (5-10 Years) | | | | |
| Transit Improvement Strategies | Improve accessibility to the existing Green Line stations at Indiana and 43rd Street through better signage, lighting, and sidewalk construction. | DPD (Study currently underway at 43rd Street) | CTA, 3rd Ward Alderman's Office | \$375,000-\$500,000 per block |
| | Provide greater levels of bus shelter enhancements (such as the use of "Bus Tracker" real time information) at retail node stops. | CTA, CDOT | DPD, City of Chicago Street Furniture Program | Further study required |
| | Establish an express bus route through the Mid South Area, along Cottage Grove and onto Lake Shore Drive to the Loop. | CTA | Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, JARC | \$1,954,150 per year |
| | Add weekend service on route #39 between Sox-35th and the 39th Street Beach. | CTA | Alderman's Office, Park District, JARC | \$227,775 per year |
| | Explore feasibility of adjusting headways on the #3 and #4 bus routes to alleviate crowding during rush hours. | CTA | Alderman's Office, JARC | Further study required |
| Access and Design Strategies | Improve pedestrian crossings at the 35th St and Cottage Grove intersections to better coordinate the use of the intersection by pedestrians, bikes and cars. | CDOT | DPD | \$35,000-\$60,000 per intersection |
| | Improve pedestrian crossings along Martin Luther King Drive at the 37th, Pershing, 41st, and 43rd Street crossings. Improve pedestrian crossings along Cottage Grove at 38th and 35th Streets. | CDOT | DPD | \$75,000-\$1,000,000 per intersection |
| | Improve access to the lakefront via existing and planned pedestrian/bicycle bridges, at 35th, 39th and 43rd Streets and the Oakwood Boulevard bridge. (Improvements underway for the 35th and 43rd Street bridges, partially funded by CMAQ grants). | CDOT | DPD, Park District | Requires significant further study |
| Commercial Development Strategies | Focus the development of new retail along transit-accessible streets, particularly 43rd Street. In addition, support development on Pershing Road, Cottage Grove, and 35th Street. | QCDC | DPD, 3rd and 4th Ward Alderman's Offices | N/A |
| | Develop mixed use retail and housing near the Green Line station at 43rd Street. | Private sector | DPD, QCDC | N/A |
| Long-Term (10-15 Years) | | | | |
| Transit Improvement Strategies | Following more in-depth study and if warranted by ridership projections and availability of funding, introduce service on the Metra Electric District within the study area. | City of Chicago | Metra | \$20-\$30 million; requires significant further study |
| | If warranted, implement BRT and/or streetcar circulator service to serve other transit modes, along with existing Green Line stations. | CTA | QCDC, Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, JARC | Further study required |
| Access and Design Strategies | Implement streetscape enhancements and plazas in conjunction with commercial developments on Cottage Grove throughout the study area and beyond, along Pershing from MLK Drive to Langley, 43rd Street from Berkeley to Prairie, and Oakwood from Mandrake Park to Lake Shore Drive. | CDOT | DPD | Approximately \$750,000 per block |
| | Improve the pedestrian environment with enhanced sidewalks and lighting along Vincennes from 43rd to Browning, 37th Street from MLK Drive to Cottage Grove, Pershing from Evans to Ellis, and Cottage Grove throughout the study area. | CDOT | DPD | \$375,000-\$500,000 per block |
| Commercial Development Strategies | Develop mixed use retail and housing on Cottage Grove between 40th and 43rd Streets. | Private sector | DPD, QCDC | N/A |

Agency and organization abbreviations:

CTA = Chicago Transit Authority, RTA=Regional Transportation Authority, DPD=City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, CDOT=Chicago Department of Transportation, JARC=Jobs Access and Reverse Commute, CHA= Chicago Housing Authority, QCDC=Quad Communities Development Corporation.

