

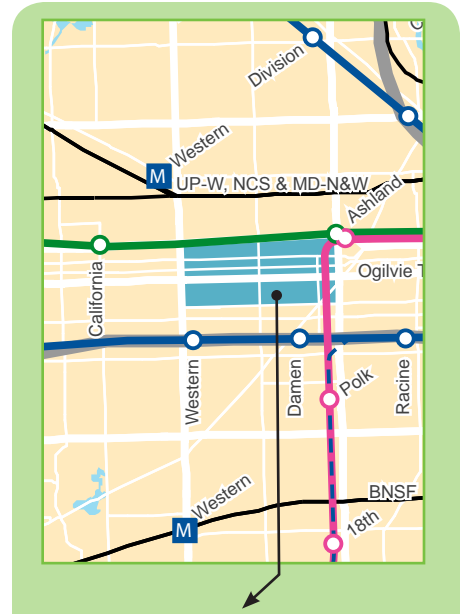


Near West

In order to create a system which best connects the Near West 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 Near West 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 NEAR WEST

In the Near West Area, the already-well established street grid provides convenient pedestrian access to key retail nodes along its major east-west corridor; Madison Street; at Western, Damen, and Ashland Avenues. Improved bus facilities such as shelters and seating areas have been installed, along with landscaping improvements that complement new housing developments. Access to the nearby Green Line has improved, due to successful development of a new elevated station at Damen. Commercial businesses in mixed use buildings flourish along Damen to the south of the station. The Lake-Kinzie Industrial Corridor to the north of Lake Street enjoys greater access for its employees that commute to the area for work. Infill developments and commercial concentrations are locally-owned and locally-serving, welcoming residents and visitors to the area and serving their daily needs—dry cleaning, banking, grocery shopping, newsstands and restaurants. Patrons of the United Center arrive to events via the Green Line’s new Damen station and enjoy a meal or refreshments pre or post-game at the variety of restaurant choices available along the route to the arena. Clear signage directs United Center visitors to the venue from both the Blue Line to the south and the Green Line to the north. New and improved pedestrian access along Damen encourages transit use to the United Center, and facilitates pedestrian access to nearby neighborhood and recreational amenities by new and old residents alike. Some of the parking lots surrounding the United Center have become redevelopment sites that accommodate parking garages to serve the United Center, provide space for a new Pink Line station at Madison, and free existing parking lots for alternative developments.



The [Near West Study Area] is bounded by Lake Street to the north, Ashland Avenue to the east, Monroe Street to the south, and Western Avenue to the west. The Lake-Kinzie Industrial Corridor abuts the neighborhood to the north, and a new mixed-income community, Westhaven Park, is under development. The United Center arena, at the center of the study area, represents a significant regional entertainment destination throughout the year. Surrounded by a vast expanse of surface parking, this area provides a potential catalyst for energizing retail activity to serve the remainder of the Near West study area. Though rail service passes along the north and eastern edges of the study area, 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 the United Center and the Lake-Kinzie Industrial Corridor), to ensure that all of the Near West side is connected in the future.

TRANSIT SERVICE

Transit Improvement Principles have been developed that focus on improving access and service using the transit system currently in place, including CTA bus and rail. Additionally, early in the planning process the community expressed a desire for a new transit stop at one of two locations; an elevated Green Line station at Damen and Lake or an elevated Pink Line station at Madison. It has been concluded that potential ridership is likely sufficient to justify construction of just one new station. The community has expressed a preference for a Green Line station, which offers more advantages to the neighborhood. However, with further development in the area, and strengthened connections to the United Center, the potential for a new Madison station on the Pink Line at the United Center should be reinvestigated. The Principles below are intended to provide policy direction consistent with the *Vision: Reconnecting the Near West*.

Transit Improvement Principles

1. Streetscape improvements and any associated elements should support transit users and transit accessibility.
2. 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 to nearby residential areas.
3. Safe bicycle parking should be accommodated in several locations easily accessible to public transit such as bus shelters and train stations.
4. Access to existing transit stations and stops should be clearly marked and signed, providing a safe and pleasant pedestrian experience for riders and facilitating transfers between east-west and north-south routes.
5. Accessible and informative shelters for bus riders shall be strategically placed to encourage new and regular transit users.
6. As the neighborhood evolves and redevelopment continues, consider the long-term potential to provide a Madison Pink Line station. Such a



Elevated Green Line tracks above Lake Street

station could provide an opportunity for the United Center to strengthen its connection to the Near West area, and reduce the current amount of parking required for games and events.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND URBAN DESIGN

The pedestrian accessibility and urban design principles provide an important tool for the Near West 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 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. Significant measures should be taken to ensure that pedestrians feel comfortable on the streets during the day or night, moving between the United Center and nearby transit stations, as well as to other neighborhood destinations.
5. As sidewalk and bicycle lane upgrades are undertaken throughout the neighborhood, prioritize access to commercial areas, community centers, schools, parks, the United Center, Malcolm X College, and other activity nodes and community anchors.



The United Center parking lots contribute to a streetscape on Madison with little visual interest or pedestrian activity.

Urban Design Principles

1. Plazas, seating areas, and public art installations should be accommodated in key locations to enhance the pedestrian experience, particularly along the streets specified for retail development.
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.
4. Gateway treatments should be provided at key entry points to the neighborhood, along Damen and Madison.
5. Way finding signage should draw visitors and residents from the surrounding Medical District and West Loop areas into the neighborhood, and attract visitors to remain in the neighborhood after or before events at the United Center.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Land use in the Near West study area includes a variety of use and development patterns, organized on a street grid of long blocks separated by a series of major east-

west arterial streets. The former CHA housing project, the Henry Horner Homes, has been removed, and in its place a new mixed-income community, Westhaven Park, is under development. Additionally, several other privately financed residential development projects demonstrate market strength on the Near West side. Further, the United Center arena represents a significant regional entertainment destination throughout the year. Surrounded by a vast expanse of surface parking dedicated to the United Center and the adjacent Malcolm X College, this area provides a potential catalyst for energizing retail activity to serve the remainder of the Near West study area. Portions of this surface parking might be considered for consolidation into structured parking in order to free land to create a new active mixed use environment benefiting the United Center, Malcolm X College, and the community area as a whole. Commercial and service uses are notably absent within the study area, community members have continually stressed 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.

Commercial Development Principles

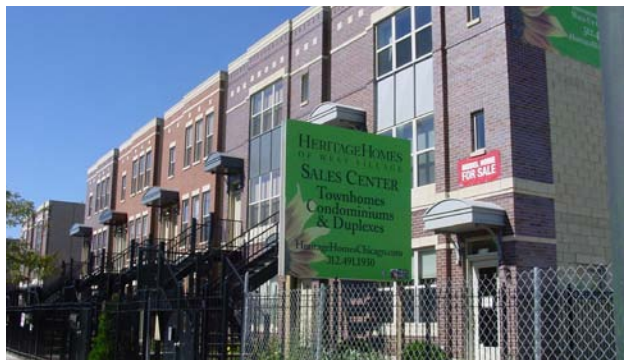
1. Both retail and residential infill development should be encouraged along the Madison and Damen corridors to both support existing businesses, and expand the retail opportunities of the study area as a whole. Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring that affordable

retail offerings are provided that serve local resident needs.

2. Convenience shopping (dry cleaners, cafes, sundry 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 sites are designed. As access to the Green Line improves with a new station at Damen, capitalize on transit-oriented development opportunities and linkages with adjacent privately-owned and City-owned redevelopment sites.
3. 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.
4. Existing structures of historic value, such as churches, institutions, and rowhouses in the area should be preserved and enhanced to blend with and complement new development under construction in the area.



Housing development in the Near West Area contributes to new commercial opportunities. Villages of West Haven Park (left), and scattered infill development (right).



New homes for sale on Madison Street.



Activity centers and recent public realm investments in the study area provide a strong basis upon which to build new connections. Clockwise from top left: the United Center, Mabel Manning library, existing Madison Street median.

The Near West recommendations summarized in this report reflect input received from the IGAC, Task Forces, and the community at large. The *Near West 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.





NEAR WEST STUDY AREA RECOMMENDATIONS



LEGEND

- Study Area Boundary
- Existing Transit Station
- Existing Transit Routes
 - CTA Green Line
 - CTA Pink Line
 - CTA Blue Line
 - CTA Bus Routes
- Bus Route Number (132)
- Planned Future Development
 - Residential
 - Mixed Use
 - Commercial

Transit Improvement Strategies

- 1 New elevated station on Green Line
- 2 Enhance connection to Blue Line
- 3 Additional/ enhanced bus shelters
 - Neighborhood stop
 - Retail node stop
- 4 Washington/ Warren enhancement
- 5 Enhance transfer locations
- 6 New elevated station on Pink Line

Access and Design Strategies

- A Improve access to community anchors
- B Streetscape enhancements
 - Plaza / open space opportunity
 - Retail streetscape
 - Key neighborhood route
- C Improved intersections, Pedestrian crossings
- D Gateway feature

Key Commercial Development Strategies

- I Damen Corridor
- II Western Node
- III Damen and Ashland/ Paulina Nodes
- IV Privately owned event parking lots
- V United Center and Malcolm X College Parking Lots



TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Near West community members advocated for improved transit service that provides accessible boardings within a feasible walking distance of major community activity nodes. The following transit improvement strategies are depicted on the *Near West Study Area Recommendations* map.

- 1** A new "L" station at Damen on the Green Line is recommended over a new station at Madison on the Pink Line. The ridership forecast suggests that a station at either of these locations would be viable (approximately 1,500 to 2,300 typical weekday boardings). The Madison area is not yet developed and there are no definite development plans in the future for the area surrounding the station. Additionally, a stop at Damen was an option preferred by the community and will better serve the Lake-Kinzie employment corridor. Consider placing the station in such a way that allows for two entrances so it can be accessed easily from both the clustering of community anchors located on Hoyne, and from the planned retail nodes located on Damen.
- 2** Improve the way finding signage and pedestrian environment to better connect the United Center with the Medical District Blue Line station at the existing Paulina, Ogden and Damen entrances. Although two CTA Blue Line stations are located within one-half mile of the southern portion of the study area, walking south to access station entrances requires traversing busy streets and a bridge over the Eisenhower Expressway, followed by a walk down a lengthy ramp. This inhospitable environment creates the perception that the stations are further away from the neighborhood than they are, and limits the potential to create synergies between commercial uses and transit.
- 3** Passenger shelters located at bus stops greatly improve the waiting environment for CTA customers. Improved shelters are especially needed along the heavily traveled #20 Madison bus route to better serve local transit riders. Commercial developments planned along existing bus routes should consider the needs of waiting bus customers in their design, by incorporating shelters or sheltering amenities into the building design.
- 4** Transit enhancements on Washington and Warren Streets are recommended to improve the environment for bus users. Washington and Warren are currently configured as a set of one-way pairs. By returning to a traditional two-way circulation pattern excessive speeding on these streets may be reduced. Further analysis is needed to determine the impact that two-way traffic would have on bus service.
- 5** Provide focused improvements at points of connection between intersecting bus routes to facilitate transfers, including wayfinding signage and use of "Bus Tracker" notification of wait times for approaching buses.
- 6** Leverage the potential of a public-private partnership to develop a Pink Line station at Madison to serve the United Center in conjunction with commercial and residential development.

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 community anchors such as the United Center and the institutional cluster on Hoyne from the study area. Concurrently, develop a strong network of bike lanes and pedestrian routes in the area with particular respect to accessing and directing users to these activity centers. Although care has been taken to create a more pedestrian scaled street environment within the new Westhaven Park area, the street grid and pedestrian network in this area is interrupted in both directions. Additionally, the character of Lake Street, along with the lack of another continuous east-west route until Washington, contributes to the perception that the Ashland CTA station is difficult to walk to from the study area. Improved bike routing and signage is needed to facilitate an easily accessible route west from the Loop into the study area for bicyclists.

- 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 space in conjunction with retail uses and transit stops. Building on pending streetscape upgrades planned for Western and Lake, focus initial efforts along Damen. Along key neighborhood routes, focus on providing well-maintained sidewalks, parkways and street trees. Access for emergency services should be a paramount consideration.
- C** Improve pedestrian crossings at key locations, particularly along Lake, Washington and Warren Streets at major cross streets. Washington and Warren in particular are both very wide and designed to accommodate significant traffic levels despite being primarily lined with residential uses. Additionally, crossings on Ogden Avenue (both at Ashland and Madison) are dangerous and lack visibility for motorists and pedestrians alike. The need for additional traffic capacity, on-street parking and bus stops has in many areas resulted in limited street tree cover and planted parkways. Properly applied improvements and potential reexamination of the one-way pairings can work together to improve this condition.
- D** Establish gateway features welcoming visitors and residents to the neighborhood at key entry points to the neighborhood along Damen and Madison.

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. Existing land use in the study area consists of a mix of scattered retail space and residential uses. Plans for new retail are at the edges of the study area, leaving a large area in the middle beyond an easy walking distance of retail locations. Effort must be undertaken to direct and generate retail at key locations throughout the study area, including close to the United Center, concentrated along Madison Street and stretching north and south along Damen Avenue. As the number of households in the community continues to increase as a result of the current development program, the market for commercial uses will improve. It can be expected that in the near term, City assistance with land assembly and remediation, in addition to financial incentives, will be required to support commercial and mixed use projects in high priority locations. Listed below and shown on the accompanying map are several recommendations with respect to commercial areas in and near the study area.

- I** A commercial retail corridor should be developed along Damen. A new Green Line station would anchor the northern terminus of a retail corridor extending south to the United Center. A vibrant commercial corridor will encourage transit users to access the United Center from the Blue Line, and potentially from the Green Line in the future.
- II** The retail node at Madison and Western includes a new Walgreen's store, which will be joined by a new full-service grocery across the street. Many of the existing uses along Western have been developed in an auto-oriented pattern, favoring vehicle access over the creation of an inviting pedestrian environment that would encourage local patronage by walking or biking. Support for this important and valuable addition to the neighborhood should also include pedestrian-friendly amenities such as sensitively designed parking lots and bike racks to encourage non-driving users.
- III** Retail nodes should also be developed along Madison Street at both Damen and Ashland/Ogden/Paulina Avenues. The City should work with property owners to determine if some of the nodes should incorporate a portion of the privately owned parking lots that currently serve the United Center. The area between Oakley and Hoyne on the Madison frontage should be residential in focus.
- IV** The privately-owned parking lots surrounding the United Center provide an opportunity for new development (in conjunction with structured parking) that provides new housing, supports street level retail, serves as a neighborhood gateway, and provides a wider range of amenities for United Center visitors and local residents.
- V** Through a public-private partnership, structured parking to serve both the United Center and Malcolm X College should be developed, freeing existing parking lots for the development of retail, entertainment, and institutional uses to serve students and United Center visitors in a campus-like setting.

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” Near West area in the coming years. Some actions will require further study and the identification of funding.

Community stakeholders and Expert Panel participants identified the following Implementation Actions as top priorities:

- **Transit Improvement:** Pursue a feasibility study and construction of a new Green Line station as first priority; consider opportunity to build a new Pink Line station in conjunction with United Center parking lot redevelopment.
- **Access and Design:** Implementing streetscape improvements along Damen between the Green Line and Blue Line, building on existing Madison streetscape improvements and planned Western and Lake streetscape improvements.
- **Commercial Development:** Pursuing public-private redevelopment options at the United Center and Malcolm X College to consolidate parking and develop commercial and entertainment uses.

Implementation Actions-Near West

	ACTION ITEM	LEAD ORGANIZATION	SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS	ESTIMATED COST (2008 \$)
Short Term (1-5 Years)				
Transit Improvement Strategies	Improve bike parking at all train stations and bus stops.	CDOT	CTA, DPD, Alderman's Office	\$1,000 per bike rack
	Improve accessibility to the existing Blue Line station at the Medical District through better signage, lighting, and sidewalk construction. Use signage to better connect the United Center with the Blue Line.	CDOT	CTA, DPD, IDOT, RTA, Alderman's Office, United Center, Illinois Medical District.	\$375,000-\$500,000 per block
	Study the feasibility of a Green Line station with access points at Damen and Hoyne.	CTA	DPD	Further study required
	Install additional bus shelters to protect riders from the elements and provide travel information. 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 coordinated facade and signage streetscape enhancements for existing buildings, including awnings and attractive storefront displays particularly along Damen, Hoyne and Madison Streets.	Near West CDC	DPD, Illinois Medical District	N/A
	Design gateway features along Damen and Madison to mark the point of entry into the community.	DPD	CDOT, United Center	\$750,000+
	Develop effective and clear way finding signage to direct pedestrians, cyclists and drivers to the neighborhood's retail and commercial business anchors.	CDOT	Near West CDC, DPD	\$300-\$700 per location
Commercial Development Strategies	Undertake appropriate zoning amendments to encourage commercial and mixed use development in the desired pattern.	DPD	Alderman's Office, City of Chicago, ICNC, MPC, private sector	N/A
	Encourage the development of retail and services (such as dry cleaners and cafes) close to existing transit stops, with particular emphasis on providing affordable options.	Near West CDC	DPD, other commercial development organizations, private sector	N/A
	Target the area surrounding the United Center and Malcolm X College for service and entertainment-oriented retail development (i.e. retail nodes at Damen and Madison, and Madison and Paulina) in conjunction with structured parking to serve visitors and students.	Malcolm X College, United Center, private sector	Energy and Environmental Block Grant Program (EEBG), DPD, Near West CDC, and other commercial development organizations.	N/A
Mid-Term (5-10 Years)				
Transit Improvement Strategies	Provide greater levels of bus shelter enhancements (such as the use of “Bus Tracker” real time information) where bus routes intersect, specifically on Madison at Western, Damen, and Ashland, and other retail node stops.	CTA, CDOT	DPD, City of Chicago Street Furniture Program, JARC	Further study required
	Construct a new elevated Green Line station along Lake Street between Damen and Hoyne.	CTA	City of Chicago, RTA, CMAP, MPC, LEED Council, ICNC, Local Alderman, Federal/State Support	\$50+ million; significant further study required

Implementation Actions-Near West

	ACTION ITEM	LEAD ORGANIZATION	SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS	ESTIMATED COST (2008 \$)
Access and Design Strategies	Improve the Washington and Warren intersections between Ashland and Damen and the Ashland/Odgen/Madison triangle to better coordinate the use of the intersections by pedestrians, bikes and cars.	CDOT	DPD	\$35,000-\$60,000 per intersection
	Improve pedestrian crossings along Lake, Washington and Warren Streets with bumpouts, clear crossing areas, countdown signaling and traffic bollards. Improve pedestrian crossings along Odgen at Madison and Ashland Streets.	CDOT	DPD	\$75,000-\$1,000,000 per intersection
	Improve access to community anchors such as the United Center and the Lake-Kinzie Industrial Corridor, via existing and planned pedestrian and bicycle routes along Madison and Lake Streets, with clear signage and pavement markings.	CDOT	DPD	\$300-\$700 per location
Commercial Development Strategies	Focus the development of new retail along transit-accessible streets: particularly Damen and Madison.	Private sector	DPD, Near West CDC, CMAP, Partnership for New Communities, and other commercial development organizations.	N/A
	Develop retail nodes at Madison and Western, and on Madison from Ashland to Paulina.	Private sector	DPD, Near West CDC, and other commercial development organizations.	N/A
Long-Term (10-15 Years)				
Transit Improvement Strategies	Construct a new elevated Pink Line station along Paulina Street at Madison, in conjunction with private development of retail and entertainment uses.	CTA	City of Chicago, RTA, CMAP, MPC, LEED Council, ICNC, Local Alderman, Federal/State Support, United Center	\$50+ million; significant further study required
Access and Design Strategies	Implement streetscape enhancements and plazas in conjunction with commercial developments along Madison Street from Ashland to Western, and Western from Lake to Monroe.	CDOT	DPD	Approximately \$750,000 per block (some areas completed)
	Improve the pedestrian environment with enhanced sidewalks and lighting along Madison from Western to Ashland, on Damen from Lake to the Eisenhower Expressway, and between Washington and Warren from Ashland to Western.	CDOT	DPD, United Center, Illinois Medical District.	\$375,000-\$500,000 per block
Commercial Development Strategies	Explore the development potential of the privately-held parking lots surrounding the United Center.	United Center, lot owners	DPD, Near West CDC, and other commercial development organizations.	N/A
	Focus residential development on Madison between Oakley and Hoyne Streets to support future retail development.	Private sector	DPD, Energy and Environmental Block Grant Program (EEBG), Near West CDC.	N/A

Agency and organization abbreviations:

CTA = Chicago Transit Authority, DPD=City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, CDOT=Chicago Department of Transportation, RTA= Regional Transportation Authority, IDOT=Illinois Department of Transportation, JARC=Jobs Access and Reverse Commute, Near West CDC=Near West Side Community Development Corporation, ICNC= Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago, CMAP= Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, LEED Council= Local Economic and Employment Development Council, MPC= Metropolitan Planning Council.

