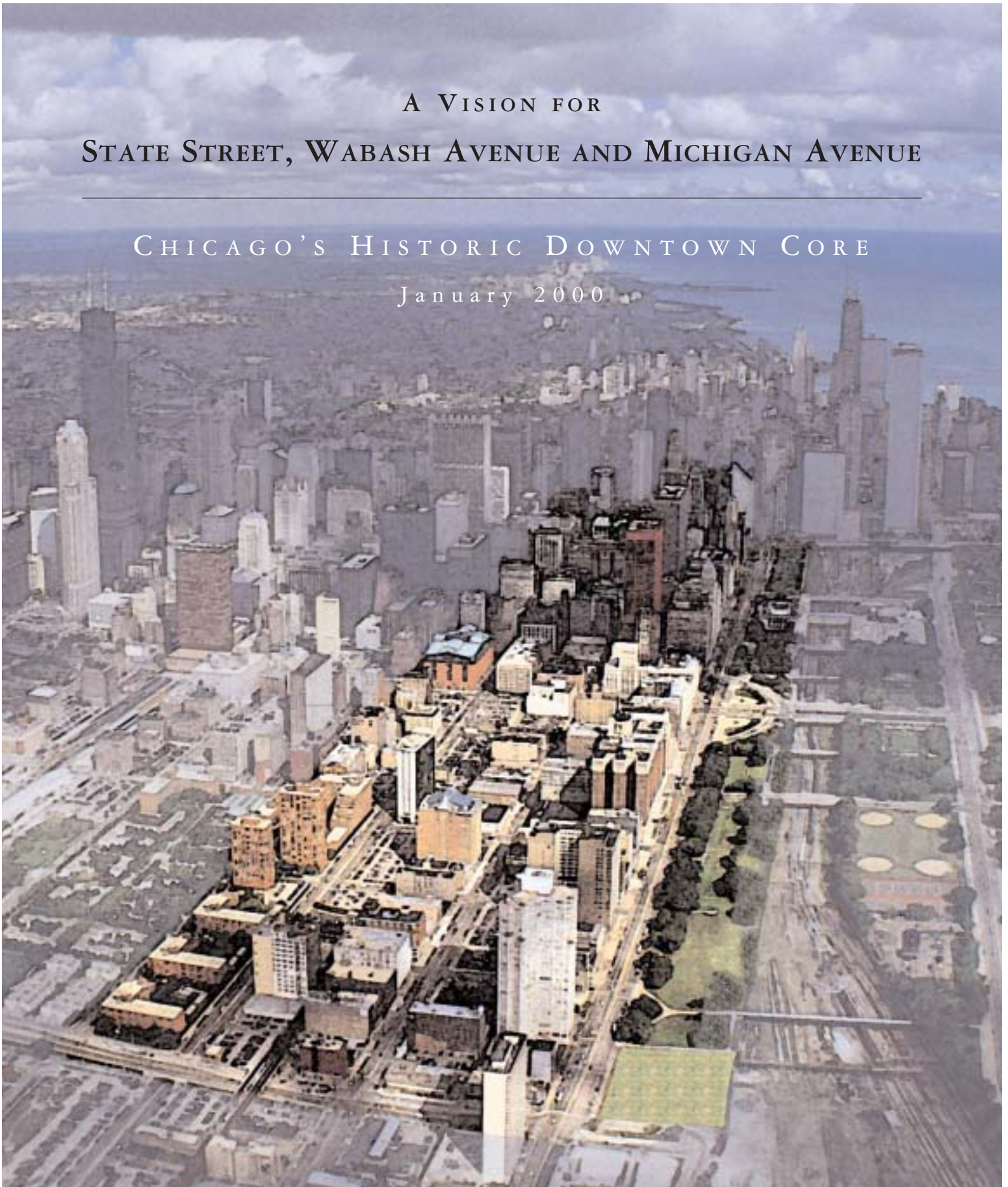


A VISION FOR  
STATE STREET, WABASH AVENUE AND MICHIGAN AVENUE

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CHICAGO'S HISTORIC DOWNTOWN CORE

January 2000



**City of Chicago**

Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Christopher R. Hill, Commissioner



The Study Area in the Heart of Downtown Chicago

# INTRODUCTION

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For the past several years the City of Chicago and the downtown business community have been aggressively pursuing the redevelopment of the Loop central business district. The most visible signs of this effort have been the reconstruction of State Street and Michigan Avenue, the reintroduction of historic lighting fixtures, planters, several major roadway rebuilding projects, and other infrastructure enhancements throughout the central area. In 1997, encouraged by the enthusiastic response to the State Street reconstruction, the City published Vision for Greater State Street: Next Steps, which outlined a series of initiatives focused on the State Street retail corridor. Implementation of many of those initiatives is currently underway.

The time has now come to broaden the perspective to look at Chicago's historic retail core, or the East Loop, as a whole. This area includes State Street, Wabash Avenue and Michigan Avenue, between the Chicago River and Harrison Street, and the east-west streets between State Street and Michigan Avenue. This is also the time to establish a stronger relationship between the East Loop and the South Loop by looking at the area from Harrison Street to Roosevelt Road.

The East Loop is a diverse downtown neighborhood which brings together businesses, academic and cultural institutions, large and small retailers, restaurants, hotels and homes, and workers, students, visitors, tourists and residents in a vibrant mix. The resilient business community that has grown up on these streets, the high concentration of landmark-quality structures, and the continuing infusion of new uses and investment offer a prime redevelopment opportunity. A program of targeted public/private initiatives would pave the way for a major infusion of private capital, and lead to a revitalization of the entire district comparable to what is already occurring on State Street.

If investment decisions in this area are to be made wisely, the public and private sectors must share a clearly articulated understanding of what they hope to achieve. Accordingly, having consulted with the local business community and other interested parties, the City of Chicago offers the following vision:

## THE EAST LOOP

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### *Chicago's Historic Downtown Core*



The East Loop is becoming the bustling heart of the city's revitalized historic central area, a thriving mixed-use neighborhood where Chicagoans from all walks of life come to live, work, shop, and learn. The district will be cherished for its vibrant street life, its rich historic character, and its unique Chicago shops and institutions. State Street, Wabash Avenue and Michigan Avenue will each continue to have a distinctive character of its own.

## STATE STREET

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### *Chicago's Historic Main Street of Classic Retail*



State Street is being reborn as the “classic retail street” – a dynamic mixed-use district that is building on the Street’s traditional strengths as a retail corridor, complementing them with exciting new uses. The street is being restored to its historic role as a destination retail district and "bright light" entertainment center. At the same time, theatre restorations, residential conversions of older buildings and a lively academic campus are bringing new life to the area. Rehabilitation of structures, new construction, and signage will continue to incorporate quality materials and sensitive design to reinforce the image of solidity, quality and permanence that Chicagoans have long associated with State Street and the Loop.

## WABASH AVENUE

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*The Street of Small Businesses:  
The Unique Chicago Scene*



Wabash Avenue will be restored to its historic role as the backbone of the “real Chicago” - an unpretentious street of hidden treasures and noisy charm. New signage will call attention to Jewelers Row and the hundreds of other thriving businesses on the street, many of them tucked away into the upper stories of vintage buildings. Over the long term, the avenue's dominant feature, the Loop elevated, will be maintained and rehabilitated in an historic spirit, to realize the aesthetic potential of this vital urban asset. Sidewalks and other neglected infrastructure will also be improved. Creative marketing will bring more popular neighborhood retailers to the street, with a special focus on attracting booksellers to this great avenue.

## MICHIGAN AVENUE

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*Chicago's Front Door,  
where Culture & Commerce meet*



Michigan Avenue will build on its role as Chicago's “front door.” Looking out onto Grant Park and Chicago's premier cultural institutions, restored historic buildings will offer homes to a dynamic mix of new and existing uses, including hotels, offices for professional service firms and small businesses, residences, educational institutions, and shops. Shops, restaurants and an abundance of outdoor cafes in the warm weather months will cater to tourists taking in Grant Park and the museums, visitors staying at local hotels, and East Loop workers. Designation of the Historic Michigan Boulevard District as a Chicago Landmark, continued improvements to the streetscape and Grant Park, including the Millennium Gardens, combined with existing assets such as the generously scaled sidewalks and expansive views of the park, lake, and skyline, will all enhance the avenue's status as one of the great urban promenades of the world.

## THE EAST LOOP TODAY

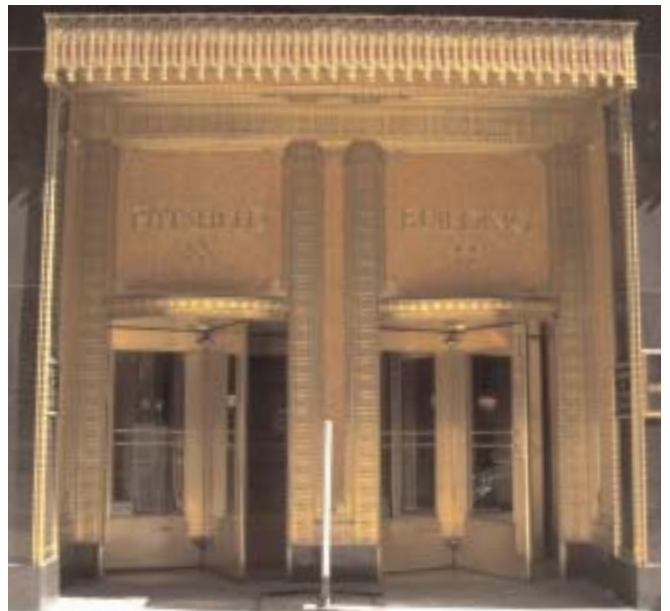
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The East Loop has continued to evolve into an exciting mixed-use district, with educational institutions, housing, and hotels in addition to shops and offices. The market for upper floor real estate throughout the district has been energized by wider economic growth and a creative adaptive re-use market. The East Loop is also home to a significant portion of the Class C office space in the central area. Class C buildings, though they may be well maintained, typically are older and do not command the premium rents of newer, more prestigious structures. For that reason they are an essential part of the diverse downtown economy, providing space for a multitude of small businesses. Over time several important business communities have taken root in these buildings, the members of which depend on one another for referrals and support services. These business communities include:

- Jewelers Row, consisting of five buildings in the vicinity of Wabash and Madison, the best known of which is the Jewelers Court Building (formerly known as the Mallers Building) at 5 S. Wabash. Jewelers Row is the center of the jewelry industry in the Midwest.
- Medical and dental professionals and related services in buildings such as 25 E. Washington Street.
- Architecture and design firms and related services such as printing and graphic arts in the Santa Fe and Fine Arts buildings.

A survey of property owners in reveals a strengthening office market in the East Loop. With minimal construction of new office buildings, and rising occupancy, rents and competing uses elsewhere in the Loop, the East Loop will gain as smaller tenants look elsewhere for space.

Academic institutions have also continued to expand their presence in the area. The retail market continues to be strong, and has made significant gains on State Street in particular. The Randolph Street Theatre District has gathered performance activities at the north end of the district and created a new streetscape on Randolph Street. New lighting and landscaping have also benefitted blocks on other streets in the area. Millennium Gardens and the proposed music and dance theater at Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street will also have a major impact.



The Historic Pittsfield Building (55 N. Wabash) on Jewelers Row

## RECENT GROWTH IN THE EAST LOOP

### Renovations and Adaptive Re-use

Renovation and adaptive re-use of East Loop buildings has continued at a remarkable pace, reflecting the dynamic economy of the district and the central area as a whole. Noteworthy recent and proposed projects include:

- The Carbide and Carbon Building (230 N. Michigan) is planned for conversion into a 386-room hotel. The \$81.5 million project will benefit from \$5 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF), a Class L property tax incentive for landmarks, and the federal investment tax credit.
- London Guarantee Building (360 N. Michigan): Renovation is currently underway for this Class L Chicago Landmark, also known as the former Stone Container building, that was recently purchased by Credit Suisse First Boston. The building will continue to be used for offices. Other East Loop buildings recently purchased by the company include 6 N. Michigan, 1 N. Dearborn, and 59 E. Van Buren.
- 320 N. Michigan: The Chicago Plan Commission recently approved plans to convert this office building to 127 extended-stay suites.
- 68 E. Wacker Place: A hotel conversion is planned for the former Chicago Auto Club building.
- 6 E. Lake: Proposed new home of the Joffrey Ballet.
- 177 N. State: The Page Brothers Building, a Chicago Landmark, will be redeveloped as the State Street Business Center, a home for civic and business promotion organizations.
- 225 N. Wabash: The former Oxford House has been redeveloped as the Hotel Monaco Chicago, a 192-room facility that opened in 1998.
- 20 W. Randolph: Renovation of the former Oriental Theater, now known as the Ford Center for the Performing Arts, was completed in 1998.
- 66 E. Randolph: Two former retail buildings were purchased by the City for the Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, opened in Fall of 1999. The \$18 million project serves as an advanced magnet school for the arts for the Chicago Public Schools in cooperation with Gallery 37. The project also includes a Gallery 37 retail store, sidewalk café and culinary arts kitchen, artists' spaces, TV studio for a cable cultural channel, black box theater, rooftop sculpture garden, and administrative offices.
- 162-170 N. State: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago was the successful bidder for this City-owned site, which had previously housed a number of marginal businesses. The 16-story Butler building will be renovated and a 17-story building constructed on adjacent parcels. The \$49 million complex will house a residence hall for 490 students, performance space, a film center, and three levels of retail at the base.

- 36 N. State: The former Reliance Building, a Chicago Landmark and a National Historic Landmark, has been converted into the Hotel Burnham with Federal Investment Tax Credits and TIF assistance. The hotel has 122 rooms and suites, and opened in fall of 1999.
- 20 N. State: A renovation with a mix of uses including retail and offices has been proposed for this former Woolworth's, which wraps around the Reliance Building. The City is in the process of acquiring the site and disposing of it through the Request for Proposals (RFP) process.
- The Chicago Building, 7 W. Madison: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) converted this Chicago Landmark from an office structure into a residence for 205 students in 1997. The lower two floors are used for retail.
- 10 S. Wabash: This mostly vacant office structure was converted into a 143-room hotel, the Crowne Plaza Chicago—The Silversmith, which opened in 1998.
- 39 S. State: The historic Mentor Building is being converted with Federal Investment Tax Credits into condominiums with retail space on the lower floors.
- 14 E. Jackson: The former Lytton Building will be converted with Federal Investment Tax Credits and TIF assistance into the city's first center for information technology with offices for high-tech startup firms.
- 401 S. State: Robert Morris College completed its move into this National Historic Landmark building, which was a department store for many years, and became an office building in 1998.
- 116 S. Michigan: This building was purchased in 1998 by the Art Institute of Chicago, which had previously converted the adjoining building at 112 S. Michigan into a dorm. The building will be used for school offices. The SAIC also owns a building at 37 S. Wabash and leases two floors totalling approximately 10,000 square feet in the former Kroch's & Brentano's building at 29 S. Wabash.
- 120 S. State: The former Singer Building has been converted into nine live/work condominiums.
- 122 S. Michigan (former Peoples Gas Building): Plans for National Louis University to occupy space in this Chicago Landmark with assistance from Federal Investment Tax Credits are underway.
- 330 S. Michigan: The top six floors of the McCormick Building are being converted to 78 luxury condominiums.
- 24 S. Congress: A \$14 million renovation is planned for this building, which will include a youth hostel operated by Hostelling International-American Youth Hostels, a dormitory for Columbia College, and retail space.





Carbide & Carbon Building: proposed hotel conversion



The former Oxford House: converted to the Hotel Monaco



Reliance Building: conversion to Hotel Burnham underway



Silversmith Building converted: to the Crowne Plaza hotel



Mentor Building: condominiums with retail below



330 S. Michigan: luxury condominiums on the top floors



Singer Building: live-work condominiums



Chicago Building: dormitory for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

## New Developments

The East Loop has also attracted significant investment in new development projects in recent years. Key projects include:

- State and Adams: “Dearborn Center”, a 25-story mixed use development has been announced for this long vacant site. The project, which proposes to include a large retail component on State and an office tower on Dearborn, will be built as a joint venture by Prime Group and Douglas Elliman-Beitler.
- 7 S. Dearborn: A 72-story structure that would be the world’s tallest, has been proposed for this site by European-American Realty. Uses include retail, offices, residential, and telecommunications.
- Clark and Dearborn: The \$50 million complex for the Goodman Theater is now under construction.
- State and Congress: This city-owned site will be offered in an RFP for mixed use development.
- State and Randolph: The City is in the process of acquiring this site and has issued an RFP for mixed use development with a food market at the street level.

## The Retail Market

Despite some turnover of stores, retailing in the East Loop remains strong, with vacancies of less than 2% as of 1997. Average retail rent increased 18% between 1996 and 1997 and 21% between 1997 and 1998 (from the Chicago Loop Retail Vacancy Survey, State/Wabash Corridor, by the Northern Realty Group). Notable recent retail developments include:

- Old Navy, flagship store on State and Washington
- 101 N. Wabash: Syms, a men's and women's discount apparel store, will occupy the former Crate & Barrel space
- 1 N. Dearborn: Sears store proposed for the lower floors of the building.
- New restaurants such as Taza at 39 S.Wabash, Mossant at the Hotel Monaco, The Big Downtown at the Palmer House, Rhapsody at Symphony Center, and the proposed Cafe Daniel at the Reliance Building.
- Carson Pirie Scott: Interior and exterior renovation is planned for this historic store on both State and Wabash. Plans for retreating the vacant spaces in the upper floors are underway.
- Borders Books & Music in the new School of the Art Institute building on State and Randolph.

New restaurants in the district



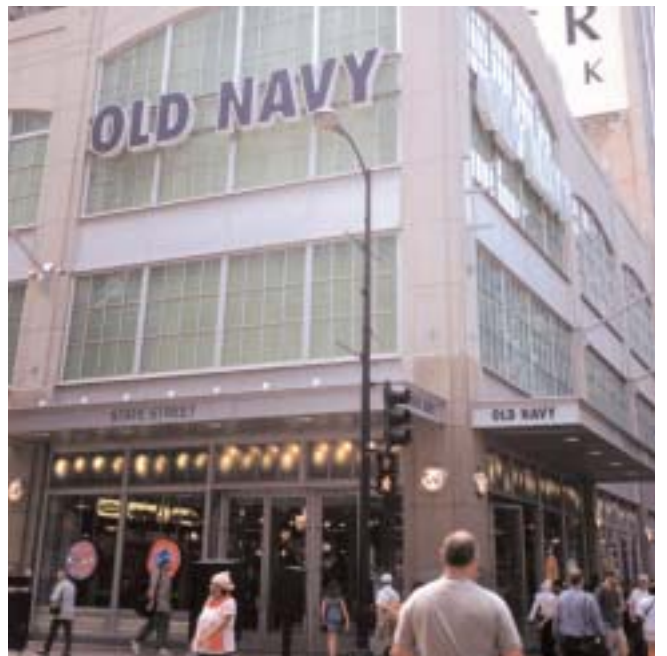
The Big Downtown at the Palmer House



Rhapsody at the Symphony Center



TAZA on Wabash Avenue

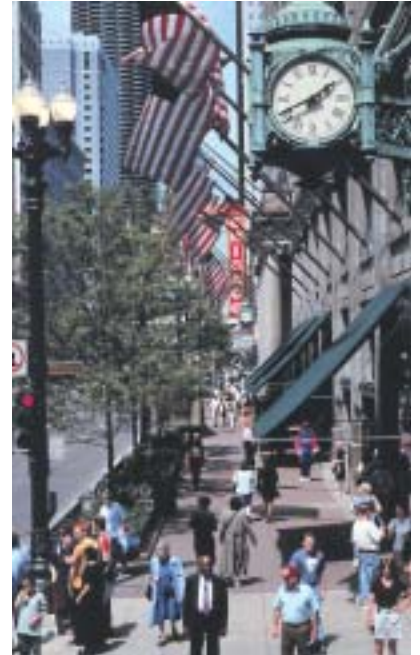


Old Navy on State Street

## Public Projects

While the impact of the streetscaping of State Street continues to be felt, a number of key public projects have recently been completed or are in progress in the East Loop.

- Michigan Avenue Streetscape has brought new sidewalks and planters to this historic boulevard.
- Randolph Street Theatre District has brought new sidewalks, historic street lighting, banners, planters and kiosks to the Randolph Street area.
- Washington Street Streetscape will bring new sidewalks, historic street lighting and planters to the street.
- Millennium Gardens, between Michigan and Columbus, and Monroe and Randolph, will bring a major new theater and a park to the district as well as creating a new underground parking facility and upgraded Metra Electric commuter rail station. The park is projected to be completed by the year 2001.
- Couch and Benton Places, alleys that link Wabash, State and Randolph between Randolph and Lake, will be reconstructed to reflect their role as pedestrian connections and service access to the adjacent theaters.
- Pritzker Park on State Street across the Harold Washington Library will be renovated to be a more usable and safe urban park.
- Jones Academic Magnet High School expansion will extend the school from Harrison to Polk along State Street.
- Proposed Jones High School Campus Park at State Street and Congress Parkway.
- The “Loop Retail Historic District”, which primarily includes State Street and Wabash avenue, recently became listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This was a significant achievement in recognizing the architectural assets of the area.



Michigan Avenue, Randolph Street and State Street: recent streetscaping projects in the area



Proposed Millennium Gardens



Pritzker Park: renovation plans are underway

# PRINCIPLES

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While much has been achieved in the East Loop in recent years, the district's full potential has not been reached. Many upper floors are vacant, retail space is subject to high turnover, and surface parking lots proliferate south of Congress. Renovations, re-use and new development by office, institutional and retail users continue apace, but with careful planning, management and linking of investments that could fully transform the district into the diverse, vibrant 24 hour community it wants to become.

Accordingly, this vision calls for public and private investment in the study area to be guided by the following principles:

## **1. Improve Infrastructure**

Wabash Avenue is poised for a revival, but the condition of the "L" and the sidewalks deters investment. Continued investment in infrastructure would have a positive impact. A master plan for public improvements in the corridor should be prepared and implemented. Central features of this plan should be rehabilitation of the "L" using its historic character as a guiding theme, and the renovation of Congress Parkway to create a dramatic gateway to the city.

## **2. Bring Upper Floors Back to Active Use Throughout the Area**

East Loop buildings are being brought back to life by substantial growth in a range of adaptive re-use markets. These buildings are also likely beneficiaries of the tightening downtown office market. The diverse market mix will be encouraged and the rehabilitation of upper floor space supported through financial incentives, marketing and technical assistance programs. Active markets include hotels, academic and cultural institutions, non-profits, high tech firms, art and design firms, residential conversions and the wider small business community. Incentives will be used creatively to support large and small projects alike.

### **3. Strengthen Retail at the Street Level on all Streets**

Although East Loop retailing is fundamentally sound, with low vacancies and rising rents, some buildings need help. The district will benefit from Loop-wide efforts to bring popular neighborhood retailers downtown and promote Loop retailing to the public. Special marketing efforts will focus on attracting booksellers to the district. Storefront improvements will reflect the historic character of the area. The City and building owners will work together to fill vacant windows with lively displays.

### **4. Strengthen the Academic Core around Congress Parkway.**

The growth of academic facilities, including student housing, in the East Loop is bringing new vitality to the district. This energy should be focused on the existing academic core around Congress Parkway where it can help to fill the gap between the Loop and the revitalizing neighborhoods to the south. Park and streetscaping projects on Congress and redevelopment of the City-owned site at State and Congress offer an opportunity to create a higher quality street environment.

### **5. Renovate and Protect Historic Buildings**

The East Loop has the largest concentration of historically significant structures in the central area. However, many need to be renovated physically and regenerated economically, and the most significant buildings need to be protected from demolition.

To achieve this, historic buildings will be linked to financial incentives, marketing and technical assistance efforts for upper floors and retail spaces. Selected buildings may be candidates for public subsidy and landmark designation. The Michigan Avenue streetwall will be protected by designating the Historic Michigan Avenue Boulevard as a Chicago Landmark.

### **6. Develop a Parking Strategy**

New parking will be directed to the periphery of the East Loop district, including new and improved underground facilities in Grant Park as well as garages south of Congress. New non-accessory surface parking lots or parking structures north of Congress are strongly discouraged. Existing surface lots are potential redevelopment sites.

### **7. Maximize Open Space and Landscaping**

Stronger connections between Grant Park and East Loop business, academic and residential areas are recommended. New opportunities for parks within the district will be sought. Chicago's nationally recognized approach to landscaping Loop streets will be extended to Wabash Avenue, cross streets and streets south of Congress Parkway.

### **8. Establish Building Design and Signage Guidelines**

Design and signage guidelines will reinforce the historic character and the lively retail scene of the district, while preserving and strengthening the uniqueness of State Street, Wabash Avenue and Michigan Avenue.

# 1 . I M P R O V E I N F R A S T R U C T U R E

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A comprehensive program of public improvements should be prepared and implemented for the East Loop. With streetscaping improvements completed on State Street and Michigan Avenue, the primary focus should be on Wabash Avenue and the side streets that tie the East Loop to the city and the lakefront. Attention should also be given to Congress Parkway, where an improved street environment, new parks and the redevelopment of the city-owned site at State offer an opportunity to create an exciting gateway to the Loop.

## ISSUES

Members of the East Loop business community consulted for this study stressed that the key to revitalizing the district is upgrading the public infrastructure, much of which is presently in poor condition. The two primary areas of concern are the “L” and the condition of the sidewalks.

## The “L”

The Loop elevated, a historic landmark, is one of the East Loop’s greatest assets. It offers convenient transit access and brings a steady flow of foot traffic. When properly maintained, the steel superstructure is striking in appearance and contributes significantly to the historic character of Wabash Avenue.

The condition of the “L” is perceived by many as an impediment to redevelopment. Funding for long-term rehabilitation of the “L” is problematic. However, historically sensitive renovation, along with a more aggressive program of cleaning, painting and lighting, would help to alleviate its negative visual impact.

## Streets

Streetscaping improvements along State Street and Michigan Avenue have renewed the status of these streets as nationally recognized examples of vital and attractive urban streets. Other streets in the East Loop, Wabash Avenue in particular, suffer by comparison. Sidewalks, curbs and gutters are in poor condition, with many patches and potholes. Sidewalk paving material varies along the length of Wabash.

Congress Parkway continues to be perceived as a barrier between north-south pedestrian connections. However, the street has benefited from significant public and private investment over the past two decades, and is now poised to become a gateway to the Loop.





The "L" in deteriorated condition



Unattractive and poorly maintained station entrances



Temporary upgrading of planters has improved the appearance of Wabash Avenue, but a more permanent and comprehensive streetscaping effort is needed for the street



Unfriendly pedestrian environment on Congress Parkway

## Improve Infrastructure

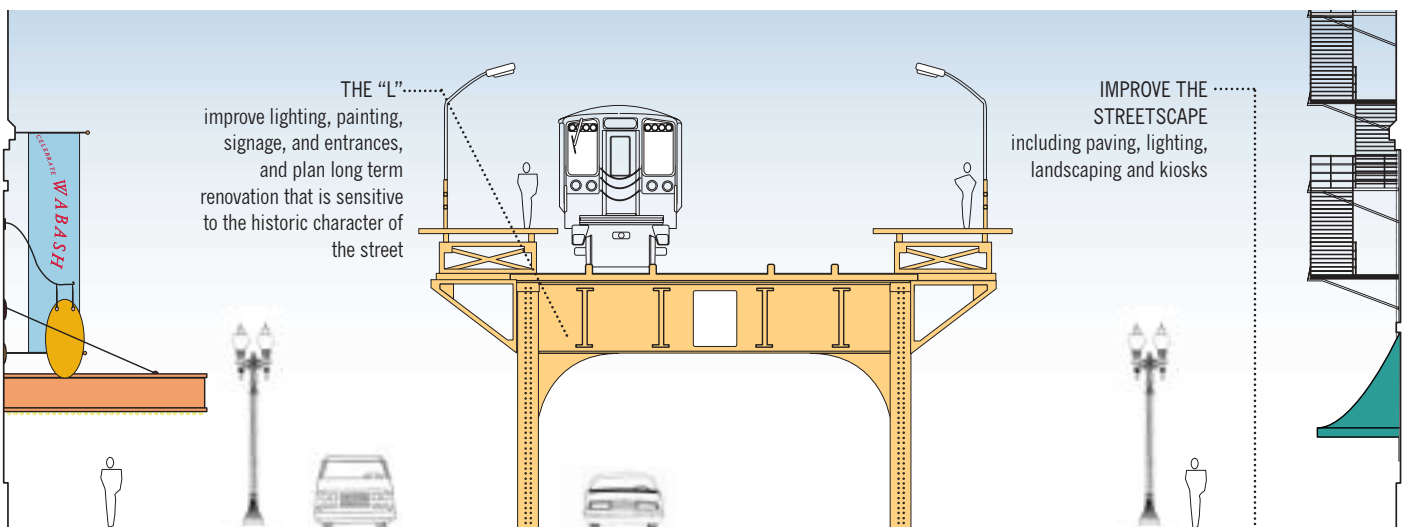
### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### The “L”

- Improve the appearance of the “L” structure and stations in terms of lighting, painting and signage, with the long-term goal of rehabilitating the “L” in the spirit of the historic character of the street.
- Identify adequate long term funding for the Loop “L”. State and federal funding should continue to be vigorously pursued. Alternatives such as TIF funding, special service areas, private capital campaigns or linking donations to increased development densities should be evaluated.
- Establish an aggressive approach to maintain the “L” in which cleaning and painting are undertaken on a regular basis. An independent funding mechanism for such maintenance should be explored.

#### Streets

- Celebrate Wabash Avenue and enhance the historic character of this quintessential Chicago street. Address repaving of the curbs and sidewalks, landscaping, and lighting. Add informational kiosks that highlight the rich mix of retail and upper-story uses found on the street. Enforce a regular and rigorous cleaning program for Wabash Avenue and cross streets.
- Improve the Congress Parkway streetscape to support the growing daytime and evening academic population around Congress. North-south pedestrian connections should be strengthened between the Loop and the South Loop. Congress is also a major traffic route into the downtown area. Streetscape renovation, along with the proposed Jones High School Campus Park and the redevelopment of the city owned State/Congress site, can make Congress Parkway an exciting gateway into the Loop.



Section through Wabash Avenue showing existing conditions



## 2 . BRING UPPER FLOORS BACK TO ACTIVE USE

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Through a coordinated program of marketing, technical assistance, and strategic public subsidy, underutilized upper floors in older buildings can be restored to economic use. City planning staff will continue pro-active efforts to alert building owners and investors to development opportunities. Adaptive re-use projects supporting the overall goal of creating a vibrant mixed-use district will be particularly encouraged.

### ISSUES

#### Upper Floor Vacancies

The upper floors of buildings on State Street, Wabash Avenue, and Michigan Avenue are home to an extraordinary variety of tenants. These include medical and dental professionals, jewelers, attorneys, design professionals, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, musical instrument repair shops, government offices, insurance companies, real estate developers, print shops, hotels, residential condos, a mosque, and a kosher deli.

However, a substantial amount of upper story space in older structures is vacant or underutilized. At least 1.9 million square feet of space in the district is currently without tenants, for an average vacancy rate of 20 percent. Vacant space includes entire floors of large buildings and portions of small floor-plate mid-block buildings, and includes both upper and lower levels.

In recent years many East Loop buildings have been converted to exciting new uses such as hotels, housing, and educational institutions including dormitories. Other buildings are likely beneficiaries of the tightening downtown office market. Nonetheless, given the fragmented nature of the market and the substantial investment required to restore some buildings to usable condition, a program of strategic public intervention is needed if the full economic potential of the district's building stock is to be realized.

#### The Office Market

A survey of Michigan and Wabash Avenues from the river to Harrison, plus adjacent side streets, was conducted during the last quarter of 1998 for this study. Data was collected on 46 of the 126 buildings in this corridor. The 46 buildings total 9.5 million square feet, of which 1.9 million square feet is vacant, at a vacancy rate of 20 percent.

The downtown office market has steadily improved since the overbuilding of the late 1980s. Vacancy rates have been decreasing across the board, especially in Class A space and in the West Loop. Rents are increasing, again especially in Class A space.



Examples of buildings with substantial upper floor vacancies: mid-block buildings on Wabash Avenue and the Stevens Building on State Street



Examples of adaptive reuse of buildings with long vacant upper floors: New high tech center at the Lytton building, and new youth hostel at Wabash & Congress

The East Loop has the highest vacancy rate of any downtown submarket, 20 percent versus 11 percent for the Central Business District (CBD) as a whole. Rents in the East Loop trail those of the CBD in general. East Loop rents also are less than the CBD average due to the preponderance of Class B and Class C buildings in the area. Rents for such spaces are typically about \$5 less than Class A spaces. In the Michigan/Wabash corridor, gross rents average \$12 to \$18 per square foot. Net rents (gross rent minus operating expenses) range from \$2 to \$8 per square foot.

Strengths of the corridor include a broad range of buildings, a diversity of tenants, reasonable rents that are excellent for startup companies, excellent public transportation, and a prestigious location such as a Michigan Avenue address.

Weaknesses include the condition of the “L” tracks, distance from the West Loop commuter rail stations, and absentee landlords. Also, in some buildings, income from ground floor rent is sufficient to carry the building, leaving no incentive to improve the upper stories, many of which have not been modernized and need substantial rehabilitation to be occupied.

As Class A vacancies decline and rents increase throughout downtown, tenants are migrating from Class A space to Class B and from Class B to Class C. Conversion of South Loop office buildings to residential has also led to office tenants relocating to the East Loop. To some extent, therefore, the vacancy problem in the East Loop may largely take care of itself. However, an appropriate menu of public/private assistance and programs would expedite the process.

## Art and Design Community

The East Loop is home to a wide array of art and design firms, and ancillary businesses that support them. Major institutions like the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Cultural Center, along with other public and private institutions in the area, provide great anchors for the art and design community. “Jewelers Row” serves as a fully integrated jewelry industry mall, with importers, wholesalers, designers, and retailers working together and creating a hub for the industry in the Midwest. Numerous architecture, interior design and planning firms also make their home in the East Loop. Graphic design firms and a number of printing houses occupy upper floor spaces. Many universities and colleges also locate their art and design programs within the district. Musical instruments are sold and repaired, sheet music is sold and both mainstream and specialty record and CD stores can be found. This diverse collection of creative professionals, businesses and schools has a major impact on the economy and character of the East Loop.

Despite this presence, the impact of this community on the growth of the East Loop is fragmented. The area is not clearly associated in the public mind with the arts and design community, and many of these small spaces that can attract art and design oriented uses are not tracked or marketed by the commercial brokerage community.



The Art Institute of Chicago and the Cultural Center: examples of the great public cultural institutions in the area



Private institutions like Columbia College and the American Academy of Art are strong anchors for the art and design community

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Actively market buildings with vacant upper floors to commercial real estate brokers so that they are fully aware of the spaces available and the potential market segments that would be appropriate for them. Build and maintain a database of all buildings in the area so that the broker community can track and market all available spaces.
- Build on the strengths of existing business clusters such as Jewelers Row, the medical professions, and the arts and design community. The City will work with building owners to develop marketing programs aimed at attracting similar firms.
- New market sectors should be explored and firms within them targeted for attraction to the available spaces. Potential markets include residential conversions and hotels, academic and cultural institutions, non-profit organizations, design firms and showrooms, high-tech firms and new industries.
- Technical support should be offered to owners of buildings to assist them in upgrading entrances, receptions, elevators, exterior treatments, building services and other conditions to meet current building codes, and to enable the full participation of the buildings in the market.
- Owners should be educated about City programs such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, Central Loop Loan Program (CLLP), Central Loop Increment Financing (CLIF), and Class L property tax incentives for undertaking substantial rehabilitations of designated Chicago landmarks, as well as Investment Tax Credits and facade easement donations that are associated with National Register of Historic Places designations.
- Training programs for managers and leasing agents, possibly offered by an organization such as the Building Owners and Managers Association, would assist certain buildings in providing services and standards that would help to attract tenants.
- The upper story retail sector would benefit from additional visibility, which might be obtained through a carefully administered program of building signs and street level kiosks.
- A coordinated public relations campaign and marketing mechanism should be initiated to increase awareness of the East Loop's arts and design community, and to link available spaces to potential art and design tenants.
- An effort should be made to use established relationships with arts-based network organizations to help them make the best use of resources and locations in the East Loop.
- Cultural anchors such as the Cultural Center should be used as leverage for related development such as the Gallery 37 Center for the Arts.
- A limited number of key upper-story reuse projects may be candidates for public subsidy.





### 3. STRENGTHEN RETAIL AT THE STREET LEVEL ON ALL STREETS

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The demalling of State Street and other recent infrastructure improvements, and the growth of the entertainment district, the academic core, and the residential community in and around the Loop, have all contributed to revitalizing retail in the East Loop. The area was recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the “Loop Retail Historic District”, marking the significance of this historic retail core of the City.

To add to the current momentum of retail revitalization, the City should continue its investments in infrastructure improvements, aggressive marketing programs and economic incentives for development. Building owners and tenants must also participate by committing to storefront improvements and design standards. Marketing efforts should be tailored to the particular character of the three main shopping streets: “classic retail” on State Street, unique Chicago shops on Wabash, and visitor-oriented stores on Michigan Avenue.

#### ISSUES

East Loop retailing is fundamentally sound, with low vacancies and rising rents. However, specific blocks and buildings need special attention. The most problematic areas are the blocks around Congress and the area south of Congress. Congress continues to be a barrier between the the strong East Loop retail core to the north and the low quality and fragmented retail to the south. The area also needs more stores that can meet the demands of the academic core and the residential neighborhoods to the south. New development on the former State-Congress parking garage site has great potential to establish retail continuity in that area by providing shops along all street frontages.

Wabash Avenue has a unique retail character with many small businesses on the street as well as the upper floors. The deteriorated condition of the “L” and the sidewalks has a negative impact on the street level retail. Jewelers Row, one of the strongest retail niches on the street, does not have a strong identity in the street. Shops on the upper floors also have little presence at the street level.

On Michigan Avenue there are some vacancy and turnover problems between Randolph and the river, created largely during the reconstruction of the street. The recent completion of the reconstruction effort, as well as new developments like the Millennium Park and the renovation of the Carbide and Carbon building, will greatly enhance the vitality of retail in this area, and over the long term, the vacancy problems should be minimal.



Vacant street level retail spaces on Michigan Avenue



Fragmented and low quality retail on Wabash Avenue south of Jackson

## Strengthen Retail at the Street Level

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Aggressively market retail space to potential tenants as part of Loop-wide retail marketing efforts. The primary focus should be on bringing popular neighborhood and ethnic retailers downtown to support the unique neighborhood scene. Promote East Loop retail to Loop workers, students, visitors, residents and tourists.
- Focus special marketing efforts on bringing book stores to the area. Market the Prairie Avenue Book Store on Wabash Avenue as a strong anchor for a potential booksellers district.
- Address the fragmented and low quality retail around Congress. Attract new retail in this area that can serve the needs of the academic core around Congress. Also, encourage affordable restaurants to locate south of Congress to serve the student population.
- Encourage neighborhood retail south of Congress to meet the needs of the South Loop residential community.
- Work with building owners to improve retail storefronts that are in disrepair or feature insensitive designs.
- Use building design guidelines to ensure that all new developments have retail space on the ground floor.
- Use sign design guidelines to ensure a high quality in the design and installation of signs. Work with the building owners to remove old signs from vacant stores.
- Work with retailers to improve the quality of window displays at the street level, open up street level windows that are opaque, and add display windows at the second level where possible.
- Make strategic investments in projects like the Carbon & Carbide building and 330 S. Michigan that can bring people to downtown and help retail in the area.
- Encourage all shops and restaurants in the area to stay open during the same hours. Encourage more restaurants to stay open in the weekends.



## 4. STRENGTHEN THE ACADEMIC CORE AROUND CONGRESS

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The emerging East Loop educational community should be supported and organized to foster the long-term viability of academic institutions, enhance the environment for students, and help fill the gap between the Loop and the revitalizing neighborhoods to the south. Underutilized property south of Congress provides room to grow as institutions expand their facilities.

### ISSUES

More than a dozen major educational institutions are located in the East Loop with a total enrollment of more than 37,000. These schools include:

- American Academy of Art
- Aurora University
- Columbia College
- DePaul University
- East-West University
- Harrington Institute
- Harold Washington College
- International Academy of Merchandising & Design
- John Marshall Law School
- Jones Academic Magnet High School
- MacCormac College
- National Louis University
- Robert Morris College
- Roosevelt University
- School of the Art Institute
- Sherwood Conservatory
- Spertus College

Most of these schools are located within a short distance of Congress Parkway, making the street a natural focal point for what may well be the largest multi-institution academic campus in the United States. However, the area remains fragmented around Congress and the following issues need to be addressed:

- The streets south of Congress Parkway are disconnected from those to the north in terms of pedestrian continuity, particularly Wabash and State. While heavy traffic on Congress clearly contributes to this, the absence of a shared pedestrian friendly streetscape is also a factor.
- The number of surface parking lots, retail vacancies and troubled buildings near Congress also fragments the area. Because of this, there is little sense of continuity or easy transition from the increasingly residential neighborhood in the South Loop to the bustle and activity of the Loop itself.
- The growth of academic facilities and academic housing in the East Loop has been ad-hoc, with individual institutions making decisions in isolation. The growing number of students living in the area in residence halls is an exciting development, but the area lacks basic amenities such as affordable restaurants and neighborhood oriented retail.
- Despite the district's excellent transit access, some institutions report that as many as 70% of their students travel to school by car, in part due to the perception that transit is unsafe, especially in the evenings. Inexpensive surface parking is now plentiful but will become less so as institutions expand their facilities.

Academic Core around Congress



Examples of some of the institutions in the academic core: (clockwise from top left) Roosevelt University, Harold Washington Library, Robert Morris Center, MacCormac College, John Marshall Law School and Columbia College

## Academic Core around Congress

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improvements to the streetscape on Wabash Avenue and State Street should be continued south of Congress Parkway.
- The quality of surface lots should be improved with better lighting, landscaping, fencing and signage in the interim until other higher uses can be developed.
- A “Presidents’ Committee” or similar organization having high-level representation from leading East Loop educational institutions should be convened for the purpose of addressing common concerns and collaborating with the City where appropriate.
- Where appropriate, vacant or underutilized land parcels should be assembled with a view to building on the emerging academic character of the area. New academic structures should have a strong civic identity, that complements the character of the library, and increases the visibility of the district.
- As opportunities arise, encourage arts and education tenants to locate in the vicinity of Congress Parkway.
- Market available upper floor spaces around the core for academic facilities, housing or to businesses that serve these institutions.
- Encourage ground-floor retail that serves South Loop residents and the academic community.
- Development of shared facilities should be explored, such as food service, housing, student centers, recreational and health facilities, day care, and parking.
- The Harrison Street station on the Red Line should be upgraded, and streetscaping and lighting improved south of Congress to foster a greater sense of safety on the streets and encourage transit use. Convenience retailing should be strongly encouraged in the vicinity of transit stops at Congress, Harrison, and Roosevelt to further promote transit use.
- The structure built on the city-owned lot at State, Wabash, and Congress should have a grand civic character as befits its prominent site. The new development should reinforce the surrounding academic core. The ground floor should incorporate a significant retail component to activate the street and serve nearby workers, students, and residents.



# PRIORITIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE ACADEMIC CORE AROUND CONGRESS



## 5. RENOVATE & PROTECT HISTORIC BUILDINGS

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A concerted effort should be made to ensure that historic buildings are fully utilized, housing a wide variety of uses like businesses, residences, hotels, high-tech firms, not-for-profit organizations, academic facilities, and arts and design firms.

### ISSUES

The East Loop has the largest concentration of historic buildings in the central area, and parts of the East Loop retain the historic character to a greater extent than any other downtown district. Michigan Avenue and State Street, for example, are unparalleled in terms of an assemblage of historically significant architecture.

However, there are significant vacancies in older buildings and many need to be renovated physically and regenerated economically. In many cases, particularly on Wabash Avenue, facades are in poor condition and contribute to the poor image of the street as a whole. Nonetheless, these buildings are a formidable asset. Renovating them while simultaneously upgrading the infrastructure is the key to revitalizing the district. Current and proposed landmark districts in the East Loop and vicinity include:

- Printing House Row District, a Chicago Landmark District.
- Michigan-Wabash Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Loop Retail Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places

- Historic Michigan Boulevard District, proposed Chicago landmark district. The Michigan Avenue streetwall is one of the most enduring assets of Chicago. The wall of buildings crystallizes the spirit of the city: an incomparable natural setting along Lake Michigan, bordered by great parks and internationally famed architecture. As one of the grandest one-sided thoroughfares of the world, the boulevard needs to be protected from any building demolition or inappropriate renovation efforts. By designating the boulevard as a Chicago Landmark District (from Randolph to Roosevelt), the City can preserve the uniqueness of this great historic promenade.

### RENOVATION INCENTIVES

- Class L Property Tax Incentive (for designated Chicago Landmarks only): Reduces the property tax rate for 10 years for rehabilitating a landmark building in a commercial use.
- Rehabilitation Tax Credit. Federal income tax credit of 10% or 20% (depending on circumstances) of the construction costs for rehabilitating an older commercial oriented residential building.
- Facade Easement Donation. A one-time charitable federal income tax deduction for granting of a “preservation easement” to a qualified not-for-profit organization for the purpose of preserving the property.
- Permit Fee Waiver (for designated Chicago Landmarks only): Waives City building permit fees.



The Historic Michigan Boulevard District needs to be designated as a Chicago Landmark to protect the streetwall and architecture of this grand promenade



The Iwan Ries Building (Jewelers Building) is the only Adler & Sullivan building other than the Auditorium Building remaining in the Loop, and is in great need of restoration and rehabilitation efforts.



The recently restored Reliance Building is now a hallmark of historic restoration and rehabilitation of architectural landmarks

## Historic Buildings

### RECOMMENDATIONS

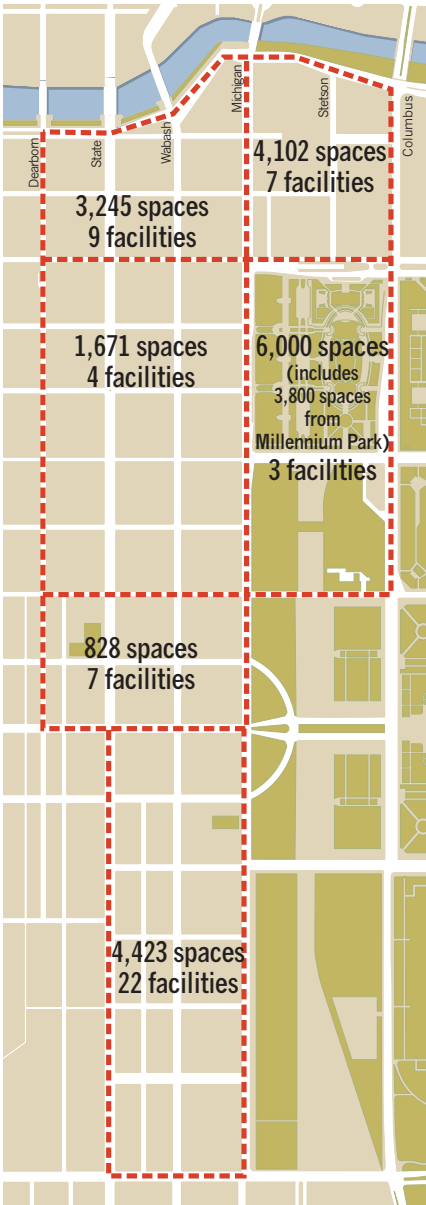
- The Michigan Avenue streetwall should be protected by designating the Historic Michigan Boulevard District as a Chicago Landmark District.
- Historic buildings should be given priority in upper floor marketing efforts. Potential new uses include hotels, not-for-profit organizations, design firms and showrooms, high tech firms, academic and cultural institutions, and residential conversions.
- The Class L property tax incentive, the permit fee waiver, incentives available for the Loop Retail Historic District, and other tax assistance programs should be aggressively marketed to help building owners renovate vacant space.
- Distressed historic buildings should be targeted for management assistance and marketing efforts.
- Key buildings may be candidates for public subsidy to support renovation and redevelopment. The City's policy to date has been to restrict public subsidy of private renovation efforts primarily to rated historic structures or landmarks such as the Reliance Building, and only in cases in which restoration of the building is otherwise economically unfeasible. This policy should continue.

PRIORITIES FOR RENOVATING HISTORIC BUILDINGS



## 6. DEVELOP A PARKING STRATEGY

While an ample supply of affordable parking is a great asset of this area, the proliferation of these facilities needs to be controlled to prevent further disruption of the street wall, and retail at the street level. Strong design guidelines are also needed to improve the appearance of all parking lots and structures.



**Total Public Parking Supply: 23,251 spaces in 52 facilities**

Source: Department of Planning & Development, 1997

### ISSUES

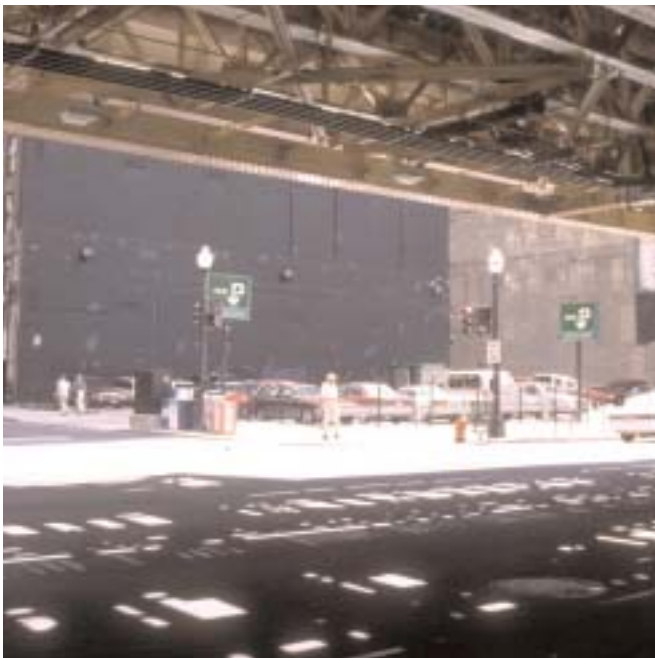
The East Loop has an abundance of parking. Grant Park offers three levels of below grade parking from Randolph Street to Congress Parkway. A \$92 million renovation of this facility is currently underway, with completion set for April 2000. Wabash Avenue is home to numerous parking structures and surface parking lots. The surface lots are located primarily south of Congress Parkway, and are a major source of low-cost parking for the universities and other area educational institutions during the day and for the Auditorium Theater in the evening.

Unfortunately, the proliferation of surface parking lots, particularly south of Congress Parkway, fragments the district. While the wide open spaces are functional, they do break the continuity and street wall of the East Loop streets. Curb cuts and entrances also break up the sidewalk. Edges are often minimally maintained, and the lots themselves are often under lit at night. The facades of some parking structures are bleak. Parking lot signs are typically oversized as each lot competes for the attention of drivers.

Over time it is anticipated that many parking lots and structures will be redeveloped. The former City-owned garage at Congress and State has already been demolished. As the supply of surface parking shrinks, costs may rise, and the supply of student parking may shrink, impacting the development of the academic district.



Poor and unattractive facades of parking structures



Poor and harsh appearance of surface parking lots



Abundance of oversized and low quality signage on parking lots and structures

## Parking Strategy

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Under the current guidelines for the Central Area Parking District (CAPD), bounded by Michigan Avenue, the River (south branch), Congress Parkway and the River (main branch), all non-accessory parking facilities (lots and garages) must be planned developments. Surface lots are highly discouraged in this area. Also, under the guidelines of the CAPD Inner Core, (boundaries are half block inside the Loop Elevated tracks), no new surface lots or non-accessory parking are allowed. In the area between Congress and Roosevelt, both accessory and non-accessory parking are allowed as per current zoning. To further control the proliferation of parking facilities in the historic core of the Loop, and to direct it to the areas that have growing demands, this vision recommends the following:

- New parking facilities should be directed to the periphery of the CAPD inner core. New non-accessory parking structures will not be permitted on Michigan Avenue.
- No new surface parking lots should be allowed on State Street, Wabash Avenue, Michigan Avenue or the side streets between the Chicago River and Harrison Street.
- No parking facility should be visible from the entire length of Grant Park, from Randolph Street to Roosevelt Road.
- Landscaped edges or high quality fence treatments, and improved lighting and maintenance should be required for existing surface lots.
- To reinforce the streetwall and to preserve the pedestrian character of the district, design guidelines should be developed and enforced for both accessory and non-accessory parking structures.
- The size, location and number of parking lot signs should be regulated.
- To the extent that the availability of low-cost parking is important in accommodating students, South Loop educational institutions are encouraged to develop parking facilities for future academic growth, and enter into joint ventures with developers to offer parking discounts to students.
- The area needs affordable short term parking to supplement the parking meters. The rates in the Grant Park North Garage could be restructured to apply to a range of short term parking needs, from one hour to several hours, instead of a flat fee for the whole day. It would also help to convert the City parking tax to a percentage, rather than a flat fee.
- While meeting parking demands is important, parking needs to be deemphasized, and the strong transit connections to the district need to be strengthened.



PRIORITIES FOR PARKING LOTS AND STRUCTURES



## 7 . MAXIMIZE OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE

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The design and programming of all existing public open space should be adjusted to encourage more residents, workers and visitors to make full use of these urban assets. Street landscaping should be introduced throughout the district. Opportunities to provide additional usable park and green space for the emerging academic and residential communities should be pursued.

### ISSUES

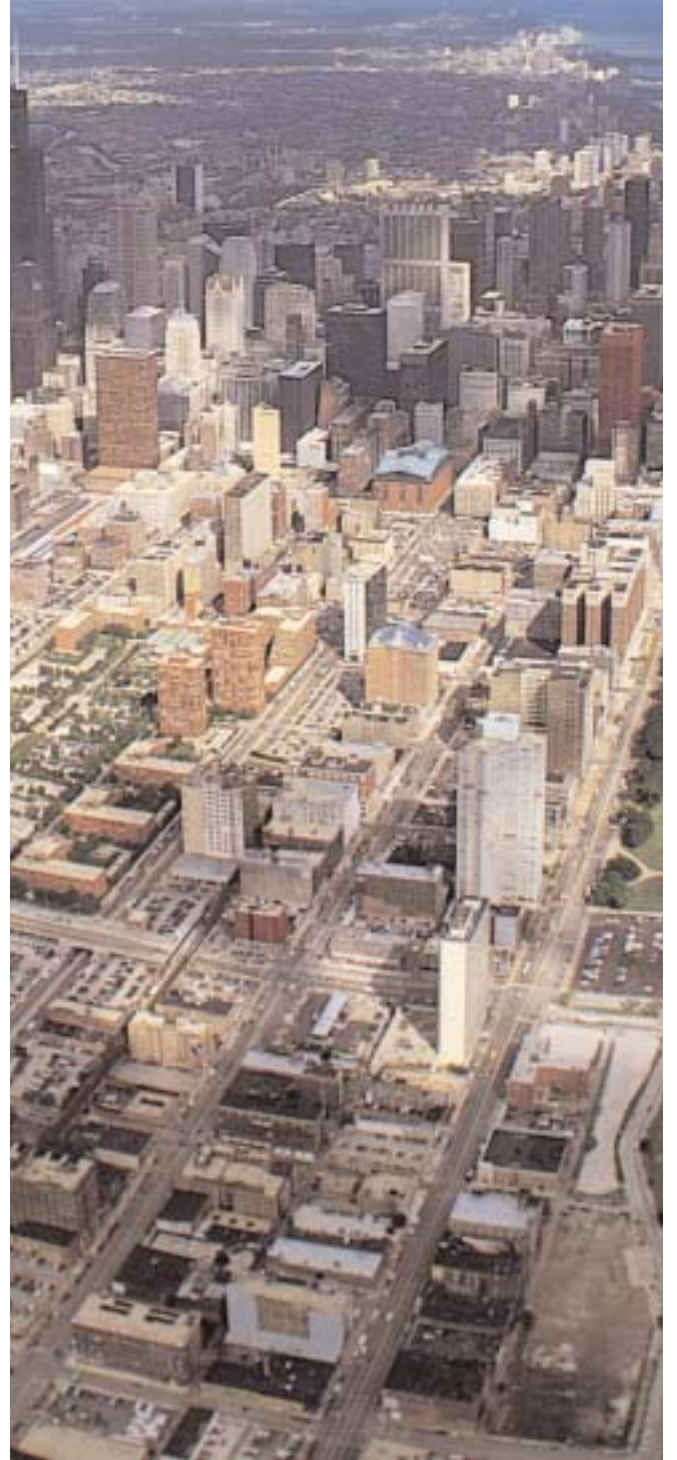
The East Loop adjoins Grant Park, one of the city's major public open spaces. The park has provided defining images of downtown Chicago for decades, yet weekday daytime use is limited to a handful of special events. The growing South Loop residential community does not actively use the park during evening and weekend hours. Public park space in the South Loop neighborhood is itself limited. The Grant Park Design Guidelines by the Chicago Park District recognizes these issues and makes clear recommendations to address these.

Several major open space initiatives are also planned or underway in the vicinity of the East Loop. These include:

- **Lakefront Millennium Park.** This \$200 million addition to Grant Park, to be completed by June 2001, involves the construction of nearly 25 acres of open space over the Metra Electric/South Shore railroad tracks in the area bounded by Michigan Avenue, Columbus Drive, Monroe Street, and Randolph Street. The park will feature an outdoor music pavilion, outdoor seating for 14,000, a 1,500-seat auditorium, a skating rink along Michigan Avenue, underground parking for 2,400 cars, and a bridge across Columbus Drive.
- **Illinois Center park.** A six-acre park is required to be developed in Illinois Center east of Columbus as part of the planned development.
- **Parks near the Art Institute.** Two parks will be developed over the Metra tracks north and south of the main Art Institute building.



Parks over the Metra tracks will greatly strengthen Grant Park



More neighborhood parks are needed south of Congress

## Open Space and Landscaping

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Grant Park

(From the Grant Park Design Guidelines,  
Chicago Park District, 1992)

- “The sections of the park along Michigan Avenue should be developed to encourage small scale gatherings and individual uses, such as lunchtime relaxation, informal meetings, people watching, etc., as well as art displays, recitals, or other small public events.”
- “Neighborhood scale uses should be concentrated in the south end of the park, adjacent to nearby residential developments.”

#### Neighborhood Parks and Pocket Parks

- Find new opportunities for neighborhood parks in the South Loop, and pocket parks like Pritzker Park and the Jones High School Campus Park in the East Loop.
- Require neighborhood parks in all new residential developments.
- Remake Pritzker Park to become a more usable, inviting and safe park.

#### Streets

- Continue the Loop wide street landscaping effort. Install trees and planters in sidewalks on all streets wherever feasible.
- Use landscaping elements to connect east-west streets to Grant Park.



## 7. ESTABLISH BUILDING DESIGN AND SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

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The historic character of the East Loop is one of its greatest assets and should be preserved and enhanced through appropriate building design and signage guidelines.

These design guidelines build on those in A Vision for Greater State Street: Next Steps, expanding to cover Michigan Avenue, Wabash Avenue and cross streets. The general intent is to encourage renovations and new development that support active, pedestrian oriented streets and retail at the ground floor, and are also sensitive to the historic character of the district. There is some variation in the guidelines by street to respect their individual characters. The integrity and civic presence of the historic streetwall is key on Michigan Avenue, the elevated rapid transit calls for a special approach to Wabash Avenue and the cross streets, while the energy of the retail and entertainment uses on State Street should be supported.

These guidelines are intended for use by city agencies in evaluating projects requiring public review or requesting public assistance. They also provide a basis for informal enforcement efforts by public or private agencies.

In addition to these, the Historic Michigan Boulevard District will add its own set of guidelines as a Chicago Landmark. Where there are contradictions, the landmark requirements will take precedence.

### BUILDING GUIDELINES

#### Street Level Facades

Large flat expanses of blank walls without architectural articulation or openings are discouraged. An articulated facade, with windows and doors, is particularly important at the street level. At least 75% of the facade area between 2'6" and 8'0" above the sidewalk must be transparent to allow viewing into the interior of the building. Windows must be of clear glass. Black or reflective glass is prohibited.

#### Facade Rehabilitation

Facades of historically significant buildings should be restored to the original appearance whenever possible. Inappropriate "modernizations" should be removed and original elements uncovered, repaired, and cleaned.

#### Facade Replacement

Where the original facade is beyond repair or needs significant modification for reuse, the replacement facade should be in the spirit of the original. Original and compatible elements should be incorporated whenever possible.



Blank unarticulated walls at the street level are strongly discouraged



Well articulated street level facades with ample windows are strongly encouraged



Inappropriate cladding should be removed to uncover and restore original building facades



DePaul Center: a great example of facade restoration

## Awnings and Marquees

Awnings and marquees should be cantilevered off the building structure, and not attached to any pole, structure, or device in the public way. Awnings should project no more than 60" across the property line into the public way. Retractable, cloth awnings are encouraged, while plastic awnings are discouraged. Backlit or other illuminated awnings are prohibited (Sections 8.9 and 9.9 of the Chicago Zoning Code).

Marquees are encouraged on Wabash Avenue and on cross streets for all uses, and on State Street for theaters only. Marquees should be of substantial construction, not cloth or other lightweight material. Marquees are prohibited on Michigan Avenue.

## GUIDELINES FOR NEW BUILDINGS

### Building Height

To provide the scale appropriate to a downtown street and to maintain historic streetwalls, new buildings should have a minimum height of 55 feet.

### Street Walls

To foster retail continuity and create the sense of enclosure appropriate to a downtown street, all new structures in the study area should be built out to the property line. Arcades and setbacks are discouraged.

## Facades

New structures and additions to existing structures should reinforce the historic character of the district in terms of materials, scale, proportion, color, and architectural details. Facades should be of masonry and should be articulated architecturally by means of reveals, projections and other three dimensional elements. Metal panel and glass curtain wall are strongly discouraged. However, it is not the intent of these guidelines that new structures should "look old" or reproduce a historic style or design, but that new buildings reflect the predominant architectural character and scale of the area.

## Plazas

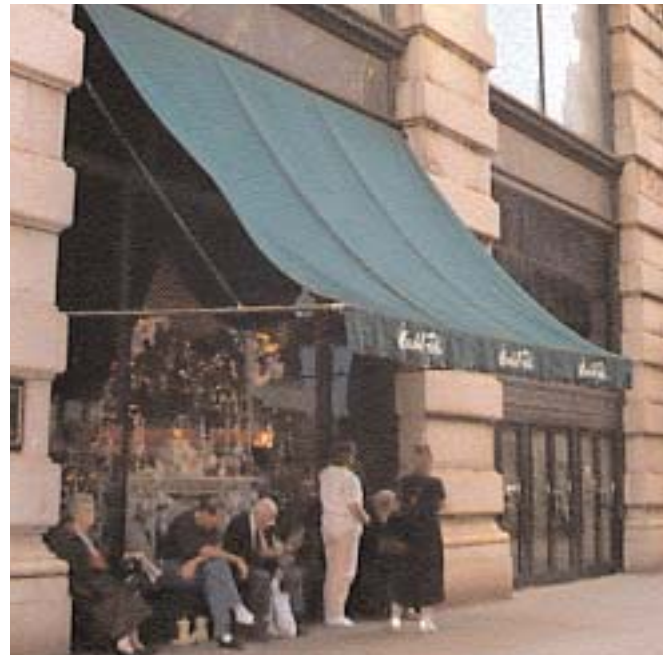
Plazas can disrupt the continuity of the street wall, and are discouraged unless the following requirements are met:

Plazas should be a minimum of 4,000 square feet in size and at least 60 feet deep, with a minimum street frontage of 40 feet. The plaza should be no more than 3 feet above or below the adjacent sidewalk level. Landscaping is required, with impervious surfaces limited to 50 % of the plaza area. Seating areas, landscaping, and lighting should be provided. Plazas should be south facing, within 30 degrees of southern orientation. Plazas should be clearly open to public during business and evening hours.





Backlit plastic awnings that are used as huge signs are not allowed



Cloth retractable awnings are strongly encouraged



Plastic canopies supported on poles on the sidewalk are not allowed



Well designed marquees of substantial construction are encouraged

## GUIDELINES FOR PARKING FACILITIES

This document recommends extending the Central Area Parking District (CAPD) requirements by prohibiting any new non-accessory parking facilities (structures or lots) on State Street, Wabash Avenue or Michigan Avenue between the Main Branch of the Chicago River and Harrison Street. No parking facilities should be visible from the entire length of Grant Park, from Randolph Street to Roosevelt Road.

### SURFACE PARKING LOTS

#### Landscaping

New surface parking lots must be adequately screened and appropriately landscaped, complying with the Chicago Landscape Ordinance (Screening Requirements for Vehicular Use Areas, Sec. III.B.). Existing surface lots are also encouraged to upgrade fencing and landscaping in conformity with the Chicago Landscape Ordinance.

### PARKING STRUCTURES

To minimize the impact on the streetscape, underground parking facilities are strongly encouraged. If parking is provided through above ground structures, facilities that are concealed from the street with other uses are strongly encouraged.

#### Street Frontage

The first floor of a parking structure facing the street should be devoted to retail or other non-parking uses. Facades consisting entirely of poured-in-place concrete are prohibited. Facades should be articulated with sufficient architectural detailing to respond to the existing character of the street wall.

Sloping ramps and internal light fixtures should not be visible from the street.

#### Entrances

Vehicular entrances and exits on any one street should be adjacent and should not occupy more than 24 linear feet of street frontage. Only one vehicle entrance/exit will be permitted per parking facility per street. Each vehicular exit should be provided with a barrier to ensure that vehicles come to a full stop before crossing the sidewalk or exiting the facility.



Well designed and properly maintained landscaping, lighting and fencing can greatly reduce the harsh appearance of surface parking lots



A parking structure with an attractive facade at the street level and above can maintain the attractiveness of the streetwall



Residential units or other uses wrapping an enclosed parking structure allows the garage to be concealed from the street

## SIGN GUIDELINES

### Sign Size

Under the current Zoning Ordinance, the maximum allowable total sign area on a building facade is equal to 24 times the lineal street frontage of the building. While this generous provision may be appropriate for most streets, sign sizes need to be further restricted for specific streets to preserve the architectural character of the street and prevent visual clutter.

For State Street, the allowable sign area will be restricted to 4 times the lineal street frontage. While this is a significant reduction in allowable size, this still allows ample signage to be placed on the building facade (top diagram, opposite page). The area of any single sign will not be more than 2 times the lineal street frontage.

For Michigan Avenue, the allowable sign size will be restricted to 2 times the lineal street frontage to ensure that the character of the historic street wall is not obscured or cluttered by unnecessary signage.

Wabash Avenue has historically had an abundance of signs which contribute greatly to the unique character of the street. For Wabash Avenue, as well as the cross streets, the allowable sign size will remain at 24 times the lineal street frontage, as permitted by the current zoning.

For all streets, the allowable sign area includes all signs on a building facade that are visible from the street. For State Street only, the allowable sign area excludes projecting signs, banners and marquees.

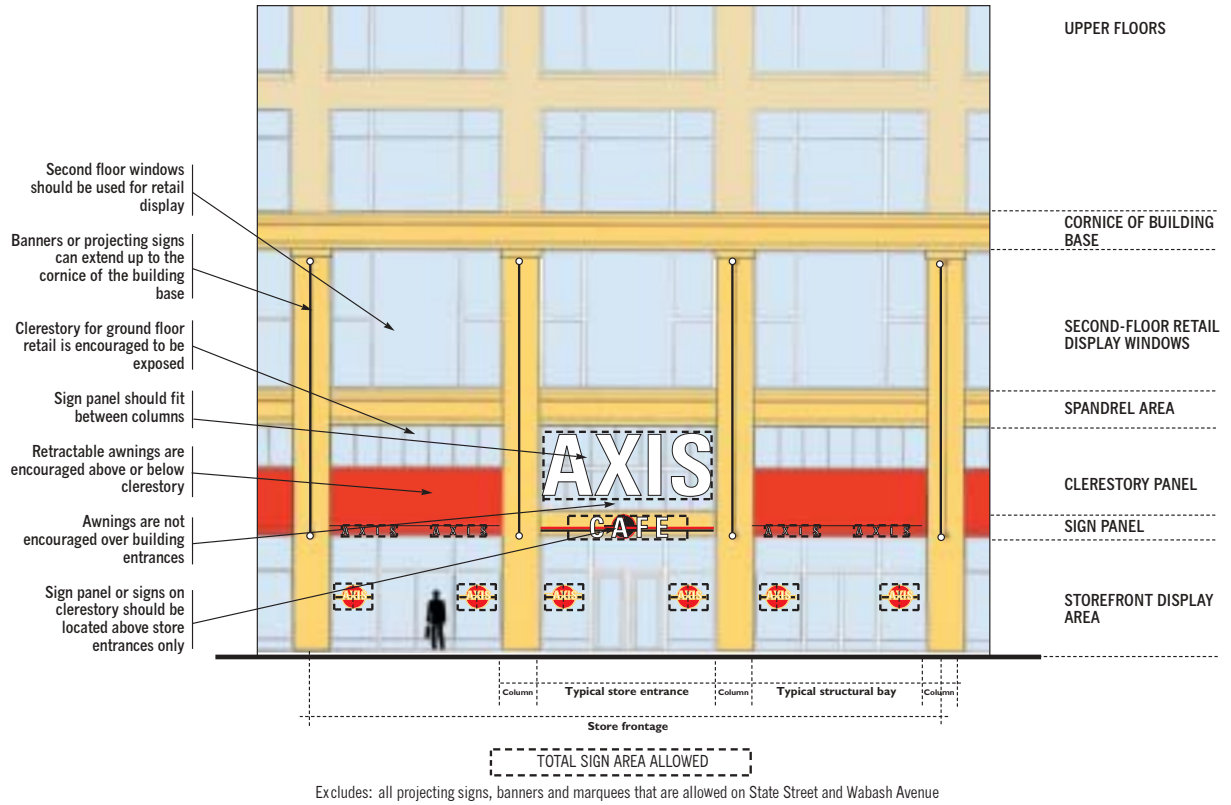
### Location of Signs

Signs should be integrated with the design of the building to which they are fixed. Signs should not obscure architectural details or block window openings. Signs should be sized to fit within architectural elements such as friezes, lintels, spandrels, sign bands and fascias over storefronts, and should not extend above, below, or beyond them. Signs panels should be centered on horizontal surfaces, within bays or over storefront openings.

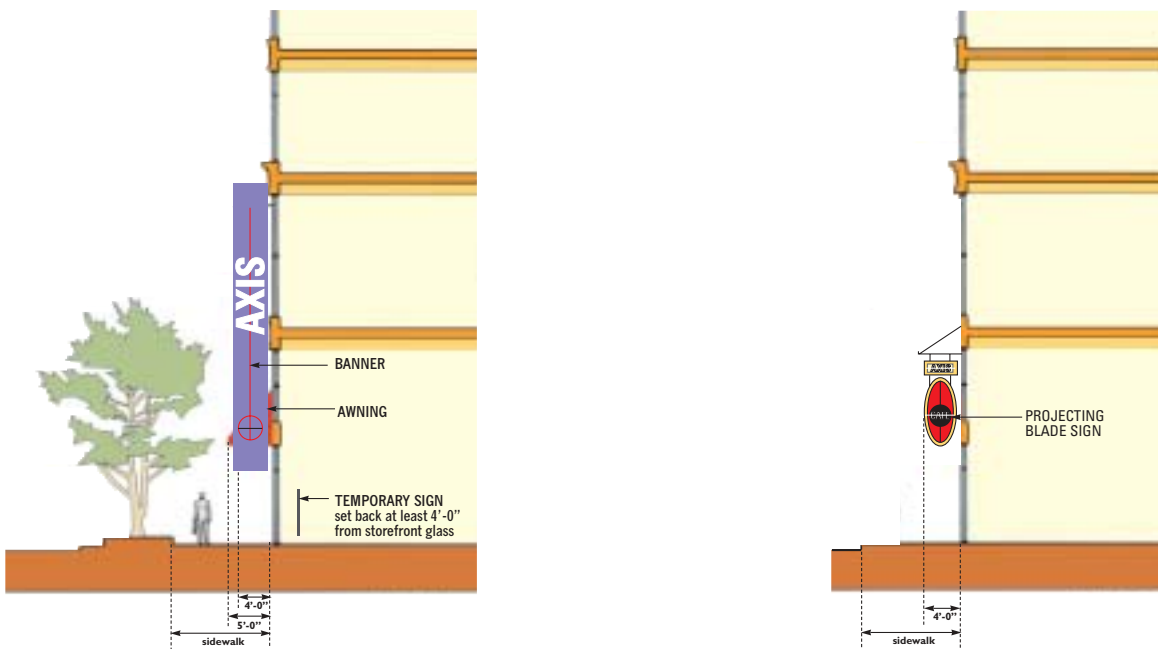
### Prohibited Signs

The following types of signs are prohibited on all streets in the study area unless otherwise noted:

- Billboards
- Flashing signs, except on theatre buildings
- Obsolete, outdated, or derelict signs
- Temporary paper or vinyl signs fixed to the exterior of the street facade, or within 4'0" inside glass openings on the street facade.
- Animated or moving signs are prohibited on Michigan Avenue.
- New rooftop signs are prohibited on Michigan Avenue.



Example of allowable sign area on a building facade along State Street. Locations of signs, awnings and banners as shown are recommended for all streets.



Recommended locations and projections for banners, awnings and temporary signs for all streets

## Blade Signs

Blade signs are rigid and project into the street at right angles from the building facade. Blade signs should not project more than 48" into the public way. Blade signs are encouraged on Wabash Avenue and on east-west streets. Blade signs are encouraged for theaters, restaurants, and hotels only on State Street. Blade signs are prohibited on Michigan Avenue (Section 5.16(b)(2) of the Chicago Zoning Ordinance). Blade signs are also prohibited in B6-6 and B6-7 zoning districts.

## Banner Signs and Flags

While banners are prohibited on Michigan Avenue, they are encouraged on all other streets. Banners should not project more than 48 inches into the public way. Banners shall be made of cloth, and be replaced when dirty or damaged. Banners shall not be supported by or attached to any pole, structure, or other device in the public way. Flags are strongly encouraged on Michigan Avenue.

## Signs on Awnings, Marquee or Canopies

Any sign located on an awning shall be fixed flat to the surface, shall be non-illuminated, and shall indicate only the name and/or address of the establishment. Further, no such sign shall extend vertically or horizontally beyond the limits of the awning (Section 8.9(3), Chicago Zoning Ordinance). Awning signs should be fixed to the skirt of the awning only.

Signs located on a marquee or canopy shall be fixed flat to the surface or suspended within and below the outer marquee or canopy limits. No sign shall extend beyond the limits of or be supported by the marquee or canopy (Section 8.9(2), Chicago Zoning Ordinance).

## Parking Signs

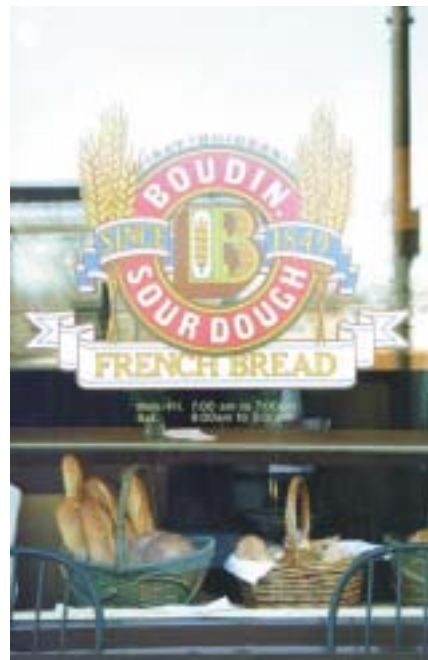
Parking structures or lots should not have more than two parking signs along each street frontage. Parking signs fixed or painted on the walls of adjacent buildings are not allowed. No parking signs are allowed beyond the second floor of a parking structure. To avoid visual clutter and aid motorists, it is recommended that the City establish graphic standards for all signs associated with parking facilities.

## Materials

Signs consisting of individual letters mounted to the building facade are encouraged. Individual letters should not be more than 36 inches tall. Large, opaque sign panels behind individual letters are discouraged. Gold leaf signs painted on windows are strongly encouraged.

## Electrical Equipment

Conduits, raceways, transformers, and other electrical sign equipment should be concealed. If raceways must be exposed, they should be integrated into the overall design of the sign. In masonry or terra cotta buildings, signs should be attached to mortar joints to minimize damage to the building facade.



Well designed blade signs, marquees, banners and window signs can add great quality and vibrancy to the streetscape

## NEXT STEPS : PRIORITY PROJECTS

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The vision presented in this document combines large scale strategic interventions and long term implementation with specific projects that can be begun immediately and build the momentum for larger tasks. Together, these provide a comprehensive framework to address the demands and problems of this area, and to restore Chicago's Historic Downtown Core to its glorious past.

The City has already undertaken a number of key initiatives that can make this vision a reality. Most remarkable of these is the "Get in the Loop" campaign launched by the City in April, 1999, to recruit the best and most desired Chicago businesses, brands, and institutions to the Loop, and to form a partnership with area property owners, building managers, business organizations and retail brokers in these recruitment efforts. The response to the campaign was remarkable: over 50 businesses that included reputable restaurants, bakeries, taverns, museums, theaters, art galleries and upscale groceries, proclaimed serious interest in locating a store in the Loop.

To provide further incentives to attract new businesses as well as help existing small businesses and building owners, two new City initiatives are being proposed: the Central Loop Loan Program (CLLP) and the Central Loop Improvement Fund (CLIF).

The CLLP is for direct low interest loans up to \$50,000 to creditworthy retail, commercial or service oriented businesses leasing or intending to lease space in the Central Loop area that will create or retain jobs for Chicago residents.

The CLIF is a tax increment financing program designed to improve the appearance and economic viability of buildings through capital improvements, attract new tenants, encourage neighborhood businesses to open a downtown location, and enhance historically significant buildings. Improvements include new signs or awnings complying with City standards; restoration of storefronts, facades, and entrances; window replacement, improvements to building systems, etc.

Along with these marketing efforts and financial incentives, the City is continuing its emphasis on infrastructural improvements and better maintenance throughout the area. Building owners can also begin with their own maintenance steps. Cleaning ground floor facades and lobbies can renew a building, while upgrading the quality of signs is an easy step that can transform how a building relates to passers-by. Parking lot owners can also contribute substantially by providing well designed landscaping, lighting and fencing.

The priority projects identified in the following page serve as an agenda for both the City of Chicago and building owners and tenants. While many are only maintenance actions, they will provide visible signs of progress on State Street, Wabash Avenue and Michigan Avenue, enhancing the appearance of the district in the near term and providing evidence of ongoing public and private commitment. These first steps are key to the realization of the vision for this district.



# PRIORITY PROJECTS

**1. THE "L"**  
Renovate the "L" and the stations by repainting, and improving lighting, signage and maintenance

**2 & 3. PUBLIC WAY**  
Repair sidewalks on Wabash Avenue and cross streets  
Renovate Congress Parkway as a gateway to the Loop

**4. HISTORIC MICHIGAN BOULEVARD DISTRICT**  
Protect the historic streetwall with a Chicago Landmark designation

**5. JEWELER'S ROW**  
Introduce streetscape elements on Wabash Avenue to strengthen the presence of Jeweler's Row

**6. BLOCK 37**  
Redevelop to bring in new uses that reinforce the existing retail and entertainment district

**7. PALMER HOUSE**  
Retenant former C.D. Peacock store and restore original street level retail facade

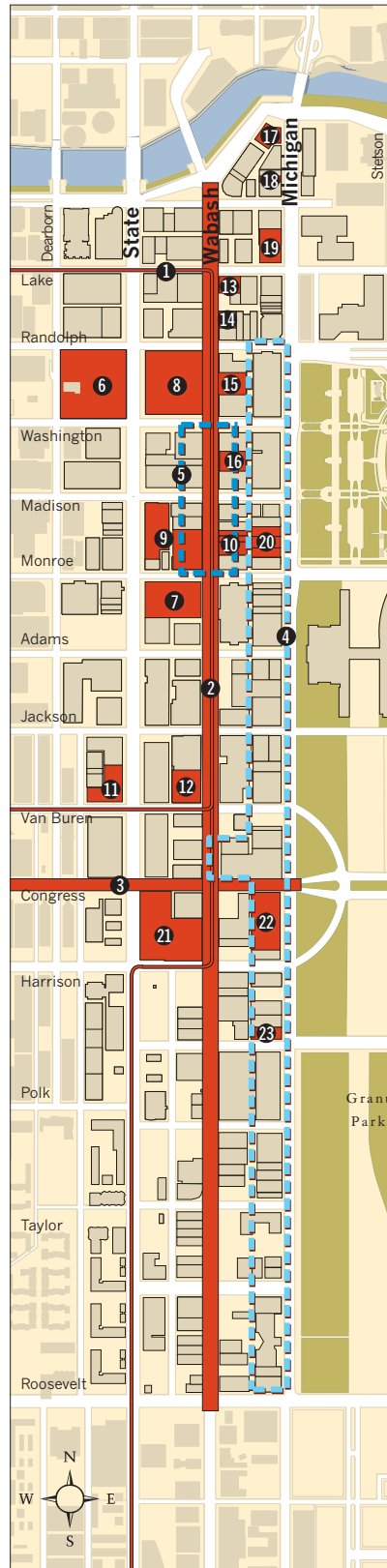
**8. MARSHALL FIELD'S**  
Clean exterior of building  
Address the blank windows on the upper floors

**9. CARSON PIRIE SCOTT**  
Rehab and fill vacant upper floors  
Clean upper floor windows  
Reintroduce retractable awnings  
Clean facade of Heyworth Building  
Restore facades of Haskell-Baker-Atwater buildings on Wabash

**10. MID-BLOCK BUILDINGS: IWAN RIES, 23 & 27 S. WABASH, & FORMER K & B BUILDING**  
Rehab upper floors  
Clean exterior of all buildings  
Restore historic Adler & Sullivan facade of the Iwan Ries building

**11. PRITZKER PARK**  
Remake the park to become a more usable, inviting and safe park

**12. PARKING GARAGE**  
Investigate potential as future redevelopment site



**ALL SURFACE PARKING LOTS**  
Improve lighting, signage and maintenance  
Add landscaping to screen lots from street  
Investigate potential as redevelopment sites

**13. MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING**  
Clean exterior of building  
Rehab and fill vacant upper floors

**14. PARKING GARAGE**  
Replace existing facade to meet design guidelines for parking structures (p:49)  
Remove projecting sign over sidewalk  
Investigate potential as redevelopment site

**15. MID-BLOCK BUILDINGS: 125-139 N. WABASH**  
Rehab and fill vacant upper floors  
Investigate other redevelopment options

**16. MID BLOCK BUILDINGS: 17, 11 & 9 N. WABASH**  
Clean exterior of all buildings  
Rehab and fill vacant upper floors

**17. 360 N. MICHIGAN**  
Rehab and fill vacant upper floors  
Improve the quality of street level retail and signage

**18. 316 N. MICHIGAN**  
Rehab and fill vacant upper floors

**19. 200, 222 & 224 N. MICHIGAN**  
Uncover original facade by removing panels and signs of former tenants  
Rehab and fill street level vacant stores

**20. THE GAGE GROUP**  
Restore original Louis Sullivan facade

**21. STATE-CONGRESS SITE**  
Redevelop with a use that contributes to the academic core

**22. THE CONGRESS PLAZA HOTEL**  
Activate the street level with new retail, attractive windows and better signage

**23. THE BLACKSTONE**  
Rehab historic facade of the building

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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