

To: Halsted Pointe Development Team

From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group

Date: 08.12.21

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force development review working group is thankful for the opportunity to review and provide input on the master plan for the Halsted Pointe development as presented August 3, 2021. The presentation provided task force members with an overview of the proposed master plan, phasing schedule, and intent to hold future coordination meetings for the river adjacent subareas. The development team expressed ongoing efforts to meet [The Chicago River Design Guidelines](#) menu of improvements criteria, and their support for the [Wild Mile](#) along the adjacent portion of the Chicago River.

Following the development team's presentation there was a 'Q & A' session that allowed Task Force members to highlight specific areas of the plan, ask clarifying questions, and provide general feedback. The following comments are representative of the group's feedback and include written responses and verbal input from meeting participants.

Halsted Pointe and River Edge Development on the North Branch

The proposed development has been in process since 2018, and has included preliminary reviews with the Department of Planning and Development, Friends of the Chicago River, and other groups. The development team plans to implement the master plan in phases over the next 8-10 years, and upon completion the entire complex will include approximately 2,500 residential units, commercial, retail, office, and hotel programming. The site is a prominent feature on Goose Island and is bound by the river on two sides, totalling approximately 1,300 linear feet of river frontage. Currently the site has little interface with the river edge, due to the existing commercial use, heavy barge traffic, and high seawalls. Halsted Pointe represents an opportunity to make bold statements about how continued barge traffic, new development, recreation, and robust riverine habitats can coexist along the North Branch of the Chicago River.

The task force acknowledges that the August 3 presentation's primary purpose is to serve as an introduction to the overall *conceptual* master plan. It does not include specific design decisions regarding the River Design Guidelines menu of improvements or subarea site/landscaping plans for portions of the site adjacent to the river's edge. Following is a *non-exhaustive* list of broad items for the development team to consider and incorporate as they continue to move through their design and planning for the site. We encourage them to refer to the River Edge Design Guidelines for direction and continue to interact, present and receive feedback from the Task Force's development review group as they move forward with the project.

- **Incorporate Naturalized Landscape and Open Space**

As the landscape design evolves it should seek to create a more naturalized layout and plant selection in conjunction with the proposed Wild Mile and in accordance with the River Edge Design Guidelines. A more equal balance between hardscape or paved open space and diverse planted greenspace is critical. Naturalized planting patterns and native plants should be utilized to signal to residents and visitors the site's adjacency to the River and increase biodiversity. Ensure that best practices are followed with regard to plant installation, care and maintenance, with sufficient soil volumes to support mature tree growth and a comprehensive maintenance plan.

- **Think Creatively about Habitat Creation**

In conjunction with the previous point, the development team should think creatively about new habitat creation. The proposal's lowering of some portions of the seawall is an invaluable first step, and when paired with additional strategies can lead to habitat creation throughout the site. Additional strategies should include creating microhabitats throughout the site, such as dense clusters of multi-layered vegetation, incorporating trees of a variety of species, and creating terraces and shelves along vertical

sea-walls. This is also a valuable opportunity to develop habitats that support birds at a key point along the river. Chicago is one of the nation's cities that is used by migratory birds and priority habitats are located along the lakefront and rivers. This site should incorporate effective migratory landbird habitat into its riverfront designs as well as protect migratory birds from harm by implementing bird friendly facade treatments.

Working with the Wild Mile is key to this project achieving the nature design principles, considering that the existing seawall wall (must) remain. The development should continue working with the Wild Mile team to incorporate additional aspects of habitat into this project, like floating wetland elements. The Task Force membership includes experts on these topics who are willing to collaborate further with the development team in future meetings as needed.

- **Improve Public Space Accessibility and Programming**

An often overlooked aspect for public space accessibility is perception. The design should incorporate wayfinding and signage to ensure that the public spaces are clearly delineated and avoid confusion for visitors. Design decisions that may lead to public spaces that are 'public' in name only should also be avoided. The development team should carefully consider how public spaces throughout the site interface with one another; large open spaces with the river path, the river path with the Wild Mile and the proposed pedestrian bridge, the river path with existing bike and pedestrian infrastructure, etc. In particular, the proposed pedestrian bridge across the river will be a major asset to help promote connectivity.

Multi-use paths, especially if a pedestrian bridge is incorporated across the River, should be clearly marked with signage to designate and welcome people into publicly available areas and paths. Public programming that serves the wider community, not just the residents of the buildings, should be incorporated, working in partnership with community-based organizations and resident groups from nearby communities.

The proposed project seems like it would support mainly passive recreation activities, but there is great opportunity to have set asides for programmable space, such as the kayak rental that was highlighted in the presentation. Ensure that there are also affordable ways to access and connect residents and visitors to the river as well.

Again, thank you for taking the time to present to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group. Your proposal is a meaningful step towards enhancing the riverfront from both a land and river perspective. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback early in the conceptual design process and look forward to the ongoing coordination as the project moves on to future phases. Your consideration of the spirit of the Riverfront Design Guidelines is admirable, and we hope that implementing the above recommendations can be mutually beneficial for the development team, community residents, and the river itself. We welcome the opportunity for feedback, offer our services in the future, and look forward to your responses and future collaboration.

Thank you,

River Ecology Governance Task Force
Development Review Group