

Where Worlds Connect

20
22



A VISION FOR A REIMAGINED MUSEUM CAMPUS

MUSEUM CAMPUS WORKING GROUP



■ A Message From the Mayor



Chicago is a city of 77 neighborhoods, all unique, diverse and chock full of amazing assets which make residents proud. One of our great unifiers is our spectacular lakefront that sets us apart from any other city on the globe. In order to make sure we are maximizing access and opportunities, in February 2022, I asked 23 civic leaders from across the city to develop a vision for a more accessible, relevant, and attractive Museum Campus that is activated year-round. These are leaders drawn from business, arts and culture, transportation, and sports – all innovative and renowned in their own rights. And special thanks to Richard Price who graciously agreed to chair this effort. My charge to them was straightforward: how do we maximize the visitor experience in each element of the Museum Campus from the Shedd to McCormick Place and everything in between to make it a year-round destination for residents and visitors alike? I also asked these leaders to dream big and be bold in their recommendations and visioning for this space that is like none other. I'm excited to share the output of that group with you here, and I'm even more excited to begin taking steps to redefine what the Museum Campus means to the people of Chicago and how it serves us all.

Since its inception, the Museum Campus has been a site of innovation, education, and entertainment. Indeed, our museum exhibits, sporting events, and concerts are among the very best in the world. Including Northerly Island, this area also provides access to nature for thousands of Chicagoans. But for all the Museum Campus offers, too many Chicagoans feel shut out of these experiences. Tickets, food, and parking are all too often unaffordable and access to inexpensive public transportation options is limited. People may not see themselves or their communities reflected in the buildings and activities on the Campus. In many cases, Chicagoans may not even know these assets exists, despite living in such close proximity to it. We must begin to change that so that all of our residents can access the natural and other beauty, history and entertainment opportunities of the Museum Campus, year-round.

What you will find is that the group has proposed a number of unique and innovative recommendations on how we as a city can reimagine the Museum Campus in partnership with important stakeholders like the museums, the Park District, our sports teams that utilize Soldier Field and people who come to this part of the lakefront to enjoy its natural beauty.

Enjoy the read and let's dream big, Chicago.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori E. Lightfoot". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lori E. Lightfoot
Mayor, City of Chicago



■ A Message From the Museum Campus Working Group Chair



Like so many other Chicagoans, I've always cherished the Museum Campus as a unique and special part of the city's identity. When Mayor Lightfoot shared her idea for the Museum Campus working group and asked me to chair the effort, I was honored and excited to get to work. Through collaboration with so many great civic leaders, we've been able to dig into the details and discuss the challenges and potential solutions. I have a newfound appreciation for Museum Campus and the incredible opportunities it holds.

As you read this report, I hope you find our vision for the Campus bold and inspiring. I hope you see that for as bright as the pieces that make up the Museum Campus shine today, as a unified destination, it can shine so much brighter. It can shine as a place to learn about and explore our world; to relax, enjoy nature, and take in unbelievable views; and to enjoy fantastic sporting events and concerts. It can shine as an economic engine for our City and also as a community park. And most importantly, it can shine as a place Chicagoans from all neighborhoods can access and share a sense of belonging to.

I'm grateful to the countless individuals and organizations that contributed to this first step in reimagining the next chapter for the Museum Campus. Now, let's see it through.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Price'.

Richard S. Price
Executive Chairman, Mesirow



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■ Executive Summary

Chicago is a world-class city, and the Museum Campus is at the heart of its vibrant city center on its spectacular lakefront. No other city has three first-rate museums, the largest convention center in the country, an iconic stadium, and a nature oasis in one site. The Museum Campus is a place to experience the connections of the city to the water, of Chicago's history to its future, and of local to global experiences. With its unique anchor institutions, there's no better place to explore the sky, land, and water; no better place for people to learn, play, or connect. The Museum Campus is truly "Where Worlds Connect."

However, physical and socioeconomic barriers stand between this incredible resource and many residents. Advancing equitable access to the Campus with enhanced transportation options, inclusive site planning, and culturally diverse programming are necessary to honor the site's legacy and increase its relevance to all Chicagoans.

In February 2022, Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced the formation of the Museum Campus working group, charged with developing recommendations to enhance and reimagine the visitor experience and elevate the appeal of the Museum Campus as a global, year-round destination. Composed of distinguished civic leaders from across the community and supported by City Departments and Sister Agencies, the working group has developed a set of recommendations to serve as a framework for future improvements to the Campus.

On the reimagined Museum Campus, new amenities will complement the Campus' assets to create an exciting place for all visitors; ecological restoration will create an urban retreat of global significance; inclusive design and programming will create a place everyone can enjoy; new connections and points of arrival will redefine the Campus' accessibility for everyone. With this new vision, Chicago can chart a trajectory for the next century of this inspiring place and reaffirm the city's leadership in urban innovation. Governed with a collaborative approach across all stakeholders, the Campus will emerge as an iconic destination recognized around the world.

● **An Exciting Place to Be:** Transformational place-making with enhanced programming and amenities will activate currently underutilized spaces and buildings across the Museum Campus to enrich the visitor experience. A renewed Soldier Field will deliver a world-class visitor experience in and around the stadium, and, along with Lakeside Center, anchor a vibrant entertainment corridor. With a greater diversity of experiences that expand use of the Campus throughout the day and into the evening, visitors will want to linger on the Campus and return often.

● **An Urban Nature Retreat:** The transformative power of landscaping with native species will amplify the natural beauty of the Museum Campus, creating a destination where visitors can immerse themselves in nature. Far more than simply filling the spaces between institutions, it will tie the Campus together, improve its function as a major flyway stop, and make it a model for sustainability. Paired with innovative approaches to environmental preservation, the Museum Campus will demonstrate Chicago's role as a leader in urban climate resilience.

● **A Place Everyone Can Enjoy:** New amenities, inclusive design, and coordinated programming will create a Museum Campus that attracts and welcomes all, from each Chicago neighborhood to our neighbors from across the world. To attract and be relevant to all, features and programming will appeal and be accessible to people with different interests, lifestyles, and needs. Access to the Campus will go beyond physical connections and extend to building a true sense of belonging and ownership.



● **A Connected Destination:** World-class connectivity will take full advantage of all modes of mobility to connect Chicago's neighborhoods, the Chicagoland region, and the world to the Campus. Whether for daily access or a special event, transportation to and from the Campus will be more convenient and enjoyable, while disruptions to major transit corridors and adjacent communities will be minimized. Visitors will have a distinct sense of arrival regardless of how they access the Campus and be greeted by new and exciting ways to move around the Campus.

● **Bringing It All Together:** The vision for the Campus will be pursued in a coordinated way that maximizes the mutually reinforcing aspects of individual recommendations to compound the benefits of future investment. Coordinating these efforts with a dedicated body will give the Campus a more cohesive identity, make it more sustainable, and ensure its longevity as an attractive, year-round destination for everyone.

Achieving this vision for Museum Campus is a long-term effort requiring further evaluations and extensive funding but with the potential for far-reaching economic and social benefits. In pursuing this vision, the City should execute the recommendations in a fiscally responsible way, utilizing a multi-pronged funding approach that systematically explores opportunities to access federal funding, engages the philanthropic and civic community, and leverages public-private partnerships to maximize the resources available for this endeavor while limiting the financial burden for residents.

Finally, while the working group brought the depth of its collective knowledge, experience, and passion to this effort, the next steps need to include a wider audience through a process that ensures additional public and stakeholder engagement.



■ Recommendations

| | Timing* | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---|---|
| | S | M | L |
| An Exciting Place to Be | | | |
| Activate outdoor spaces to enhance year-round appeal | | | |
| Activate Solidarity Drive as a year-round plaza | ◆ | | |
| Incorporate large-scale art to rejuvenate the Campus | | ◆ | |
| Create an indoor/outdoor experience with educational programs for all ages | | ◆ | |
| Rethink the lake and harbor as place-making and activation resources | | ◆ | |
| Transform Soldier Field into a state-of-the-art venue with an exceptional visitor experience | | | |
| Offer a best-in-class visitor experience | | | ◆ |
| Update Soldier Field's seating configuration | | | ◆ |
| Explore advertising and sponsorship opportunities | ◆ | | |
| Integrate additional public attractions into Soldier Field | | ◆ | |
| Explore the potential to increase year-round use | ◆ | | |
| Create new experiences with adaptive reuse of existing buildings | | | |
| Adaptive reuse of Northerly Island terminal building, harbor buildings, and Chicago Horizon | | ◆ | |
| Adaptive reuse of Lakeside Center | | | ◆ |
| An Urban Nature Retreat | | | |
| Unify the Campus with landscaping that restores native ecosystems | | | |
| Make Northerly Island a resilient, sustainable ecological oasis | | | |
| Reimagine the Northerly Island terminal building as the Great Lakes Climate Lab | | | ◆ |
| Explore sustainable options for Huntington Bank Pavilion | | ◆ | |
| Restore Northerly Island and protect it from additional erosion damage | | | |
| Green the broader Museum Campus by modifying non-permeable surfaces | | | |
| A Place Everyone Can Enjoy | | | |
| Introduce new and expanded amenities that appeal to all ages and needs | | | |
| A Connected Destination | | | |
| Improve connectivity to existing public transportation | | | |
| Reinstate a free or low-cost trolley or shuttle | ◆ | | |
| Improve CTA bus service to the Museum Campus | ◆ | | |
| Provide better access to real-time transit information | ◆ | | |
| Increase pedestrian, bike, and water-based connectivity | | | |
| Complete connections to bike trails and improve existing connections | | ◆ | |
| Make the Campus more bike and scooter friendly | | ◆ | |
| Expand existing water taxi service and seasonal water transportation options | | ◆ | |
| Create new access over Metra Weldon Yard complex | | | ◆ |

*Timing indicates approximately how quickly recommendations can be implemented: short-term (S) actions are within the next year, medium-term (M) actions are in the next 2-5 years, and long-term (L) actions have timelines longer than 5 years.



■ Recommendations (Continued)

| | Timing* | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---|---|
| | S | M | L |
| Create connections through new infrastructure | | | |
| Build increased connectivity to the South Side | | | ◆ |
| Create an iconic pedestrian bridge connecting to Northerly Island | | | ◆ |
| Increase transit access and capacity along the Cermak corridor | | | ◆ |
| Create a South Lakefront Busway by enhancing and extending the McCormick Place Busway | | | ◆ |
| Create mobility hubs on and adjacent to the Campus | | ◆ | |
| Address vehicle congestion and parking challenges | | | |
| Improve shared bus drop-off and parking for field trips | ◆ | | |
| Improve pick-up and drop-off strategies and related traffic routing plans | ◆ | | |
| Improve Columbus/Roosevelt/DLSD intersection triangle | | ◆ | |
| Develop enhanced lakefront remote parking strategies | ◆ | | |
| Improve on-site parking accessibility and optimize capacity | ◆ | | |
| Create a sense of destination and arrival | | | |
| | | | ◆ |
| Develop solutions for intra-Campus mobility | | | |
| | | ◆ | |
| Bringing It All Together | | | |
| Establish a stakeholder coordinating body | ◆ | | |
| Develop a comprehensive site plan to guide a cohesive implementation effort | ◆ | | |
| Develop an integrated wayfinding approach for the Campus and with neighboring parks | ◆ | | |
| Create a Campus identity through rebranding | ◆ | | |

*Timing indicates approximately how quickly recommendations can be implemented: short-term (S) actions are within the next year, medium-term (M) actions are in the next 2-5 years, and long-term (L) actions have timelines longer than 5 years.



■ The Museum Campus Working Group

The Museum Campus is one of Chicago's crown jewels, home to premier cultural institutions, sports and concert venues, important memorials, and invaluable open space. Recognizing an opportunity to further revitalize Chicago's resurgent tourism sector, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot announced the formation of the Museum Campus working group in February 2022. She charged the group with developing recommendations to enhance and reimagine the visitor experience and elevate the appeal of the Museum Campus as a global, year-round destination. Composed of distinguished civic leaders from across the community and supported by City Departments and Sister Agencies, the working group has developed a set of recommendations to serve both as a framework for future improvements to the Campus and to identify near-term opportunities to increase the benefits of this invaluable asset.

The Museum Campus working group organized along primary themes for the Campus: open space and recreation, cultural amenities, athletic facilities, and transit access. These sub-groups met independently to discuss the challenges and opportunities relevant to their topical areas and to hear from experts on specific aspects of the Campus. The full working group met seven times to integrate the individual workstreams into a unified concept for the Campus and to address topics spanning sub-groups.

Guided by the objectives set forth by the Mayor and the collective aspirations of its members, the Museum Campus working group grounded its efforts in six principles:

- Enhance the Campus' attractiveness and relevance for all Chicagoans
- Provide a unified, year-round Museum Campus experience
- Improve multi-modal access to and mobility on the Campus
- Ground the Campus in Chicago's motto: "City in a Garden" and the Park District's motto: "Garden in the City"
- Harness the Campus' role as an economic engine for Chicago
- Recognize the Campus as the heart of 20+ miles of lakefront in the park system

Along the entire course of its activities, and out of concern about violence across the City, the working group identified safety on Campus as a prerequisite for the realization of any vision that aspires to make the site an attractive location for residents to work and enjoy, and for tourists to visit.

■ Working Group Scope

Though the Museum Campus is sometimes narrowly defined as the 57-acre strip of land that contains the Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium, and the Adler Planetarium, for the purpose of this working group the Museum Campus has been defined more broadly as the 307-acre area bounded roughly by Roosevelt Road to the north, DuSable Lake Shore Drive to the west, and the Stevenson Expressway to the south. This land is owned by the Chicago Park District ("Parks"); the institutions that are hosted within its boundaries are operated by separate organizations through various agreements with Parks.

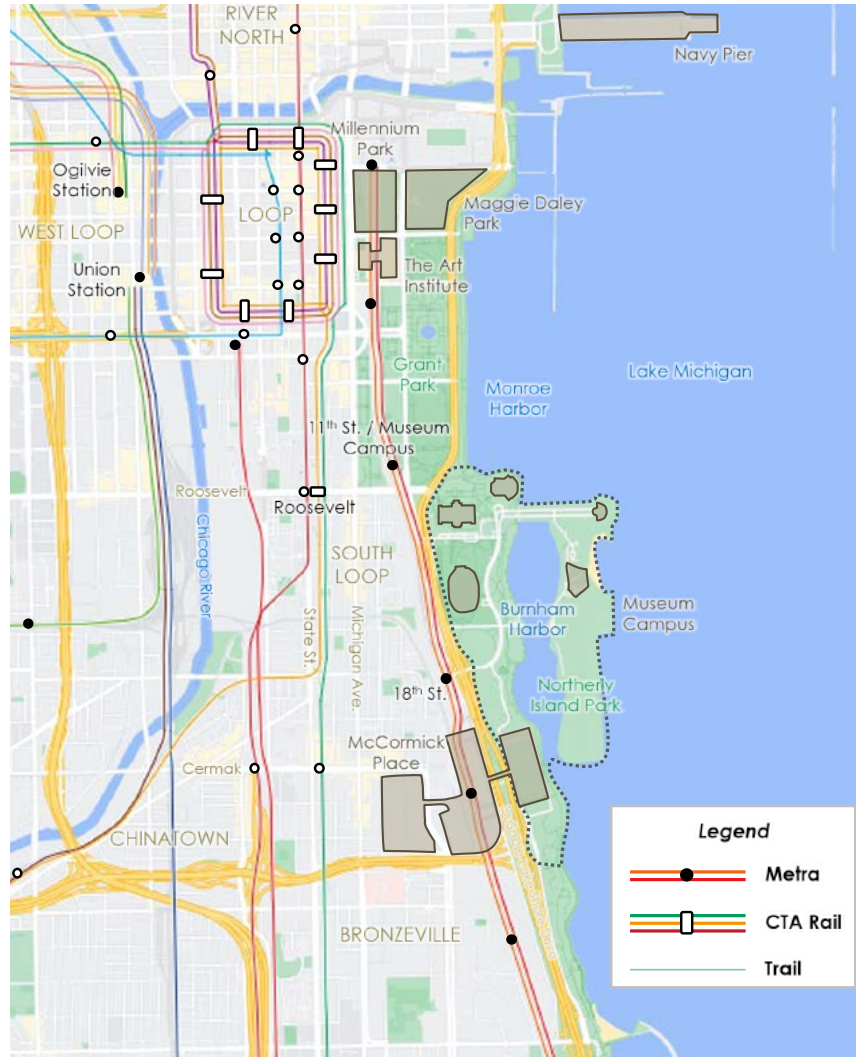
This broader scope recognizes the interconnectedness of many adjacent venues and features within this larger space. In addition to three world-class cultural institutions, the Campus is home to entertainment and event venues, such as Soldier Field, Huntington Bank Pavilion, and the McCormick Lakeside Center. These institutions have stunning views of the skyline and Lake Michigan, and coexist with an abundance of natural spaces, including Northerly Island and the McCormick Place Bird Sanctuary. Other public-facing amenities such as Burnham Harbor, 12th Street Beach, and a sledding hill round out the Campus.



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Particularly with respect to transit access, the working group recognized that even this broader view of the Museum Campus is limited and therefore considered connections to transportation nodes and community areas, especially to the west and south (in the map below), as part of their focus.

Museum Campus Scope and Relation to Other Key Locations



■ The Museum Campus – The Past

Generations of Chicagoans and visitors have explored the Museum Campus to engage with Chicago's prime cultural, nature, and sporting offerings. Situated in the heart of Chicago adjacent to the Loop's business and entertainment district, the site occupies an urban lakefront oasis unique among world's global cities. Today's Campus has greatly evolved since its earliest conception in 1909, and in Chicago's great tradition of innovation, it has undergone many transformations. Understanding the origins of this dynamic destination is critical to contextualizing the vision for the Campus' next chapter.

When the prominent architecture team Daniel Burnham and Edward H. Bennett released the Plan of Chicago in 1909, it included a vision of Northerly Island as a nature haven. As construction on the man-made island proceeded, the Illinois Central Railroad offered the City land it had reclaimed from the lake.



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This land, gifted in 1911, spread from the southern edge of Grant Park to south of 12th Street and was to be used to erect the Field Museum. The first project in a flurry of major activity on the Campus, the Field Museum opened in 1921. In rapid succession, Soldier Field opened in 1924, Northerly Island's initial construction ended in 1925, and the Shedd Aquarium and Adler Planetarium were opened in 1930. With these institutions newly open to the public, Chicago secured its place as a leader in innovation and was chosen to host its second world fair. Under the motto "Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Adapts", the 1933-1934 Century of Progress World's Fair introduced over 40 million visitors to this new and exciting part of Chicago.

In 1938, the Works Progress Administration connected Northerly Island to the Campus mainland with a causeway to create the peninsula present today. A decade later, the peninsula was reconfigured into the Merrill C. Meigs Field Airport, a decision spurred by World War II aviation developments and the prior vision of Edward H. Bennett.

Mirroring the activity in the 1920s, the 1990s ushered in three decades of major changes to the Museum Campus. Mayor Richard M. Daley announced plans to close the airport and replace it with a park in 1996. Major construction completed in 1998 rerouted northbound Lake Shore Drive to the west of the major institutions. This allowed for uninterrupted space connecting all the land from the Field Museum to McCormick Lakeside Center (built between 1968-1971) and established the boundary of the Museum Campus known today.



Meigs Field operated on Northerly Island from 1948 to 2003.



Remnants of Meigs Field remain on Northerly Island, including the control tower pictured here.

Soldier Field was renovated between 2002 and 2003 to modernize the stadium while retaining much of the historic architecture. In 2003, the promised removal of the Merrill C. Meigs Field Airport began, and the site was converted to parkland with the 2005 addition of a temporary concert venue, known currently as the Huntington Bank Pavilion. Inspired by Burnham's vision of Northerly Island as a natural site, the architecture firm Studio Gang released its visionary Northerly Island Framework Plan in 2011. Limited parts of the plan, such as the introduction of native landscaping and a lagoon-like pond, were implemented in 2015 with the support of the Army Corps of Engineers in parallel with their efforts to control lakefront erosion.

From its birth in Burnham and Bennett's 1909 Plan of Chicago, the Museum Campus has played a formative role in crafting the spirit of Chicago. It is the working group's goal to build upon this legacy and lay a path that continues to evolve this incredible asset for the benefit of future generations of Chicagoans.



■ **The Museum Campus – the Present**

Key Museum Campus Assets



- 1 Shedd Aquarium
- 2 Field Museum
- 3 East Museum Lot
- 4 North Garage
- 5 Soldier Field
- 6 Gold Star Families Memorial
- 7 Adler Planetarium
- 8 Adler Lot
- 9 12th Street Beach
- 10 Huntington Bank Pavilion
- 11 Northerly Island Visitors Center
- 12 Northerly Island Park
- 13 Waldron Deck
- 14 Sledding Hill
- 15 South Lot
- 16 McCormick Place Lakeside Center
- 17 McCormick C Parking Garage
- 18 McCormick Place Bird Sanctuary

Field Museum – Opened in 1921 as part of the original Burnham and Bennett 1909 Plan of Chicago, the Field Museum is a major hub for research, educational and cultural programming, and environmental work. As of 2019, its annual visitorship is about 1.3 million people and it employs roughly 150 scientists in its labs.

Shedd Aquarium – Opened in 1930 as one of the first inland aquariums in the world, the Shedd welcomed close to 1.9 million guests in 2019. Today, it houses more than 100 animal species from around the globe. In addition to educational, cultural, and animal-encounter programming, the aquarium is heavily engaged in conservation efforts and field research.



Adler Planetarium – Adler Planetarium opened its doors in 1930 as the first planetarium in the western hemisphere. Welcoming nearly 500,000 guests per year, the space science center includes the institution's landmark museum and observatory complex; two planetarium dome theaters; one of the world's leading collections documenting the history of astronomical science; and an award-winning digital platform that engages millions of people around the globe.

Soldier Field – The oldest stadium in the NFL, Soldier Field opened in 1924. Following its 2003 renovation, Soldier Field's capacity increased from 45,000 to 61,500. Soldier Field hosts an estimated 194 events annually, welcoming almost 1.4 million people. It has two primary tenants—the Chicago Bears and the Chicago Fire of Major League Soccer—and regularly hosts major concerts and other entertainment events.

McCormick Place Lakeside Center – Completed in 1971, Lakeside Center is a convention and event space with a total of 580,000 square feet of exhibit space and 141,000 square feet of meeting space. It includes a ballroom, a landscaped deck, and a state-of-the-art theater. Lakeside Center is part of the McCormick Place Convention Center, the largest convention center in North America, which saw nearly 3 million visitors in 2019.

McCormick Place Bird Sanctuary – Occupying 6 acres of land on top of an underground parking lot for McCormick Place, the Bird Sanctuary opened as part of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor in 2003. An important migration stop for millions of birds, it comprises native prairie and woodland plant species.

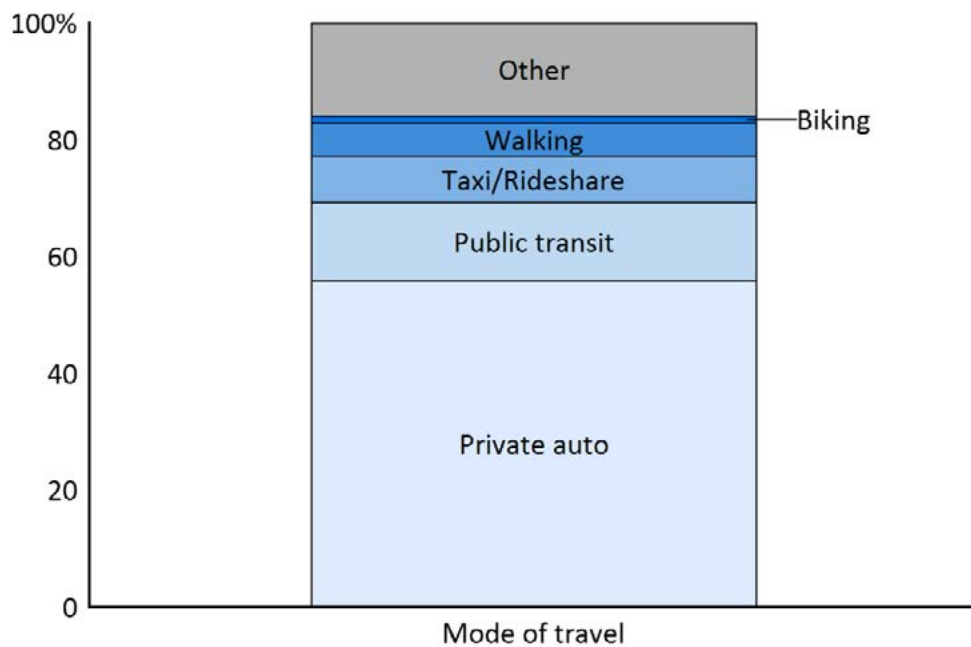
Northerly Island: Park and Huntington Bank Pavilion – The brainchild of Daniel Burnham, Northerly Island opened in 1925 and was transformed into a peninsula in 1938. Northerly Island's 40-acre park, encompassing nearly half of the peninsula's 91 total acres, opened on the southern part of the island in 2015, after the site's roughly 50-year stint as an airport ended in 2003. Located on the northern portion of the peninsula, Huntington Bank Pavilion is a 30,000-person capacity outdoor amphitheater with views of Lake Michigan and the Chicago skyline.



Visitorship

Each year, about 5 million people visit the Field Museum, Adler Planetarium, Shedd Aquarium, and Soldier Field. It is estimated that on a typical summer Saturday, approximately 19,000 people visited the Museum Campus. The site attracts visitors from near and far with a nearly even split between Illinois residents and out-of-state visitors. In 2019, more than half of all daily visitors arrived by private motor vehicles and only 13% traveled via public transit, illuminating the essential role that cars play in accessing the Museum Campus today.

Share of total visitors (average summer weekend, '19)

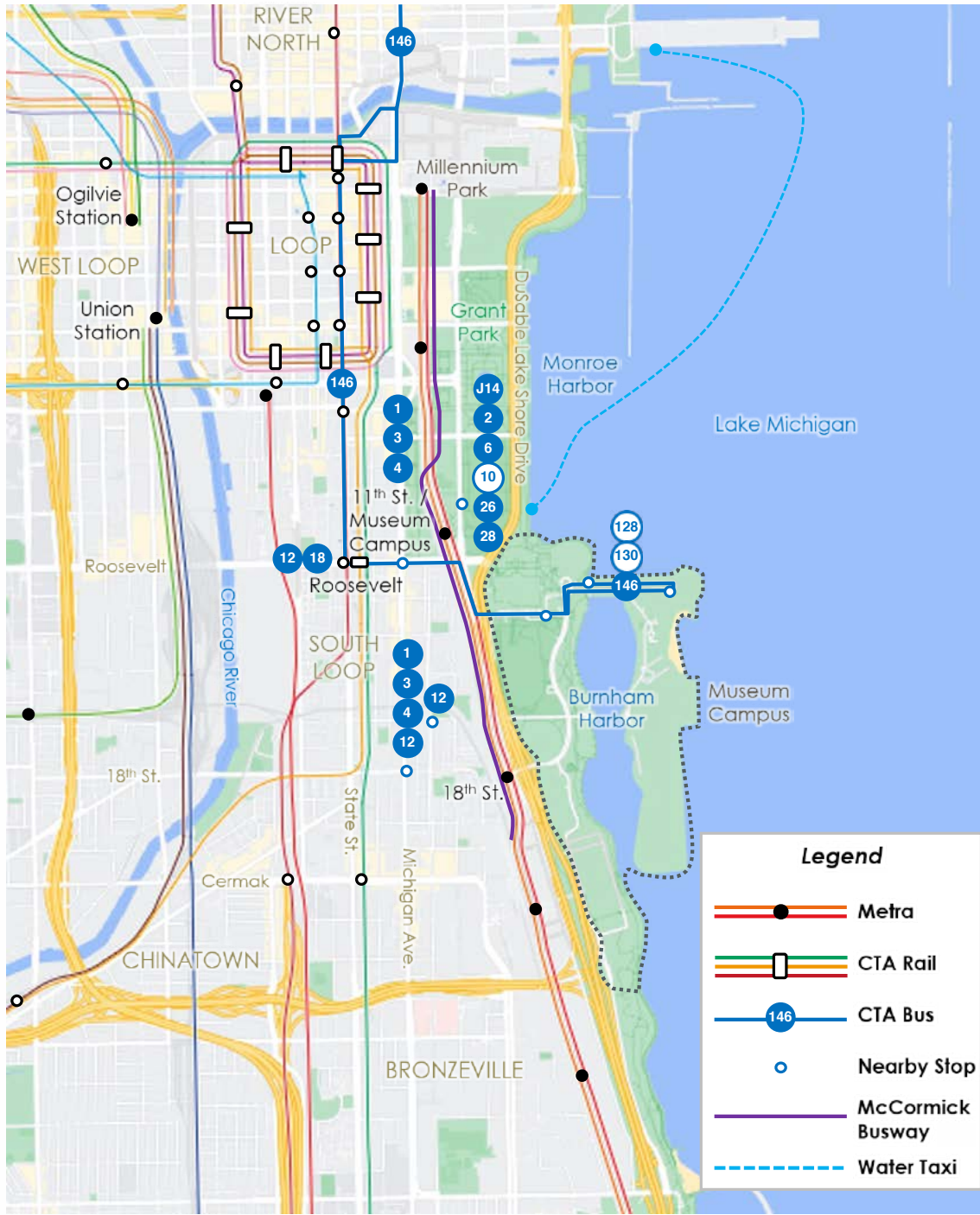


In general, the Campus is busiest during the summer and on weekends, and almost all individuals who travel to the site travel for recreational purposes (including visiting museums, attending sporting events, or other types of recreation). This contrasts with other common Chicago destinations, like Navy Pier, that have a greater proportion of visitors who come for shopping, eating, or other activities.



Public Transportation to the Campus

Existing Museum Campus Transit Access



Three CTA bus routes serve the Museum Campus directly; only one runs year-round.

- a. Route #146 operates every day connecting the Museum Campus to the Roosevelt Road CTA station, State Street in the Loop, North Michigan Avenue, and the north lakefront along Lincoln Park between Belmont Avenue and Foster Avenue.
- b. Route #130 operates seasonally between Ogilvie Transportation Center, Union Station, and the Museum Campus via State Street in the Loop and the Roosevelt Road CTA station.
- c. Route #128, the “Soldier Field Express,” operates nonstop from Ogilvie Transportation Center and Union Station to Soldier Field during Bears game days.

Many other CTA bus routes stop relatively close to the Museum Campus but west of DuSable Lake Shore Drive. CTA’s south lakefront express bus routes #2, #6, #10, #26, #28 and J14 all stop at 11th Street. However, the 11th/Columbus bus stop is more than a five-minute walk from the Field Museum and significantly farther for most other the Museum Campus destinations. The nearest stops for CTA bus routes #1, #3, #4, #12, and #18, which likewise run near the Campus, are also more than a five-minute walk from any destination on the Campus.

The closest CTA ‘L’ stops to the Museum Campus are Roosevelt (Red Line, Green Line, and Orange Line), Cermak-Chinatown (Red Line), and Cermak-McCormick Place (Green Line). The Roosevelt ‘L’ stop is a 15-minute walk to the nearest the Museum Campus destinations, or about 7 to 12 minutes away if transferring to a bus. The two Cermak ‘L’ stations are more than a 20-minute walk from the nearest the Museum Campus destinations and are not connected to the Campus by bus service.

The 18th Street and 11th Street Stations on the Metra Electric Line are the closest commuter rail stations to the Museum Campus. 18th Street station is a “flag stop” with trains stopping only if requested to do so. The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District’s South Shore Line also provides direct commuter rail service between northwest Indiana and Metra’s 11th Street Station. Most of this service is clustered around the peak commuting periods in the morning and evening. During off-peak hours, trains stop at these stations only about once per hour.



Driving and Parking

Driving is currently essential to the Museum Campus accessibility. However, given the Campus' location and existing infrastructure, drivers to the Campus are likely to face traffic congestion. Currently, there are three entry/exit points for private motor vehicles, namely McFetridge Drive, Waldron Drive, and 18th Street.

- McFetridge Drive serves as the main entry point for traffic from the north side of the city via Columbus Drive, the west side of the City via Roosevelt Road, and the south side of the city via DuSable Lakeshore Drive and I-55. Vehicles coming from the North on DuSable Lakeshore arrive via 18th Street farther south.
- From the south, all three access points are directly accessible for vehicles arriving via DuSable Lakeshore Drive or I-55. Local traffic from the South is mostly accessing the Campus via McFetridge.
- From the west, in addition to McFetridge via Roosevelt Road, traffic arriving via DuSable Lakeshore Drive or I-55 can access through all three access points. Two additional major east-west arteries (Cermak and 18th street) are disconnected from the Museum Campus by the Metra tracks.
- McFetridge Drive is the main access point for everyday local traffic—for both private vehicles and visitors/school buses and buses—and often becomes a choke point for traffic. This congestion is only furthered by the lengthy wait required at the entrance's stoplight.
- Because the Waldron Drive and 18th Street access points are mostly accessed via DuSable Lakeshore Drive or northbound I-55, they tend to serve nonlocal visitors converging to the Museum Campus around large events/concerts and are highly congested on those days.

Upon arriving on Campus, approximately 7,100 parking spaces are available for public use, most of which are located within four main parking lots and garages. The daily cost for parking ranges from \$22-26 on ordinary days to \$35-106 during special events. During special events, shuttle bus connections to remote parking at McCormick Place and Millennium Park are used to increase parking capacity. Overall, a total of approximately 15,000 additional parking spaces are available within 1.5 miles from the Museum Campus along Chicago's Central Lakefront Area including the Millennium Park garages, and McCormick Place.



■ A New Vision for the Museum Campus – the Future

Chicago is a world-class city, and the Museum Campus is at the heart of its vibrant city center on its spectacular lakefront. No other city has three first-rate museums, the largest convention center in the country, an iconic stadium, and a nature oasis in one site. The Museum Campus is a place to experience the connections of the city to the water, of Chicago's history to its future, and of local to global experiences. With its unique anchor institutions, there's no better place to explore the sky, land, and water; no better place for people to learn, play, or connect. The Museum Campus is truly "Where Worlds Connect."

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On the reimagined Museum Campus, new amenities will complement the Campus' assets to create an exciting place for all visitors; ecological restoration will create an urban retreat of global significance; inclusive design and programming will create a place everyone can enjoy; new connections and points of arrival will redefine the Campus' accessibility for everyone. With this new vision, Chicago can chart a trajectory for the next century of this inspiring place and reaffirm the city's leadership in urban innovation. Governed with a collaborative approach across all stakeholders, the Campus will emerge as an iconic destination recognized around the world.

To unlock the full potential of this vision the Museum Campus working group discussed and considered dozens of ideas to identify a set of both short- and long-term recommendations along five themes:

- An Exciting Place to Be
- An Urban Nature Retreat
- A Place Everyone Can Enjoy
- A Connected Destination
- Bringing It All Together



● An Exciting Place to Be

Transformational place-making with enhanced programming and amenities will activate currently underutilized spaces and buildings across the Museum Campus to enrich the visitor experience. A renewed Soldier Field will deliver a world-class visitor experience in and around the stadium, and, along with Lakeside Center, anchor a vibrant entertainment corridor. With a greater diversity of experiences that expand use of Campus throughout the day and into the evening, visitors will want to linger on the Campus and return often.

I. Activate outdoor spaces to enhance year-round appeal

The Museum Campus offers a rich selection of events and activities for residents and visitors. However, most people visit the Campus for specific events or institutions rather than exploring the Campus as a whole and are particularly deterred by winter weather. The working group sees value in reimagining outdoor spaces on the Campus as year-round attractions. Potential improvements to the Campus' year-round appeal include activating Solidarity Drive, rethinking the lake and harbor as place-making resources, and bringing select museum and art exhibits into outdoor spaces. Additionally, sled and cross-country ski rentals, a seasonal ice rink, new cross-Campus programming, and similar added amenities might all be viable winter-weather attractions.



Solidarity Drive can be a more attractive and active destination with great views of the skyline while also still allowing necessary vehicle access to the Adler Planetarium.



The Port Vieux Pavilion by Foster + Partners, 2013. Marseille, France. Inspiration for a sheltered pavilion over Solidarity Drive.

i. Activate Solidarity Drive as a year-round plaza

Solidarity Drive serves as an important connection between many on-Campus institutions and is a key drop-off route for buses and cars on the Campus. Named for Lech Walesa's Solidarity Movement to free Poland, Solidarity Drive pays homage to the large population of Polish Chicagoans and extends from the Field Museum to the Adler Planetarium.

Solidarity Drive also boasts one of the most stunning views of the Chicago skyline but with significant untapped potential. While preserving the necessary drop-off functions, the City should redesign Solidarity Drive east of Linn White Drive to make it pedestrian- and event-friendly. Rethinking the drive as a boulevard or plaza would make it a natural site for cross-Campus events like art and nature festivals, small performances, outdoor fundraising benefits, and more. This redesign could include art installations, performance spaces, additional amenities, or other features to add to its appeal as a community gathering place and allow it to showcase ethnic foods, arts, and activities from the many communities that call Chicago home.

ii. Incorporate monumental art to rejuvenate the Campus



The Angel of the North by Antony Gormley, 1998. Gateshead, UK. Inspiration for monumental artwork on the Campus.

From The Cloud Gate to downtown plaza pieces by Chagall, Miro, Calder, and Picasso, Chicago is a city of great public art. Revitalization of the Campus should continue in that tradition by incorporating iconic art installations. Millennium Park is a great example of how monumental art pieces like Sir Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate have become synonymous with Chicago's identity as a destination. Permanent pieces like The Bean could imprint the Museum Campus into the public's imagination while rotating exhibits could be used to highlight the diversity of talent present across Chicago's neighborhoods. Continuing this legacy of celebrating the rich cultures of Chicagoans the Campus should showcase works from local and global artists alike. These pieces could be strategically placed across the Campus to interact with their surroundings or create natural gathering spaces. Ideal locations include the southern tip of Northerly Island; the main entryways on the north, south, and west sides; and along Solidarity Drive, though other locations should be considered as well.



iii. Create an indoor / outdoor experience with educational programs for all ages

Bringing the museum experience outside can be a powerful way to activate the grounds and solidify the Campus identity. Museum-themed exhibits like the all-weather Brachiosaurus sculpture towering outside the Field Museum could be incorporated into the Campus to engage visitors with the educational treasures housed within the institutions. Pieces retained in the institutions could be brought outside, or be replicated with weather-safe models. The institutions and Northerly Island could bolster their coordination efforts and create cross-Campus programming to educate visitors about the environment and the steps the Campus is taking to protect against climate change. Bringing the Campus experience outside, whether through exhibits or programming, also serves as advertising to spur interest in current exhibits and the ongoing work of the institutions.

iv. Rethink the lake and harbor as place-making and activation resources



Rendering of an improved Harbor Walk with increased pedestrian and bike access, sitting areas, and native landscaping. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.

The Museum Campus should employ activation strategies that weave the surrounding water into the Campus experience. Water-based art installations, either floating on temporary structures or integrated directly into the lake or beach, could add to the Campus' dynamism, as could exciting new fountains in the lake, lagoon, or elsewhere. Increased options for personal water sports such as kayaking and paddleboarding, could be made available as rentals on 12th Street Beach along with additional programming and classes. Greater access to the water should be integrated into the designs to restore and protect the east side of Northerly Island from erosion. For example, the barrier reefs suggested by the Studio Gang vision for Northerly Island would result in a man-made lagoon with the potential for snorkeling, calm water for boating, and deep-water swimming (see *An Urban Nature Retreat*). Access to and awareness of the beach could also be eased through increased signage and a more inviting approach. Along Burnham Harbor or the northern sea wall, barges or boats could be considered for floating entertainment and restaurants uses, expanding event and food options without adding built structures on the Campus.



II. Transform Soldier Field into a state-of-the-art venue with an exceptional visitor experience



Rendering of Soldier Field tailgating plaza on a Bears game day. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.

Soldier Field is a renowned, open-air stadium with unparalleled strengths: its proximity to downtown, its breathtaking view of the city, and its location within reach of numerous major roads and mass transit networks. As the largest non-tax source of revenue for the Parks, it generates critical resources supporting programs that benefit all Chicagoans.

The event experience however has evolved significantly since Soldier Field was last renovated nearly twenty years ago and the modern NFL and MLS stadium—indeed, any professional sports venue—must meet sport enthusiasts’ expectations by offering a best-in-class experience both inside and outside the stadium. To honor the legacy of this sporting venue and ensure competitiveness with newly constructed sporting stadiums, Parks, the City, and the private sector should collaborate to transform the visitor experience, improve the stadium’s role as an economic engine, and allow it to serve as a cornerstone of the reimagined Museum Campus. Critically, many of these changes can be implemented with minimal changes to the current footprint, in ways that continue to preserve the historically significant aspects of Soldier Field, and with benefits to the public and tenants. These recommendations aim at strengthening the role and uniqueness of Soldier Field as an NFL stadium for decades to come but, at the same time, can be adapted to enable a modern and versatile utilization of Soldier Field even under different scenarios.

i. Offer a best-in-class visitor experience

Soldier Field’s concourses are among the smallest in the NFL, negatively impacting the gameday experience as well as the ability to host other revenue-generating events outside of major events. Soldier Field’s usable concourse should be expanded within the current footprint through creative designs that produce unique experiences for stadium visitors. Investment in concourse technology, such as digital, interactive wayfinding signs, and virtual event reality will allow Soldier Field to match the experience of newly built stadiums. This reimagination of the concourses should also extend to updates to other more routine aspects of the venue, including expansion of concessions, washrooms, and retail areas to reduce congestion and wait times to further enhance the overall visitor experience. Related point-of-sale improvements have the additional benefit of generating greater ancillary revenues.





Expanded public amenities at Soldier Field can serve all Campus visitors and encourage year-round use. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.

In addition to ensuring the stadium's audio and video technology deliver a great event experience, Soldier Field should incorporate high-tech, innovative augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) programming. The use of cutting-edge AR technology within the stadium can enhance the visitor experience, exceeding the technological features of newly built stadiums. Fans could be greeted and directed by a projection of their favorite player or the team mascot. These interactive wayfinding solutions could make the process of navigating the stadium an entertainment experience itself. Artificial reality experiences could also be used to create additional event programming, such as a stadium scavenger hunt or a self-guided tour.

Moreover, the fast-growing Extended Reality (AR, VR) range of technologies can be leveraged to create mesmerizing online experiences that complement the stadium's live events and generate additional revenue. By investing in the required technology, people attending the VR event would have access to exclusive content, merchandise, and visuals all from the comfort of their home. With this technology and programming, all Soldier Field events could reach a global audience.

ii. Update Soldier Field's seating configuration

Updating the stadium's current seating configuration is imperative. Though Soldier Field's capacity is the smallest in the NFL, new stadiums have focused on upgraded seating options to deliver a superior fan experience beyond simply increasing capacity. Enhanced seating at Soldier Field could take the form of new stadium boxes and clubs but could also consist of other creative configurations with unique benefits for fans. These updated seating locations should have a more relaxed environment than traditional stadium seating with couches and lounging areas that expand the entertainment experiences on game days and other events, helping to diversify the mix of spaces available in the stadium and city overall. Additional conventional seating, therefore, should focus more on maintaining existing capacity rather than significantly increasing it. Further assessment should inform the most practical and cost-effective stadium seating updates at Soldier Field to match the experiences being created in other state-of-the-art facilities.

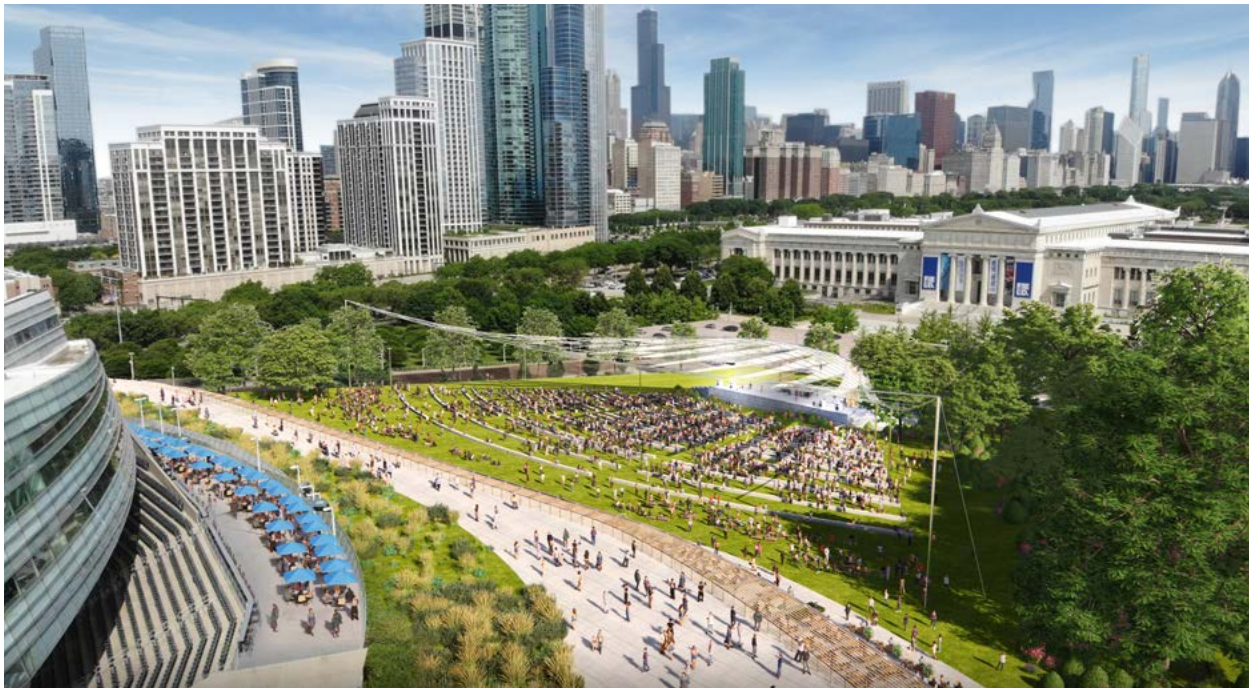
iii. Explore advertising and sponsorship opportunities

Across professional sports venues, recent naming rights agreements have demonstrated how lucrative sponsorship opportunities can be and the critical role they can play in funding modernization efforts. At SoFi Stadium, Allegiant Stadium, and MetLife Stadium, for example, these agreements have all exceeded



\$400M in total value. Furthermore, the Caesars Superdome (formerly the Mercedes-Benz Superdome) and VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena (formerly Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena) highlight how such sponsorship agreements can retain the original names. A similar arrangement in Chicago would allow a sponsorship agreement to be pursued in a way that respects Soldier Field's legacy as a war memorial by keeping Soldier Field in the name of the facility. Beyond naming rights for the stadium itself, there are many other potential ancillary naming opportunities (e.g., South Lot, new club seating, renovated concourses, etc.) and sponsorship options (e.g., sponsorship displays) that should be considered to help offset the cost of renovations.

iv. Integrate additional public attractions into Soldier Field



Moving the Campus' music venue to the North Lawn would use the amenities at Soldier Field and position visitors closer to transportation. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.

To extend Soldier Field's activation beyond major sporting events and concerts, additional attractions should be integrated into the stadium or into areas adjacent to the Museum Campus. These attractions could enhance the gameday experience while also encouraging visitors to explore the Campus on non-gamedays. Additional restaurants could improve visitor experience during major events but be incorporated in ways that also allow them to be convenient, accessible options to serve the public on non-event days. This would make Soldier Field more dynamic while addressing a Campus-wide scarcity of food and beverage options. Other public attractions might include a Soldier Field visitors center that tells the legacy of Soldier Field and helps the stadium fulfill its century-long mission of honoring military service or a Bears Hall of Fame that shares the rich tradition of the Chicago Bears and their strong relationship with the City of Chicago. Additionally, pending regulatory and NFL policy changes, inclusion of an in-person betting lounge should be explored. Following national trends around sports betting, such a venue could increase the revenue generated by Soldier Field and add another element to the visitor experience to the Museum Campus.



A relocated music venue could provide a premier concertgoer experience and also support other community programming. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.

v. Explore the potential to increase year-round use

Replacing the natural grass surface with synthetic turf could reduce existing restrictions on the field's use by removing the need to protect the playing surface. While this would require changes to existing contracts, it would allow Soldier Field to host a greater number of revenue-generating events, potentially including more college football games or concerts. It could also host more community events such as high school championship games and band competitions. Critically, this increased availability would come in the late summer and fall when demand is typically highest. Furthermore, a synthetic surface would not prevent Soldier Field from hosting events requiring real grass; a natural grass surface could be installed for specific occasions in a more cost-effective way than maintaining one year-round.



To better utilize Soldier Field year-round, the City should also explore the feasibility of enclosing the stadium. From May to December, Soldier Field is a lively, highly utilized venue. During this time, the stadium is estimated to host anywhere from 96,000-240,000 people each month. However, the arena's usage is much lower from January to April when the weather limits use of the stadium's outdoor areas. During these colder months, it is estimated that stadium attendance ranges from 1,200 to 66,800 people per month. Although an enclosed venue is unlikely to attract many more major concerts due to limited touring windows among other reasons, it would negate inconsistent weather conditions and allow Chicago to host coveted one-off events such as the Super Bowl and the NCAA Final Four Championship. Although enclosing Soldier Field would incur significant investment, further analysis is required to fully understand the specific costs, the potential direct and indirect economic impacts, and the full range of potential funding sources available to determine options that are respectful to Chicago taxpayers.

III. Create new experiences with adaptive reuse of existing buildings

Achieving the working group's vision of a fully activated Museum Campus requires creating space for new programs and activities. The working group supports exploring the re-use of existing, underutilized buildings. The untapped potential of these structures provides a unique opportunity for new programming, entertainment activities, and amenity creation.

i. Adaptive reuse of Northerly Island Terminal Building, Harbor Buildings, and Chicago Horizon

As part of the recommendation to transform Museum Campus in a nature retreat outlined in the next section of this document, the working group has suggested that the City consider transforming the Northerly Island Visitor's Center into the Great Lakes Climate Lab (see An Urban Nature Retreat). In parallel, all underutilized buildings on the Museum Campus (like the former Meigs Field firehouse or Chicago Horizon installation) be evaluated for reuse. The reconfiguration of these buildings opens countless opportunities for new amenities and programming, such as lakefront food and beverage options, kayaking and paddleboarding rental stations, and comfortable leisure space.

ii. Adaptive reuse of Lakeside Center

Lakeside Center is a dominant structure that anchors the southern edge and serves as the southwestern gateway to the Museum Campus. However, with lagging utilization and significant maintenance requirements, MPEA, Parks, and the City will need to carefully evaluate future options for this important part of the McCormick Place convention center. While still hosting the very largest conventions and supporting other McCormick Place buildings with critical infrastructure, Lakeside Center might also accommodate different types of sporting events, recreational activities, film production, or any number of other potential uses. Such uses could improve MPEA revenue, provide significant public benefits, and complement other McCormick Place events.

Considering the profound implications a reimagined Lakeside Center would have for the rest of the Museum Campus, it is important for designs to integrate with the broader Campus vision in a mutually beneficial way. Designs should seek to improve the accessibility on the north side of the building, improving Museum Campus access to the south and west and encouraging people to seamlessly experience both spaces. Outfitted with amenities available to the public, a reimagined Lakeside Center could also better serve Museum Campus visitors, extend activation along the west side of Burnham Harbor, and elevate the overall Campus experience. Likewise, as a more attractive destination, the Museum Campus can be an exciting and convenient option for event exhibitors, delegates, and attendees to spend time during breaks in programming or outside of convention hours. Such a unique setting could enhance McCormick Place's appeal to event organizers and contribute to its status as a premier convention location.



● An Urban Nature Retreat

The transformative power of landscaping with native species will amplify the natural beauty of the Museum Campus, creating a destination where visitors can immerse themselves in nature. Far more than simply filling the spaces between institutions, it will tie the Campus together, improve its function as a major flyway stop, and make it a model for sustainability. Paired with innovative approaches to environmental preservation, the Museum Campus will demonstrate Chicago's role as a leader in urban climate resilience. The diagram below illustrates the key elements of the vision for making the Campus an urban nature retreat including reclaiming and activating green spaces on Northerly Island and around the harbor, greening and beautifying surface parking areas, expanding the landscaping efforts initiated by the Field Museum and the Shedd Aquarium along Solidarity Drive, and creating reef barriers as originally envisioned to protect Northerly Island from lake erosion.



Diagram of the Urban Nature Retreat improvements proposed for the Museum Campus. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.



I. Unify the Campus with landscaping that restores native ecosystems

To unify the Campus experience, the working group recommends implementing a coordinated landscaping approach using native vegetation. The Field Museum piloted this approach in 2015 in the area immediately surrounding its footprint and found it was a powerful tool for visitor education, ecosystem revitalization, and cost reduction. The Field Museum also found maintenance costs for watering and mowing could be significantly reduced, and the cooling effect of the gardens could potentially reduce energy costs. As part of its 2030 Centennial Commitment, the Shedd Aquarium will invest several million dollars into planting four acres of native gardens and outdoor nature learning scape to enhance the experience for all Campus visitors. Coordinating these ecologically and economically savvy efforts and expanding them across the Campus is a foundational priority to create an aesthetically pleasing cross-Campus experience.



Image of the Field Museum rewilding initiatives facing North Lawn. Courtesy of the Field Museum, 2015.



Rendering of the planned landscaping improvements to Shedd Aquarium outlined in the 2030 Centennial Commitment. Courtesy of Shedd Aquarium in collaboration with Valerio Dewalt Train and Visualized Concepts, 2022.

II. Make Northerly Island a resilient, sustainable ecological oasis

Northerly Island is one of Chicago's most unique assets, particularly among large cities. Responsible stewardship of this asset requires visionary planning and thoughtful activation. Careful consideration is also required to resolve the contradictions in Northerly Island's use as both a concert and nature destination. Today's venue causes accessibility issues through congestion and creates obstructions to visiting the natural parts of the island. The City has an exciting opportunity to reaffirm the identity of the island as a nature retreat by reevaluating the temporary concert venue, as discussed later in this section. Together with investments into educational programming and the commissioning of monumental art installations celebrating Chicago's culture, these improvements could establish Northerly Island as a cornerstone of Chicago's parklands.

i. Reimagine the Northerly Island terminal building as the Great Lakes Climate Lab

As part of the broader effort to protect the integrity of Northerly Island as a conservation haven, the working group advises adaptive reuse of the former Meigs Field terminal building. Currently, the building hosts the visitors center—including a roughly 6,000 square foot, multipurpose event space—and Park District offices, but has the potential for expanded use as a learning or gathering hub. Amenities at this site, such as food and beverage options and more accessible washrooms, should also be considered.

One key recommendation is the creation of a Great Lakes Climate Lab that could utilize the current visitors center. Building on the discovery-oriented purpose of the museums, the public "Great Lakes Climate Lab" would have a strong regional emphasis, focusing on Great Lakes climate adaptation. This center could act in concert with existing museum research programs and work at Midwest universities to study topics like rebuilding Great Lakes shorelines at scale, nature-based stormwater solutions, restoration of native fish populations, and so many more critical challenges confronting Illinois and its neighbors. While not housing the entirety of such a climate lab, this particular building could serve a valuable public-facing role where these academic communities could connect to share research with visitors and educate the public on the local effects of climate change. The Great Lakes Climate Lab would be a visible demonstration of Chicago's commitment to be a leader in advancing climate resilience.

ii. Explore sustainable options for Huntington Bank Pavilion

Like Soldier Field, the concert venue's unique location on Lake Michigan and proximity to downtown make it an attractive entertainment destination. Coming to see popular headliners perform with Chicago's skyline as an unparalleled backdrop, Huntington Bank Pavilion draws in more than 200,000 concertgoers annually across roughly 30 events. At the same time, its location and temporary configuration make it suboptimal: its location contradicts the island's identity as a nature haven while also making it difficult for concertgoers to reach the venue and for other Northerly Island visitors to access the southern end of the island; its configuration makes it inefficient for event production and creates tension with lakeside public land use.





Shown in the foreground, Huntington Bank Pavilion is difficult for concertgoers to reach and limits access to the rest of Northerly Island.

Recognizing its role as a revenue generator for the Parks, the working group recommends considering options to relocate the venue elsewhere on the Campus. The 2011 Studio Gang Northerly Island plan suggested a multipurpose, 12-to-15,000-seat amphitheater be designed to replace the pavilion and be located on the area of the current Adler parking lot. Importantly, this concept focused on a low profile and integration with the island's landscape. However, a preferable option would be to use reconfigure Soldier Field (see An Exciting Place to Be) to incorporate a new outdoor venue adjacent to the stadium to replace the Huntington Bank Pavilion. While further technical analysis is required, this option would preserve the natural integrity of Northerly Island and locate the pavilion as close to other amenities, parking, and public transit as possible.

III. Restore Northerly Island and protect it from additional erosion damage

Northerly Island is not fully accessible today because of lakeshore erosion. The current piling system is contributing to erosion rather than protecting the island and the eastern edge of the perimeter-wide path was deconstructed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2019 after experiencing severe damage. To unlock Northerly Island's potential as a premier nature oasis, new strategies must be implemented to address erosion and prevent future damage. The original Northerly Island Vision Plan put forth by Studio Gang in 2011 suggested a visionary solution to the problem: construct an outer barrier reef islands in Lake Michigan. The reef, which would create a lagoon bursting with additional recreational opportunities such as kayaking and snorkeling, would also reduce the destructive potential of waves. Recognizing the magnitude of the investment required—likely on the order of \$100-300M—all possible sources of funding, such as recent infrastructure funding opportunities, should be explored.





Rendering from Studio Gang's original Northerly Island Vision Plan illustrating the proposed lagoon and reef system. Courtesy of Studio Gang, 2013.

IV. Green the broader Museum Campus by modifying non-permeable surfaces

Half of the Museum Campus area today is occupied by non-permeable surfaces. This presents an ecological challenge by raising the amount and rate of stormwater runoff, interrupting the natural flow of local water sources and soil absorption, and thus increasing pollution. A significant portion of on-Campus impermeable surfaces consists of surface parking, but equally significant is the amount of concrete surface taken up by paths, roads, and sidewalks. While parking capacity on-Campus is fully utilized during large sporting events, day-to-day utilization is much lower for most of the year. The working group recommends exploring solutions to strengthen remote parking options (see A Connected Destination), which is anticipated to reduce vehicular traffic and congestion over time.

In line with the vision of the Campus as a nature retreat, the City should conduct an analysis of parking utilization and identify ways to gradually reduce surface parking and other impervious surfaces. In parallel, any remaining surfaces should be updated in alignment with best practices for climate-friendly improvements, including replacing existing surface material with permeable material and planting native landscaping. The benefits go beyond the aesthetic and ecological; maintenance of permeable surfaces is generally cheaper than asphalt or concrete and the lifespan is longer. Additionally, dismantled materials from former lots and paved surfaces have the potential to be reused as breakwater, reef materials, or art installations.



There are opportunities to make Campus parking, including Waldron Deck and South Lot shown here, more attractive, and environmentally friendly, while still allowing them meet parking needs and host additional events



● A Place Everyone Can Enjoy

New amenities, inclusive design, and coordinated programming will create a Museum Campus that attracts and welcomes all, from each Chicago neighborhood to our neighbors from across the world. To attract and be relevant to all, features and programming will appeal and be accessible to people with different interests, lifestyles, and needs. Access to the Campus will go beyond physical connections and extend to building a true sense of belonging and ownership.

The following diagram illustrates how the working group envisions amenities for campus visitors and programming activating the Campus. Rethinking the use of Solidarity drive will open a new and vibrant core for the Campus connecting the three museum and leveraging its' spectacular location facing the Chicago skyline. By concentrating amenities along Solidarity Drive, Burnham Harbor, and the western half of the Museum Campus, Northerly Island can be preserved as a natural oasis and attract visitors to enjoy 12th Street Beach and immerse themselves in nature.

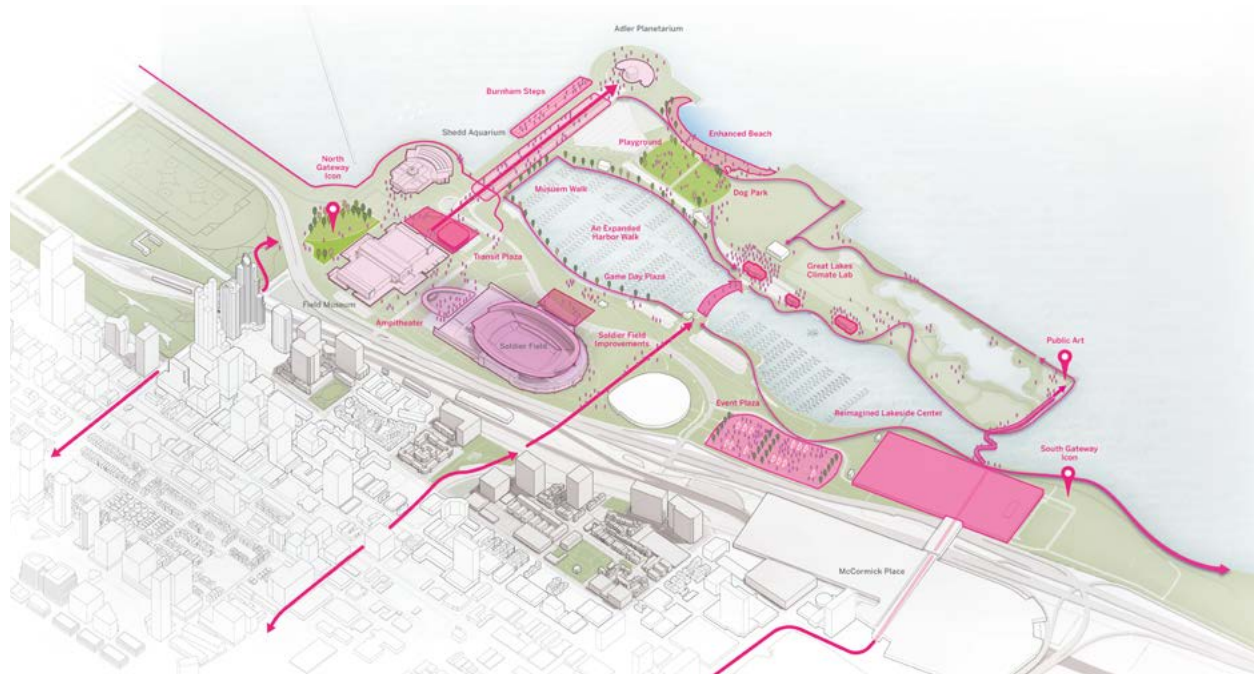


Diagram of initiatives to activate the Campus for everyone. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.



I. Introduce new and expanded amenities that appeal to all ages and needs

Kid-friendly amenities such as creative playgrounds and easily understandable wayfinding signs and activities should be integrated across the Campus to engage and inspire the youngest visitors. Additional seating areas, covered rest stops, and potentially air-conditioned or heated spaces to provide respite from extreme heat and cold would benefit everyone but especially elderly visitors. Beyond foundational accessibility, expanded services and amenities should attract visitors to spend time on the Campus. This includes amenities such as bike service stations, washrooms and water stations, seating areas or observation platforms to appreciate nature, expanded trails and pathways (see A Connected Destination), and a fully-equipped lakeside dog park—a unique asset for the downtown area.

Expanding food and beverage options in temporary food truck hubs and reconfigured existing structures is also key to making the Campus a year-round destination where visitors can easily spend a full day (see An Exciting Place to Be). By incorporating restaurants and retail opportunities into Soldier Field’s footprint, the City will create spaces for fans to gather before and after games and diversify the reasons why people visit the stadium outside of major events. Given its central location and outstanding views of the city, Solidarity Drive is also a natural gathering point that could host food trucks, temporary food stands, and seating options for dining and lounging. All amenities should be reflected in the comprehensive site plan recommended by the working group in the upcoming pages (see Bringing It All Together). Every effort should be made to ensure that improvements are fully accessible for those with mobility aids and rest stop needs as well as caretakers with strollers and nursing parents.

● A Connected Destination

World-class connectivity will take full advantage of all modes of mobility to connect Chicago’s neighborhoods, the Chicagoland region, and the world to the Campus. Whether for daily access or a special event, transportation to and from the Campus will be more convenient and enjoyable, while disruptions to major transit corridors and adjacent communities will be minimized. Visitors will have a distinct sense of arrival regardless of how they access the Campus and be greeted by new and exciting ways to move around the Campus.

As illustrated below, a more easily accessible Campus leverages all modes of travel to the north, west, and south. Pedestrian access over the railroad tracks and improved connections through McCormick Center increase connectivity to the west. Expanded use of the McCormick Place Busway, water taxis, and Metra increase access to the north and south. Two main mobility hubs convey a sense of arrival and make it easy to transfer between on-Campus modes of transportations while new bridges make Northerly Island more accessible from the west and south and improve circulation on the campus.





Diagram of “A Connected Destination” improvements proposed for the Museum Campus. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022

2015 Transportation Study

In 2015 the Chicago Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Planning Council led a Museum Campus Transportation Study including a holistic set of recommendations to make it easier and more enjoyable to visit the Museum Campus and move within it, while also actively reducing energy use and congestion. This work contributed to an expansion of the City’s Divvy Bike program across the Campus as well as additional technical analysis of the McCormick Place Busway even though the report was never formally published. This work has been leveraged and extended here.

I. Improve connectivity to existing public transportation

Reaching the Museum Campus by public transportation today often requires multiple connections or walking a significant distance from the closest transit stop. Limited access by public transportation acts as a barrier to would-be Campus-goers. This is particularly true for people who are unable to afford to drive and park on the Campus, people unfamiliar with the CTA and Metra, people with disabilities, and people bringing children to the Campus, among others. As a result, many communities and individuals in Chicago are effectively shut out from experiencing one of the City’s most valuable assets.



i. Reinstate a free or low-cost trolley or shuttle

The working group recommends that a free or low-cost trolley service be reinstated to make accessing the outstanding educational and recreational resources of the Museum Campus a fun and convenient experience. The route should enhance connections between the Museum Campus to Ogilvie Transportation Center, Union Station, Roosevelt Station, and other key downtown locations while also improving on-Campus mobility. The trolley should be integrated as closely as possible with existing transit networks, utilizing the same stops, lanes, and signboards where appropriate. Ideally, the trolley service would consist of low-emissions vehicles to complement the broader eco-friendly objectives of the reimagined Campus. Wrapping them in Campus-themed imagery would make them easily identifiable while also promoting the Museum Campus.

A model for this service can be the free seasonal trolley Chicago operated in the early 2000s which connected people to key destinations across downtown. The Museum Campus route alone served more than 300,000 people annually. The service was administered by the Chicago Department of Transportation and funded primarily through a grant from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program, in addition to select corporate funding, but it was discontinued in 2009 when the \$1.7 million in annual funding was no longer available. Notably, the Adler Planetarium, the Field Museum, and the Shedd Aquarium submitted an “Access Improvement Project” request for Federal funding in 2021 that included reinstatement of a trolley service but did not receive funding. While DOT funding could be pursued for seed costs, the shuttle system should ultimately grow to be self-sustaining through revenue from Campus-specific sources.

ii. Improve CTA bus service to the Museum Campus (esp. from West and South)

The one year-round bus and two additional buses provide access to the Loop and North Chicago but do not efficiently connect the Campus to other parts of the city. CTA should continue to assess ways to adjust its service plans for the Museum Campus, taking appropriate and reasonable steps to improve bus service reliability and frequency. These assessments should include not only those CTA bus routes that serve the Campus directly but also other routes that stop relatively close to the Museum Campus west of DuSable Lake Shore Drive. CTA should be responsive in its planning to refine, combine, or create routes and schedules in ways that improve customer service without negatively impacting the agency’s operating costs or farebox revenues.

iii. Provide better access to real-time transit information

CTA is already a national leader in providing real-time arrival information to transit customers in a variety of ways including displays at or near bus stops and rail stations, text message alerts, and through third-party smartphone apps. Now there is an opportunity to advance similar efforts on the Museum Campus. Bus stops on Campus lack real-time transit information screens found elsewhere in the city. Given the relative remoteness of these stops and limited bus service, the lack of information is particularly impactful. The working group recommends that there be a continued effort to increase the real-time travel information available on the Museum Campus, including creating and enhancing displays inside museums as well as including transportation information in other displays such as wayfinding and information kiosks. The information provided should include not only CTA, but also Metra, Divvy, water taxi services, taxicabs, and ridesharing.



II. Increase pedestrian, bike, and water-based connectivity

A significant network of trails and pathways exists within the Museum Campus, as well as seasonal connections by water taxis. Further improving and expanding those assets will contribute to make the Campus more accessible without increasing vehicular traffic and congestion. An improved network of paths will also contribute to a better on-Campus experience and create a space where people want to spend more leisure time.

i. Complete connections to bike trails and improve existing connections, particularly to South and West

Connections to bike trails on Campus can be problematic in two primary ways. In some areas, particularly to the west and some locations on Campus, connections have significant limitations. For the bike connection at 18th Street, the City should study the feasibility and cost of either replacing the existing bridge with a more bike-friendly design or extending the existing underpass below the Canadian National tracks and busway so it continues in direct alignment under the Metra tracks and emerges in the bus loading area east of the tracks. Such a direct path over or under the railroad, busway, and DuSable Lake Shore Drive corridors would provide a significantly shorter and more easily navigable path connecting the Sangamon Corridor to the Campus and the Lakefront Trail than the existing bridge ramps and switchback turns. For the on-street connections to the north and south of 18th Street, the working group recommends that improved signage be provided to direct people riding bicycles on designated bike routes to the Museum Campus and the Lakefront Trail. This information should also be incorporated into Divvy maps along the route so that occasional bikers will also benefit more fully from the city's bike infrastructure.

Where connections are strongest, especially to the 18.5-mile-long Lakefront Trail, the nature of the challenge is about making it easier to traverse the Campus rather than building connections. Particularly around the Shedd Aquarium, the bike and pedestrian portions of the Lakefront Trail merge at the same time they make several sharp corners. Combined with the limited visibility caused by the corners and sea wall, this portion of the Lakefront Trail should be made safer to improve the experience for bikers and pedestrians. Further analysis should be done to both separate these lanes and to reduce the sharp turns.



Museum Campus Bike and Pedestrian Trails



ii. Make the Campus more bike and scooter friendly

On Campus, bike access to Northerly Island consists of on-street connections or sidewalks along Solidarity Drive and Linn White Drive. As a result, these connections make bike access susceptible to congestion caused by drivers trying to find parking; alternatively, cyclists must bike along narrow pedestrian walkways. It is recommended that the City evaluate ways to create better bike access to Northerly Island, potentially through an expanded harbor walkway parallel to Solidarity Drive that connects the Lakefront Trail to a designated bike lane along Linn White Drive. Bike-specific amenities should also be considered to improve the experience for bicyclists including bike maintenance stations and personal bike storage (see A Place Everyone Can Enjoy).

To make the Campus more scooter friendly, the City should look for the opportunity to expand the scooter sharing pilot launched in May of 2022 to include the Campus. This expansion should incorporate lessons learned from the city-wide pilot to improve personal mobility in the safest and least disruptive manner.



iii. Expand existing water taxi service and seasonal water transportation options

The working group recommends that the City work with the private sector to increase water connections to the Museum Campus to take full advantage of the site’s prime location on Lake Michigan. If appropriate, this may include creating additional docks to complement the existing access point north of Shedd Aquarium to better serve Adler Planetarium, a reimagined Solidarity Drive, and Northerly Island. It might also include working with the Museum Campus institutions, Navy Pier, and the existing water taxi operators to develop new promotions to encourage increased taxi usage, creation of temporary water taxi routes tied to events on the Campus, and the development of water taxi routes to the south. Other cities have developed systems for visitors to easily hail water taxis at designated pick-up/drop-off locations. These models could serve as an example for Chicago to emulate in creating water connections that are responsive unpredictable or inconsistent levels of demand.

iv. Create new access over Metra Weldon Yard complex

It is recommended that the City improve pedestrian access over the Metra Weldon Yard complex to increase green space and accessibility between the adjacent neighborhoods and the Museum Campus. Activation of the air rights might consist of simple, direct connections that achieve this objective. It might, however, include more transformative solutions that creatively incorporate pedestrian and bike paths with expanded green spaces. These more ambitious activations of the air rights over the Metra yard would not only increase access to the Campus but also improve its overall appeal. Such activations should also preserve sufficient space below the air rights for future transportation improvements including but not necessarily limited to an enhanced busway and increased transit access and capacity to the Museum Campus along the Cermak corridor.

III. Create connections through new infrastructure

While efforts to increase connectivity with existing transportation networks will play a significant role in making the Campus more accessible to all, especially in the shorter term, new infrastructure could significantly improve equitable access to the Museum Campus. These recommendations will have longer timelines but will fundamentally change how visitors access the Museum Campus and will significantly strengthen connections to transit options, thoroughfares, and communities.

i. Build increased connectivity to the South Side

The existing connections between the Museum Campus and the South Side of Chicago are insufficient and will be further stressed in the future. It is recommended that the City evaluate options to address long-term connectivity between these neighborhoods and the Museum Campus. The Metra Electric Line serves communities along the lakeshore today, but its operation as a commuter rail instead of local train means that it runs less frequently and costs more than similar CTA L lines. In the past few decades, the South Loop and Near South Side saw significant residential growth and more recently, communities farther south, especially Oakland and Hyde Park, were among Chicago’s fastest-growing community areas. With the start of construction on the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park, these neighborhoods and others nearby will likely continue to experience significant growth. In concert with the desire for equitable transit access and greater connectivity to other attractions in this area—including the Museum of Science and Industry and the DuSable Museum of African American History—this growth requires infrastructure modifications to improve connectivity with the Museum Campus. Cook County’s three-year “Fair Transit South Cook” pilot program completed its first year in 2022 and the lessons from this effort should be used to inform further efforts to increase connectivity to Chicago’s south side.



ii. Create an iconic pedestrian bridge connecting to Northerly Island

Today Northerly Island is not actually an island, but a nearly one-mile-long peninsula connected at its northern end to mainland Campus via a thin neck of land. Solidarity Drive runs along this neck and is the only land connection to Northerly Island. This configuration makes it a long walk to reach the southern end where a new park and wildlife habitat area are being created, particularly for anyone accessing the Campus from the south. The current access leaves only one entry/exit point to service Huntington Bank Pavilion. The lack of multiple routes to Northerly Island makes special event traffic effectively shut down access to the rest of Northerly Island.

During the 1933-34 Century of Progress World's Fair, which was held on both sides of Burnham Harbor, the island was connected to the mainland by three bridges: one at today's Solidarity Drive, another at 16th Street, and one at the southern end of the peninsula. In this spirit, the working group recommends that a new pedestrian bridge be created to connect Northerly Island either at the latitude of approximately 16th or 18th Street or at the southern end of the peninsula. This bridge could become a destination itself while enhancing the overall aesthetic of the Museum Campus and serving a functional purpose. Further study will be needed to recommend the most appropriate design of the new connection to accommodate existing boats in the harbor and their access to Lake Michigan. A temporary connection, such as a pontoon bridge or other similar structure, might be deployed more rapidly, with the results of such a pilot project informing the design and configuration of a more permanent solution.



Diagram of "A Connected Destination" improvements proposed for the Museum Campus. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022



iii. Increase transit access and capacity along the Cermak corridor

Currently, Roosevelt Road is the only east-west corridor providing direct access for cars and buses and it frequently experiences congestion throughout the day, as well as during special events. Cermak Road is a major east-west corridor near the Campus and could be a promising alternative to Roosevelt Road but does not physically connect with Campus. It is recommended that the City evaluate options to increase east-west access to the Campus along the Cermak corridor for motorists, transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists. This new connection could take advantage of the Cermak corridor's Red and Green Line CTA stations, and its emergence as a major center for events, entertainment, and lodging. At 120 feet in width, but with half the average daily vehicular traffic of Roosevelt Road, Cermak is also attractive because it is not capacity-constrained like the other east-west corridors.

A dedicated, high-capacity transit system—potentially in the form of bus rapid transit, streetcar, light rail, or other possible transit modes— would not only serve existing destinations but could also support future transit-oriented development in the area. Such a transitway could be planned and designed in a manner that would not preclude future phases connecting to other key destinations in and around Chicago's Central Area. Further study is needed to rigorously quantify the benefits of such a transitway in terms of travel times and ridership demand, to establish the physical feasibility of fitting the required infrastructure into the limited space available, to identify a suitable type of transit vehicle or mode, and to identify adequate and appropriate funding sources for design, construction, and operation. Once the physical needs are determined, right-of-way along this corridor should be preserved to allow for this future visionary investment.

iv. Create a South Lakefront Busway by enhancing and extending the McCormick Place Busway

The McCormick Place Busway runs along the Metra tracks between Lower Randolph and McCormick Place. It opened in 2002 to allow faster, more direct convention shuttle bus connections between McCormick Place and hotels in River North, Streeterville, and Lakeshore East. Identifying the untapped potential of the busway as an opportunity to improve access to the Museum Campus, the 2015 Transportation Study recommended adding new access points and stations and changing its name to the South Lakefront Busway. With new stations at 11th Street and 18th Street, the South Lakefront Busway would improve bus connectivity between the Museum Campus west along the Cermak corridor and south along existing bus routes. This recommendation had the added benefit of improving the speed and reliability of six bus routes currently using DuSable Lakeshore Drive for access to the Loop. A subsequent study in 2020 on behalf of CDOT identified the specific modifications that would need to be made to the busway and quantified the potential impacts of these changes on access to the Museum Campus and CTA bus service for impacted routes.

Given the high potential of the South Lakefront Busway to provide more equitable access to the Museum Campus, as well as to the downtown area and South Side in general, the working group recommends that the City continue this project by pursuing the funding sources identified in the 2020 study to refine and determine how to implement the proposed changes to the existing McCormick Place Busway.

v. Create mobility hubs on and adjacent to the Campus

Mobility hubs should be created at key nodes where multiple modes of transportation intersect to increase access to the Campus and create a better visitor experience. Wayfinding will be simpler and more intuitive, while visitors will also have more options from the hub to reach their final destinations. At the current 18th Street Metra station, such a mobility hub could combine an improved 18th Street station with the enhanced bike and pedestrian access. This mobility hub could also serve CTA service on the South Lakefront Busway and gameday shuttles that connect Soldier Field with the Millennium Park parking garages. A similar hub for on-Campus mobility should be more centrally located to provide connections between the existing Divvy bike stations, shuttle stops, and drop-off/pick-up points.





An improved 18th Street Station will create a distinct sense of arrival while improving bike and pedestrian connectivity to the west and amplifying the Campus' new branding. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.

IV. Address vehicle congestion and parking challenges

Due in large part to challenges with accessing public transportation, most day-to-day visitors and a major portion of special event visitors arrive by car. This reliance on driving creates significant congestion during peak traffic hours and especially around major events that negatively affects the visitor experience and adjacent communities. It also led to a large inventory of parking spaces to accommodate the volume of vehicles around large events that goes largely unused at other times. Taking steps to improve alternatives to driving and better manage traffic on and near the Museum Campus will make it a more attractive and accessible destination.

i. Improve shared bus drop-off and parking for field trips

As a premier attraction for local and regional school programs, the Museum Campus hosts tens of thousands of students annually and must accommodate the hundreds of buses they arrive on. Currently, there is no designated pick-up or drop-off point for the buses and no designated bus parking while the students are visiting the Campus. In the busiest months for school trips, this is challenging because the buses tend to drop-off and pick-up at similar times and must do so on active streets. It is recommended that the City develop a comprehensive approach to school bus management with the input of all three museums. There are several potential solutions for this challenge, but the East, Adler, and South Lots should all be considered in the development of a coordinated plan.



ii. Improve pick-up and drop-off strategies and related traffic routing plans

The lack of a designated pick-up and drop-off strategy for the Museum Campus leads to an ineffective uncoordinated approach for ride-sharing services and taxis. This becomes particularly problematic during special events when traffic management procedures limit vehicle access before and after events. Unable to access the Campus directly, private vehicles and taxis scramble around neighborhood streets in the South Loop, while visitors must walk for a half-mile or more away from the Campus to meet their rides. In addition to creating a negative visitor experience, this kind of informal pick-up and drop-off activity is disruptive to nearby residents around 18th/Calumet, where the largely residential streets are not configured for this type of activity.

The City should develop and pilot pick-up and drop-off strategies coordinated with traffic routing plans for Soldier Field and Huntington Bank Pavilion events. This would include identifying and testing designated area(s) for pick-up and drop-off by both private passenger vehicles and taxicabs. One potential solution is to make Columbus Drive between Balbo Drive and Roosevelt Road the primary pick-up and drop-off location, creating a long cul-de-sac with signs, barricades, and cones with entry and exit only from Balbo Drive. CTA bus operations on Columbus could also be integrated into this traffic configuration, as could proposed changes to the McCormick Place Busway or expanded use of the Metra Electric Line as an event shuttle. Once the pick-up and drop-off strategy is refined, the experience could be enhanced with clear signage, incorporation into the proposed digital wayfinding system, communication via an updated digital presence, and shelter for passengers during inclement weather.



iii. Improve Columbus/Roosevelt/DLSD intersection triangle

The realignment of DuSable Lake Shore Drive and extension of Roosevelt Road brought together three high-volume roads (DuSable Lake Shore Drive, Columbus Drive, and Roosevelt Road), forming a triangle of intersections, pictured in Figure 6. During times of peak travel demand, traffic queues exceed the storage space available between the intersections on all approaches, especially at the Roosevelt/Columbus intersection, reducing flow and limiting entry and exit to the Campus. Additionally, pedestrians are not able to traverse this intersection and must use an underpass in Grant Park. Although the underpass is a logical and effective connection between Grant Park and the Museum Campus, it is a somewhat indirect and counterintuitive path for Campus-bound pedestrians at the south side of Roosevelt at Columbus.



Intersection of DuSable Lake Shore Drive (on left), Roosevelt Road (in foreground), and Columbus Drive (on right, running parallel to the Metra tracks)

Several improvements to these intersections should receive further study and be implemented if appropriate. One potential improvement would be to grade separate the northbound lanes of DuSable Lake Shore Drive with an underpass at McFetridge Drive. This would facilitate traffic movements between Roosevelt/Columbus and McFetridge Drive, a primary motor vehicle route to the Museum Campus. In addition, a grade separation at this location could create a direct pedestrian connection from the south side of Roosevelt Road to the Campus. A lower cost improvement to the intersection triangle could include eliminating left turn movements from northbound DuSable Lake Shore Drive to westbound Roosevelt Road to reduce the volume of conflicting movements at the Columbus Drive and Roosevelt Road intersection. A broader reimagining of Columbus Drive through Grant Park could also significantly improve pedestrian access from the northeast and mitigate the traffic challenges at this intersection triangle.



iv. Develop enhanced lakefront remote parking strategies

Despite the recommendations for greater connectivity to public transit and the increased mobility from new infrastructure, a significant portion of visitors to the Museum Campus will continue to access the Campus by car. Coordinated remote parking strategies should be developed to utilize existing parking options in Chicago's Central Lakefront Area more fully. The roughly 7,000 parking spaces on Campus and the limited road connections to Campus both constrain the number of private vehicles that can feasibly drive to the Museum Campus during peak times while creating significant challenges with congestion. In addition to the spaces on the Campus, there are an additional 9,100 spaces available in the Millennium Park garages and 5,800-7,300 spaces available at McCormick Place. However, these parking locations are not well connected to each other or to the Museum Campus and tend to serve only parking needs within the immediate walking distance of each facility.

During Bears games, buses shuttle fans between Millennium Park garages and a makeshift bus turnaround at 18th Street as well as from the lots at McCormick Place. However, there is no consistent strategy for remote parking for all special events and the existing shuttle services are not designed to accommodate other Campus visitors impacted by the games. The enhanced lakefront parking strategy should make these shuttle services more convenient and reliable while also developing solutions to accommodate driving visitors impacted by major events. The more coordinated strategy should also better advertise these remote parking options and consider opportunities incorporate the Metra Electric Line into shuttle services to Millennium Park to be as effective as possible.

v. Improve on-site parking accessibility and optimize capacity

Given the significant role that cars play in accessing the Campus, the Campus' parking systems should be improved to increase accessibility and optimize parking usage. For instance, employing a "pay-as-you-exit" system at Adler Lot and other locations could reduce parking congestion by eliminating lines of cars waiting to access lots. Implemented in conjunction with an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) to provide live updates on the number of available parking spots in each lot, visitors could find open spots more quickly and get to their final destinations more quickly. In addition to these changes, better coordination between the parking vendor and the museums could allow for voucher or validation programs that reduce costs for visitors. Particularly for free museum days, programs of this nature could make the Museum Campus significantly more accessible.



V. Create a sense of destination and arrival

Today, there is little to convey to visitors that they have arrived at the Museum Campus. A large stone sign in Grant Park indicates arrival but in a somewhat misleading way as it is north of Roosevelt Road and west of Lakeshore Drive. Aside from the name itself, the Museum Campus/11th St. Metra stop has little to highlight its proximity to the Campus while the 18th St. stop similarly doesn't convey a sense of arrival and appears to be a temporary in nature. Regardless of the mode of travel or the direction of access to the Campus, the experience is the same, which also contributes to the lack of a cohesive identity discussed elsewhere in this document.

It is recommended that as efforts to improve Campus connectivity are pursued, specific attention be given to the ways these projects might create a stronger sense of destination and arrival. Signs, statues, murals, or other artwork could indicate arrival at the Campus in a way that generates excitement about the experiences that await visitors, like the way the four-story tall Brachiosaurus skeleton welcomes travelers to O'Hare Airport. Improving the sense of arrival should also be incorporated into wayfinding and branding to reinforce a consistent visitor experience.



Rendering of the North Gateway to the Campus located on the terrace in front of the Field Museum. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.



Rendering of the South Gateway to the Campus located east of the Lakeside Center. Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, 2022.

VI. Develop solutions for intra-Campus mobility



Gateway (Greenwich Automated Transport Environment) Project, 2016. Greenwich, UK. Inspiration for autonomous people movers.

The size of the Campus and distance between institutions makes movement around the Campus difficult, particularly for people with disabilities or otherwise encumbered. Furthermore, walking routes around the Campus are highly exposed and significantly impacted by inclement weather. It is recommended that the City evaluate options to have an on-Campus shuttle to connect the major attractions to parking and to each other. This circulator should complement the free trolley recommendation that enhances Campus connections to other parts of the city by connecting the more remote parts of the Campus, especially the Northerly Island visitor center and 18th Street Station, to minimize the number of necessary on-Campus stops the trolley must make. By implementing an all-electric shuttle, this system could advance the Campus' role in mitigating climate change and generate environmental awareness. Furthermore, using autonomous solutions being developed by several companies could improve mobility while also enhancing the overall Campus experience with a memorable experience.



● Bringing It All Together

The vision for the Campus will be pursued in a coordinated way that maximizes the mutually reinforcing aspects of individual recommendations to compound the benefits of future investment. Coordinating these efforts will give the Campus a more cohesive identity, make it more sustainable, and ensure its longevity as an attractive, year-round destination for everyone.

I. Establish a stakeholder coordinating body

The working group realizes that carrying out the vision and recommendations outlined in this report will require strong leadership and coordination among all institutions present on Campus, supported by robust sources of funding. Museum Campus functions not performed today or performed only on an ad hoc basis, including event coordination, advertising (e.g., branding, website, engagement, social media), advocacy, and fundraising, need to be integrated to be successful. Examples at other large and complex places, like Millennium Park, MPEA, and Navy Pier, show how governance models can support the Campus with dedicated funding source(s), ensure agile management, facilitate partnerships with private sector, and manage philanthropic fundraising. In the longer term, such options need to be explored for the Museum Campus.

In the short term, the working group recommends the Mayor establish a stakeholder coordinating body to engage Parks, the Campus museums, City Departments with pertinent expertise (e.g., CDOT, DCASE, DPD), Choose Chicago, and strategic long-term tenants to advance the execution of the recommendations outlined in this report.

II. Develop a comprehensive site plan to guide a cohesive implementation effort

The ideas and recommendations articulated in this report capture a transformational vision for a reimagined, accessible, and inspiring site. They include a broad range of programmatic initiatives and investments. There is a significant number of actions that can and should be taken immediately, either because they are “no-regrets” improvements, extensive due diligence work has already been done to make them shovel-ready, or they can serve as experimental smaller-scale solutions for plans that might take longer fully implement.

To execute this vision faithfully and responsibly, the City should develop a comprehensive and detailed site plan to guide long-term implementation and investments. This plan should be centered around an integrated concept of landscape, wayfinding, and amenities, in addition to other activation and accessibility recommendations put forth in this report.

III. Develop an integrated wayfinding approach for the Campus and with neighboring parks

A key part of establishing a unified Campus identity is implementing a comprehensive wayfinding strategy to and within the Museum Campus. Signage should be bold, educational, and appropriate for all ages and accessibility needs. Any Museum Campus wayfinding efforts should be coordinated with the Grant Park Framework Plan process to further integrate the Museum Campus into the larger downtown area.

Technology could be creatively harnessed to create a unique and interactive wayfinding experience that allows Museum Campus visitors to easily plan and prepare for trips and navigate the Campus. A dedicated mobile app could offer a dynamic planning tool with real-time transportation information, embedded educational experiences for student groups like AR scavenger hunts and nature tours, free AR or VR experiences that enable visitors to preview locations on Campus and interact with specific exhibits, and opportunities to provide feedback. Cultivating an easily navigable, informative, and high-tech wayfinding system will create interactive experiences across Campus that can enhance and ease the visitor experience.



IV. Create a Campus identity through rebranding

Throughout this report, the site has been referred to by its current name: the “Museum Campus”. However, this name does not begin to capture the site’s full potential, range of attractions, or diversity of experiences. As part of the process of developing a unique identity, the working group recommends development of a creative, inspiring rebranding effort to represent the Museum Campus more holistically and capture the emotions and ideas conveyed in this report. This effort should leverage a high level of community engagement and emphasize the site as a place where all are welcomed.

V. Maintain fiscal responsibility

This report has outlined a reimagination of the Museum Campus, transforming it into a global, year-round destination. The working group recognizes executing these recommendations is a long-term ambition requiring further evaluations and extensive funding. The working group is confident this proposition is a necessary investment with far-reaching economic and operating benefits for Chicago and hopes the City and Parks will commit to implementing the goals of this report. The working group, however, urges the City and Parks to execute the recommendations in a fiscally responsible way that respects the taxpayer and to utilize a multi-pronged funding approach that systematically explores federal funding opportunities, engages the philanthropic and civic community, and leverages public-private partnerships when possible and appropriate.

■ Next Steps and Accountability

Achieving the vision outlined in this report is a long-term objective. While many of the recommendations suggested in this report offer the opportunity to target relatively easier initiatives in the short term, the most transformative aspects of this vision will require long-term focus with meaningful and authentic engagement of communities and external stakeholders, planning and execution of feasibility studies, and identification of adequate funding sources. In addition, the holistic nature of this vision and the extensive area it covers necessarily involves numerous stakeholders with jurisdiction of distinct aspects of its implementation.

This complexity requires clear accountability, as well as mechanisms to ensure coordination and consistency of execution. A first step is to determine appropriate owners responsible for the execution of key aspects of this vision, along the following guidelines:

- **The Chicago Park District**, as the owner of the Campus grounds, should lead the overall site planning, development of wayfinding strategies, and efforts to improve connectivity to trails and pathways
- **The Chicago Department of Transportation** should lead initiatives and decisions related to transportation connecting to the Museum Campus in collaboration with related CTA and Metra strategies and initiatives and support the Northerly Island bridge concept
- **The Chicago Department of Planning and Development** should lead initiatives related to planning of new access points (bridges) and of activation of Solidarity Drive, in coordination with DCASE
- **The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events** should lead programming tied to new features, especially on Solidarity Drive in coordination with Parks and the museums



- **A designated lead should be assigned by the Mayor to plan and advance Soldier Field's renovation.** Given the central role of this asset for the revitalization of the entire Campus, and the need for efficient interaction among several City Departments as well as private sector stakeholders for its execution, it is recommended this role is accountable to the Park District as the owner of Soldier Field, but also directly to the Mayor's Office
- **The Chief Marketing Officer** should lead the effort to brand the Museum Campus in close coordination with its key stakeholders
- **The Mayor's Office** should lead development of a stakeholder coordinating body to advance the execution of the recommendations outlined in this report. Until such a mechanism is in place, the Mayor's office should convene and coordinate the work of the different partners and stakeholders of the Campus.

■ Acknowledgements

The working group was generously assisted by several key partners. Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill (SOM) supported the working group throughout the entire effort by providing inspiration through best-in-class examples from around the world and creating renderings that bring to life the singular vision that emerged from the working group's discussions. Additionally, the working group was informed by a series of roundtable discussions coordinated by the Mayor's Office of Community Engagement (MOCE), and an Innovation in Action session hosted by Chicago Innovation and Accenture. The working group was also assisted by the Chicago Park District, the Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events, the Department of Planning and Development, and the Chicago Department of Transportation. Finally, the working group is grateful to the Civic Consulting Alliance, and its partner Protiviti, for all their support facilitating the entire process.

- Photo credits: Nathanael Filbert and Patrick Pyszka

¹ Data from 2015 CDOT Transportation Study

² Data sourced from Replica. All data are best estimates

³ Data sourced from Soldier Field 2019 and 2022 attendance data. All data are best estimates.

⁴ Data sourced from Soldier Field 2019 and 2022 attendance data. All data are best estimates

■ Appendix

Working Group Members

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- **Gerald Adelman (Open Space & Recreation Lead)** – President and CEO, Openlands
- **Michelle T. Boone (Cultural Amenities Lead)** – President, The Poetry Foundation
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- **Jaime di Paulo** – President and CEO, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- **Karen Freeman-Wilson** – CEO, Chicago Urban League
- **Juanita Irizarry** – Executive Director, Friends of the Parks
- **Perri Irmer** – CEO of DuSable Museum, President of Museums in the Parks
- **Michelle Larson** – President and CEO, Adler Planetarium
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- **Sam Toia** – President and CEO, Illinois Restaurant Association
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