

To: Costco Wholesale
From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group
Date: 08.19.22

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group appreciates the opportunity to review and provide input on Costco Wholesale's proposed site amendments to 2746 N Clybourn Ave, as presented on August 2, 2022. The presentation provided Task Force members with an overview of the proposed changes, including building expansion, new parking layouts, and renovations to an existing riverwalk originally installed prior to the passage of the Chicago [River Design Guidelines](#).

Following the development team's presentation, Task Force members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide general feedback. Task Force members then discussed thoughts and reactions amongst themselves after the development team was excused from the meeting. The comments in this letter summarize the group's written and verbal input.

Context of the proposed development

Costco Wholesale is proposing three phases of redevelopment, upgrade and expansion of an existing gas station, expansion of the existing warehouse building and associated parking, along with other site improvements. In compliance with the River Design Guidelines, the project would also include improvements to an existing riverwalk installed in 2002 adjacent to the North Branch of the Chicago River. Proposed improvements include planting additional shade trees, upgrading light fixtures, fence repairs, and replacing invasive plantings with native species. The proposed changes to the site require approval as an addendum to the existing Planned Development #728.

Development review working group recommendations:

- **Use an alternative solution to comply with River Design Guidelines 30' setback requirement**
The existing riverwalk does not comply with the current requirement of a 30' setback across its entire length. Requesting the development team to meet this requirement as part of the proposed renovations would be unnecessarily burdensome, but other strategies should be taken into consideration to ensure the proposed riverwalk renovations meet the spirit of the design guidelines.

The four new parking stalls shown on sheet L1.1, as provided by the development team, could be removed from the proposal and remain as greenspace adjacent to the existing riverwalk. Unpaved space should not be removed from the current configuration as it serves to provide additional relief for users and wildlife and provides balance where some portions of the riverwalk are narrower than the 30' setback requirement.

Additional considerations could include potential future river access for recreational users, the installation of floating planted islands, or 'softening' the seawall edge in order to provide additional habitat for wildlife species in accordance with River Design Guidelines best practices.

- **Review the planting plan to maximize native species, and balance shading/screening with high-value natural habitat**
The development team shared a preliminary planting plan that is to be updated as the proposal moves forward and with feedback from the Task Force. Task Force members are supportive of the plan to expand native plantings and pollinator habitat on the site, but careful consideration should be given to what native species are proposed to replace current invasive species. Careful consideration needs to

be given to maintenance after removal of invasive species. A thorough maintenance plan needs to be developed with follow through that has not occurred since the initial installation of the riverwalk.

Acknowledging the need for shading and screening, the planting plan could be completed in phases to avoid defoliating an entire stretch of the river edge at this location. Non-native plants and invasive species should be replaced with native plants. Non-native juniper should be replaced with native juniper (many species of which are fast growing), and arborvitae, red osier dogwood, or similar shrubs can also be used to create privacy. Non-native evergreen species should be replaced in kind with native evergreen species. New native plantings should not over rely on cultivars in order to provide high-value habitat for insects and migratory bird species.

- **Improve circulation and signage to maximize accessibility for both Costco shoppers, employees, and the general public**

The existing riverwalk currently connects to Lathrop Homes via an under-bridge connection at the north end of the site and terminates at Clybourn Avenue via a five foot sidewalk along the edge of the Costco parking lot. The development team noted that new crosswalk striping would be installed to connect shoppers to the river walk by way of the front entry path. The proposal could also consider how riverwalk users are accessing the Costco segment from Damen Avenue. New signage, striping, or other traffic calming measures should be installed to indicate shared road use if the primary access point for the riverwalk from Damen Ave is through the Costco parking lot. The development team also noted that the existing sidewalk connection from the river edge to Clybourn Avenue, along the southern edge of the site will be maintained.

- **Additional feedback regarding minor site improvements**

Any new fixtures (benches, trash cans, lighting) should comply with the river design guidelines. New light fixtures should be directed toward the path and should be shielded from being cast on the river/into the night sky. The development team should submit a maintenance plan for the updated riverwalk including strategies for stormwater retention and ongoing removal of invasive species.

Thank you for taking the time to present to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback in the design process and look forward to the ongoing coordination as the project moves on to future phases. We hope that implementing the above recommendations can be mutually beneficial for the development team, community residents, and the river itself. We welcome the opportunity for feedback, offer our services in the future, and look forward to your responses and collaboration.

Sincerely,

River Ecology Governance Task Force
Development Review Working Group