

To: The 78 (101-213 West Roosevelt Rd. / 1200-1558 South Clark St.) Development Team
From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group
Date: August 18, 2025

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force (REGTF) Development Review Working Group received a presentation about The 78 development concept on August 5, 2025. The presentation provided Task Force participants with an overview of the proposed site plan, their proposed character areas and zones showing river setbacks and section designs, and how the team will comply with the City's Chicago River Design Guidelines and Sustainable Development Policy.

Following the development team's presentation there was a 'Question & Answer' session that allowed Task Force participants to ask clarifying questions and provide general feedback verbally and via an online form. The following summary is representative of the group's verbal and written input.

Working Group understanding of The 78 site plan proposal

Planned development No. 1434, located along the South Branch of the Chicago River, was originally approved in 2018 and a planned amendment will be submitted for approval by the Chicago Plan Commission. The Chicago Fire will become the anchor tenant for this 62 acre development proposal with a stadium at the center of the project. The site has a half mile of riverfront and the development team's goal is to have the river be the focus of the plan with different spaces and character zones. The development team mentioned their priority for river habitat and creating a natural slope for aquatic and riparian landscape in the furthest south riverfront zone, closest to Ping Tom Memorial Park. A water taxi stop is also planned on the site. A key difference between this proposal and the previous 2018 submitted planned development is the approach to open space distribution. The original planned development had a large central open space whereas this proposal takes a different approach showing a mix of small open spaces throughout the site.

Project-specific comments for the development team from the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group.

1. **Expand the open space approach west of Wells Street.** The Working Group agrees that the portion of the site west of Wells Street, along the river should be focused on open space uses to accommodate the large number of anticipated site users (20,000 stadium visitors plus additional residents) and to maximize landscape and river edge habitat potential. River edge open spaces shown in the plan are small and narrow, and are interrupted by many smaller buildings / kiosks. Larger river edge spaces that leave adequate space for pedestrian and bike circulation, passive recreation, and for the creation of landscaping and habitat along the entire riverfront are needed.
2. **Connect the river to the site by expanding riparian habitat zones.** In previous master plans, areas of the site were designed to have more interaction between the site and the river through riparian / emergent habitats. The new river edge cross sections that show these strategies seemed to be limited to a small portion of southern river frontage, with the rest of the site having a high seawall (higher than 5 feet). Though we understand that some areas will be set aside for water taxi docking and for barge construction, the Working Group envisions more variation along the river frontage throughout the site. The Working Group would like to see additional areas of the

riverfront designed to engage the landscape and people with the water, with areas for kayaks, and riparian and aquatic habitats.

3. **Prioritize aquatic and wildlife habitat.** It was mentioned by the development team that there will be some aquatic habitat and wildlife habitat spaces on the site, yet specific details on these plans were not shared. The Working Group would like to emphasize the importance of this site for creating safe fish passage downstream and creating bird nesting opportunities for native and migratory birds. These habitats can also support human connection, education, and stewardship with the river.
4. **Ensure that the proportion of the open spaces fits with the massing and density of the buildings as well as the proposed site uses.** Because the open spaces and riverfront spaces have been reduced to small promenades and courtyards, the Working Group is concerned about the number of people accessing the open spaces and riverwalk, particularly on days when the stadium is in use, and we would like to see more information about how those spaces look in comparison to the proposed heights of the buildings.
5. **Coordinate and plan for functional and safe circulation for riverfront pedestrians, paddlers, cyclists of all ages and abilities.** If there is regular bike and pedestrian traffic along with over 20,000 people using the stadium, it is critical to design a system of trails, open spaces, and paths that provide active and passive ways to experience the riverfront. It is also important to plan for safe access for kids, wheelchair users, and others who desire to access the riverfront. There are a lot of kayak users that live in the community who would benefit from this additional access point, which requires reducing the seawall closer to the water level at multiple locations. The Working Group also finds it critical to clearly indicate and design circulation plans for bicyclists and pedestrians to move safely throughout the site and to understand how that system interacts with nearby public transit. As riverfront spaces become more popular, this type of proactive planning is essential.
6. **Prioritize the open space and public river amenities in the first phase of the development.** No first phase drawings were shared at this time with the Working Group, but we feel that it is essential that the first phase of the development include improvements to the river edges and avoid interim uses that could harm the river.

Additional questions and comments for the development team:

7. Further examples of river edge stadiums would be helpful to examine to inform what the demand might be on these riverfront spaces due to the stadium use. The Working Group mentioned riverfront case study examples in Nashville, St. Louis, and San Antonio.
8. What are the plans for CTA stations to support the stadium use?
9. Has the surrounding community been consulted about their potential use of spaces on your site?
10. The Working Group would be interested to see a traffic study when it is completed with the Chicago Department of Transportation.
11. What areas of the site are private vs. public? Are the open spaces and courtyards spread throughout the site going to be public? With the North end of Ping Tom Park being a Chicago Park District Natural Area, it is recommended to have cohesive integration of the southern green spaces in the 78 to Ping Tom Park.

12. Are there safety measures in place for young kids when walking (running along) the river edge as it changes in each zone? There are a lot of kids in and out around the park and field house that is adjacent.
13. What is the parking plan relative to stadium events and will first phase parking areas mentioned be located near the riverfront?
14. What is the proportion of previous green/softscape vs. new plazas and hardscape?
15. How does the development team plan to address volume control measurements using BMPs?
16. How will downstream habitat conditions be improved? How will the created environment support riparian, aquatic, and upland habitat?
17. What remediation has been completed for this site?

Outstanding question(s) for the City:

18. For the affordable requirement ordinance, would this proposal be subject to the old rules when it was previously approved in 2018 or the new rules with this planned amendment?

Conclusion

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 and look forward to the ongoing coordination opportunities with river related experts. 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