



# WEST LOOP DESIGN GUIDELINES



**DPD**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT  
CITY OF CHICAGO



Adopted by the Chicago Plan Commission on September 20, 2017

# WEST LOOP DESIGN GUIDELINES

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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## Purpose

The West Loop is a diverse and rapidly growing neighborhood just west of downtown Chicago. The neighborhood's proximity to the Loop, various transportation networks as well as a thriving dining and retail scene make it one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the City of Chicago to live, work and play.

The West Loop Design Guidelines are the result of a community process led by the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD). DPD has prepared these design guidelines to help the West Loop build on the central area characteristics of an employment, transportation, cultural and residential center for the city; while preserving the urban character and scale that has made it so attractive. The guidelines were developed in consideration of concerns that DPD heard from the community engagement process, including:

- Loss of the existing character and scale of the West Loop
- Density and height of new buildings
- Solar access
- Lack of open space
- Monotony in the design of new developments

Following adoption, these design guidelines will apply to all projects within the study area boundary seeking Plan Commission approval, but may be used by stakeholders as a tool to discuss and address architecture and urban design issues.

## Application

The design guidelines are intended to be applied holistically to each project and ultimately each project should respond to these guidelines substantially, with the ultimate goal of achieving design excellence. As projects respond to the guidelines in unique ways, the built environment of the West Loop will become more architecturally rich and diverse. These design guidelines can be viewed as a reference document that facilitates property owners, the community and the City to work together from a common understanding when reviewing and refining future development projects.

The guidelines are not prescriptive, but rather principles intended to balance the interaction of context, land use, open space, the public realm and building scale and massing. Therefore, the design guidelines do not include recommendations for architectural styles, zoning or land use changes, or support for any specific capital improvement project.

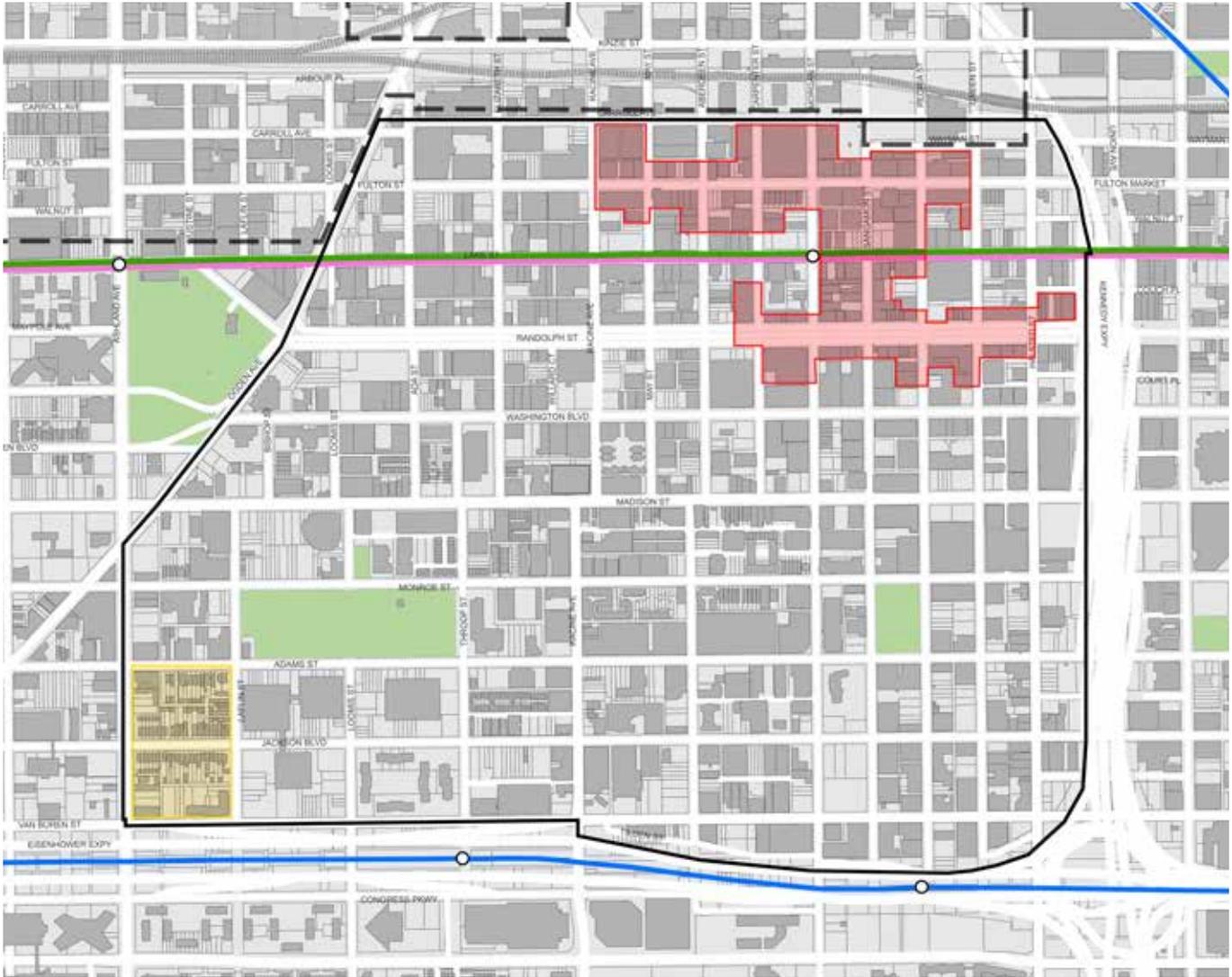
## Public Engagement

Participation by community stakeholders was critical to the planning process. Initiated in the winter of 2017, public engagement included input by more than three hundred individuals over the course of two open houses, three working group meetings, and an online survey. The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) was also a key stakeholder and contributed to the development and refinement of the document's Public Realm, Parking and Service Guidelines.

The input of Aldermen Daniel Solis, Walter Burnett and Jason Ervin was also essential to the process ensuring that the demands of local stakeholders were considered and appropriately balanced. DPD would like to acknowledge the thoughtful participation of the following community organizations:

- West Central Association
- West Loop Community Organization
- Neighbors of West Loop

Invaluable consultant services were provided by Site Design Group, Ltd. in partnership with Solomon Cordwell Buenz and with assistance from KLOA Inc. and Goodman Williams Group.



**West Loop Design Guidelines**  
**Study Area**

- Map Key
- Study Area Boundary
  - CTA Blue Line
  - CTA Green Line
  - CTA Pink Line
  - Kinzie Planned Manufacturing District
  - Jackson Boulevard District
  - Fulton-Randolph Market District
  - Transit Station



# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

## Key Zoning Concepts

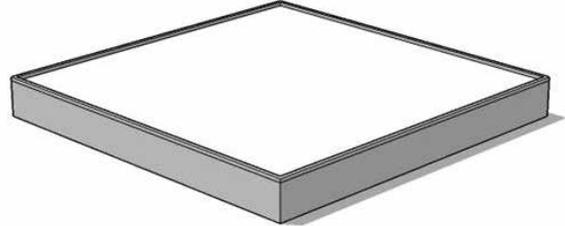
While these guidelines do not recommend any zoning or land use changes, it is important to understand the underlying zoning 'envelope' that these guidelines respond to. The following summarizes some key zoning concepts in order to inform and facilitate an understanding of these concepts for users of this document.

### Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

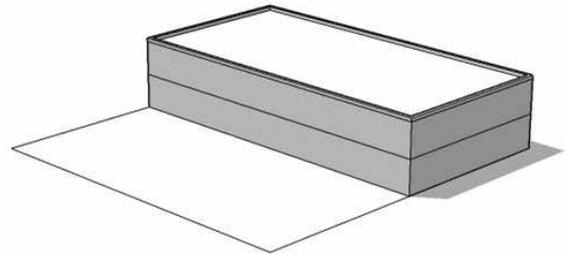
Increased density and height of new buildings has been a recurring concern from the community throughout the development of the guidelines. Because these guidelines are responding to the existing regulatory framework, providing more background on how density and height are regulated is necessary. Generally, zoning classifications designated to each parcel, determine the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of a site. FAR determines the density and height of new development proposals. FAR is the relationship between the total amount of usable floor area that a building has, or has been permitted for the building, and the total area of the lot on which the building stands. This ratio is determined by dividing the total or gross, floor area of the building by the gross area of the lot. More information can be found in The Chicago Zoning Ordinance (Sec. 17-17-0305). As can be seen in figures 1-3., FAR can be utilized on a site in a number of different ways to "sculpt" or break up the massing of a building.

When a property owner proposes a new project, he or she is required to comply with the local zoning ordinance and the existing zoning classification of their property. If the proposed development does not require any modification to the underlying zoning to accommodate it, it is "as-of-right."

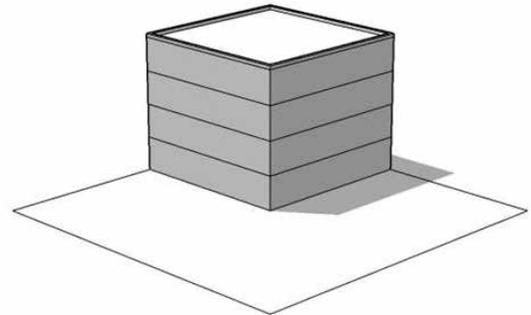
**Figure 1**  
10,000 sf building  
Covering 100% of lot



**Figure 2**  
10,000 sf building  
Covering 50% of lot



**Figure 3**  
10,000 sf building  
Covering 25% of lot

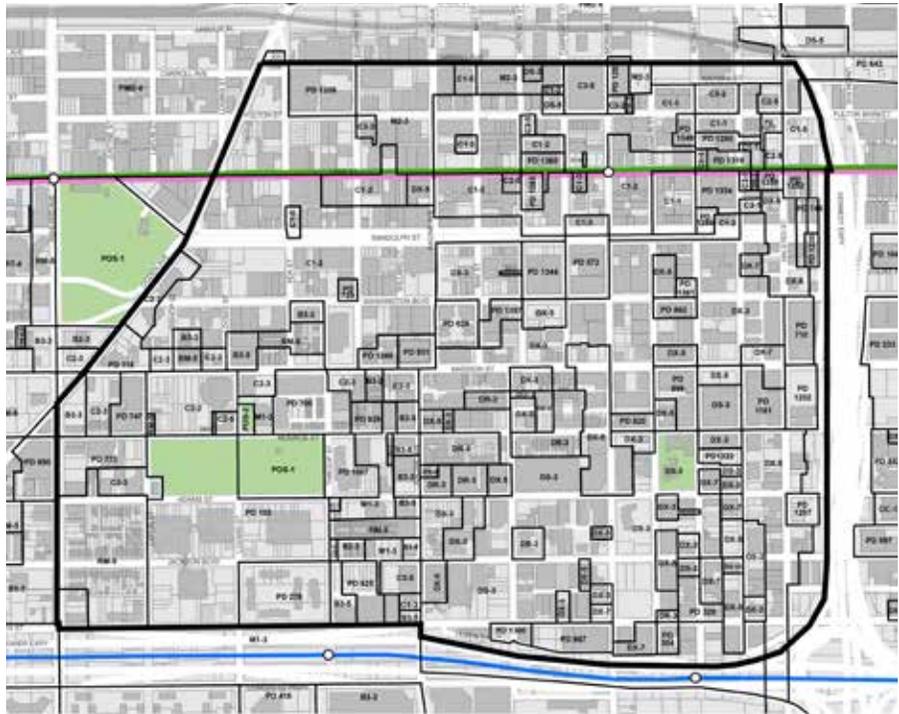


**As-of-Right Zoning vs. Planned Developments**

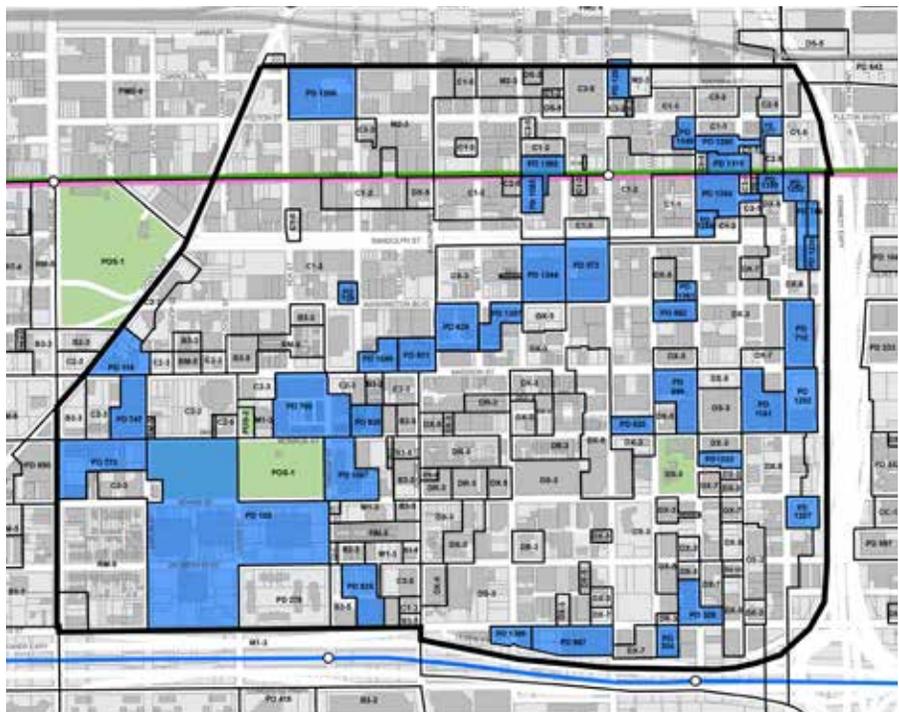
Development that occurs as-of-right complies with all applicable zoning regulations, as defined by the Chicago Zoning Ordinance. As-of-right development does not require any discretionary action by the Chicago Plan Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, the Committee on Building Standards and Tests and the Committee on Zoning.

At times, a proposed project may require a special zoning designation called a Planned Development (PD) due to its size, use, scale, complexity or location. PDs are reviewed and approved by the Chicago Plan Commission according to standards described in the Chicago Zoning Ordinance (Sec. 17-8-0900) involving:

- Use, bulk, density, and intensity;
- Transportation, traffic circulation, and parking;
- Pedestrian orientation;
- Urban design;
- Building design;
- Sustainable design;
- Parks, open space, and landscaping;
- Provision of public, social, and cultural amenities;
- Promotion of safety and security;
- Prioritization of adaptive re-use of historically significant buildings; and,
- Protection and enhancement of waterways.

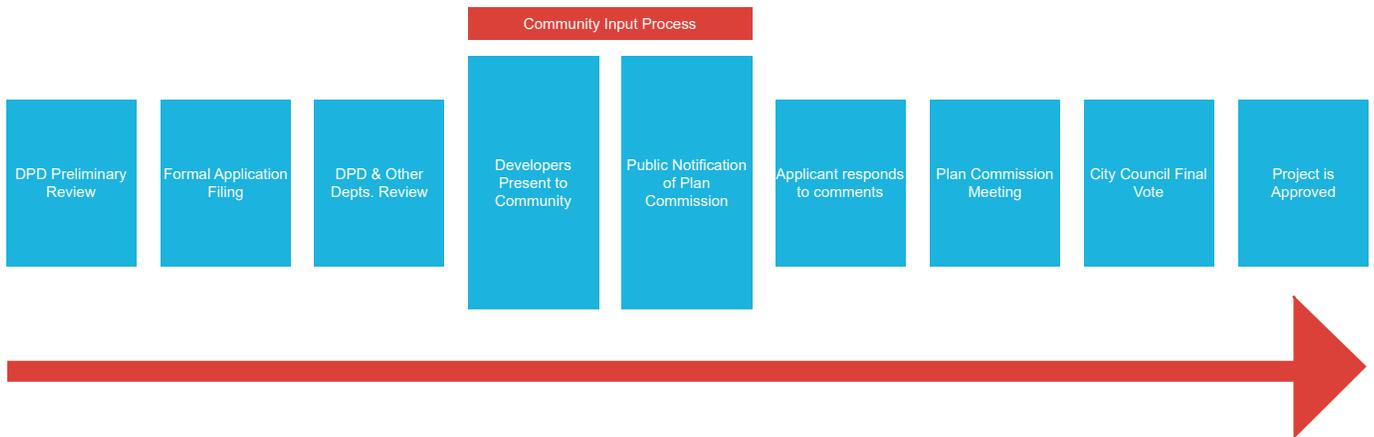


As-of-right Zoning within the West Loop.



Planned Developments within the West Loop.

## Review Process



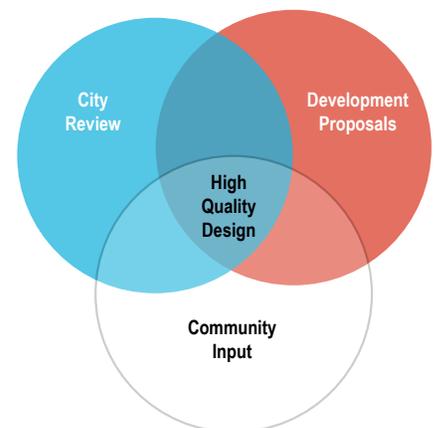
The review process for Planned Developments follows a standard procedure, as outlined below:

1. The owner submits a draft development proposal to DPD for preliminary review.
2. DPD reviews the development proposal and responds via Letter to Applicant.
3. The applicant files a formal application with City Council.
4. DPD and other city departments review the application for completeness.
5. The applicant presents the development proposal to the community.
6. Public notice of Plan Commission hearing is posted 15 days prior to review.
7. Applicant responds to public comment and prepares for Plan Commission hearing.
8. Plan Commission conducts hearing, followed by a Committee Meeting.
9. 15 days following the City Council votes on PD approval.
10. Project is fully approved to seek permits.

Steps 2, 5, and 7 can take many meetings and/or require many iterations and the time frame to complete each step varies by project. Prior to Chicago Plan Commission review, projects are reviewed by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Department of Buildings, Chicago Fire Department and the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities. As part of CDOT’s review, certain large-scale projects are required to provide a traffic analysis.

More details can be found in DPD’s Development manual for Chicago Plan Commission projects, which can be found in the appendix of this document.

Throughout the Design Review Process, community feedback is encouraged and essential to successful projects. Community feedback is stronger when it is consistent with the City Zoning Code and with the West Loop Design Guidelines. In addition, providing comments in writing and quantifying how many of your neighbors share your idea is encouraged. Comments can be given through your local Alderman, Community Organization, directly to the Department of Planning and Development or through public comment at the Chicago Plan Commission.



## Organization

The West Loop guidelines are organized into five primary categories:

1. General Strategies
2. Tall Building Design Guidelines
3. Site Specific Guidelines
4. Public Realm Guidelines
5. Alley, Parking, and Service Guidelines

### **General Strategies**

Guidelines that fall within the General Strategies section of this document include overarching principles for high-quality development. The General Strategies address topics such as: design excellence, preservation and enhancement of streetwalls, building base design, parking podium design, and guidelines for materials and architectural components.



### **Site Specific Guidelines**

This section addresses design strategies for important West Loop corridors, including: Halsted and Van Buren, Ogden Avenue, Washington Street, Randolph Street, and Lake Street. This section also outlines recommendations for development within other existing retail nodes and for development occurring adjacent to historic districts, parks and open space.



### **Parking and Service Guidelines**

These guidelines seek to ensure high-quality support infrastructure within the West Loop. This section includes recommendations for alley, service, and loading access, off-street parking, and bicycle amenities.



### **Tall Building Design Guidelines**

The Tall Building Design Guidelines address topics specific to tall buildings, including: building setbacks, height transitions, building orientation, preservation of solar access, and inclusion of public open space.



### **Public Realm Guidelines**

This section addresses design strategies for public space within the West Loop. It includes guidelines for pedestrian safety, placemaking, streetscape design, signage and identity design, and sustainable design.





# CONTEXT



# STUDY AREA



## West Loop Design Guidelines Study Area

### Map Key



The Study Area is bounded by Ogden and Ashland Avenue to the West, Carroll Avenue to the North, Interstate 90/94 to the East and Interstate 290 to the South and is approximately 0.75 square miles. The Study Area is located within the Near West Side Community Area (#28). The Study Area has experienced a significant amount of new development since 2012 with many additional projects planned or under construction. Currently the West Loop is home to approximately 10,680 residents who enjoy a wide array of amenities including but not limited to the following:

### Significant Institutions

- ① National Hellenic Museum
- ② YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
- ③ Chicago Police Training Division
- ④ Office of Emergency Management & Communications

### Schools

- ⑤ Mark T. Skinner West Elementary School
- ⑥ Whitney M. Young Magnet High School

### Parks and Open Spaces

- ⑦ Mary Bartelme Park
- ⑧ Skinner Park
- ⑨ Park 596

### Significant Employers

- ⑩ Google and SRAM
- ⑪ McDonald's Corporate Headquarters
- ⑫ Dyson and Glassdoor
- ⑬ Chicago Suntimes and Chicago Reader

# HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE



Randolph Street Market.



Jackson Boulevard District.



Fulton Market.

The West Loop has long been a significant industrial area within the City of Chicago. For many years it consisted of manufacturing facilities and large warehouses. Over time, these structures have been converted into timber loft residences and have become extremely popular. In addition, these structures have become very desirable to office tenants in recent years due to their large floor plates.

### ***Fulton-Randolph Market Districts***

Along the north side of the study area is the Fulton-Randolph Market District (see adjacent map). The Historic Fulton-Randolph Market District is the oldest extant market district in Chicago with an ensemble of historic buildings that continue to support wholesale produce and meat packing outlets as well as new uses. Recently, this area has been a popular location for restaurant and entertainment adaptive re-uses along Randolph Street and Fulton Market. This district has its own set of [design guidelines](#) found as an appendix to this document.

### ***Jackson Boulevard District***

At the southwest corner of the study area (see adjacent map), the Jackson Boulevard District is virtually all that remains of Chicago's once-fashionable Near West Side residential district. The houses, as well as the Church of the Epiphany were built in the popular architectural styles of the late 19th century --Italianate, Queen Anne, Second Empire, and Romanesque Revival. This district follows the guidelines set by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks which can be found in the appendix of this document.

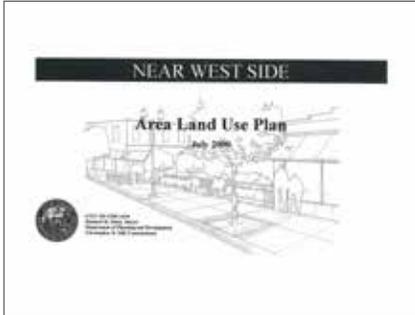
# PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

## City-led Planning Efforts

Through the years, the West Loop has seen numerous planning efforts. The Fulton Market Innovation District has been created as well as the City of Chicago Landmark Designation for the Fulton-Randolph Market District which led to a set of design guidelines for the Landmark District. The Fulton Market Innovation District Plan also provides recommendations for parts of the West Loop.

The West Central Association, West Loop Community Organization and Neighbors of West Loop have all developed various plans and/or studies for the West Loop.

The recommendations from these prior plans and studies have been incorporated and/or refined and updated for this planning effort. In particular, it is important to note that the design guidelines for the existing Landmark Districts govern within those boundaries.



### Near West Side Area Land Use Plan

City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, 2000

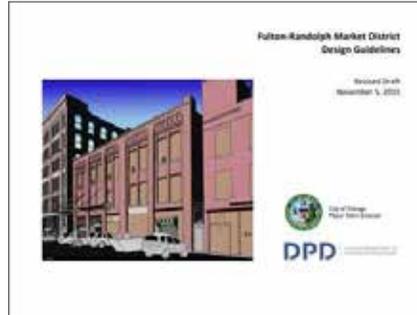
The 2000 Near West Side Area Land Use Plan, provides an overview of several distinct land use or character districts. In addition, design guidelines are provided because a critical issue confronting the area is the physical quality of the built environment. The West Loop Design Guidelines build upon these concepts and provide a vision for key streets, both for public and private development.



### Chicago Central Area Action Plan

City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, 2009

The Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) is a roadmap for the continued implementation of the Chicago Central Area Plan adopted by the Chicago Plan Commission in 2003 and updated in 2009. The CAAP prioritizes key transportation, urban design, and open space projects, many of which are relevant to the West Loop neighborhood.



**Fulton Market Innovation District**

City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, 2014

Approved by the Chicago Plan Commission in July 2014, the Fulton Market Innovation District (FMID) plan outlines a vision to preserve existing jobs while accommodating private sector investments that reinforce the area’s expanding role as an innovation-driven employment center. The plan identifies seven key actions that serve to guide City policies and investment within the area, including to establish a Subdistrict within the Kinzie Planned Manufacturing District (PMD), east of Ogden Avenue, to provide adequate space for a broader range of businesses, while still protecting against the potentially negative impacts of housing, entertainment, and lodging uses. These design guidelines could apply to this area if or when that proposed action occurs.

**Fulton-Randolph Market District Design Guidelines**

City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, 2014  
Adoption Pending

The Historic Fulton-Randolph Market Chicago Landmark District is the result of a targeted planning effort in the Near West Side community area by the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development. The guidelines serve to preserve the character of this area as well as encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and compatible new construction. The design guidelines for the existing Fulton-Randolph Market District take precedence over the West Loop Design Guidelines.

The City of Chicago approved the landmark designation of the Fulton-Randolph Market District on July 29, 2015.

## Community-led Planning Efforts



### A Future for the Near West Side

West Central Association, 2016

The West Central Association partnered with the Metropolitan Planning Council to develop the study in 2016. The study is intended to offer key information about current conditions in the community from the perspective of land use and parking, and to offer recommendations about how to move the neighborhood forward in the coming years.



### The Neighborhood Plan

Neighbors of West Loop, 2017

This document, written from the perspective of residents, offers this vision for the future of the West Loop: To preserve and enhance the high quality of life for residents and neighbors of the West Loop, allowing the neighborhood to remain a desirable place for residents to live, play and work for decades to come. Built upon several recent studies and extensive outreach, *The Neighborhood Plan* is the first plan developed exclusively by residents of the West Loop.



### Infrastructure Needs Assessment

West Loop Community Organization, 2017

The West Loop Community Organization hosted a series of Community Workshops to develop an infrastructure needs assessment for transportation, traffic, safety and beautification improvements in the West Loop. The feedback was presented to the Aldermen for their consideration when planning their respective ward budgets.

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# DESIGN GUIDELINE METHODOLOGY



# TRANSPORTATION

The West Loop neighborhood is served by a multimodal transportation network that offers travel options for residents, employees, and visitors who may be walking, biking, taking transit, or arriving by car.

## **Public Transit Service**

Public transit services that serve the West Loop include CTA “L” rapid transit, Metra commuter rail service, and CTA bus service. There are two rapid transit lines (Green Line, Pink Line) that extend through the West Loop above Lake Street and one rapid transit line (Blue Line) that extends along the southern boundary of the West Loop down the median of the Eisenhower Expressway. There are six CTA stations within a 10-minute walkshed of the West Loop (UIC-Halsted, Racine, IMD and Grand stations on the Blue Line and the Morgan and Ashland stations on the Green/Pink Lines). In addition, there are five CTA bus routes that traverse the area, Halsted #8, Ashland #9, Ashland Express X9, Madison #20, and Jackson #126.

## **Bikeways**

In addition to signed bike routes, the West Loop currently has two types of on-street bicycle facilities: buffered bike lanes and marked shared lanes. Bike facilities are located along W. Washington Blvd., W. Jackson Blvd., Ogden Ave., and Halsted St. The West Loop currently lacks high-comfort bike facilities, and also lacks connectivity within the existing City bike network.

To address these issues, the City has recommended additional bike facilities in the West Loop through the Streets for Cycling Plan 2020, which has three route classifications including Spoke Routes (direct routes in and out of the Loop), Crosstown Bike Routes (long, continuous routes located on collector and arterial streets) and Neighborhood Bike Routes (routes along quiet residential streets). A Spoke Route has been recommended along Lake Street providing direct access to the Loop. Crosstown Bike Routes are recommended along W. Randolph St., W. Washington Blvd., W. Adams St., W. Jackson Blvd., Halsted St. and Ogden Ave. Neighborhood Bike Routes are planned along Morgan and Loomis (south of Adams).

Divvy bike share stations are located at all but one of the CTA stations within or adjoining the West Loop, allowing seamless rail-bike connections for the last-mile trip. The exception is the Grand Ave. Blue Line station where the nearest Divvy station is one block away.

## **Public Parking and Car Sharing Facilities**

There are approximately 5,510 on-street parking spaces in the West Loop. Most of the spaces (83%) are free and unrestricted. The remaining spaces are restricted by standing or loading zones (7%), are paid metered spaces (6%), or are regulated by industrial permits (Fulton-Randolph Market District), residential permits or short-term free parking around the Morgan CTA station (4%). Currently, the City is in the process of instituting a Residential Parking Permit Program in the West Loop that would limit parking along certain streets.

12 car share vehicles can be found spread across seven locations within the West Loop. Most parcels east of Racine are within 3-4 blocks of one of the vehicle locations. The only location west of Racine is at Whitney Young High School in the southwest corner of the study area.

## **Network Connectivity**

In general, the West Loop neighborhood is a very walkable area that has achieved a high Walk Score of 85 (Very Walkable) by WalkScore.com, indicating most errands can be accomplished on foot. The neighborhood has also achieved a high Transit Score of 81 (Excellent Transit) as the area is served by two CTA rapid transit lines and five CTA bus routes, and a high Bike Score of 89 (Very Bike-able). The high Bike Score is likely due to the density of the neighborhood and its proximity to the Loop and not necessarily an extensive bicycle network. In addition, the West Loop also benefits from an efficient street grid that accommodates local and commercial traffic oriented to the regional expressways, downtown Loop, Illinois Medical District, and other areas of the City.

However, there are some issues related to connectivity, safety, traffic flow efficiency, parking management, and walking, biking, and transit accommodations. Some of these issues are currently being addressed through capital improvements planned by CDOT and the CTA or by private development projects, while others have been identified in the various neighborhood plans and require further study, funding or implementation.



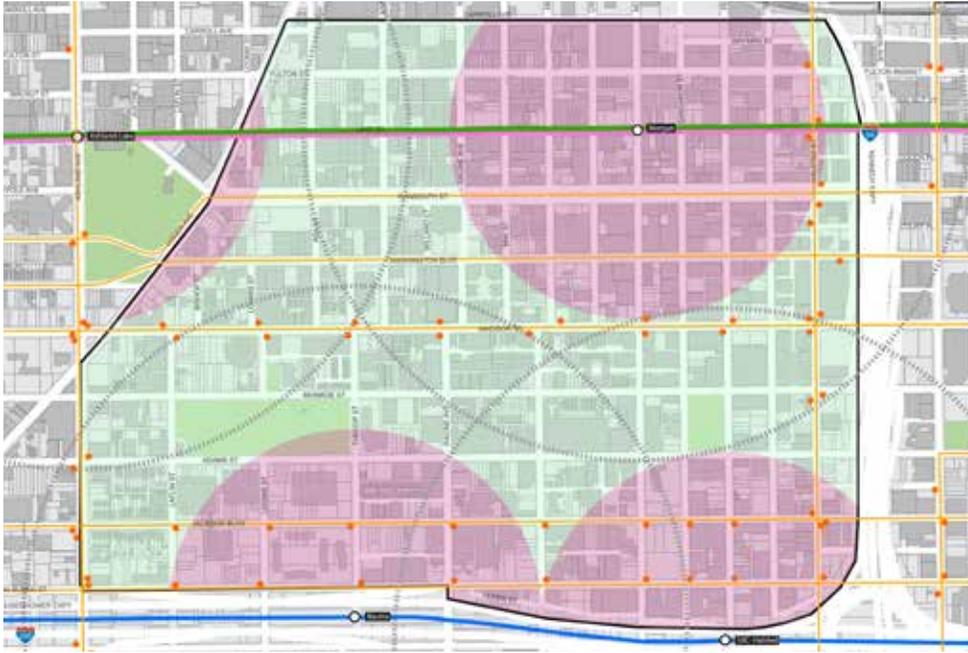
CTA Morgan Station (Green and Pink Line).



Madison Street bus stop.



Peoria Street pedestrian bridge.



*West Loop Design Guidelines*  
**West Loop Public Transit System**

*Map Key*

- |                     |                          |                 |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Study Area Boundary | CTA Pink Line            | CTA Bus Stop    |
| CTA Blue Line       | 10 minute walkshed       | CTA Bus Route   |
| CTA Green Line      | Transit-served locations | Transit Station |



*West Loop Design Guidelines*  
**Chicago Streets For Cycling 2020 Plan**

*Map Key*

- |                     |                |                      |                         |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Study Area Boundary | CTA Green Line | Spoke route          | Neighborhood bike route |
| CTA Blue Line       | CTA Pink Line  | Crosstown bike route | Transit Station         |

# DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

	2000	2010	2016 EST.	% Change
Total Population	4,409	9,663	10,860	146.3%
Total Households	1,913	5,205	5,920	209.5%
Total Housing Units	2,111	5,932	6,408	203.6%
Avg. Household Size	1.74	1.70	1.70	-2.3%
Family Households	703	1,831	2,038	189.9%
Households w/ Children	234	583	613	162.0%
Median Age	-	33.5	34.4	2.7%

## POPULATION BY AGE

	2000	Total %	2016	Total %
0-14	453	10.3%	931	8.6%
15-24	368	8.3%	706	6.5%
25-34	1,255	28.5%	4,062	37.4%
35-44	1,027	23.3%	2,532	23.3%
45-54	641	14.5%	1,180	10.9%
55-75	506	11.5%	1,243	11.4%
75+	159	3.6%	206	1.9%
Total Population	4,409		10,860	

### Demographic Trends

The West Loop has grown significantly between 2000 and 2016; gaining nearly 6,500 residents over that time period, for a growth rate of 146.3%.

The share of population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher has jumped from 44.1% to 80.1% over the last 16 years. The median income in 2016 for residents in the West Loop is estimated by ESRI to be \$101,651, more than twice the median for the City of Chicago, which stands at \$49,531.

The share of those 45 and older in the area has shrunk from 29.6% in 2000 to 24.2% while the share of those 25-44 has grown from 51.8% of the population to 60.7% over the same time period.

### Residential Development Trends

The West Loop has seen a boom in the amount of new and ongoing development. The Area has added at least 1,974 new residential units since 2012. There are also more than 2,700 additional units planned or permitted. Many of the planned projects are large in size, with five different projects proposed to have more than 300 units.

### Office Development Trends

The growth of the office market during this timeframe has also seen significant growth, with the traditional Central Area office market expanding west of I-90. Nearly 650,000 SF of office space has been completed in the Study Area during the past four years, and 1,190,000 SF are currently under construction and another 942,000 SF are proposed.

### Hotel Development Trends

Along with the increase in office space, hotel development is also occurring in the West Loop Study Area. There are 604 more rooms currently under construction in five projects. The hotels under construction are varied in type, scale, and market.

### Retail Trends

Most of the recently completed and proposed large-scale residential and office developments in the Study Area feature ground-floor commercial uses. Examples include 1K Fulton, which includes more than 10,000 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor. In addition to these ground floor commercial uses, a number of new free-standing commercial buildings have been completed in the West Loop in recent years - most of these are food- and beverage-focused.

The growth in the above, diverse range of uses, is consistent with national trends where job centers are evolving into more mixed use environments. Contemporary workers and employers increasingly favor work environments with more collaborative settings and public landscapes that emphasize connectivity, walkability, and a dense mix of uses. In its landmark 2013 study, "The Rise of Innovation Districts: A New Geography of Innovation in America" the Brookings institution found that properly planned physical assets, which include publicly and privately owned buildings, open spaces and streets, and new infrastructure can stimulate new and higher level of connectivity, collaboration and innovation. Mixed use environments that include residential neighborhood-serving retail and restaurants, research and office

buildings can create opportunities for residents and workers to remain in the area off-hours and feel more invested in their community.

Source: 2000/2010 data from U.S. Census Bureau. Where Census Data not available estimates are from Esri Business Analyst



\*Proposed, Planned or Under Construction as of January 1, 2017

West Loop Design Guidelines  
**Development Trends**

Map Key

- Study Area Boundary
- Proposed, Planned or Under Construction\*



\*Proposed, Planned or Under Construction as of January 1, 2017

West Loop Design Guidelines  
**Proposed Developments By Use**

Map Key

- Study Area Boundary
- CTA Pink Line
- Office
- CTA Blue Line
- Residential
- Retail / Entertainment
- CTA Green Line
- Hotel

# RETAIL AREAS

Currently, the West Loop enjoys a strong retail presence throughout the neighborhood. Generally, retail is focused along east/west corridors in the neighborhood while the north/south corridors have a neighborhood character. The strongest retail areas occur on W. Randolph Street, Halsted Street, W. Washington Street and W. Madison Street. Existing retail corridors and areas where clusters of retail exist should be strengthened and enhanced through design and complementary ground floor uses.

Given the constantly changing retail market, proposed retail uses should be carefully considered. If a retail use is not planned for, active ground floor uses that contribute positively to the public realm should be considered.

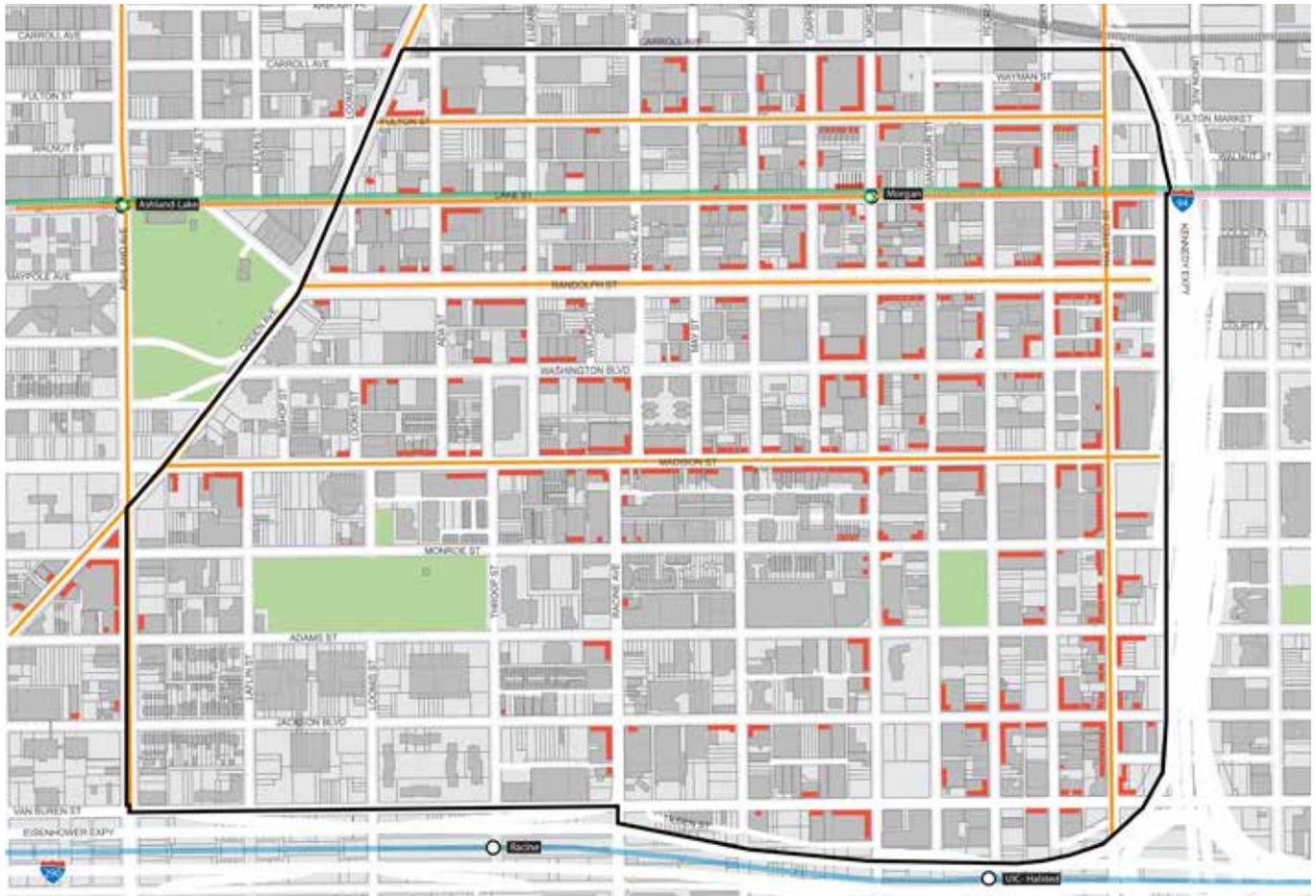
In addition, the Chicago Streets for Cycling plan should be considered when planning for retail uses. Retail areas could be focused on future "Spoke Routes" and "Crosstown Bike Routes" when a market analysis shows that retail would be successful at the site of the proposed development.



Randolph Street retail area.



Madison Street retail area.



**West Loop Design Guidelines**  
**Retail Areas**

Map Key

-  Study Area Boundary
-  Existing Commercial Storefront
-  Prominent Retail Corridor

# URBAN DESIGN BEST PRACTICES

## Principles

The following principles have been developed after an analysis of national and international urban design best practices and attempt to address specific community concerns within the West Loop through design. These key themes, which have been previously outlined include: loss of the existing character and scale of the West Loop, density and height of new buildings, solar access, lack of open space and monotony in the design of new developments.

### Building Design

- Encourage taller, thinner buildings with substantial setbacks
- Orient longest building façades and/or concentrate height along wider streets

### Base Design

- Building bases should be mindful of existing context, particularly at infill sites
- Provide seamless or gradual transition in bulk and scale near areas with lower-scale and character buildings - including those in the Landmark Districts
- Reinforce desirable urban features found within the surrounding area such as siting patterns, massing arrangements and streetscape characteristics

### Commercial Uses

- Buildings for commercial uses that require large floor plates should respect the mass, scale and architectural character of adjacent buildings.



Alternative approaches to handle building massing with similar FAR and gross building square footage.



### Urban Design Strategies In-Practice

- 1 Residential designed in a thin tower that is set back from the street to allow for more light, air and views.
- 2 Larger residential units line the street frontage to disguise the parking podium.
- 3 Mix of uses on site encourages activity throughout the day. Smaller office corner building provides a height transition to the surrounding buildings.
- 4 Compressing the building's gross floor area into taller structures allows for publicly accessible open space on site. This space could be used for outdoor cafes, or as a leisure space for office and residential units.
- 5 Parking garage is accessed from an alley and is built away from the primary street frontage.

# URBAN DESIGN BEST PRACTICES

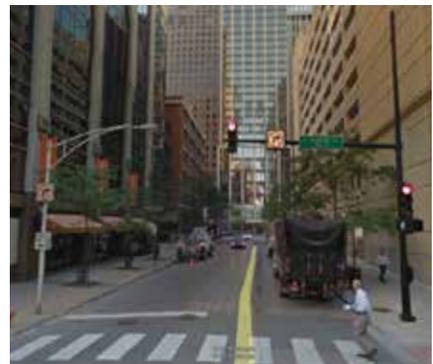
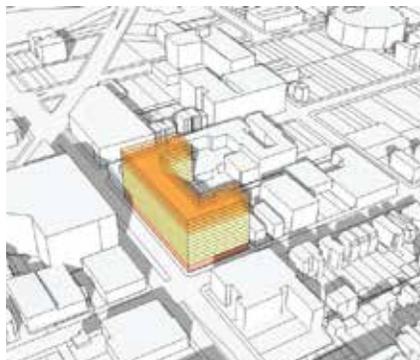
## Building Massing Scenarios

The building massing scenarios above illustrate three different ways to approach site development. Each scenario is based on the same site area as well as the same zoning designation and floor area ratio.

By adjusting the building massing, height and setbacks three completely different scenarios can be achieved for the same site with similar square footages. As each scenario progresses a different urban design principle is applied.

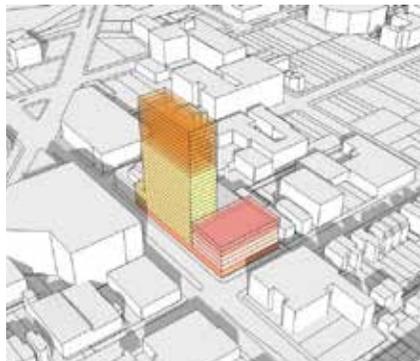
### Scenario 1

In Scenario 1, a large building mass is utilized which creates a canyon like effect at the street level. In addition, the development lacks publicly accessible open space.



### Scenario 2

In Scenario 2, a smaller building mass is utilized at the corner to allow more solar access for the public realm. However, due to the building massing a wider tower is located along the street which is less pedestrian friendly. In addition, the development lacks publicly accessible open space.



### Scenario 3

In Scenario 3, the building is setback at the corner which allows for the inclusion of a publicly accessible open space such as a plaza or a park. Furthermore in Scenario 3, a small liner building is placed in front of the tall building to reduce the scale of the building. This approach also helps the building better relate to the existing streetwall and create a more human scale in the public realm.





# DESIGN GUIDELINES



# 1.0 GENERAL STRATEGIES

## Introduction



Guidelines that fall within the General Strategies section of this document include overarching principles for high-quality development. The General Strategies address topics such as: design excellence, preservation and enhancement of streetwalls, building base design, parking podium design, and guidelines for materials and architectural components.

### **1.1 Design Excellence Principles**

Design excellence was a high priority for stakeholders involved in the planning process. The goal of the design excellence guidelines is to encourage high quality and innovative design of new buildings, public open space, and transportation systems within the West Loop.

These guidelines encourage context-sensitive design, diversity in architectural styles and materials, and conscious effort in the design process to create a healthy and comfortable public realm.

### **1.2 Preserve and Enhance Streetwalls**

Today the West Loop is a walkable urban district with strong streetwalls, and there is strong support among stakeholders that this character be preserved. The goal of these guidelines is to ensure that new development contributes positively to the existing streetwall, strengthening the West Loop's street character as new development occurs.

These guidelines encourage continuity of the streetwall, by recommending that buildings line the sidewalks, hold corners, and that building façades do not include blank walls.

### **1.3 Design of the Building Base**

Alongside streetwall guidelines, the goal of building base specific design guidelines is to encourage high-quality buildings that complement the street block-face. These guidelines promote context-sensitive design, with a focus on historic context, pedestrian scale and access, and active ground-level uses.

### **1.4 Location and Buffering of Parking Podiums**

To accommodate local demand for parking, decks are sometimes constructed on the lower levels of tall buildings - something commonly referred to as a parking podium. The goal of the parking podium design guidelines is to ensure there are active uses and quality façades buffering the parking areas from public view.

These guidelines address how parking podiums may be screened from public view through creative building design.

### **1.5 Architectural Components**

The components included in a well-designed building will contribute positively to an environment of design excellence within the West Loop. The goal of these guidelines is to encourage high-quality and urban-oriented architecture that activates the ground level with quality entrances, design character, and canopies. These guidelines address topics like entrance location and identity, building presence at important intersections, and balcony design.

### **1.6 Material Guidelines**

Similar to architectural components, the materials designed for use in buildings and public open space have a big impact on overall quality. These guidelines ensure new buildings are composed of high-quality materials and detailing that complement and enhance the character of the West Loop.

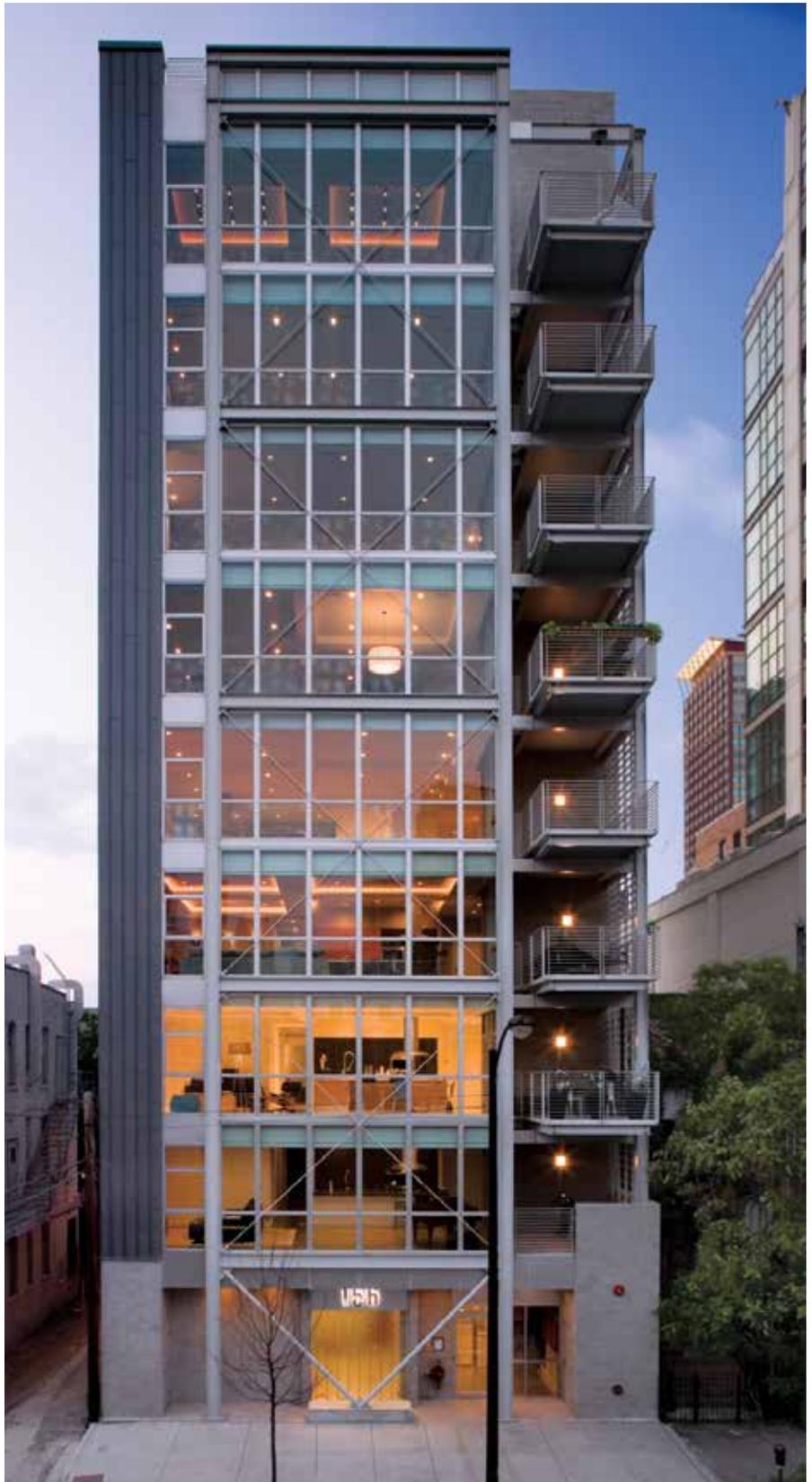


# 1.0 GENERAL STRATEGIES

## 1.1 Design Excellence

Encourage high quality and innovative design of new buildings within the West Loop without being prescriptive as to building style.

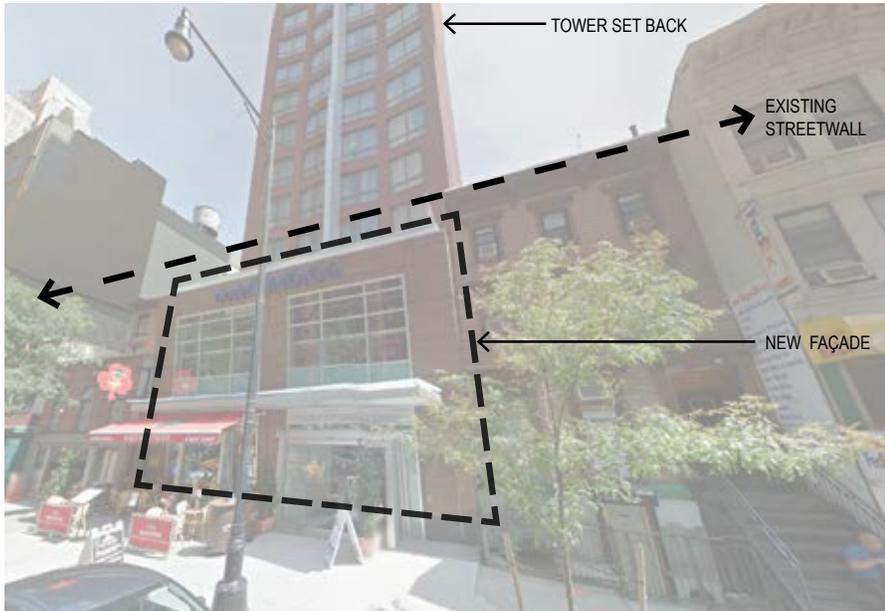
- 1.1.1 Promote architectural and urban design excellence by substantially adhering to the West Loop Design Guidelines.
- 1.1.2 New projects should be designed to be compatible with existing and planned context in the West Loop, including the Landmark Districts.
- 1.1.3 Encourage a diversity of design approaches in the West Loop that entail innovative, creative and sustainable architectural designs constructed with high quality materials and state of the art construction methods.
- 1.1.4 Strengthen and reinforce the desirable urban features within the West Loop such as block structure, streetwall continuity, building orientation, massing, design and streetscape characteristics.
- 1.1.5 Preserve and integrate adjacent and on-site historic buildings in a complementary manner into new developments and consider compatible materials, building proportions and scale to the surrounding district.
- 1.1.6 Encourage new development to respect the urban authenticity of existing historic buildings rather than encourage mimicry or replication of historic building designs and details in new buildings.
- 1.1.7 Consider the cumulative effects of new buildings on sunlight, comfort and quality of the public realm by maximizing solar access for streets, parks, and public open space.
- 1.1.8 Ensure access to high quality open space by creating a safe, comfortable, accessible, vibrant, and attractive public realm and pedestrian environment.
- 1.1.9 Meet or exceed the requirements of the Sustainable Development Policy.



# 1.0 GENERAL STRATEGIES

## 1.2 Preserve & Enhance Streetwalls

Today the West Loop is a walkable urban district with strong streetwalls. The following guidelines were developed to strengthen the district street character with new development.



1.2.1 Where a streetwall exists, its continuity must be reinforced with the new development. Gaps between buildings that interrupt the streetwall should be avoided. Design the base of a building to be compatible with and complement the existing context of neighboring building heights along the street block-face. New buildings should respect the scale and proportion of adjacent buildings, parks and open space.



1.2.2 Building orientation and massing should create active streetwalls lining the sidewalks.



1.2.3 Buildings should be aligned with neighboring buildings, abutting the sidewalk and close to one another.



1.2.4 Buildings on corner sites should be located close to both street frontages to help hold and give prominence to the corner.

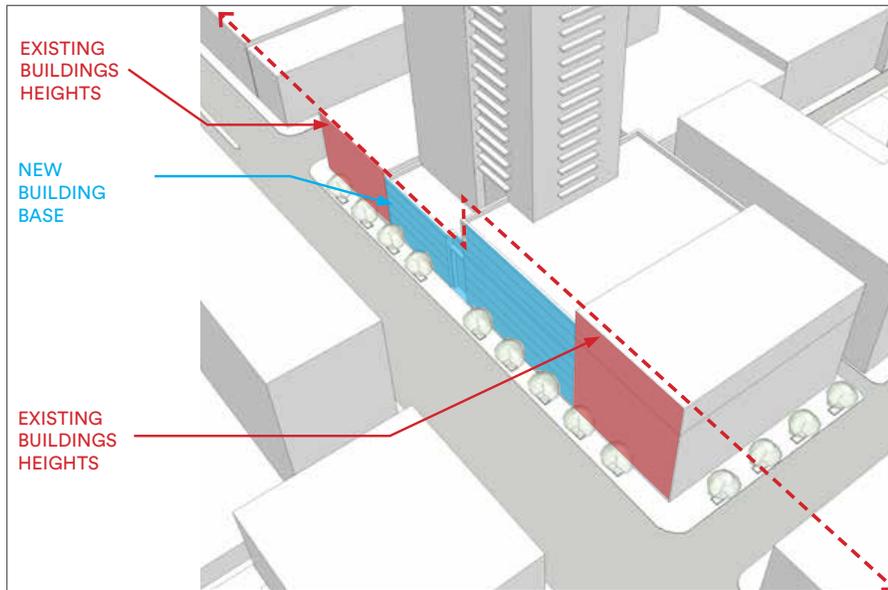


1.2.5 Blank walls are to be avoided and primary building façades must incorporate storefront window design or entryways that provide continuous visibility to the street.

# 1.0 GENERAL STRATEGIES

## 1.3 Design Of The Building Base

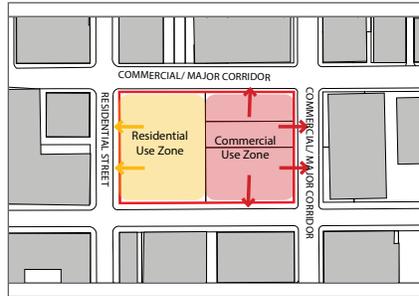
Encourage high quality buildings that are complementary with the street block-face.



1.3.1 With high density buildings, step the base to be compatible in height with adjacent lower scale buildings.



1.3.2 Line the base of the building with active, ground level uses to promote a safe and active public realm.



1.3.3 In a mixed use development, locate land uses and building entrances based on the local context, for example residential on narrow streets and office on commercial or wider streets.



1.3.4 Provide a first floor height consistent with the rest of the street block face and façade transparency in compliance with the Chicago Zoning Ordinance.



1.3.5 Articulate the base building with high quality materials and design elements that fit with the district context and enhance the pedestrian scale.

# 1.0 GENERAL STRATEGIES

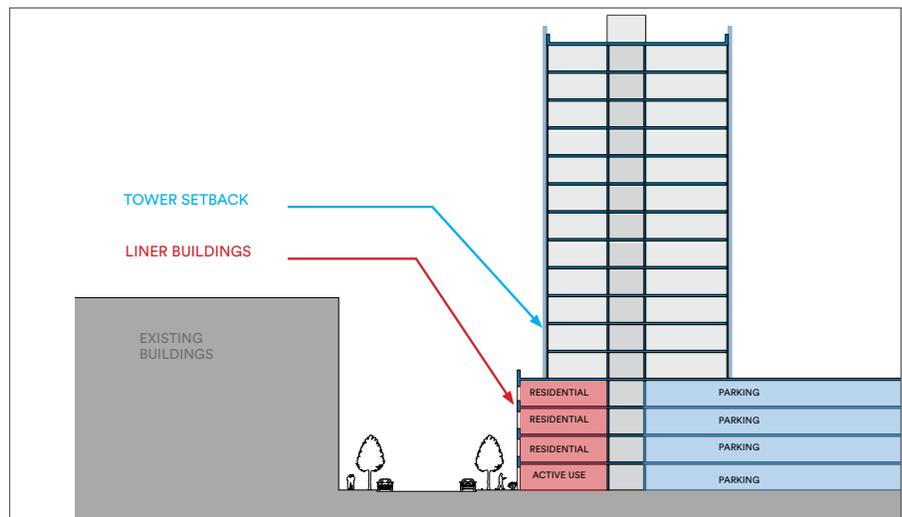
## 1.4 Location & Buffering Of Parking Podiums

If parking is located at the base of the building (podium), then ensure there are active uses and quality façades buffering the parking areas from public view.

1.4.1 Consider low scale liner buildings along lower scale streets, for example townhouses that buffer and screen a parking deck from a residential street.



1.4.2 Locate active building program elements along the street frontages to screen the parking podium.



1.4.3 When feasible, it is strongly encouraged to locate some or all parking underground.



# 1.0 GENERAL STRATEGIES

## 1.5 Architectural Components

Encourage high quality and urban oriented architecture that activates the ground level with quality entrances, design character and canopies.

- 1.5.1 Building entrances should be easily identifiable from the street and special architectural treatments that highlight the entry location are encouraged.



- 1.5.2 Where applicable, existing West Loop character elements should be maintained and incorporated into new development.



- 1.5.3 Buildings located at major intersections should reinforce the architectural definition of the corners of the block by building to the corner. Strategies for strengthening the corner can include adding an architectural feature, special material, or locating the entry at the corner.



- 1.5.4 Balconies located on primary building façades should be inset and integrated into the façade design.

# 1.0 GENERAL STRATEGIES

## 1.6 Material Guidelines

Ensure new buildings are composed of high quality materials and detailing that complement the West Loop.

1.6.1 All sides and areas of buildings that are visible to the public should be treated with materials, finishes and architectural details that are of high-quality and appropriate for the use on the primary street-facing façade(s).



1.6.2 Design excellence should be incorporated into the selection of high quality and innovative building materials and detailing.



1.6.3 Materials should be compatible with the existing buildings and with the district in general, regarding character, color and texture. New buildings and additions may employ alternative materials, including high quality glass, metal, concrete and wood materials that complement and maintain a design vocabulary and scale that is appropriate to street block face and district.



# 2.0 TALL BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Introduction



Stakeholders expressed strong interest in developing design guidelines that help to ensuring that all new development brings higher density and taller buildings to the West Loop is designed in a thoughtful manner that does not disrupt the existing character of the neighborhood. The Tall Building Design Guidelines address topics specific to tall buildings, including: building setbacks, height transitions, building orientation, preservation of solar access, inclusion of public open space and a high quality public realm.

### **2.1 Building Setbacks**

The goal of the building setback guidelines is to encourage human-scale design of new development. These guidelines address issues of streetwall preservation, sidewalk width, setbacks from property lines, and setback of towers from the building base.

### **2.2 Tall Building Design**

The goal of these guidelines is to encourage human-scale design, specifically for new tall buildings. These guidelines encourage design elements to help preserve solar access and avoid a “canyon-effect” on the street level by addressing separation between buildings.

### **2.3 Tower Design Impacts to the Public Realm**

The goal of these guidelines is to encourage positive interaction between pedestrians and new tall buildings. These guidelines encourage taller and thinner tower designs for that allow for greater solar access and open space at the street level.

### **2.4 Height Transitions**

The goal of these guidelines is to specifically address optimum transitions of building height within large scale developments. These guidelines encourage a diversity of building heights, and consideration for “stepping back” the height of buildings from the property line into the site.



## 2.0 TALL BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

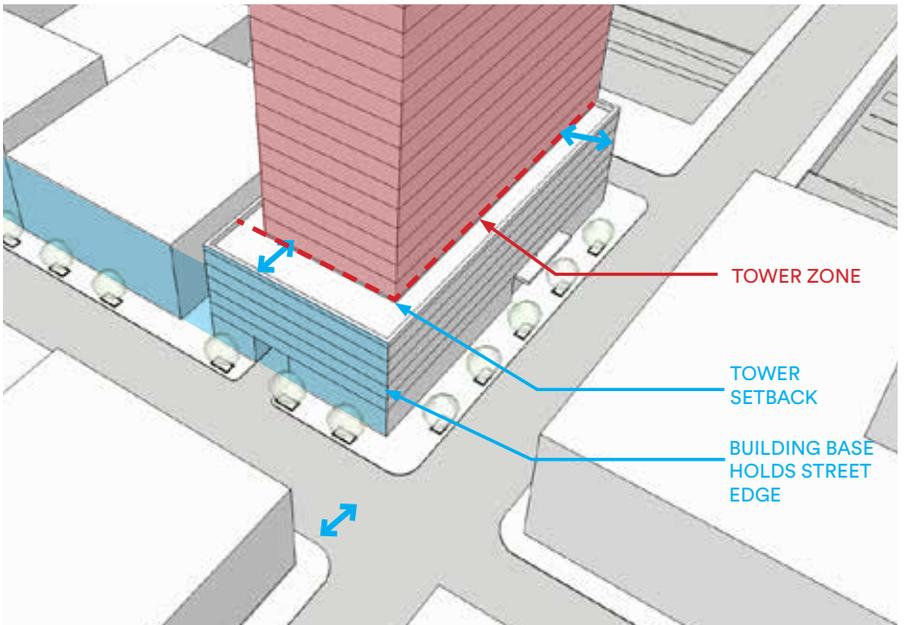
### 2.1 Building Setbacks

Encourage upper level setbacks on tall buildings to maintain the continuity of the existing streetwall and scale of the street.

- 2.1.1 Strengthen the streetwall by positioning the base of the building at the property line.



- 2.1.2 Set back the tower portion of the building away from the street. Where possible, provide an upper level set-back to respect the existing scale of the street.



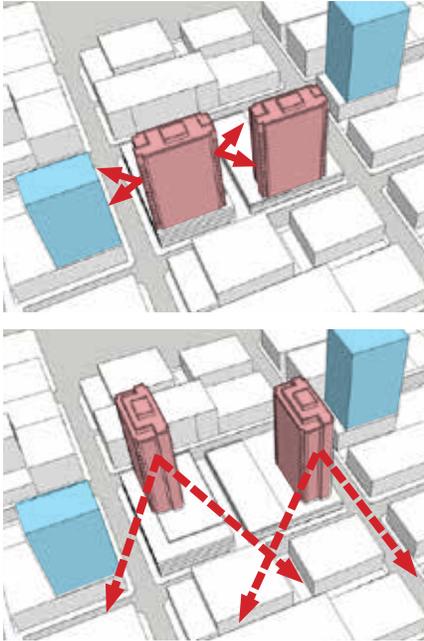
- 2.1.3 To improve the streetscape along strategic corridors, consider increasing the sidewalk width when there is an opportunity to modify over 60% of the block face.

# 2.0 TALL BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

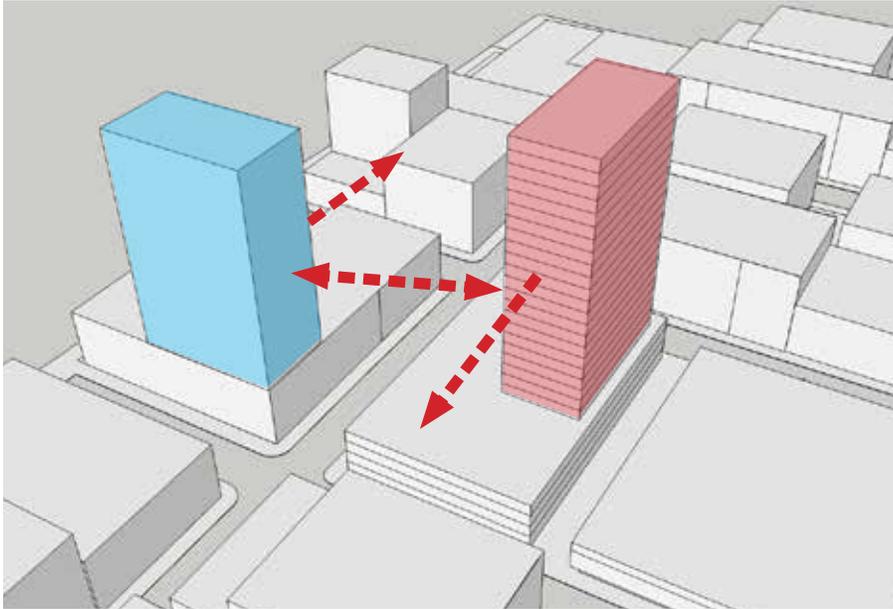
## 2.2 Tall Buildings

Vary the orientation of towers to avoid a canyon effect on the street level.

2.2.1 If there are multiple tall buildings on a single site, maximize the separation between the buildings to allow solar access.



2.2.2 A tall building proposed on a site adjacent to another existing tall building should use setbacks and other location strategies to achieve a maximum distance between the buildings.



## 2.0 TALL BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 2.3 Tower Design Impacts To The Public Realm

Encourage taller and thinner tower designs for residential buildings to allow for greater solar access and open space at street level.



**2.3.1** Where appropriate, design residential uses into a thinner and taller tower form that is set back to allow for more solar access within the public realm.



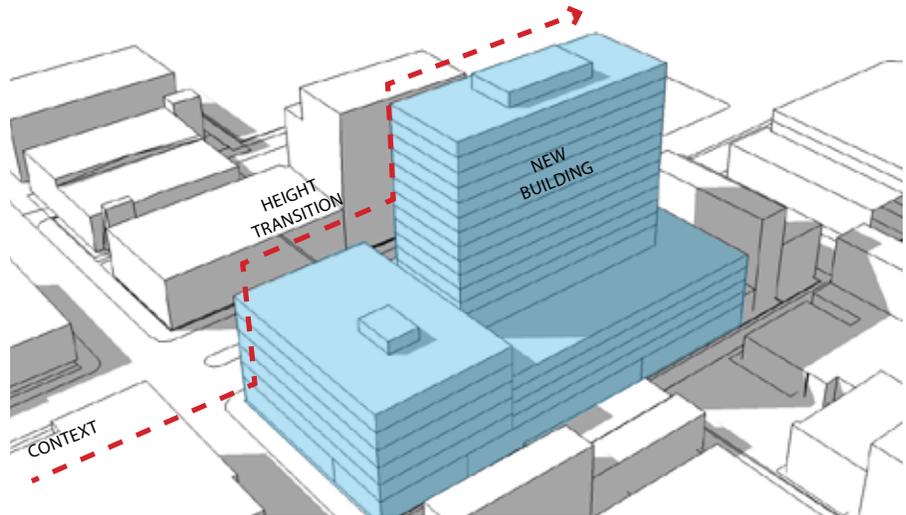
**2.3.2** For larger sites, design building program into thinner structures to allow for publicly accessible open space on site. This space could be used for outdoor cafes, or for leisure space for building occupants and the general public.

## 2.0 TALL BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 2.4 Height Transitions

Avoid abrupt changes in height, especially adjacent to historic buildings.

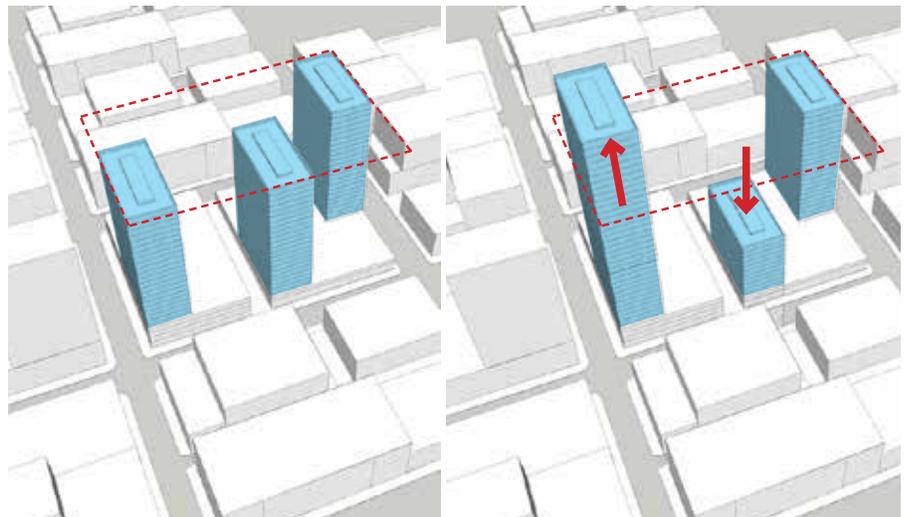
2.4.1 Tall buildings and their podiums should use a stepped approach to building design, in order to transition between surrounding lower scale buildings and high density buildings on the same block face.



2.4.2 Design new developments to benefit all perimeter streets by coordinating with the character of the individual streets.



2.4.3 When multiple towers are located on a single site or block, a diversity of heights related to the context should be used.



# 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## Introduction



This section addresses design strategies for important site and corridor-specific areas of the West Loop, including: Halsted and Van Buren, Ogden Avenue, Washington Street, Randolph Street, and Lake Street. This section also outlines recommendations for development within other existing retail areas and for development occurring adjacent to historic districts, parks and open space.

### 3.1 Halsted Street and Van Buren Street

Halsted Street and Van Buren Street are important West Loop arterials that require unique design and development treatment. The goal of these guidelines is to preserve these corridors as important thoroughfares, make them as comfortable as possible for pedestrians, highlight the corridors as gateways to the West Loop, and to mitigate the impacts of tall buildings along the corridors by orienting towers towards the expressway.

### 3.2 Ogden Avenue

The goal of these guidelines is to transform Ogden Avenue from an automobile-oriented street into a pedestrian-oriented street. The guidelines also seek to boost Ogden Avenue as an attractive western gateway to the West Loop.

### 3.3 Washington Street

Washington Street is an important residential and retail corridor within the West Loop. The goal of these guidelines is to encourage a pedestrian-oriented environment that complements the existing development patterns along the corridor. The guidelines address sections of the corridor east and west of Carpenter Street with different guidelines for development and ground-level use.

### 3.4 Randolph Street

Randolph Street is the important and established restaurant and retail corridor of the West Loop. The goal of these guidelines is to support the street as a commercial and retail corridor. Guidelines address working with the existing Fulton Market District guidelines, and organizing access to businesses along the corridor. The community engagement process revealed a desire to make Randolph Street safer and to use its large right-of-way to explore opportunities for public open space. This section includes conceptual renderings depicting how these goals may be achieved.

### 3.5 Lake Street

Lake Street is an important east-west thoroughfare that shares its right of way with a trestle supporting the elevated CTA Green and Pink Lines. The goal of these guidelines is to address the unique challenges presented by the shared transportation route. Guidelines include recommendations for upper-level setbacks, sound-absorbent materials, and strategic consolidation of building access to help avoid excess curb cuts along the busy thoroughfare.

### 3.6 Madison Street

Throughout the community input process, a desire was expressed to preserve the existing “Main Street” character of Madison Street as well as the possibility of removing the raised median planters to enhance pedestrian safety. This section includes an artist’s depiction of the potential for Madison Street to be transformed into a “Complete Street” safely accommodating all modes of transportation including pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles.

### 3.7 Areas Adjacent to Historic Districts

West Loop historic districts are critical components of the neighborhood’s unique character. The goal of these guidelines is to help ensure urban form adjacent to historic districts is complementary and context-sensitive. Guidelines include recommendations for preserving the streetwall, ensuring appropriate scale, and preserving views of important area landmarks.

### 3.8 Areas Adjacent to Parks & Open Spaces

The West Loop is also home to a number of important and well-designed public open spaces. The goal of these guidelines is to help ensure adjacent urban form that is compatible with parks and open space. These guidelines include recommendations for how to frame and enhance open space with appropriate building massing and ground floor uses.

### 3.9 Retail Areas

Clusters of interesting shops, restaurants, and services are a key component supporting the current and ongoing popularity of the West Loop. These guidelines lay the groundwork for welcoming new retail uses and supporting retail clusters that already existing within the West Loop. The guidelines provide guidance on design issues such as façade transparency, first floor height, first floor use, and entrance orientation to help these area continue to thrive as walkable shopping districts.

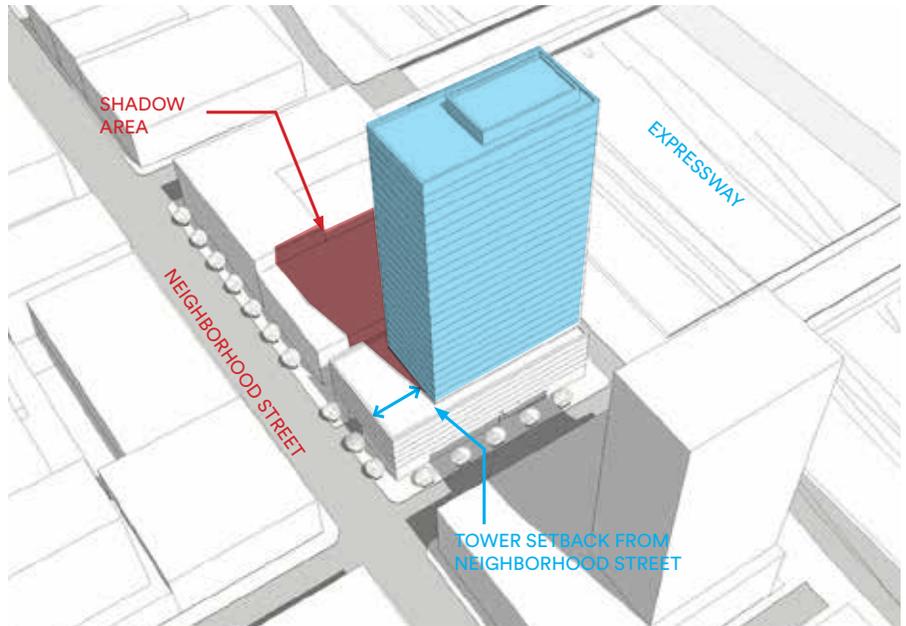


# 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

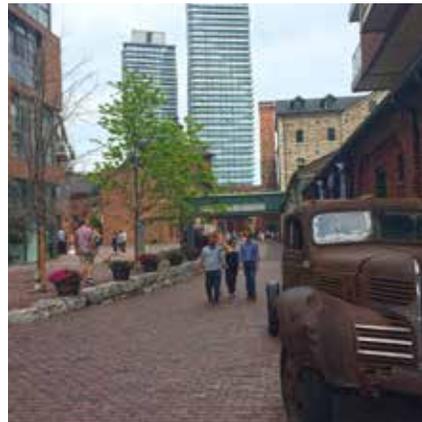
## 3.1 Halsted And Van Buren Street

Mitigate the impacts on the street by orienting tall buildings towards the expressway.

3.1.1 Provide significant upper level set-back along these arterial streets to position the tower closer to expressway frontage, in order to maximize the daylight reaching the pedestrian area of the street and maintain the scale of the streetwall with the existing context.



3.1.2 Reduce and combine curb cuts for large scale developments on these arterial corridors to help improve the public realm experience and reduce vehicular conflicts with pedestrians.



3.1.3 Tall buildings and large scale developments in these corridors should reinforce the gateways and entrances to the West Loop by incorporating architectural features (such as corner articulation, entrances, landscape and/or streetscape elements) at major intersections.



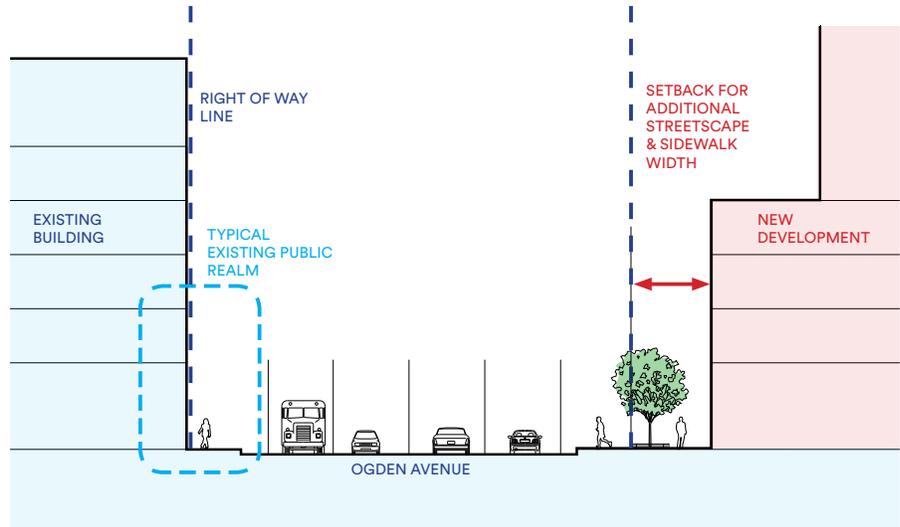
3.1.4 Due to the relatively narrow sidewalk conditions along these high traffic corridors, large developments should incorporate strategic setbacks to provide space for additional streetscape and trees along the public realm.

# 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## 3.2 Ogden Avenue

Transform Ogden from an automobile oriented street into a walkable city street to serve as a gateway into the West Loop.

3.2.1 Large scale triangular parcels along Ogden provide an opportunity to create an new urban streetwall, with a building base (that can include parking) and would help to establish a more pedestrian scale to the streetscape.



3.2.2 Orient retail and other commercial uses towards Ogden Avenue where there are substantial vehicular traffic counts and greater visibility.



3.2.3 Tall buildings can create an opportunity for iconic buildings and gateway elements to help identify the western edge of the West Loop.



3.2.4 The parcel depth allows for tower setbacks that will reduce the impact of height on Ogden Avenue.



3.2.5 Tall buildings should be placed parallel to Ogden Avenue to reinforce the urban form of the street.

## 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

### 3.3 Washington Street

Encourage new residential development with non-commercial uses on the ground level to be more pedestrian oriented.

- 3.3.1 East of Carpenter Street: Support the existing urban streetscape with street trees and parkway and buildings at the property line.



- 3.3.2 West of Carpenter Street: Support a walkable neighborhood scale by establishing a setback for foundation planting with ornamental fencing except at entrance and retail locations.

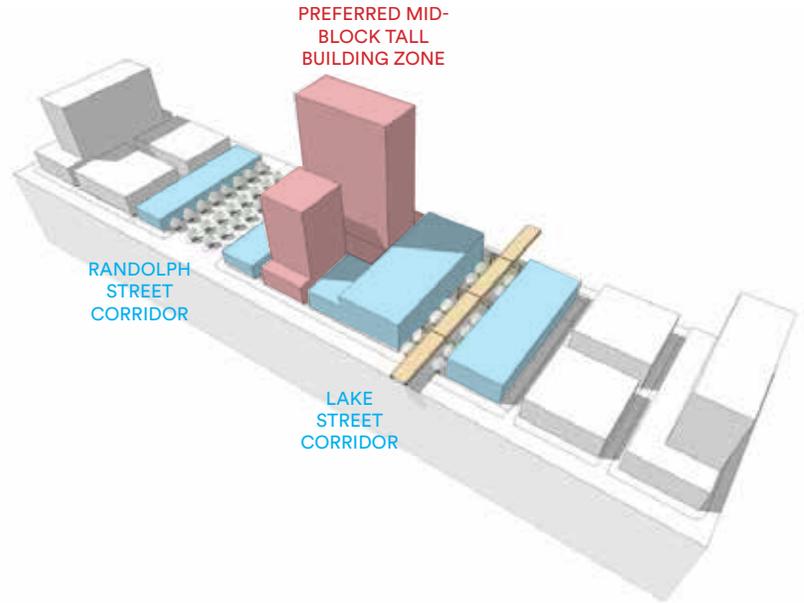


# SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## 3.4 Randolph Street

Support the street as a commercial and retail corridor.

3.4.1 Randolph Street should continue to be developed as a commercial and retail corridor and the existing retail and restaurant character should be preserved. Tall residential buildings located along Randolph Street should be set back towards the center of the block and not front directly on Randolph Street.



3.4.2 Parking and service access should not be accessed from the Randolph Street frontage, only from alleys and/or north or south side street locations.



## 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

### 3.4 Randolph Street Vision Alternative 1



Based on feedback from community stakeholder and sister agencies, a long-term improvement vision for Randolph Street is illustrated above along with an alternative vision on page 56. Both of these visions will require further study, engineering, and funding for implementation. The vision includes a total reconfiguration of the existing roadway cross section to improve both safety and aesthetics. In the vision, frontage lanes are eliminated, and thereby pedestrian space is increased and pedestrian safety is improved throughout the busy corridor. Other improvements envisioned, include:

- Corner bumpouts to improve pedestrian safety at intersections;
- A wide, linear, landscape parkway;
- Dedicated seating areas integrated within the new landscape areas;
- Widened sidewalks including increased space for outdoor cafes and festivals; and,
- More efficient on-street parking.
- New landscape areas to slow down stormwater run-off and reduce stormwater entering the City's combined sewer system.



1 Corner bumpouts



2 Enlarged landscape parkway with stormwater infiltration and mitigation features



3 Dedicated seating areas



4 Integrated seating and landscape spaces



5 Outdoor cafes for adjacent retail spaces



6 Widened sidewalks for pedestrian promenade



7 Protected bike lanes



8 Consolidated loading, valet and ride share pickup locations.



9 Public art installations

## 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

### 3.4 Randolph Street Vision Alternative 2



Based on feedback from community stakeholder and sister agencies, a long-term improvement vision alternative for Randolph Street is illustrated above. Similar to Alternative 1, the vision includes a total reconfiguration of the existing roadway cross section to improve safety, functionality, and aesthetics. In the Alternative 2 vision, the roadway features one-way driving lanes and separated bike lanes. The pedestrian space is increased to allow for a large pedestrian park and promenade on the south side of the street with large landscape areas, integrated seating, and widened sidewalk areas. These improvements increase pedestrian comfort, usability, and safety. Other improvements envisioned, include:

- Corner bumpouts to improve pedestrian safety at intersections;
- A wide, linear, landscape parkway on the north side of the street;
- Dedicated seating areas integrated within the new landscape areas;
- Widened sidewalks including increased space for outdoor cafes and festivals; and,
- More efficient on-street parking.
- New landscape areas to slow down stormwater run-off and reduce stormwater entering the City's combined sewer system.



1 Corner bumpouts



2 Enlarged landscape parkway with stormwater infiltration and mitigation features



3 Dedicated seating areas



4 Integrated seating and landscape spaces



5 Outdoor cafes for adjacent retail spaces



6 Widened sidewalks for pedestrian promenade



7 Protected bike lanes



8 Consolidated loading, valet and ride share pickup locations.



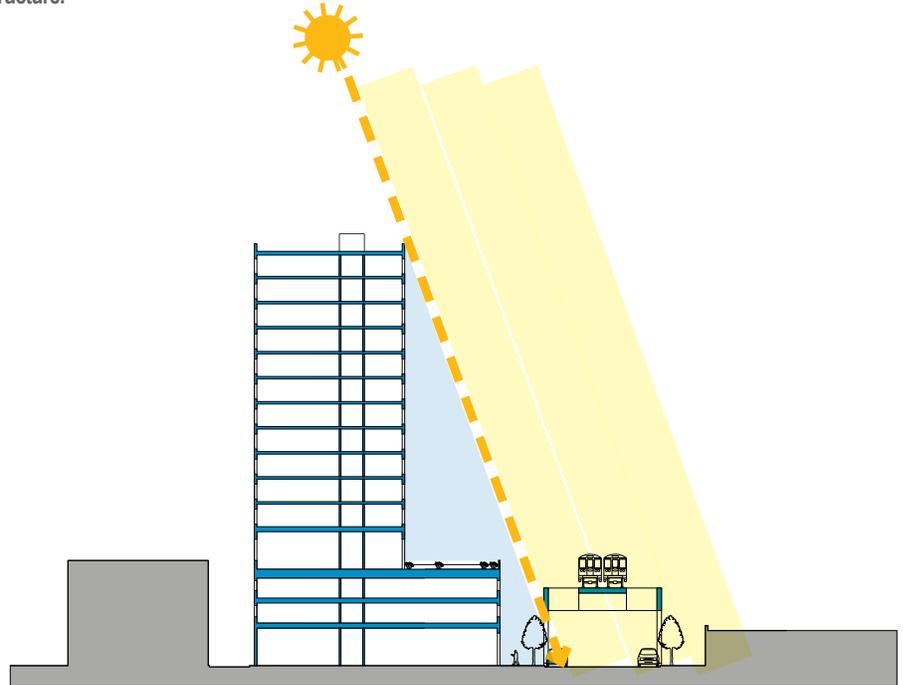
9 Public art installations

# 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## 3.5 Lake Street

Address the unique conditions of the elevated CTA structure.

3.5.1 An upper level setback is encouraged along Lake Street to maintain daylight at the ground level. This is especially true along the south side of the street where street daylight will be impacted by both building shadows and the "L". The setback can also be utilized to provide a sound buffer for buildings adjacent to the "L".



3.5.2 Consider sound absorbent materials along Lake Street to help with mitigating the sound reverberating from the "L".



3.5.3 Residential entrances, parking entrances, and drop-off zones should be located along alleys and north-south side streets where possible and not along Lake Street. Retail and commercial entrances should be located along the Lake Street frontage.



3.5.4 Enhanced ground floor building façade lighting is encouraged along Lake Street.

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# 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## 3.6 Madison Street Vision



### Phase 1

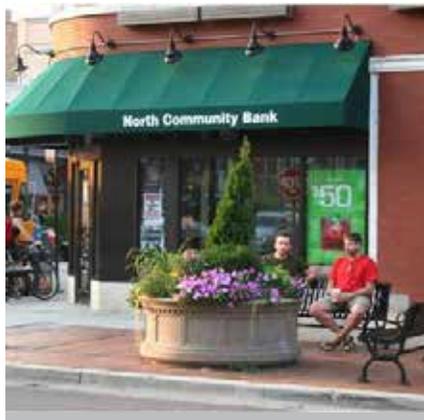
Based on feedback from community stakeholder and sister agencies, a long-term improvement vision for Madison Street is illustrated above. The vision is considered in two phases. The first, near-term phase includes removal of the existing landscape medians. In their place, pedestrian refuge islands and corner bump-outs will be implemented to improve pedestrian safety. The refuge islands and bumpouts will also slow motor vehicle traffic speeds to better create a sense of place, and that bumpouts increase sidewalk space for other uses such as landscaping, bike racks, seating, etc. A center turn lane will be striped to improve traffic efficiency.



1 Remove raised mid-street planters and replace with strategic pedestrian refuge islands with landscape improvements where feasible.



2 Corner and mid-block bumpouts, with landscape area that could be designed to reduce, slow down, and filter stormwater runoff.



3 Sidewalk seating and landscape planters



4 Lighting and community identity banners

**Phase 2**

Improvements to streetscape elements such as landscape planters, seating, lighting, and upgraded hardscape materials will be implemented as part of a second phase of roadway improvements. This phase of improvement will complement changes made to the roadway geometry as part of Phase 1, and will support Madison Street's identity as an important West Loop commercial corridor.

# 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## 3.7 Areas Adjacent To Historic Districts

Create compatible urban form adjacent to historic districts.



3.7.1 Specific attention should be given to preserving the scale of the existing streetwall.



3.7.3 The scale of architectural design elements and details in the surrounding historic context should be considered.



3.7.2 A transition in the scale of new construction is necessary to appropriately complement the lower scale of existing historic structures. New developments being proposed adjacent to historic districts should provide a transition in scale to help preserve the unique urban character of the district.



3.7.4 New development massing and building form should be designed to frame and enhance street-level views of landmark buildings.



3.7.5 Streetscape and public way improvements in areas adjacent to historic districts should continue the treatments and street configurations found within historic districts, in order to create a seamless pedestrian experience.

## 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

### 3.8 Areas Adjacent To Parks & Open Spaces

Create compatible urban form adjacent to parks and open space.

- 3.8.1 Create opportunities for buildings to frame and enhance open space and streetscapes by defining the edge of the public realm (to include sidewalks, open space, plazas, etc).



- 3.8.2 Buildings proposed for the sites adjacent to a park space should provide a shadow study, and illustrate how the development will mitigate any impacts to the park space.

EXAMPLE PARK SHADOW STUDY - OAK PARK (HPA ARCHITECTS)



- 3.8.3 Retail and other active ground floor uses are desirable surrounding the park, to enhance the pedestrian experience and increase safety.



# 3.0 SITE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## 3.9 Retail Areas

Support existing retail locations in the West Loop to thrive as walkable shopping districts.

3.9.1 First floor façades in identified retail areas should maintain a significant percentage of the ground floor area as retail storefront. In non-retail areas, active ground floor uses are encouraged.



3.9.2 Within retail areas provide appropriate retail first floor heights.



3.9.3 Façades within retail areas should have a high percentage of clear un-tinted glazing along the primary street frontages (refer to Zoning Ordinance criteria).



3.9.4 Multiple entries along a street block-face are encouraged to enhance the activity of the street.

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# 4.0 PUBLIC REALM GUIDELINES

## Introduction



This section addresses design strategies for encouraging active and successful public space within the West Loop. It includes guidelines for pedestrian safety, placemaking, streetscape design, signage and identity design, and sustainable design.

### 4.1 Placemaking

Placemaking is the formal or informal integration of improving public space to help improve sense of place. The goal of these guidelines is to help ensure that thoughtful placemaking is prioritized in the West Loop. The guidelines highlight opportunities for vacant lot improvement as well as city-sponsored opportunities that are aimed at placemaking (like Make Way for People) that help community members implement “people spots” – temporary places for art, programs, or just hanging out - in their own neighborhoods.

### 4.2 Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety

Pedestrian Safety is fundamental to creating a walkable and enjoyable environment. The goal of these guidelines is to ensure best practices for pedestrian safety are implemented as the West Loop continues to grow and thrive. The guidelines encourage ADA-compliant accessibility, and support policy initiatives and intent of the City of Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT)’s Complete Streets Design Guidelines program.

### 4.3 Sustainable Design

Design that has a low impact on the environment is an important component of design excellence. These guidelines outline recommendations for building and site design that minimizes environmental impact.

### 4.4 Streetscape

The goal of these guidelines is to encourage high quality design and materials within the public right of way. To achieve this goal, guidelines following city standards and recommend sharing costs of streetscape implementation with private developers.

### 4.5 Signage & Identity

Well-designed signage and public art can contribute positively to an area’s sense of place. The goal of these guidelines is to encourage the use of signage, art, and wayfinding in the West Loop to positive effect.



## 4.0 PUBLIC REALM GUIDELINES

### 4.1 Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety



- 4.1.1 When reconstructing street corners to meet CDOT and ADA accessibility standards, provide corner bumpouts to reduce the crossing distance at intersections and enhance public safety.

### 4.2 Placemaking



- 4.2.1 Leverage CDOT's Make Way for People program to develop underutilized public open spaces. Potential applications include People Spots, People Streets, People Plazas and People Alleys.



- 4.2.2 Where feasible, coordinate with property owners of vacant lots to activate them with temporary improvements such as community gardens, public art installations, landscaping or other improvements to enhance the pedestrian experience.

## 4.0 PUBLIC REALM GUIDELINES

### 4.3 Streetscape



**4.3.1** Create a safe and inviting public realm including high quality paving materials, lighting, plantings, and sidewalk furnishings.



**4.3.2** When streetscape improvements are planned for the public right of way immediately adjacent to a proposed project, the property owner is responsible for paying all necessary construction costs and or constructing the necessary improvements as well as coordinating with all authorities having jurisdiction.



**4.3.3** Follow applicable City of Chicago Design Standards (CDOT Streetscape Design Standards, Guide to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance, CDOT Street and Site Plan Design Standards and City of Chicago Sidewalk Café Requirements).

### 4.4 Sustainable Design



**4.4.1** Incorporate sustainable design features in the public realm by utilizing CDOT's Sustainable Urban Infrastructure Guidelines where feasible.

### 4.5 Signage & Identity



**4.5.1** Express neighborhood character in streetscape design through: wayfinding and informational signage, public art opportunities, banners, and other strategies. Develop a unified approach and strategy through the various neighborhood organizations.

# 5.0 PARKING & SERVICE GUIDELINES

## Introduction



These guidelines seek to preserve existing and encourage new high-quality support infrastructure within the West Loop. This section includes recommendations for alley, service, and loading access, off-street parking, and bicycle amenities.

### **5.1 Alley, Service and Loading Access**

Chicago's alleys, service areas, and loading zones provide important infrastructure for access and necessary services. The goal of these guidelines is to ensure proper use of existing service infrastructure, and recommend for the implementation of low impact and site-appropriate service infrastructure as site redevelopment occurs.

### **5.2 Off-Street Parking**

Convenient and accessible parking is a critical support amenity for the retail, restaurant, and residential uses in the West Loop. The goal of these guidelines is to accommodate necessary and accessible parking, without compromising the quality of the built environment. Guidelines cover issues like location of parking access to minimize access points and support retail use. They also cover recommendations for accommodating taxi services, car-sharing, and electric vehicle parking.

### **5.3 Bicycle Amenities**

As support of bike infrastructure grows in Chicago, cycling continues to grow as a popular choice for local transportation. The goal of these guidelines is to accommodate the needs of people bicycling as a part of existing and new development, including provision of high-comfort bike accommodations (such as protected bike lanes, raised bike lanes, etc.) where appropriate.



## 5.0 PARKING & SERVICE GUIDELINES

### 5.1 Alley, Service & Loading Access

- 5.1.1 Locate loading docks off the public alley to minimize pedestrian conflicts where feasible. Where public alley access is not feasible, locate loading dock access on the adjoining side street.



- 5.1.2 Setback loading docks off the public way so that delivery trucks, moving vans, waste haulers and other trucks minimize curbside conflicts within the public way. In addition, large developments are encouraged to incorporate an internal vehicular drop-off area.

- 5.1.3 If the proposed development spans an entire block and the block is larger than the standard City of Chicago block, consider incorporating an internal alley to handle service and loading.

- 5.1.4 Existing on-street loading zones are to be re-evaluated as part of the planned development process to determine their overall use and effectiveness.

- 5.1.5 Where feasible, consider green alley improvements in accordance with the Chicago Green Alley Handbook.



# 5.0 PARKING & SERVICE GUIDELINES

## 5.2 Off-Street Parking



5.2.1 Locate access to structured parking facilities off the public alley when feasible to minimize pedestrian conflicts. Where public alley access is not feasible, locate garage access on the adjoining side street.

5.2.3 Provide audio/visual pedestrian warning systems on the exit drive of parking facilities in heavily traveled pedestrian areas. Volume levels for the audible feature should not adversely impact adjoining properties.

5.2.4 In retail areas, provide retail parking on the 1st floor behind the retail or underground or above the 1st floor to serve the parking requirements.

5.2.5 Incorporate parking for a car-sharing service into structured parking facilities.

5.2.6 Incorporate electric-vehicle car-charging stations into parking structures.



5.2.2 Parking structure façade design on all street frontages must comply with current City of Chicago zoning ordinance.

5.2.7 Provide ride share and taxi loading areas within developments in order to minimize curbside conflicts and congestion.



5.2.8 For larger sites, consider off-street motor courts.



## 5.3 Bicycle Amenities

5.3.1 Provide secured bicycle storage and parking within buildings. Residential buildings are strongly encouraged to provide bicycle parking and storage at a 1:1 ratio.

5.3.2 Offer shower and changing facilities on-site or access to nearby facilities at a discount for commercial office users.

5.3.3 Install an on-site bicycle fix-it station enabling bike repairs and maintenance.

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West Loop Community Organization  
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YMCA of Metro Chicago

# RESOURCES

[Near West Side Plan](#)

[Central Area Action Plan](#)

[Fulton Market Innovation District](#)

[Fulton-Randolph Market District Guidelines](#)

[City of Chicago Zoning Ordinance](#)

[City of Chicago Development Manual for Plan Commission Projects](#)

[Guide to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance](#)

[City of Chicago Sustainable Development Policy Matrix](#)

[Complete Streets Chicago Design Guidelines](#)

[City of Chicago Make Way For People Campaign](#)

[Sustainable Urban Infrastructure Guidelines](#)

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