



## CHAPTER 5

# District Recommendations

**Figure 5.1**  
Central Area Districts

1. The Expanded Loop
2. The Near North
3. The South Loop and the Near South Side

The expanded Loop is downtown Chicago from the lake on the east to the Kennedy Expressway on the west, and from Congress Parkway on the south to the main branch of the Chicago River on the north. It includes the Central Loop, where most office growth will continue to cluster, the West Loop which will expand the office core west to the Kennedy Expressway, and the East Loop where older buildings house a mix of uses.

The Near North extends from the river on the south to Division Street on the north, and from the lake on the east to Halsted on the west.

The South Loop extends from Congress Parkway in the north to Roosevelt Road, and the Near South Side extends from this point to the Stevenson Expressway on the south. Both are bounded on the east by the lake and Halsted Street on the west.



# District Recommendations

The following section of the plan shows how its guiding themes will shape development in the three major geographic districts:

- **THE EXPANDED LOOP**
- **THE NEAR NORTH**
- **THE SOUTH LOOP AND THE NEAR SOUTH SIDE**

These Districts are comprised of corridors, neighborhoods and special places and industrial areas, each with their own unique characteristics. Some of these districts will experience more significant change than others in the coming years. These may involve shifts in land use, changes in the overall density of development or changes in character. Other districts may see changes in infrastructure, transit and open spaces, while their essential role and character within the Central Area will remain unchanged. The development concept for the Central Area is based on continued office growth in the Central Loop and expansion of the high-density office district west into the West Loop. Higher density, mixed use development will also be directed to the Central Area's major corridors. This concept will be reflected in a new strategy for zoning in the Central Area.

Regardless of the diversity of the Central Area's districts and the development that will occur within them, all should reflect the following commitments.

## **BUILD GREAT PLACES**

Great places are created when the public and private realm work together. Natural features, streets, parks and buildings can be organized and designed to respect and recognize each other. Diversity and cohesion can achieve balance. Efficiency and bustle can co-exist. The scale and density of new development will require special attention to the effect on the neighborhood, district and entire Central Area. The most significant buildings must be protected, the distinctive identity of special areas maintained, and the most spectacular views conserved.

## **CREATE SUCCESSFUL OPEN SPACES**

Chicago's Central Area open space system is remarkable. A continued commitment to the Lakefront, the Chicago River Corridor and the system of parks and plazas will maintain this legacy. Many new open spaces will be created where new opportunities arise as new development occurs. Others will require creative approaches to streets, river edges or rail corridors. New open spaces must be visible, accessible and usable by all.

## **ENSURE A WALKABLE ENVIRONMENT THROUGHOUT**

The life of street is one of the Central Area's most remarkable features. Sidewalks also serve as a primary transit system, moving thousands of people around the Central Area on a daily basis. All streets in the Central Area should have usable, pedestrian friendly and attractive sidewalks.

## **MAINTAIN THE DIVERSITY OF THE CENTRAL AREA**

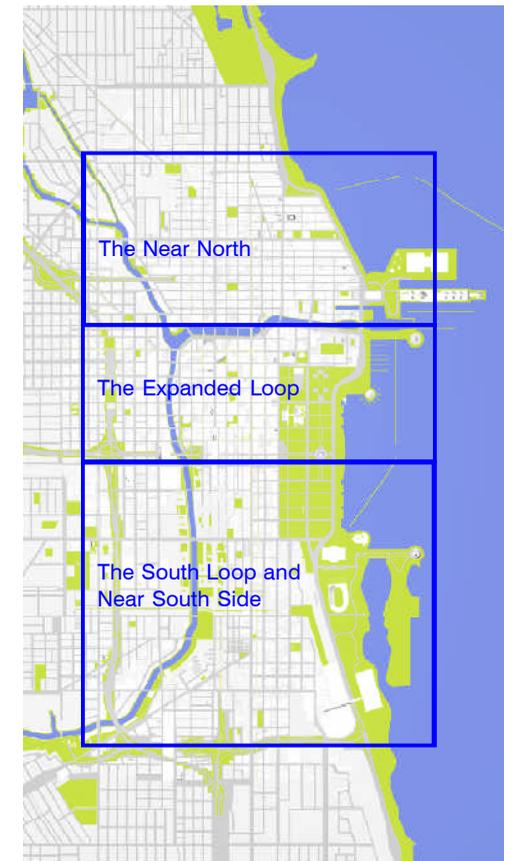
The economic diversity of Chicago's Central Area has been a source of its long-term success while other central cities have declined. With corporate headquarters and banking, finance, insurance, government, law, advertising and design sectors, employment has continued to grow. Many uses - other than high-density office - now make up the Central Area, with retail, cultural, educational and residential uses contributing to its bustle and excitement.

## **MAINTAIN A CRITICAL DENSITY**

The density of the Central Area is key to its success. Even in an age when everybody is connected electronically, there is no substitute for proximity in maintaining and building a diverse, competitive central business district. Functionally, this level of economic activity is most efficiently accessed and served when it is compact. The density of the Central Area must be maintained.

## **EMPHASIZE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

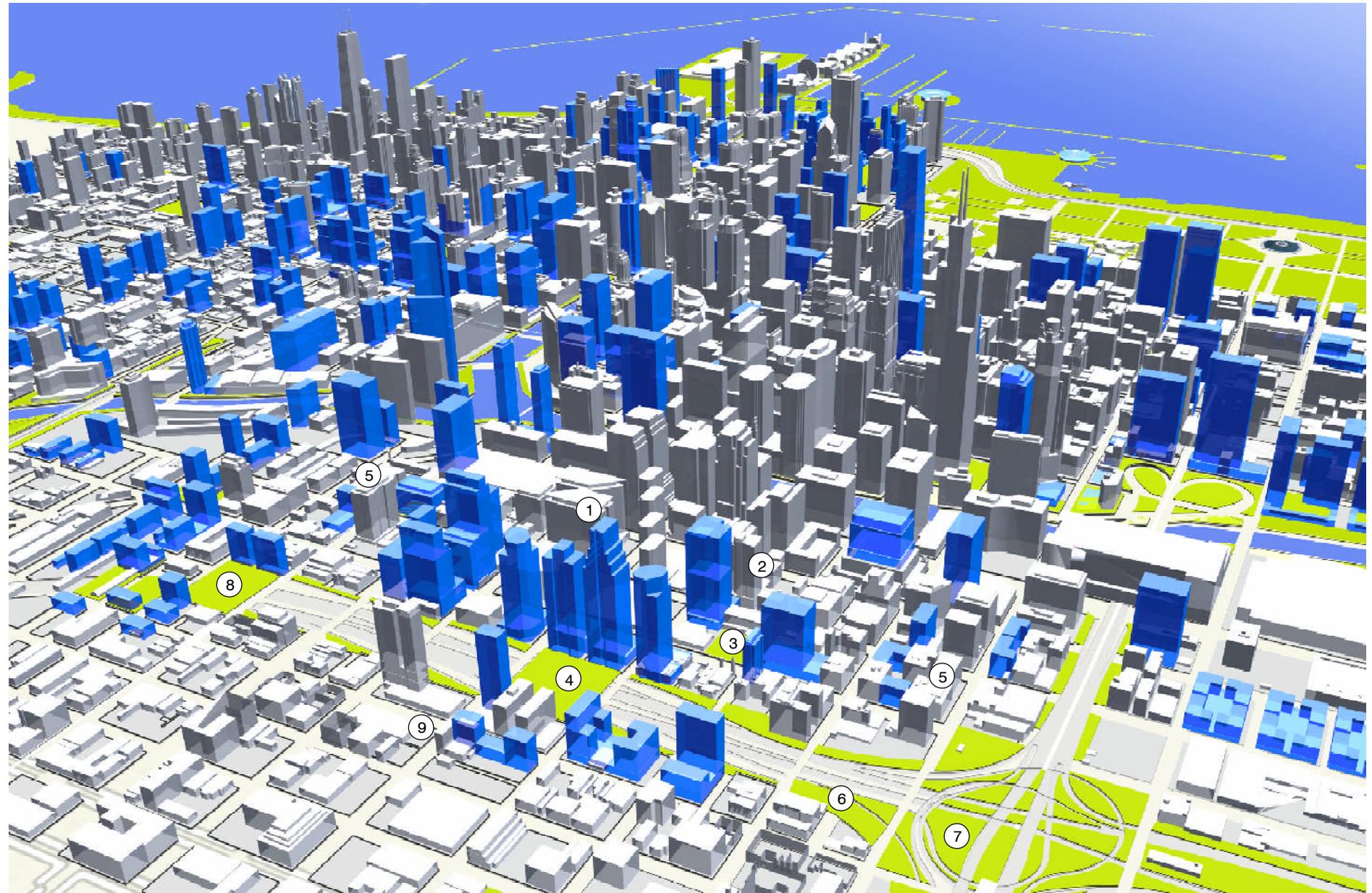
The City of Chicago will encourage the development of a new generation of high performance, energy efficient, resource conserving buildings and infrastructure in the Central Area. The city will take the lead by retrofitting public buildings to save energy and reduce emissions, creating rooftop gardens, landscaping streets and emphasizing public transportation.



**Figure 5.2**  
Central Area Districts

**Figure 5.3**  
The Expanded Loop

*The Central and West Loop will accommodate the anticipated growth in the Central Area's office market and employment.*



**KEY WEST LOOP RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Develop high density office uses in the West Loop.
2. Create a main street on Clinton Street above the planned multi-story, multi-modal West Loop Transportation Center
3. Create a new park at Adams Street and Des Plaines Street
4. Develop a new park over the Kennedy Expressway to connect the West Loop to Greek Town and the Near West Side
5. Allow for infill residential development at the Jackson Loft District and the Fulton River District.
6. Landscape improvements along the Kennedy and Eisenhower Expressways
7. Develop a gateway feature and landscaping at the intersection of the Eisenhower and Kennedy Expressways
8. Develop new parks over the Hubbard Street tunnel.
9. Step development down from the West Loop to the Near West Side.

# The Expanded Loop

## Development Framework

Fifty years ago, the Chicago central business district was largely confined to the 35 blocks bounded by the Loop elevated tracks, with additional development along Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive. Today the business core extends from Michigan Avenue to Canal Street, and from the Main Branch of the Chicago River to Congress Parkway.

The most dramatic changes have taken place in the western part of the Loop. Streets such as Franklin that were back waters twenty years ago are now home to prestigious office buildings. The West Loop commuter stations were once at the fringes of downtown; now development is beginning to engulf them. It is only a matter of time before new buildings replace the West Loop's surface parking lots.

The Expanded Loop will change significantly over the next 20 years. The Central Loop and the West Loop will see intense office development, while the East Loop will continue to evolve into a vibrant mixed-use district. Historic buildings will be preserved.

## The Central Loop from State Street to Franklin Street- Continued Infill

The Central Loop will remain as a high-density employment center for banking, legal, and financial services and government offices, among others. High density commercial office development will infill available sites, while older buildings will be replaced or renovated to meet contemporary needs. Approximately 70% of the new office development and new jobs will be east of the river.



**Figure 5.4** Adams Street and Des Plaines Street today.



**Figure 5.5** Adams Street and Des Plaines Street, with Old St. Pat's Park and new West Loop office buildings, in 2020.

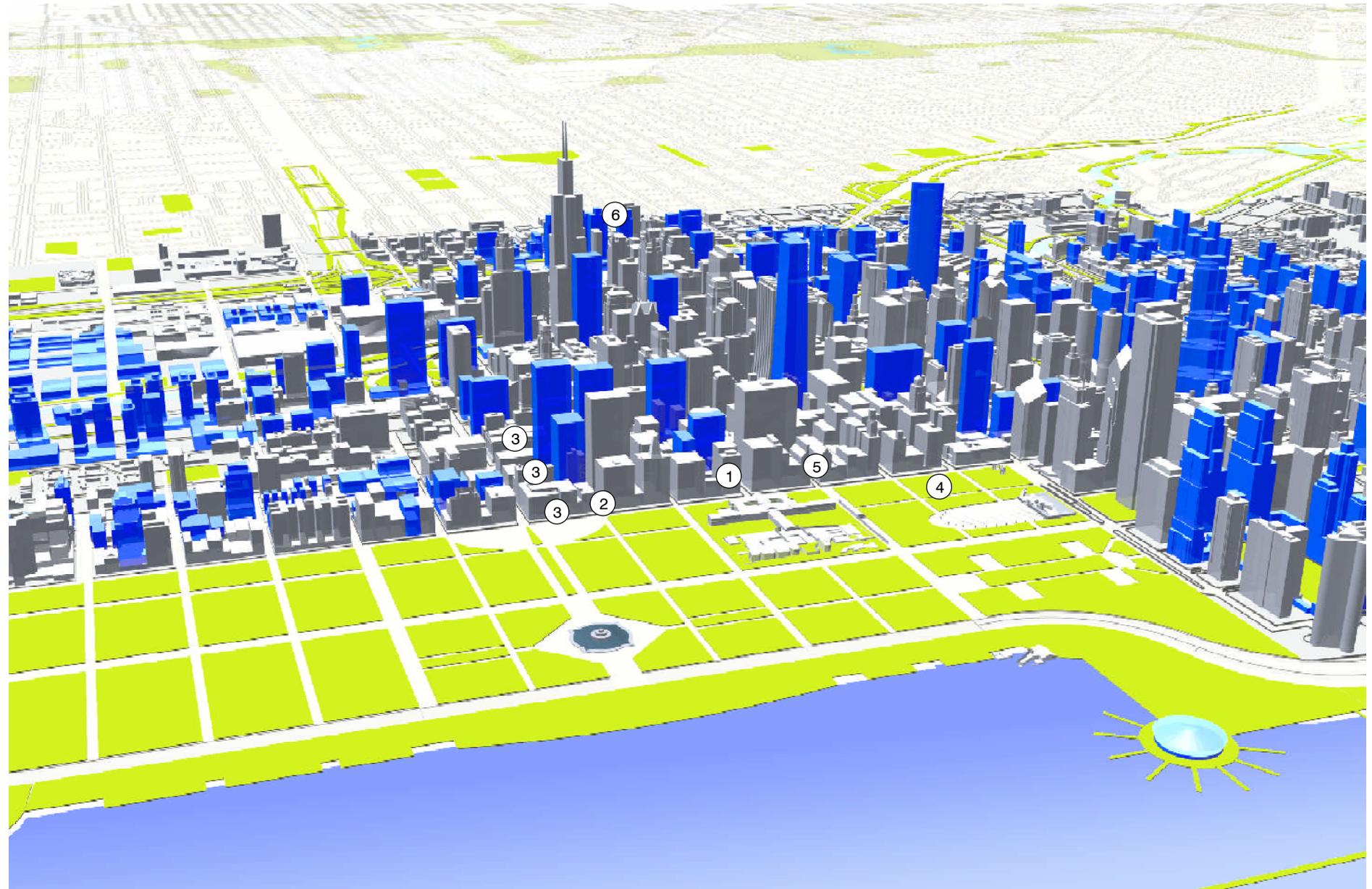
**Figure 5.6**  
The East Loop

*The East Loop's vitality will be strengthened.*



**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Residential, cultural, educational and business uses will occupy historic buildings
2. The Michigan Avenue Street Wall will be preserved
3. A vibrant mix of retail will be encouraged on State Street, Wabash Street and Michigan Avenue
4. Millennium Park will be completed
5. An east-west busway will strengthen transit connections between the East Loop and West Loop
6. Pedestrian connections between West Loop transit stations and the East Loop will be strengthened



The City of Chicago is committed to preserving the areas historic buildings and districts by encouraging creative adaptive re-uses.

Dearborn Street will continue to be a significant address for government and commercial offices, with employment building of transit service provided by the CTA's Blue Line. South, toward Congress Parkway, Dearborn will have a mix of uses, with residents living close to smaller offices and specialty retail stores. At Washington Street, Dearborn Street will be part of the Theatre District, offering performances and theatre-related restaurants.

LaSalle Street will continue to be a center for Chicago's banking and financial community housed in both historic and contemporary buildings. LaSalle Street will continue to be a bustling retail street, catering to local workers.

### **The West Loop from Franklin Street to the Kennedy Expressway - Building a New Urban District**

The office core will expand into the West Loop between Lake Street and Jackson Boulevard. The West Loop will accommodate more than 30% of the anticipated growth in the Central Area's office market. To provide expansion room for the growing office core, the West Loop will be up-zoned to permit high-density office buildings comparable to those in the Central Loop.

The West Loop will clearly be a business district, but the mix of uses will shape its character. While high-density office development will be the focus of new construction, the district's residents and visitors will continue to add to its vitality. Well over 6,000 people currently live in and near the Loop between State Street and the Kennedy Expressway, with most living west of the Chicago River in areas such as the Fulton River District and the Jackson Loft District. Mixed-use buildings that combine residential, hotel or other uses with offices will be added. The residential neighborhoods immediately north and south of the West Loop office district will reinforce the vitality that this diversity of uses brings to the Central Area.

A high quality public realm will be emphasized. Landscaped sidewalks and well-lit streets will encourage people to walk. New buildings will be built up to the sidewalk with storefronts and active ground floor uses that provide vitality and light. Curb cuts for service and parking will be limited on main pedestrian and transit corridors.

The West Loop's proximity to the Kennedy Expressway offers an opportunity to create a high-profile image for the area. High standards of design will be encouraged for new buildings adjacent to the Kennedy, which will be seen by thousands of motorists each day.

Clinton Street is envisioned as the "main street" of the West Loop business district. Continuous retail on the ground floor, landscaping and outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes will give Clinton Street vitality. These shops will serve the high volume of pedestrians using the new West Loop Transportation Center (WLTC), a multi-level facility for buses, rapid transit, and commuter and inter-city rail to be built beneath Clinton.

### **The East Loop from Michigan Avenue and Illinois Center to State Street - Preservation and Reuse**

Behind the historic facades, East Loop buildings are undergoing profound change as the office market moves on and residential, cultural, and educational uses take its place. The East Loop has become an academic center, with educational institutions building or converting new dormitory, classroom, and office space along Michigan Avenue, Wabash Avenue, and State Street. Class C buildings along Michigan and Wabash are being converted from office to residential use, and new housing is under construction. State Street's position as the city's shopping hub has been reinforced with the opening of several major stores and the removal of the transit mall. Major expansion programs at cultural institutions including the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony are drawing additional visitors to the area. Hotel activity in the area remains strong, and will likely continue given the East Loop's proximity to premier cultural attractions and shopping.

These positive changes will continue to make the Loop a vibrant 24-hour city. New residents support retail around the clock. Visitors to museums and downtown college campuses are also customers for these retail establishments. These visitors, along with theater district patrons, will continue to boost East Loop restaurants and hotels, giving a new glow to an area that once was deserted after 6 p.m. Millennium Park will add a new dimension to the mix, helping to strengthen the Michigan Avenue retail corridor from the Chicago River south to Randolph Street.

The City of Chicago is committed to preserving the area's historic buildings and districts by encouraging creative adaptive reuse. Renovations and new development in the East Loop must respect its historic character and urban fabric. The impressive streetwalls that have been signature features of Chicago for more than a century will be preserved at the Michigan Boulevard Historic District.

As the Loop continues to expand westward, the East Loop will remain connected to the emerging office district. A new East - West busway will provide quick, convenient transit service between Michigan Avenue and the West Loop.