



Near North

In order to create a system which best connects the Near North to the City as a whole, a Vision and set of complementary Planning Principles were created and refined based on input from residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders. These Principles then informed the development of the planning strategies. Together, the Vision, Planning Principles, and Strategies will serve as a guide for “reconnecting” the Near North Area over the short (1-5 years), medium (5-10 years), and long-term (10-15 years). Principles and Strategies address Transit Service, Pedestrian Access and Urban Design, and Commercial Development.

VISION: RECONNECTING THE NEAR NORTH

In the Near North Area, a well established street grid connects to Clybourn Avenue providing pedestrian-accessible retail across and along this area’s major diagonal axis. Improved bus facilities such as shelters and seating areas have been installed, along with landscaping improvements that complement new housing developments. New entrances and exits to the North/Clybourn Red Line station have increased accessibility for riders and access to the nearby Brown Line has been improved, due to successful development of a new elevated station at Division. Transit access in the heart of the neighborhood has been improved with expanded bus service on Larrabee and Clybourn. Commercial businesses in renovated and new buildings thrive in the areas immediately surrounding the new station and along Clybourn. These infill developments meet local retail and service needs for residents of all income levels. Dry cleaning, banking, specialty foods, newsstands and restaurants—all allow residents to gather in the center of the community. Improved pedestrian and bicycle access is provided to the already established retail areas on North Avenue and Orleans, and to existing and new community-based institutional anchors. Community facilities cluster along Oak and Larrabee, and Orleans is revitalized with mixed use development and community serving nodes in keeping with its historic pattern. The nearby recreational amenity of Seward Park serves as a key gateway entry point into the community from the east, and the expanded riverfront path allows access to and from the community.



The [Near North Study Area] is bounded by North Avenue, Orleans Street, Chicago Avenue, and Halsted Street. The study area is currently an eclectic mix of development types that show wide disparities in resident income and highlight the rapid pace of change in the area. The ongoing transformation of the Cabrini-Green public housing complex into new mixed-income housing and the shift from manufacturing uses to new retail uses are dramatically redefining the neighborhood. Though rail service passes underground and along the eastern edge of the study area, much of the neighborhood is beyond the ideal walking distance to stations. The study area boundaries were set to focus particular attention on mobility and services in the neighborhood as the residential infill development process moves forward, to ensure that all of the Near North side is connected in the future.

TRANSIT SERVICE

Transit Improvement Principles have been developed that focus on improving access and service using the transit system currently in place, including CTA bus and rail. Additionally, early in the planning process the community indicated a desire for a new rail station at one of two locations; an underground Red Line station at Larrabee and Clybourn or an elevated Brown Line station at Division and Orleans. As described in the existing conditions report, the potential ridership projected for the Division and Orleans location, upon completion of all proposed developments, is sufficient to justify construction of a new station. At this time, the construction of an underground Red Line station at Larrabee and Clybourn is cost prohibitive, but as the neighborhood continues to evolve the possibility could be reexamined. The Principles below are intended to provide policy direction consistent with the *Vision: Reconnecting the Near North*.

Transit Improvement Principles

1. Streetscape improvements and any associated elements should support transit users and transit accessibility.
2. Good vehicular access should be maintained throughout the neighborhood, but care should be taken to limit heavy traffic and bus lines to main thoroughfares in order to avoid speeding and cut through traffic to nearby residential areas.
3. A strong network of bicycle lanes and pedestrian routes should be developed with particular respect to accessing the river walk promenade and related recreational opportunities.
4. Safe bicycle parking should be accommodated in several locations easily accessible to public transit such as bus shelters and train stations.
5. Access to existing transit stations should be clearly marked and signed, providing a safe and pleasant experience for riders.
6. Accessible and informative shelters for both bus and transit riders shall be strategically placed to encourage new and regular transit users.



Adaptive re-use at 600 West Chicago Avenue lines the North Branch of the Chicago River.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND URBAN DESIGN

The pedestrian accessibility and urban design principles provide an important tool for the Near North Area to encourage transit usage and neighborhood vitality. These principles provide a framework against which the City can consider and evaluate both public and private improvement proposals for the area. They bring together many recommendations, including: pedestrian access and circulation considerations, landscaping and other site enhancements, effective integration of public uses and open spaces, and suggested streetscape and public area design features.

Pedestrian Accessibility Principles

1. The placement of commercial storefronts should consider visibility and accessibility from transit stops.
2. Other street-level improvements such as raised planters and decorative paving should work in concert with commercial storefronts, facilitating visits to the neighborhood shopping venues from nearby residents and tourists alike.
3. Where parking is provided on-site at commercial uses, a designated pedestrian access way from the public sidewalk should be provided.
4. As sidewalk upgrades are undertaken throughout the



neighborhood, prioritize access to commercial areas, schools, parks and other activity centers.

5. Pedestrian safety should be of paramount concern; ensure that there is adequate crossing time and protective traffic islands to shelter pedestrians, particularly at the Division and Clybourn intersection.

Urban Design Principles

1. Plazas, seating areas, and public art installations should be accommodated in key locations to enhance the pedestrian experience, particularly along the streets specified for retail development.
2. Design controls should be enforced, especially for access to sites that include mixed use and commercial development to ensure compatibility with existing historic structures and new housing developments.
3. Facade and signage enhancements at existing buildings and businesses should be undertaken to preserve and enhance the character of the study area and contribute to its visual identity.
4. Gateway treatments should be provided at the key entry points to the neighborhood on Division Street to enhance and elevate the community's identity.
5. Way finding signage should draw visitors and residents alike from the proposed Brown Line train station at Division into the neighborhood.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Land use in the Near North Area is currently an eclectic mix of development types, organized on a street grid of long blocks separated by a series of major east-west arterial streets. The former CHA Cabrini-Green public housing complex is in the process of being removed, and in its place a new mixed-income community, the Parkside at Old Town, is under development. Additionally, several other privately financed residential and mixed use development projects demonstrate market strength on the Near North side. Though many new commercial and service uses have recently come online within the study area, community members have continually stressed the study area's lack of easy access to affordable retail and services. To this end,



The vacant lots at the intersection of Clybourn and Larrabee contribute to a streetscape on Clybourn with little visual interest or pedestrian amenities.

planning can help direct quality locations for new affordable retail, rather than miss opportunities to add services to the community, as the residential infill development process continues to move forward.

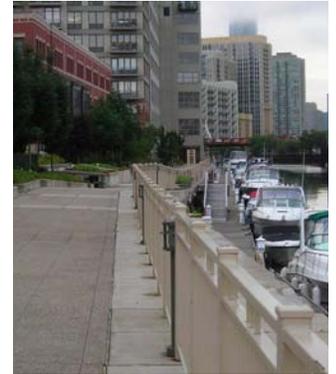
Commercial Development Principles

1. Both retail and residential infill development should be encouraged along the Clybourn corridor to both support existing business that are present, and expand the economic vitality of the study area as a whole.
2. Empower and develop a local (or non-profit) community based retail leadership team, to ensure future commercial development remains affordable and accessible to all Near North residents.
3. Convenience shopping (dry cleaners, cafes, sundry stores) should be located close to existing transit routes and stations so commuters and those without access to private autos may take advantage of neighborhood services without exacerbating traffic congestion. Special efforts should be made to attract retail and services that provide affordable products and services.
4. Public uses such as parks, schools and recreation centers (such as the recently refurbished Seward Park facility) should be maintained and enhanced in the vicinity of the study area to support both existing and new residential populations.

5. Existing structures of historic value should be preserved and enhanced, to blend with and complement new development under construction in the area.



Housing development in the Near North Area will contribute to new commercial opportunities. The Parkside at Old Town (above left), and Old Town Village (above right).



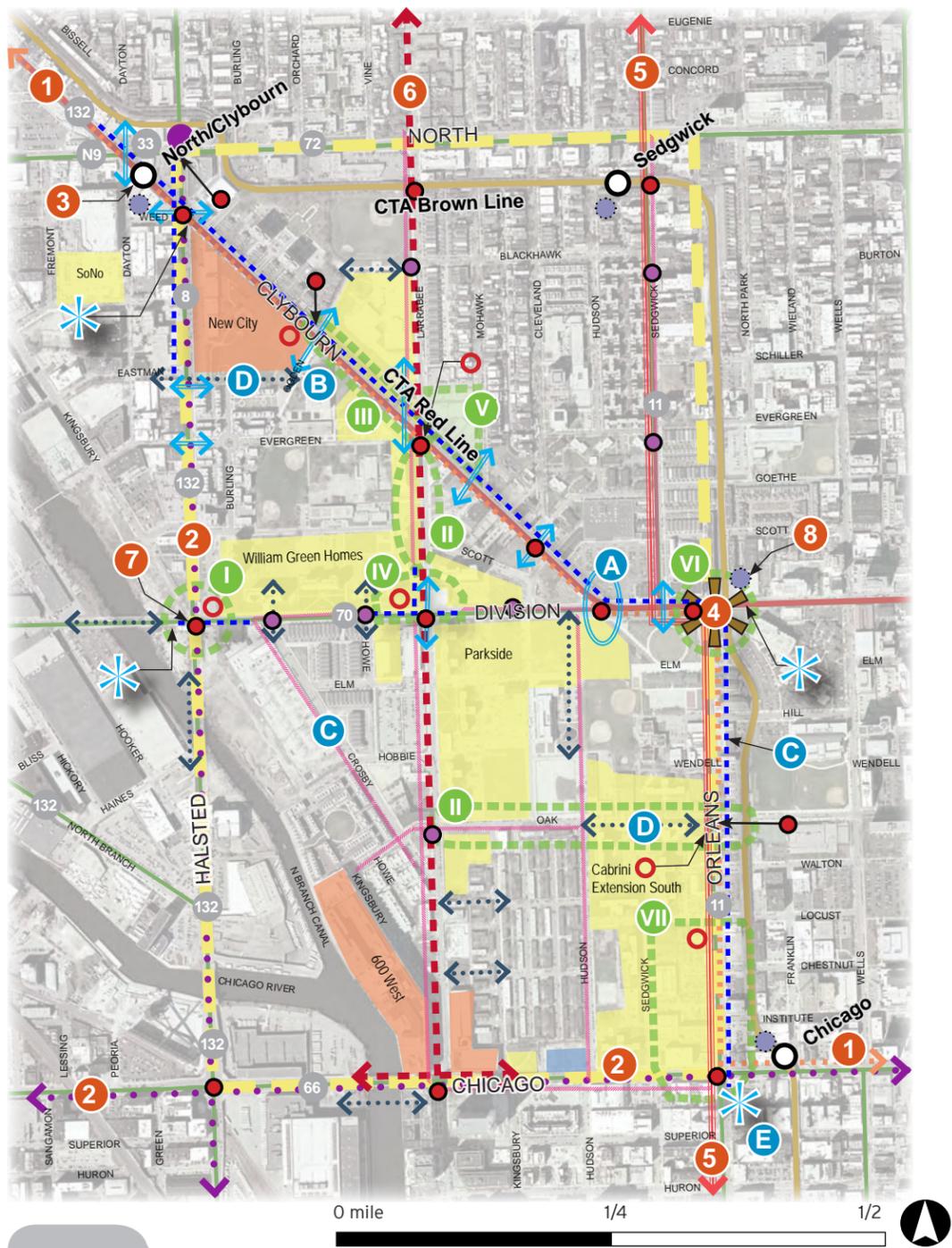
Recent residential construction in the study area includes: new homes on Kingsbury Street (top left), Burling and Scott (top right), and Marina Village (below).



Increased access to community assets in the Near North Area can be achieved with improved streetscapes and way finding signage. Clockwise from top left: the Winfield Moody Health Center, the Chicago River Walk, and Seward Park.

The Near North recommendations summarized in this report reflect input received from the IGAC, Task Forces, and the community at large. The *Near North Study Area Recommendations* map on the following page summarizes the Strategies identified through this planning process. A detailed description of each strategy is provided, followed by an Implementation discussion that includes a summary matrix of action items.





LEGEND

- Study Area Boundary
- Existing Transit Station
- Existing Train Routes
 - CTA Red Line
 - CTA Brown Line
- Existing Bus Routes
 - CTA Bus Routes
 - Bus Route Number (132)
- Planned Future Development
 - Residential
 - Mixed Use
 - Public / Institutional

Transit Improvement Strategies

- Reinstate Clybourn bus service
- BRT opportunities
- Improved entrances to the North/Clybourn station
- New elevated station on Brown Line
- Extended service hours on #11
- New Larrabee bus service
- Additional / enhanced bus shelters
 - Neighborhood stop
 - Retail node stop
- Improved/ installed bike racks and way finding signage

Access and Design Strategies

- Clybourn/Division intersection enhancements
- Improved intersections, Pedestrian crossings
- Streetscape enhancements
 - Plaza / open space opportunity
 - Retail streetscape
 - Key neighborhood route
- Complete the pedestrian and bicycle network
- Gateway feature

Key Commercial Development Strategies

- Division/Halsted Node
- Community Facility Nodes
- Clybourn /Larrabee/ Ogden Node
- Division/Larrabee Node
- White Way Sign Site
- Division/Orleans Node
- Orleans Corridor

TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Near North community members advocated for improved transit service that provides accessible boarding within a feasible walking distance of retail and service destinations. The following transit improvement strategies are depicted on the Near North Study Area Recommendations map.

- Reestablish the Clybourn Bus.** Prior to 1998, CTA operated weekday bus service on Clybourn Avenue between Belmont Station on the Blue Line and Union Station. Development along Clybourn northwest of the study area has prompted the CTA to pursue JARC funding to implement a new Clybourn bus route between the Chicago Red Line Station and the Logan Square Blue Line Station. The new route will operate on a trial basis through the study area on Chicago, Orleans, Division and Clybourn.
- Explore Chicago Avenue and Halsted BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) opportunities.** The announcement of proposed BRT alignments on Chicago Avenue and Halsted Street bordering the study area suggests opportunities for cooperation between developers, the City of Chicago and CTA. BRT will be a high-quality, high-capacity bus service that travels in exclusive lanes at peak hours.
- The North and Clybourn Red Line Station** can be difficult for transit patrons to identify from the street, and can be difficult for riders to approach particularly from North Avenue. The station, in order to be more accessible to transit patrons, would benefit greatly from **improved signage, additional entrances/exits and underground pedestrian tunnel(s) for improved access, and improved at-grade pedestrian crossings.** The New City YMCA site redevelopment affords a unique opportunity to implement a grade-separated access point.
- Pursue a new elevated Brown Line train station at Division and Orleans.** Early in the planning process the community indicated a desire for a new rail station at one of two locations; an underground Red Line station at Larrabee and Clybourn or an elevated Brown Line station at Division and Orleans. As described in the existing conditions report, the potential ridership projected for this location, upon completion of all proposed developments, is sufficient to justify construction of a new station (approximately 3,800 to 4,300 weekday boardings). The estimated cost of building an elevated Brown Line station is significantly less expensive than construction of a Red Line subway station due to the increased difficulty of building in the subway (see Appendix). Additionally, community meeting attendees favored the Division location for a new transit station.
- Improve the #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick weekend schedule.** The study area is generally well served by CTA bus routes. However, north-south bus access on weekends could be improved by operating the weekend routing of the #11 Lincoln/Sedgwick on weekends. Currently, weekend service on #11 operates between Howard/McCormick on the north and North/Clark as the southern terminus. As development continues to emerge south of North Avenue, CTA should consider expanding #11 weekend service into the study area.
- Consider a Larrabee Street bus service;** examine existing bus routes that could be combined with a Larrabee routing such as the return of the Clybourn bus (see next mobility improvement alternative). In the future, as development along Larrabee grows, a route change moving service from Orleans to Larrabee may be appropriate.
- Passenger shelters located at bus stops** greatly improve the waiting environment for CTA customers. Shelters shield waiting passengers from the elements and provide route and system information. Responsibility for the provision of shelters rests with the City of Chicago through the City's Street Furniture Program. The criteria for locating shelters include the presence of bus service, the availability of sufficient space on the sidewalk, and the number of boarding passengers. New commercial developments should provide space for a shelter or incorporate sheltering amenities in the building design. This type of design element should be incorporated into new developments that are planned along Clybourn and Larrabee in anticipation of new bus service on these streets.
- Install improved and extra bike racks at the Chicago, Sedgwick and North/Clybourn stations.** Accessibility between points of interest in the study area and existing CTA rail stations can also be improved with way finding signage.

ACCESS AND DESIGN STRATEGIES

The urban design and pedestrian framework recommendations address the appropriate treatment for the public realm including enhanced connections for recreational opportunities, improved streetscapes, construction of plazas and gateways, and facade improvements. The access and design recommendations described below are shown on the accompanying map.

- Install intersection enhancements** at the Division/Clybourn intersection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety. Median refuge areas, countdown signals, lane reduction, restricted turning movements and other strategies should be considered.
- Improve pedestrian crossings at key locations,** particularly at future transit stops on Division, Clybourn and Chicago at major cross streets. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring adequate visibility and safe traffic patterns at Clybourn intersections. At the Division and Clybourn intersection adequate crossing time for pedestrians and sheltering traffic islands should be installed. Where feasible, intersections should be reconfigured as redevelopment occurs.
- Improve the streetscape environment** in targeted areas slated for retail development to enhance the feeling of safety and comfort for pedestrians, and provide public plazas, way finding features, or open spaces in conjunction with retail uses and transit stops. At key neighborhood routes, focus on providing well-maintained sidewalks, parkways and street trees. Access for emergency services should be a paramount consideration.
- Improve bike and pedestrian access** throughout the area by completing the street grid where feasible. Develop a strong network of bike lanes and pedestrian routes with particular respect to accessing and directing users to the riverfront pathway and across river bridges. Pedestrian circulation should be improved leading to the Cabrini Row houses east from Larrabee Street and west from Orleans. Additionally, new mixed use housing developments in the area such as New City and Parkside, and community amenities like Seward Park will benefit from improved access. In areas subject to future redevelopment, a complete and connected street grid should be provided, pending more detailed traffic studies.
- Establish design elements** that welcome visitors and residents to the neighborhood at key entry points along Division, Halsted and Chicago.

KEY COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Planning for key commercial areas is recommended to ensure that site-level development strategies coordinate well with transit and pedestrian movement patterns. Existing land use in the study area is substantially dominated by planned developments. Effort must be made to direct retail at key locations throughout the study area in a concentrated manner, including along the area's spine— the angled Clybourn corridor. As the number of households in the community continues to increase, the market for commercial uses will improve. It can be expected that in the near term, City assistance with land assembly and remediation, in addition to financial incentives, will be required to support commercial and mixed use projects in high priority locations. Listed below and shown on the accompanying map are several recommendations with respect to commercial areas.

- Pending the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service on Halsted, **retail at the intersection of Division and Halsted should be established** to invigorate the streetscape and provide comfortable and entertaining waiting areas for bus passengers.
- Community facilities should be clustered along Larrabee and Oak** as the William Green Homes and Cabrini Extension South are redeveloped.
- Locating a **commercial node on Clybourn from Ogden to Larrabee** would place retail in the center of the community and make it easy to access from many parts of the study area. A node in this location provides an opportunity for sidewalk and landscaping improvements, way finding signage, and the accommodation of visible street level retail in the heart of the study area.
- Establish a commercial node at the intersection of Division and Larrabee** to invigorate the streetscape along Division and provide convenient services to both the residents located in surrounding blocks and bus passengers along Division.
- Accommodate commercial uses in the redevelopment of the White Way Sign Site** at Clybourn and Mohawk streets. New development here can anchor street level retail along the Clybourn corridor in conjunction with residential development.
- Mixed use development** should be encouraged immediately surrounding the proposed Division Brown line station; this area is a prime location for a thriving retail node, which has been the subject of (and benefited greatly from) previous planning efforts.
- Mixed use, service and retail development on Orleans** should be expanded along the corridor improving this gateway area and supporting the existing stores and services on Orleans.

IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation of the study recommendations will be facilitated by prioritizing and phasing the associated action items and coordinated with the appropriate agencies. The matrix below outlines each action item and its recommended phasing timeframe, the identification of lead and supporting agencies and estimated costs, where applicable.

Because the action items are subject to change over time, flexibility should remain regarding implementation priorities, costs and timing. This matrix should be reviewed and updated periodically, and utilized to measure progress on realizing a “reconnected” Near North area in the coming years. Some actions will require further study and the identification of funding.

Community Stakeholders and Expert Panel participants identified the following Implementation Actions as top priorities:

- **Transit Improvement:** Improve access to the North/Clybourn Red Line station via additional entrance/exit sites, particularly on the SE corner of the North/Clybourn/Halsted intersection, and pursue new Brown Line station at Division/Orleans.
- **Access and Design:** Enhance pedestrian safety at Clybourn crossings, in particular at Division and Clybourn intersection; establish street grid connections within current and future redevelopment areas.
- **Commercial Development:** Pursue commercial nodes at Halsted/Division (in conjunction with BRT service) and establish community-serving commercial and institutional uses along Larrabee and Oak.

Implementation Actions- Near North

	ACTION ITEM	LEAD ORGANIZATION	SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS	ESTIMATED COST (2008 \$)
Short Term (1-5 Years)				
Transit Improvement Strategies	Establish a bus route on Clybourn, traveling from the Logan Square Blue Line station to the Red Line station at State Street.	CTA	LEED Council	\$3,229,000 (implementation pending)
	Implement Chicago Avenue and Halsted Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).	CTA	DPD, CHA, private sector partners	Further study underway
	Improve pedestrian access to existing North/Clybourn Red Line station via underground pedways and additional entrances/exits.	CTA	DPD, private sector partners	Further study required
	Expand the Lincoln/Sedgwick #11 weekend bus service.	CTA	DPD, JARC	\$305,250 per year
	Improve secure bike parking at train stations and bus stops.	CDOT	CTA, DPD, Alderman's Office	\$1,000 per bike rack
	Install additional bus shelters to protect riders from the elements and provide travel information. Ensure new developments include adequate space for bus shelters, or incorporate sheltered waiting areas into the building design.	CTA, CDOT	DPD, City of Chicago Street Furniture Program, Alderman's Office	\$15,000-\$20,000 per shelter \$15,000-\$30,000 per plaza area
Access and Design Strategies	Continue to promote facade and signage enhancements for existing buildings, including awnings and attractive storefront displays.	Community-based retail team	DPD	N/A
	Establish design elements along Division, Halsted and Chicago to mark community entry points.	DPD	CDOT	\$750,000+
	Develop effective and clear way finding signage to direct pedestrians, cyclists and drivers to the neighborhood's retail and commercial businesses.	CDOT	Community-based retail team, DPD, Alderman's Office	\$300-\$700 per location
Commercial Development Strategies	Encourage the development of stores, such as dry cleaners and cafes, close to existing transit stops.	Private sector	DPD, Old Town Merchants and Residents Association, Community-based retail team	N/A
	Undertake appropriate zoning amendments and explore shared parking strategies to encourage commercial and mixed use development in the desired pattern.	DPD	Alderman's Office	N/A
	Develop a retail activity node at the BRT stop at Division and Halsted.	Private sector	DPD, Community-based retail team, CTA	N/A
	Target the Clybourn corridor for service and retail-oriented development, attracting affordable products and services.	Private sector	DPD, Community-based retail team	N/A
Mid-Term (5-10 Years)				
Transit Improvement Strategies	Construct a new elevated Brown Line station along Orleans Street at Division.	CTA	City of Chicago	\$50+ million; significant further study required
	Provide greater levels of bus shelter enhancements (such as the use of “Bus Tracker” real time information) where bus routes intersect, specifically on Halsted at Division, Clybourn, Chicago, and North. Other locations for enhancements are specified on the <i>Near North Study Area Recommendations</i> map.	CTA, CDOT	DPD, City of Chicago Street Furniture Program	Further study required

Implementation Actions-Near North

	ACTION ITEM	LEAD ORGANIZATION	SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS	ESTIMATED COST (2008 \$)
Access and Design Strategies	Improve the Halsted intersections of Evergreen and Eastman, the Larrabee intersections south of Division, and pedestrian crossings at the Halsted/North/Clybourn triangle to better coordinate the use of the intersection by pedestrians, bikes and cars. Other locations for improved pedestrian crossings are specified on the <i>Near North Study Area Recommendations</i> map.	CDOT	DPD	\$35,000-\$60,000 per intersection
	Improve the pedestrian environment at key intersections along Division and Clybourn with bumpouts, clear crossing areas, pedestrian refuge islands, countdown signaling and traffic bollards.	CDOT	DPD	\$75,000-\$1,000,000 per intersection
	Improve access to the neighborhood, via new streets or right-of-ways and on existing river bridges at Halsted, Chicago and Division by improving pedestrian and bicycle routes with clear signage and pavement markings.	CDOT	DPD, CHA	\$300-\$700 per location
Commercial Development Strategies	Focus the development of new retail along transit-accessible streets: Clybourn, Orleans and Division.	Private sector	DPD, Old Town Merchants and Residents Association, Community-based retail team	N/A
	Develop a retail activity node surrounding the new Brown Line station site at Division.	Private sector	DPD, Community-based retail team, CTA	N/A
Long-Term (10-15 Years)				
Transit Improvement Strategies	Explore the feasibility of operating new bus service on Larrabee Street.	CTA	DPD, Alderman's Office	Further study required
	If warranted, implement a shuttle or feeder route service to the existing Orleans/Sedgwick bus service from Larrabee Street, or consider combining the Larrabee and Orleans routes.	CTA	Alderman's Office	Further study required
Access and Design Strategies	Implement key neighborhood and retail streetscape enhancements and plazas in conjunction with new developments along Division Street from Halsted to Orleans, Chicago from Larrabee to Orleans, North at Clybourn and Orleans from Chicago to Division.	CDOT	DPD	Approximately \$750,000 per block
	Improve the pedestrian environment with enhanced sidewalks and lighting along Division from Halsted to Larrabee, on Orleans from Oak to Locust, and on Clybourn at Larrabee.	CDOT	DPD	\$375,000-\$500,000 per block
Commercial Development Strategies	Construct new neighborhood-serving recreational facilities where feasible.	City of Chicago, Park District, Chicago Public Schools (CPS)	NNDC, DPD	N/A
	Monitor redevelopment so that new development complements existing, historic structures.	City of Chicago	Alderman's Office	N/A

Agency and organization abbreviations:

CTA = Chicago Transit Authority, DPD=City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, CDOT=Chicago Department of Transportation, CHA= Chicago Housing Authority, NNDC=Near North Development Corporation, LEED Council= Local Economic and Employment Development Council, JARC=Jobs Access and Reverse Commute.

