

# Phase 1 Engagement Findings

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

December 2023

The 2024

## CENTRAL AREA PLAN

Update

A 20-YEAR VISION FOR EQUITABLE  
DOWNTOWN GROWTH



**Phase 1 (2023) community engagement included two online surveys and multiple in-person events as outlined in this report. A summary for two rounds of focus groups meetings is provided in a separate report.**

## **General Survey** Pages 4-13

**Online survey from April through September  
2,741 total responses**

- English and Spanish options
- Publicized at kick-off meeting, open house and pop-up events
- Advertised in multiple DPD emails and social media
- Worked with community partners to promote

## **Youth Survey** Pages 14-17

**Online survey from August through September  
1,554 analyzed responses out of 2,724 total responses**

- Worked with community partners to promote
- Advertised in multiple DPD emails and social media
- Publicized at pop-up events
- Respondents ages 14-24 had a chance to enter a sweepstakes to win a Visa gift card of up to \$250 in value
- Responses were filtered out based on age, spam and duplications

## **Pop-up Events** Pages 18-29

**8 regional pop-up events from June through August  
Over 1,700 participants**

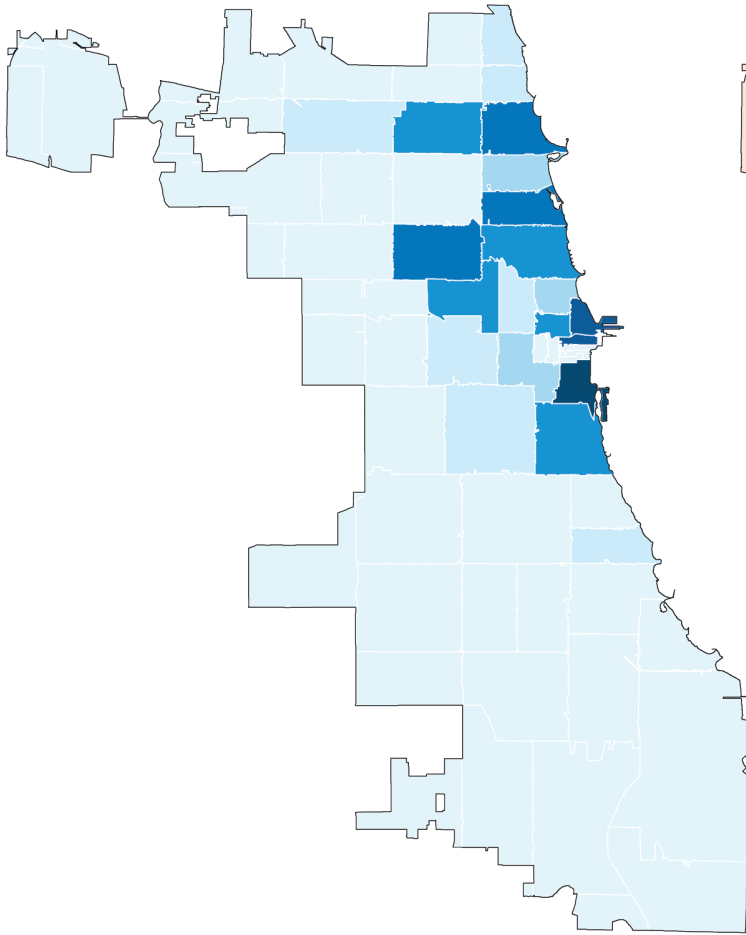
- At neighborhood festivals and farmers markets throughout the city
- Participants provided feedback using comment cards and stickers
- An interactive wheel was used to offer prizes such as candy, pens and tote bags

## **Open Houses** Pages 30-47

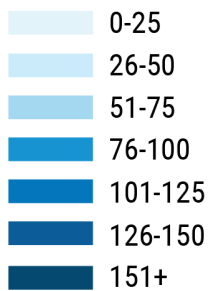
**May 23, 2023, at the Harold Washington Library  
December 6, 2023, at the Chicago Cultural Center  
Over 200 participants attended first Open House**

- Interactive stations organized by pillar
- A kids activity table was provided
- Participants provided feedback using sticky notes, comment cards, stickers and pom-poms

# Online Survey Participation



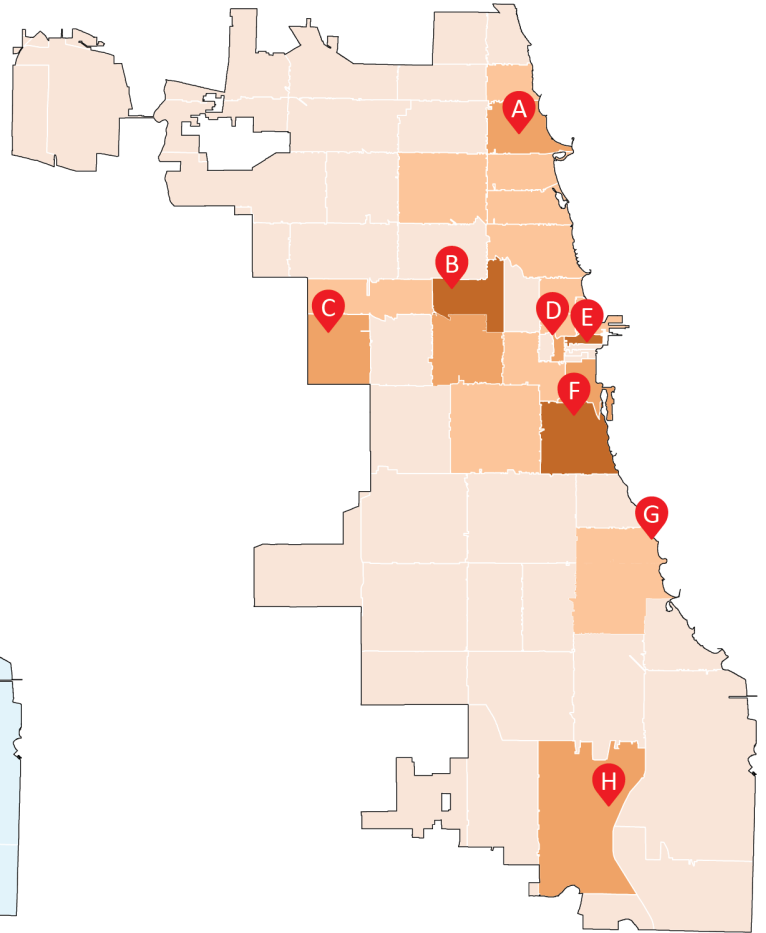
Range indicates number of responses by Zipcode



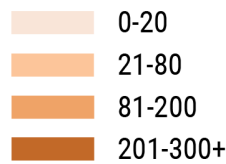
## Two Online Surveys Conducted:

- ★ General Survey (2,741 total responses)
- ★ Youth Survey (1,554 analyzed responses)

# Pop-up Event Participation



Range indicates number of participants by Zipcode



## Regional Pop-up Event Locations:

- A UPTOWN FARMERS MARKET
- B TASTE OF CHICAGO - HUMBOLDT PARK
- C AUSTIN TOWN HALL CITY MARKET
- D 27TH WARD STAY IN SCHOOL EVENT
- E SUNDAYS ON STATE
- F CHINATOWN SUMMER FAIR
- G HYDE PARK SILVER ROOM BLOCK PARTY
- H TASTE OF CHICAGO - PULLMAN



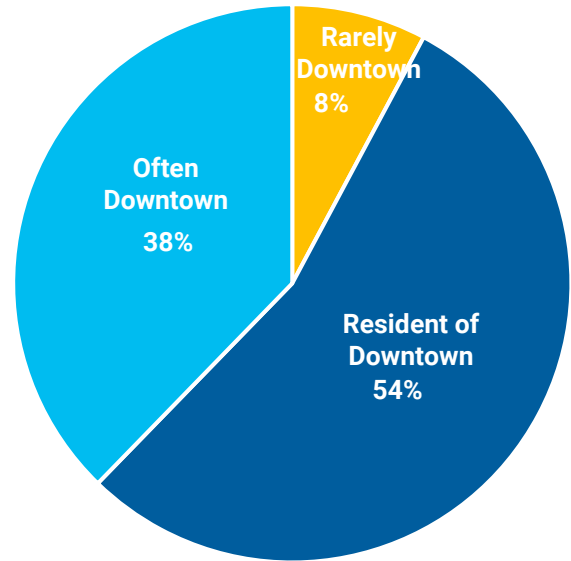
A scenic view of a park with a river, a bridge, and a city skyline in the background. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'General Survey' is centered in white, with a red zigzag line below it.

# General Survey



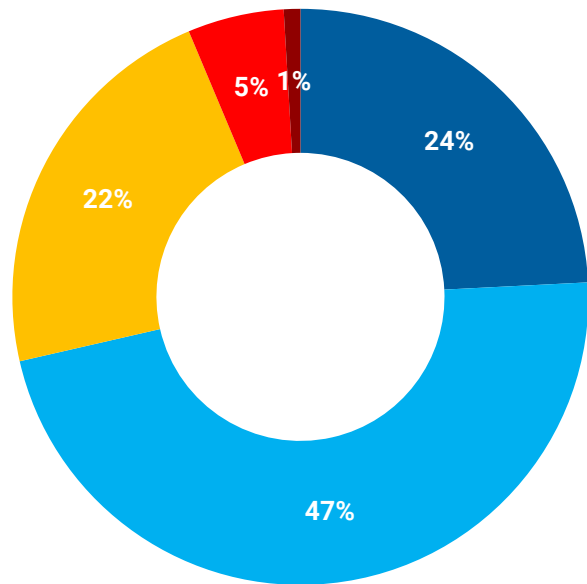
## Visiting the Central Area

- Over 90% of respondents either reside in or often visit the Central Area.



## Percentage of respondents who feel welcome in the Central Area

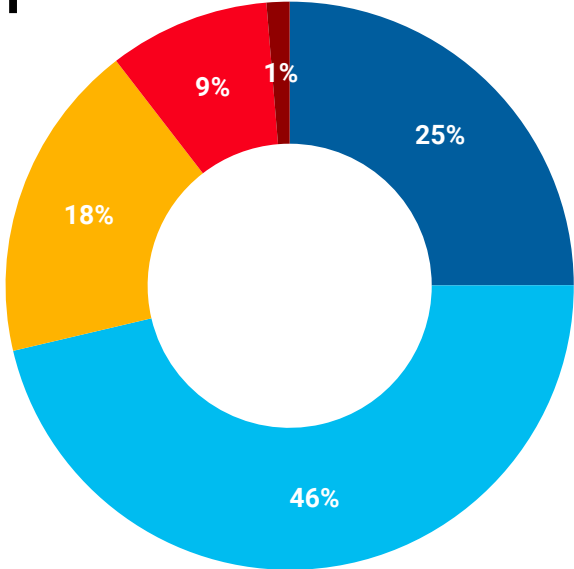
- Over 70% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they feel welcome in the Central Area.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree  
Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

# Percentage of respondents who enjoy spending time downtown

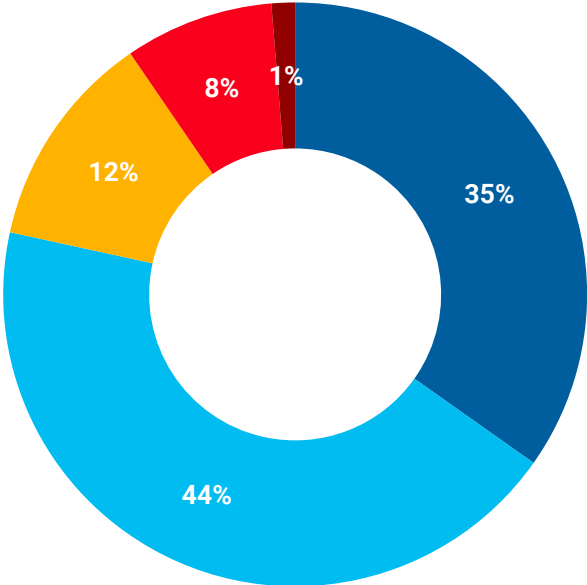
- Over 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy spending time in the Central Area.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree  
Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding

# Percentage of respondents who think downtown is easy to get to

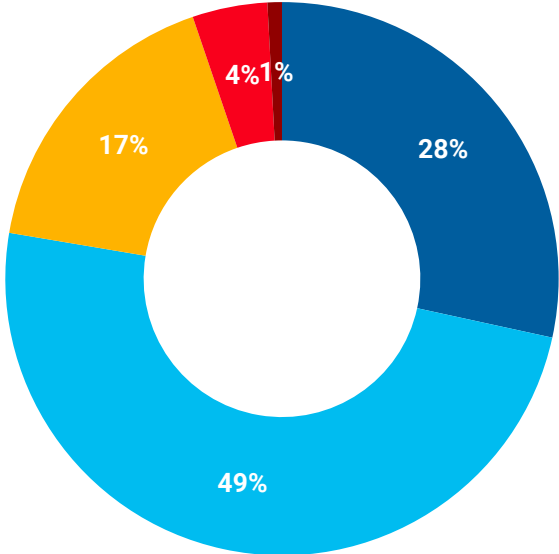
- 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Central Area is easy to get to.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

# Percentage of respondents who feel that the artistic and cultural activities reflect their interests

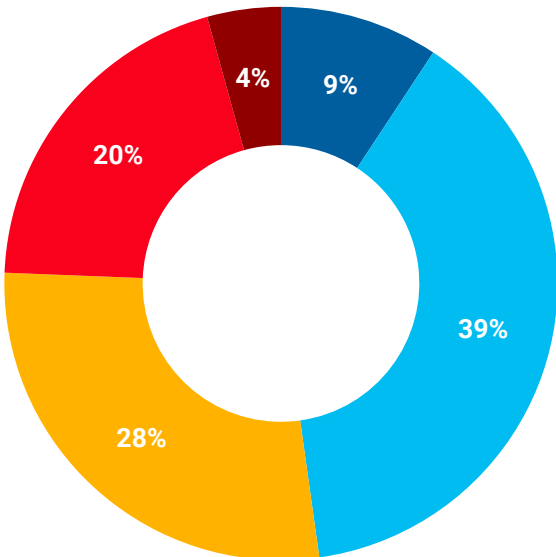
- 77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the artistic and cultural activities in the Central Area reflect their interests.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

# Percentage of respondents who believe downtown is clean and comfortable

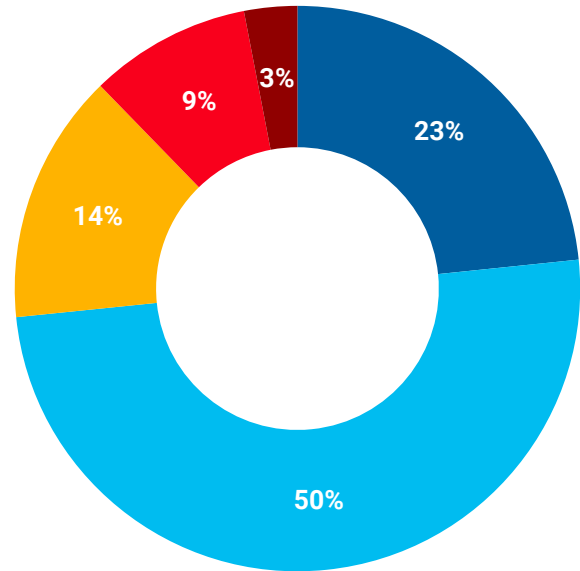
- 48% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Central Area was clean and comfortable. Half as many disagreed or strongly disagreed.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

# Percentage of respondents who feel safe during the day

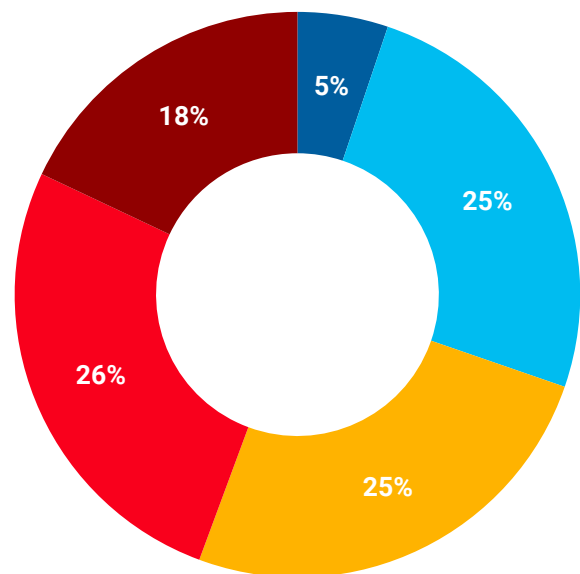
- 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe during the day in the Central Area.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree  
Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

# Percentage of respondents who feel safe at night

- Only 30% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe at night, with 44% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

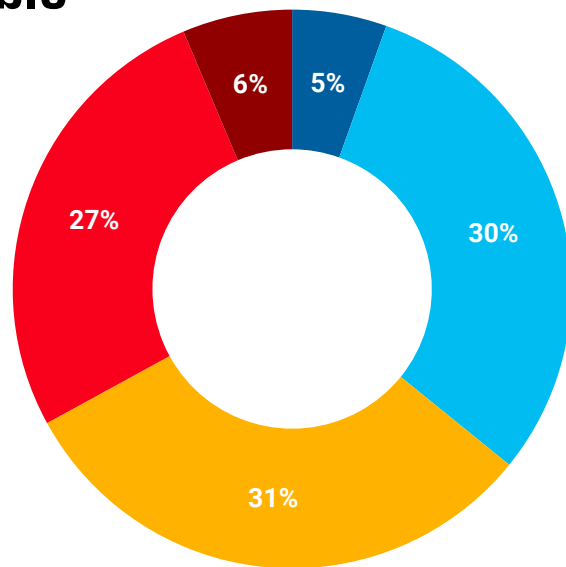


■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree  
Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.



# Percentage of respondents who feel that downtown shopping and dining experiences are affordable

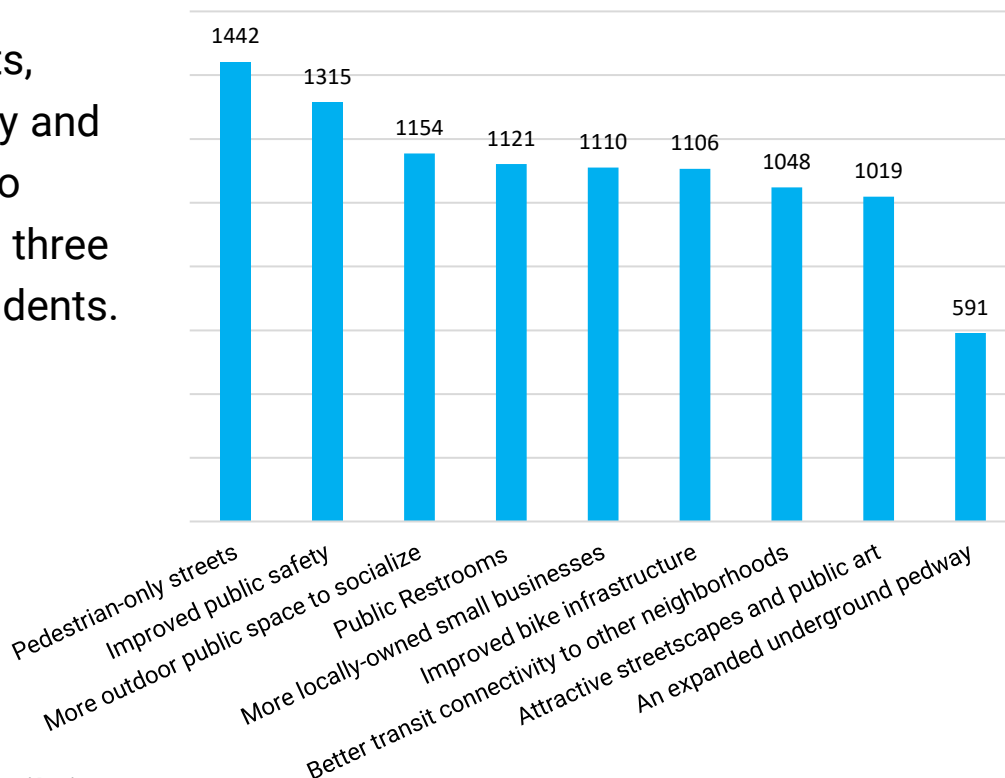
- There was generally an even response between agreed, neutral and disagreed with this statement.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree  
Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding

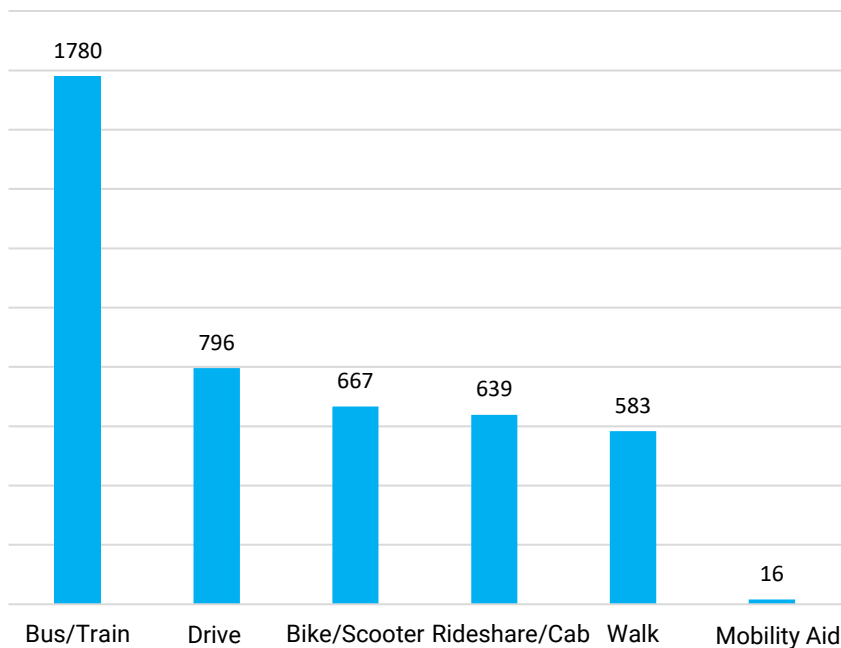
# Number of respondents on what would make their time downtown more enjoyable (selected three)

- Pedestrian-only streets, improved public safety and more outdoor space to socialize were the top three picks from the respondents.



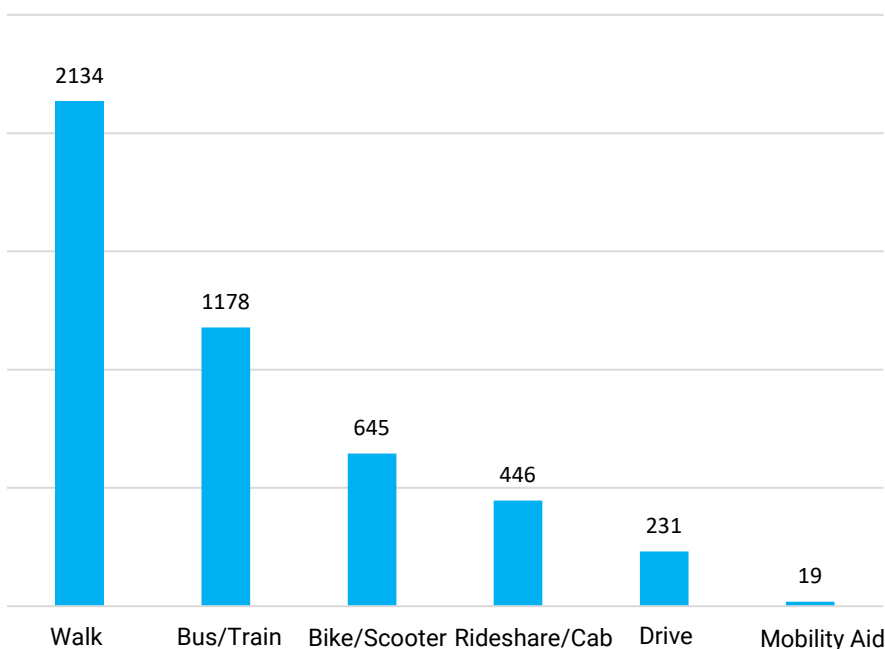
# Number of respondents on transportation mode(s) used to travel from outside the Central Area to downtown (selected applicable)

- 65% of responders selected bus or train to travel from outside the Central Area to downtown. Driving, bike/scooter, ridesharing/cab and walking were selected significantly less by respondents, though all received similar results to each other.



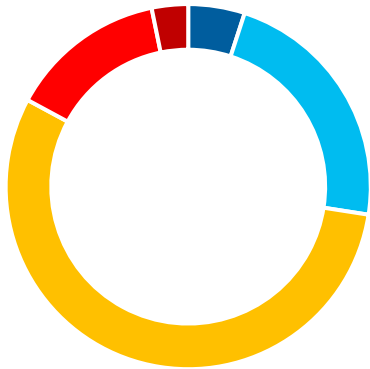
# Number of respondents on transportation mode(s) used to travel within the Central Area (selected applicable)

- Once respondents were inside the Central Area, walking was the most popular selection with 78% of respondents including it in their selections, followed by bus and train.

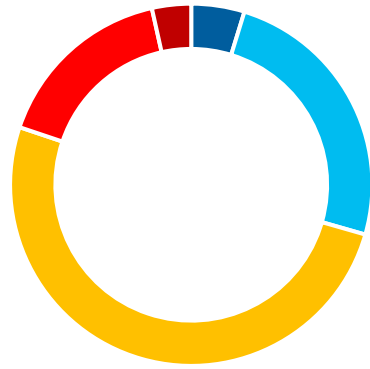


# Perceptions from respondents on the implementation of the 2003 Central Area Plan themes

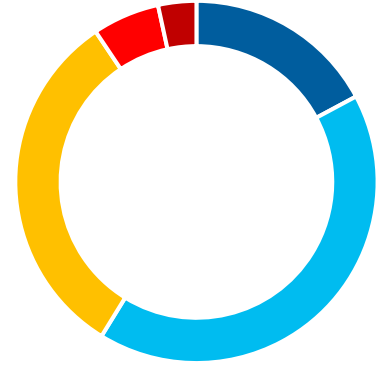
- 92% of respondents identified that the expansion and connectivity of open spaces was at least somewhat successfully implemented.



Direct growth to create a dynamic Central Area with vibrant and diverse mixed-use urban districts



Strengthen transit options to keep the Central Area easy to reach and get around

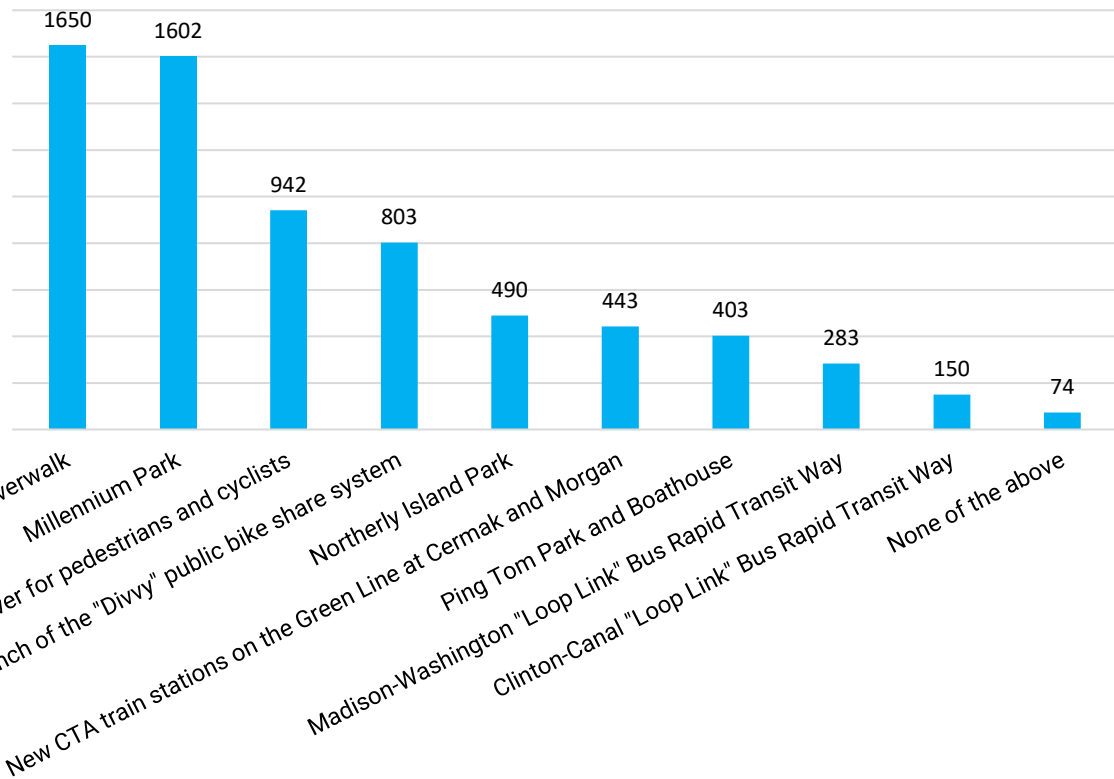


Expand and connect waterfronts and open spaces to create great public places

- Extremely successful
- Very successful
- Somewhat successful
- Not successful
- Not at all successful

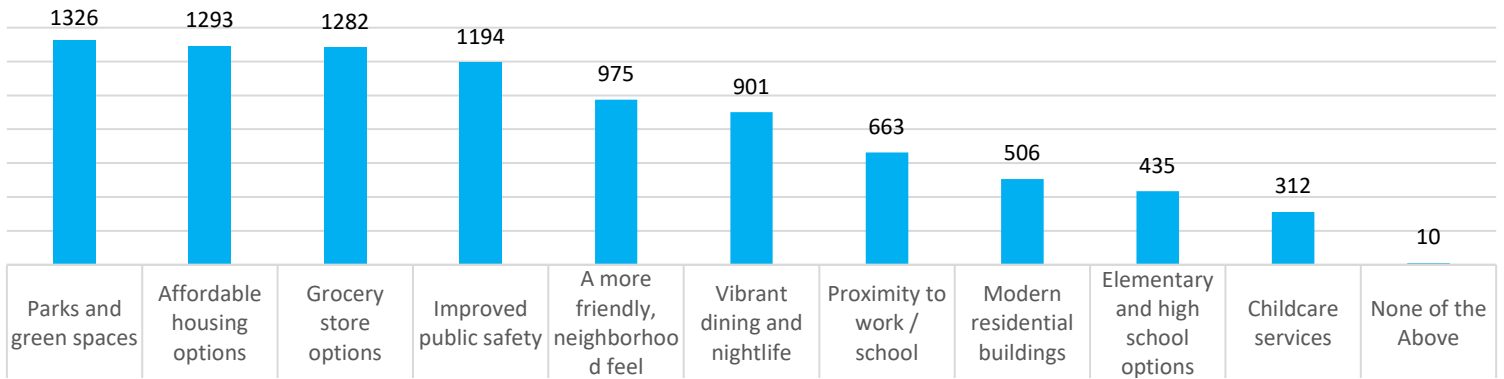
## Most useful projects completed since 2003 according to respondents

- The Riverwalk and Millennium Park were selected by nearly 1 in 4 respondents.



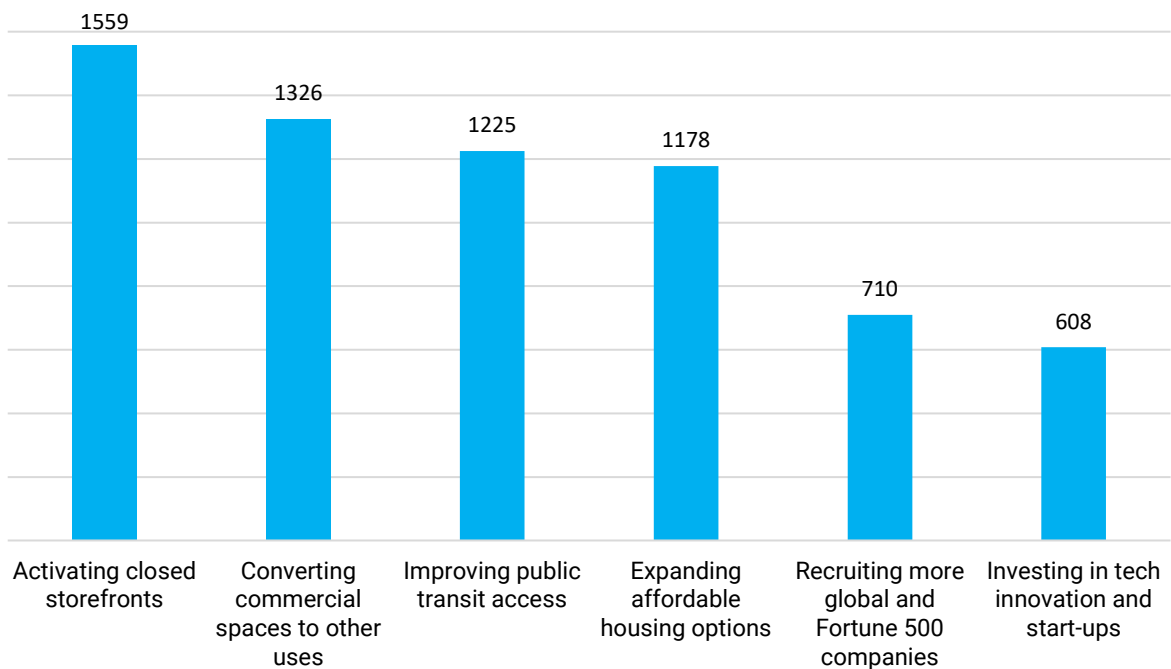
# Respondents' most important amenities for attracting more people to live in the Central Area (selected three)

- Respondents selected parks, affordable housing options, grocery store options and improved public safety as their top amenities.



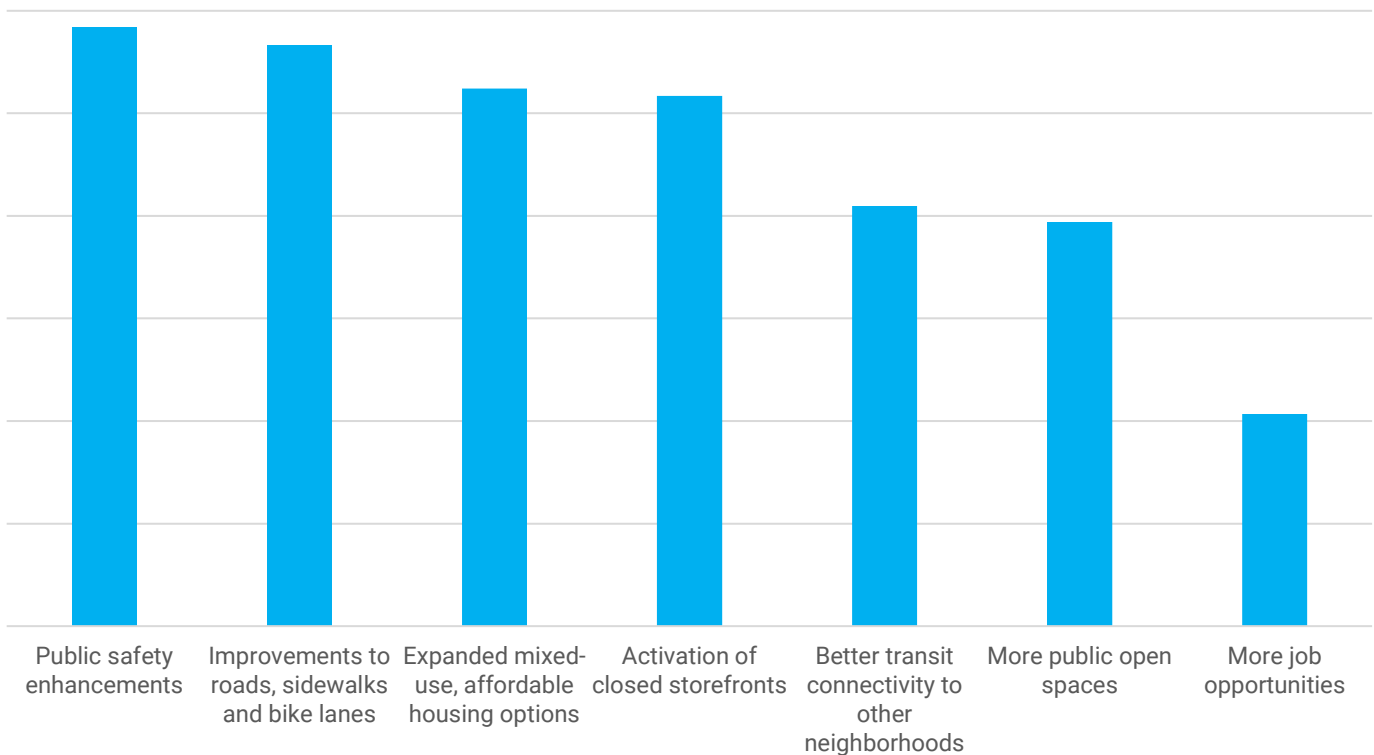
# Recommendations for enhancing the area's economy according to respondents (selected three)

- At least 1 in 2 respondents selected activating closed storefronts, connecting commercial spaces to other uses, improving public transit access or expanding affordable housing options as one of their top three picks.



# Respondents' top priorities to complete in the next five years (selected three)

- Nearly half of the respondents selected public safety and infrastructure improvements as their top priority over the next five years.
- Approximately 44% of respondents selected expanding mixed-use affordable housing options and activating close storefronts.





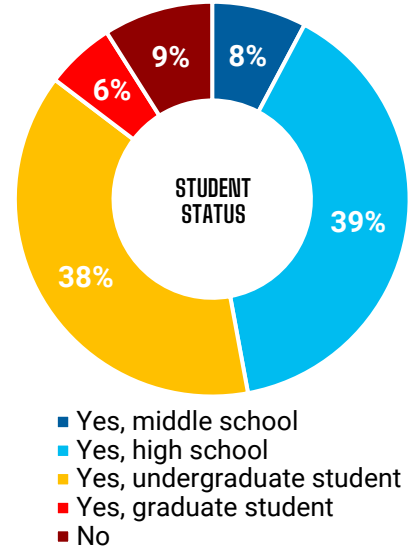
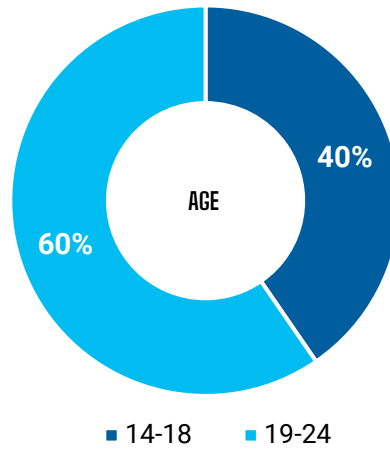


# Youth Survey



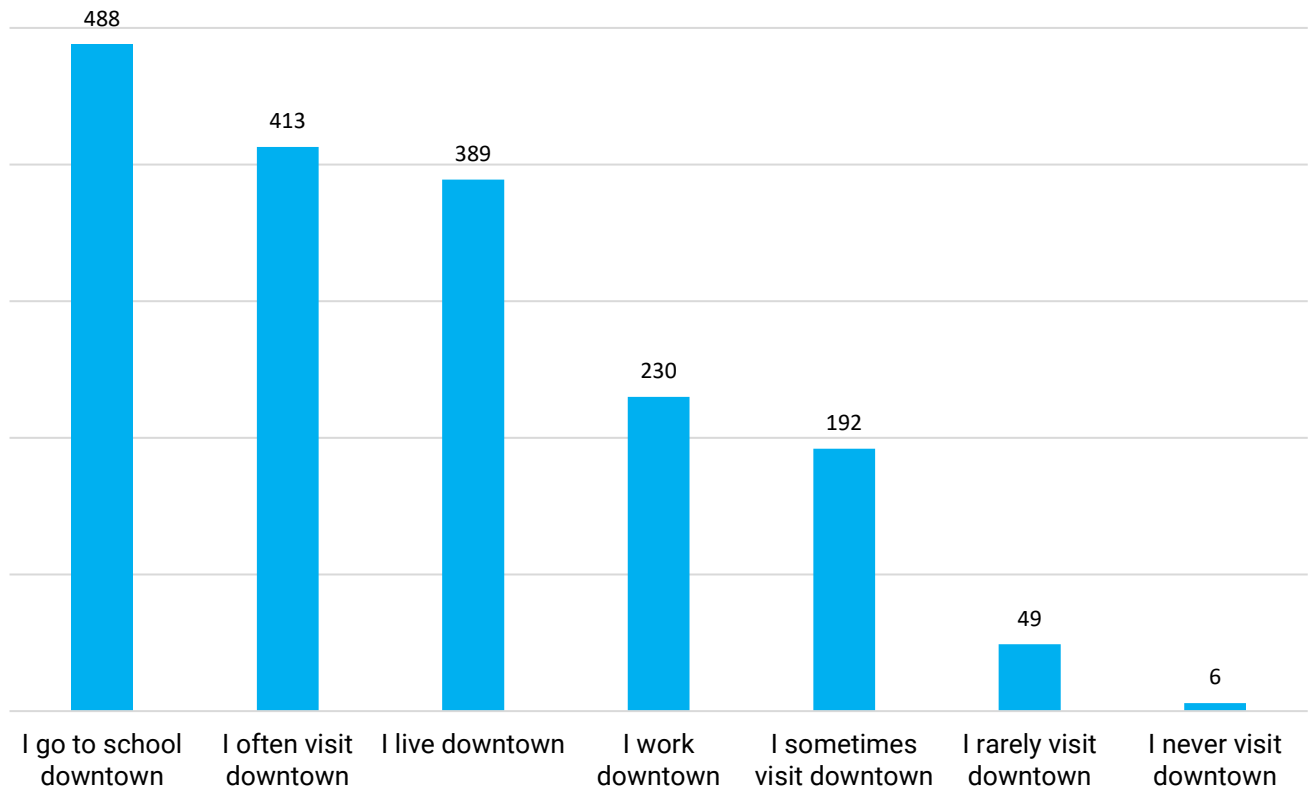
# Respondents' ages and student status

- Approximately 40% of respondents were 14-18 years old and the remaining 60% were 19-24 years old.
- Of those who responded to the question, more than 75% were either high school or undergraduate students.



# Visiting downtown

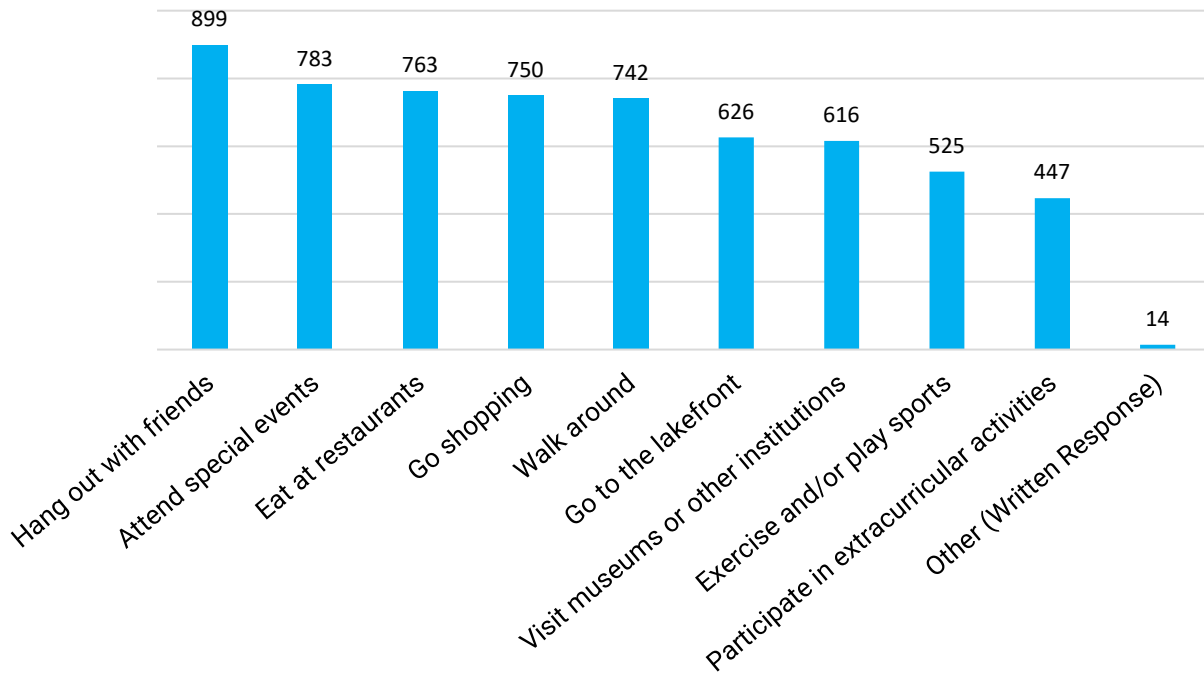
- Nearly 1/3 of respondents go to school downtown, and very few respondents indicated they never go downtown.





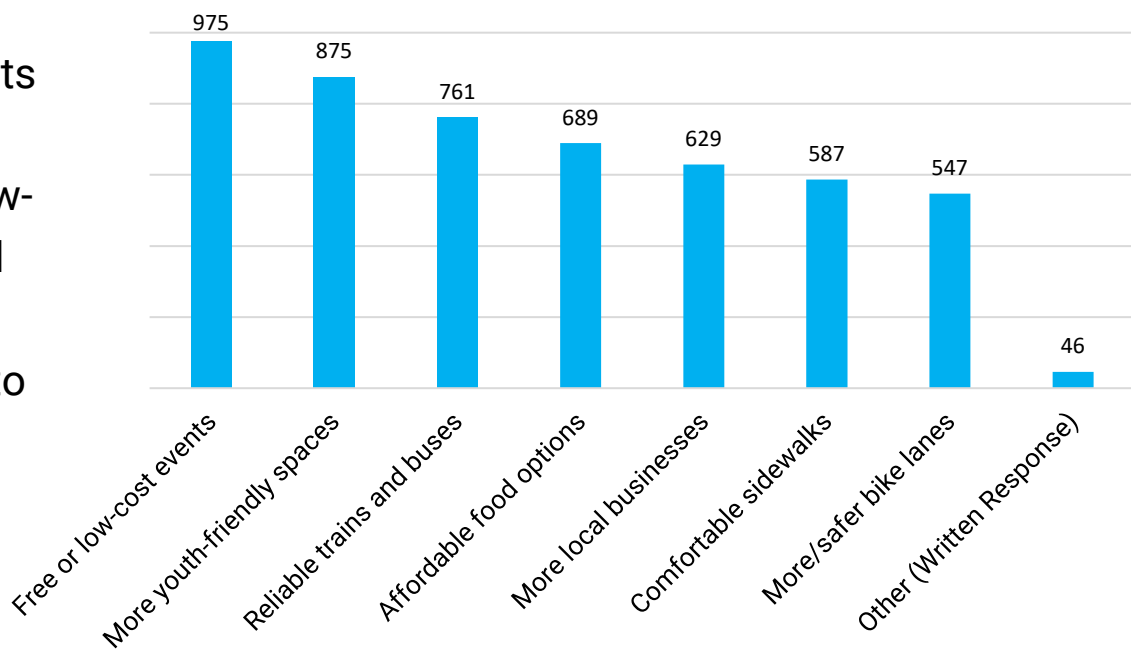
# What respondents like to do downtown (selected applicable)

- Nearly 60% of respondents like to hang out with friends downtown.
- Approximately 50% of respondents like to attend special events, eat at restaurants, go shopping and walk around downtown.



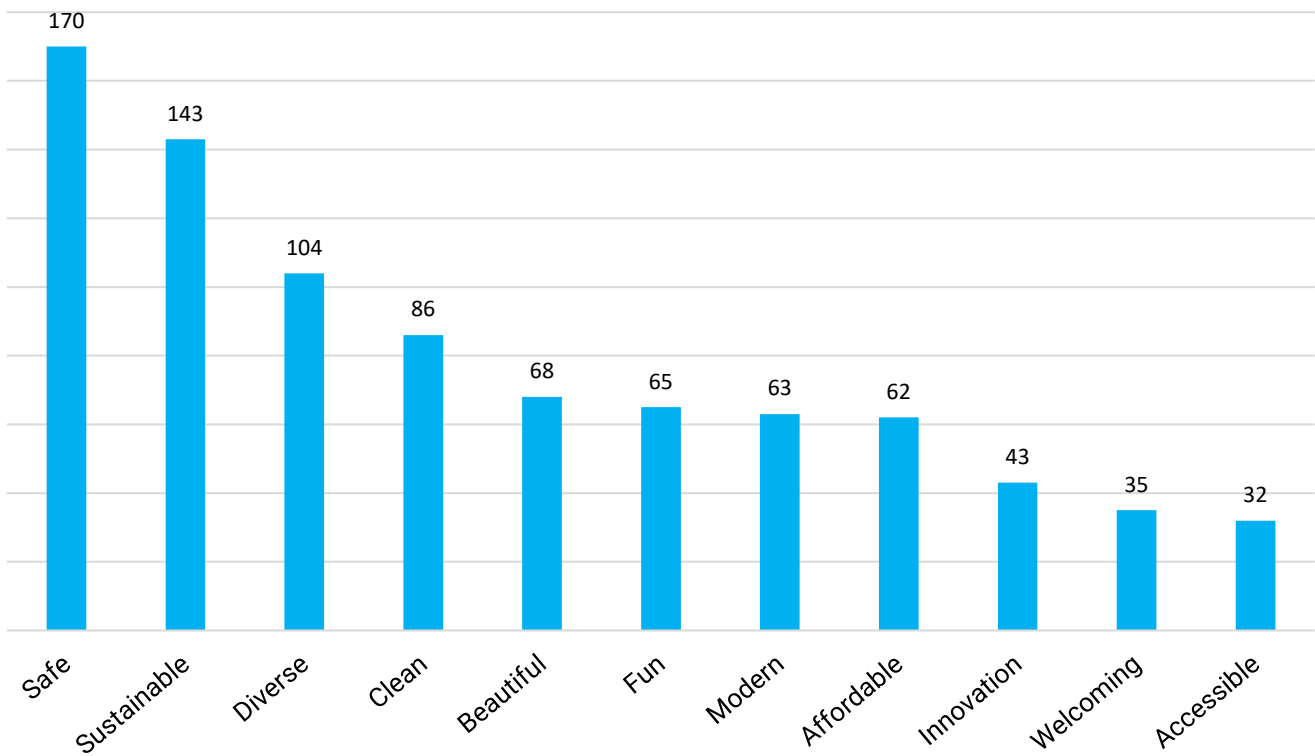
# Respondents' top three priorities for downtown to be more welcoming to kids, teens and young adults

- 63% of respondents indicated that offering free or low-cost events would make downtown more welcoming to kids, teens and young adults.



# Three words selected by respondents on their vision for downtown in ten years

- Safe, sustainable and diverse were the top three words selected by respondents.



A scenic view of the Chicago skyline across a river, with a bridge on the left and a modern building on the right. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Pop-up Events' is centered in white, with a red zigzag line below it.

# Pop-up Events





# Taste of Chicago in Humboldt Park

June 24, 2023

## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

600 total stickers placed ~200 participants

Affordable Housing Options – **114 Stickers**

Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **89 Stickers**

Reliable Public Transit – **62 Stickers**

Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **57 Stickers**

Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **56 Stickers**

Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **55 Stickers**

Grocery Store Options – **45 Stickers**

Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **43 Stickers**

Continuing Education Opportunities – **31 Stickers**

Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **26 Stickers**

Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **22 Stickers**



## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- There is a pressing need for opportunities for youth, including education and workforce development, as well as the need for cultural/social events. Mentoring programs should be explored as a way to connect with young Chicagoans.
- Improving the reliability of public transit creates equity for residents and enhances overall public safety.
- Considerable effort should be placed on increasing affordable housing to stem displacement in neighborhoods like Humboldt Park.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

“Chicago needs more reliable transit in Humboldt Park, and Hermosa, Belmont Cragin. There are no nearby trains in these densely packed, mostly Latino + Black, low-income communities.”

“More mental health resources. Homeless plan - living where there are resources. Trash pickup, more low-income housing and youth programming.”



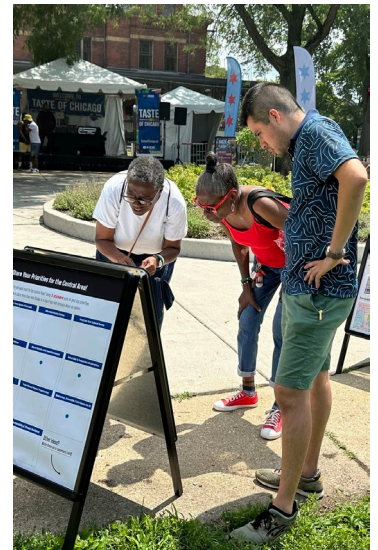
# Taste of Chicago in Pullman

July 15, 2023

## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

**342 total stickers placed ~114 participants**

- Affordable Housing Options – **71 Stickers**
- Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **41 Stickers**
- Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **40 Stickers**
- Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **37 Stickers**
- Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **29 Stickers**
- Reliable Public Transit – **29 Stickers**
- Grocery Store Options – **27 Stickers**
- Continuing Education Opportunities – **24 Stickers**
- Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **20 Stickers**
- Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **12 Stickers**
- Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **12 Stickers**



## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- People felt strongly about incorporating more youth-focused programming downtown and ensuring that youth have equitable access to programs, events and jobs. There should be a conscious effort to include youth voices in projects like these.
- Continuing to invest in free cultural events (such as Taste of Chicago) and bringing them outside of downtown bridges a gap in perception that downtown isn't for everyone.
- There are opportunities to build off projects such as the Red Line Extension Project to make public transit reliable and increase accessibility to downtown and opportunities.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

“Lack of parking downtown. The parking that is available is expensive and not accessible for people that do not live downtown.”

“Surprising that more people did not highlight a need to improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure.”





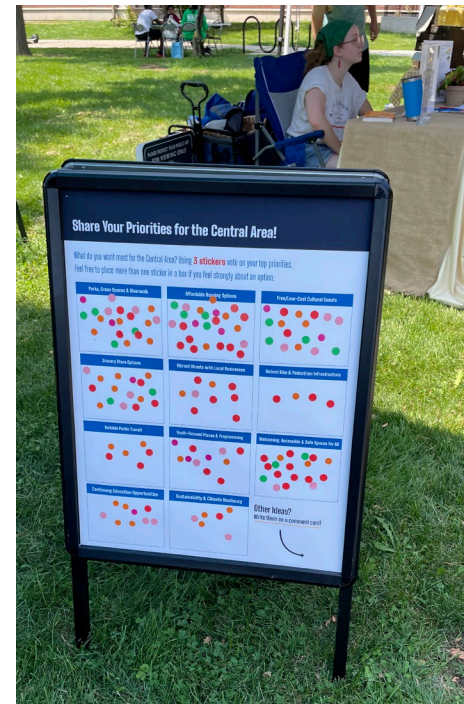
# Austin Town Hall Park City Market

July 27, 2023

## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

464 total stickers placed ~154 participants

- Affordable Housing Options – **43 Stickers**
- Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **33 Stickers**
- Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **28 Stickers**
- Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **26 Stickers**
- Grocery Store Options – **24 Stickers**
- Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **18 Stickers**
- Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **17 Stickers**
- Reliable Public Transit – **12 Stickers**
- Continuing Education Opportunities – **12 Stickers**
- Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **10 Stickers**
- Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **9 Stickers**



## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- There is a gap in the Central Area catering to older adults and those with disabilities; diversity in events throughout can help to invite those populations to visit the Central Area.
- Without affordable family housing, people are unable to live in the Central Area as most of the affordable units (and in general) are too small.
- Reducing the need for cars downtown helps clean the air from standstill traffic emissions and makes room for those that do need to use them.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

- “Stop the violence, put the guns down. Help each other more.”
- “Affordable multi-family units, not just studios or 1 bedrooms.”
- “More for adults to do downtown. More inviting for older adults. Increase variety of events.”
- “More auditory accessibility downtown for crossing intersections.”
- “More local lunch spots, reducing standstill traffic to reduce pollution.”
- “More public parking.”
- “Animal preserve (not a pound but a place where dogs and cats can roam free).”
- “More soul food restaurants. More sweets shops.”

# Summer Fair in Chinatown

July 29, 2023, pop-up led by CBCAC



## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

682 total stickers placed ~227 participants

- Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **125 Stickers**
- Affordable Housing Options – **88 Stickers**
- Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **81 Stickers**
- Reliable Public Transit – **80 Stickers**
- Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **61 Stickers**
- Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **55 Stickers**
- Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **52 Stickers**
- Grocery Store Options – **38 Stickers**
- Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **35 Stickers**
- Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **34 Stickers**
- Continuing Education Opportunities – **33 Stickers**



## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- There was consensus among visitors that it is a priority to improve public transportation for accessibility and better connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods outside of Chinatown.
- Many people mentioned a need to increase affordable housing options that include more opportunities for older adults to be able to age in place.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

“More outdoor public space to socialize, public restrooms.”

“New CTA train stations on the Green Line at Cermak and Morgan.”

“Expanding affordable housing options. Improving public transit access.”

“More public open spaces, more job opportunities, more frequent cultural events and festivals.”

“Expanded mixed-use, affordable housing options, better transit connectivity to other neighborhoods, more job opportunities.”

“More outdoor public space to socialize, attractive streetscapes and public art, improved public safety.”

“Better transit connectivity to other neighborhoods.”

“Pedestrian-only streets.”



# Silver Room Block Party in Hyde Park

July 30, 2023

## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

150 total stickers placed ~50 participants

- Affordable Housing Options – **26 Stickers**
- Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **20 Stickers**
- Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **18 Stickers**
- Continuing Education Opportunities – **17 Stickers**
- Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **12 Stickers**
- Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **12 Stickers**
- Grocery Store Options – **11 Stickers**
- Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **11 Stickers**
- Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **9 Stickers**
- Reliable Public Transit – **7 Stickers**
- Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **7 Stickers**



## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Increasing economic development incubators can help local small businesses start in and expand to beyond the Central Area.
- Support ambassadors who serve as holistic guides (providing mental health services, directional guides and promoters of visiting other Chicago neighborhoods).
- Increasing diversity for all to feel welcomed and safe in the Central Area with a focus on youth is needed.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

“Affordable rent prices for businesses.”

“Make Mag Mile and other main streets pedestrian only, improve public transit movement, and build concentrated boat tours.”

“People to help navigate transit and point things out as ambassadors for those traveling to other neighborhoods.”





# Silver Room Block Party in Hyde Park Continued

July 30, 2023



## COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

- “Promote tourism of other neighborhoods outside of the downtown.”
- “Consider impact of street and road closures, specifically construction.”
- “Improve safety to work to keep the businesses on the Mag Mile and to attract new businesses.”
- “More and better bike infrastructure because bikers can be aggressive on sidewalks
- “More police presence near the lakefront.”
- “Work to continue to improve amenities and cost for local businesses to want to open in the Central Area.”
- “More safe spaces so people can connect with downtown instead of going home after work.”
- “Millenium Park is more for tourism; we need a place where people can relate with local communities.”
- “Focus more on accessibility for downtown.”
- “More elevators and signage.”
- “Getting ramps for sidewalks.”
- “Accessible, free youth events that are educational and fun opportunities.”
- “Increase diversity of people, businesses and experiences.”
- “Continuing education opportunities as a method to work with youth that need work experience, housing and mentorship to move forward. Look into how we can create more stable, independent housing for youth.”

# Uptown Farmers Market

August 9, 2023



## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

**250 total stickers placed ~83 participants**

Affordable Housing Options – **43 Stickers**

Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **34 Stickers**

Reliable Public Transit – **34 Stickers**

Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **34 Stickers**

Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **22 Stickers**

Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **22 Stickers**

Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **19 Stickers**

Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **14 Stickers**

Continuing Education Opportunities – **11 Stickers**

Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **10 Stickers**

Grocery Store Options – **7 Stickers**

## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Increase sustainability by utilizing renewable energy for new developments and also having more markets that provide equitable food resources to Chicagoans within walking distance.
- Plan for more shared streets that can be multi-use for non-car activities. This makes it safer and easier for neighbors to want to walk and bike to the Central Area.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

- “More affordable grocery store options.”
- “Better streets for bicycles that includes paved, clean, free of debris, and protected.”
- “Mental health resources.”
- “More activities and programs for teenagers.”
- “Low-income housing for workforce.”
- “Affordable housing focused on helping homeless and people in unstable housing.”



# Sundays on State

August 13, 2023



## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

2,678 total stickers placed ~892 participants

### English Boards:

- Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **331 Stickers**
- Affordable Housing Options – **313 Stickers**
- Reliable Public Transit – **267 Stickers**
- Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **254 Stickers**
- Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **184 Stickers**
- Grocery Store Options – **182 Stickers**
- Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **162 Stickers**
- Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **144 Stickers**
- Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **139 Stickers**
- Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **127 Stickers**
- Continuing Education Opportunities – **110 Stickers**

### Spanish Boards:

- Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **9 Stickers**
- Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **6 Stickers**
- Grocery Store Options – **6 Stickers**
- Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **6 Stickers**
- Youth-Focused Places & Programming – **5 Stickers**
- Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **4 Stickers**
- Affordable Housing Options – **3 Stickers**
- Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **2 Stickers**
- Continuing Education Opportunities – **2 Stickers**
- Sustainability & Climate Resiliency – **2 Stickers**
- Reliable Public Transit – **1 Sticker**

# Sundays on State Continued



## Mandarin Boards:

Reliable Public Transit – **2 Stickers**

Welcoming, Accessible & Safe Spaces for All – **2 Stickers**

Parks, Green Spaces & Riverwalk – **1 Sticker**

Affordable Housing Options – **1 Sticker**

Free/Low-Cost Cultural Events – **1 Sticker**

Vibrant Streets with Local Businesses – **1 Sticker**

Robust Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure – **1 Sticker**

## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Building better public transit coverage throughout the Central Area to and from the South and West sides creates greater equity for all Chicagoans to experience downtown.
- Safety concerns have grown since the pandemic and there is a pressing need to consider the safety of everyone; CTA employees, homeless Chicagoans, refugees, residents, and visitors all need to be included in public safety considerations.
- Fun cultural activities at low-cost can be effective ways to highlight neighborhoods outside the Central Area while still serving as economic drivers for local downtown businesses and organizations.

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

- “Public transportation could have better coverage.”
- “Temporary safe housing for refugees.”
- “More well-lit open spaces to move around at night. More public safety.”
- “More dog-friendly areas and amenities and more green space.”
- “Please reinstate a streetcar or surface rail network planning process. Please do more pedestrian-oriented street festivals. Incorporate a bike grid.”
- “Follow NY and London congestion pricing for cars.”
- “I would like to see less anti-homeless architecture and more resources for housing and needs for those struggling with homelessness.”



# Sundays on State Continued

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

- “We need more fun and free activities. Good ambiance and vibes. Just missing more activities.”
- “We need a grocery store downtown. More places for kids outside and year-round, Halloween fest, juke jam, middle school supervised, etc. We need a youth sports league.”
- “In other dense city centers, there isn't public parking. It's ridiculous that we give so much land to parking. Implement congestion pricing for drivers downtown.”
- “More cultural events encompassing a wider range of ethnicities. More educational opportunities for young adults through visual/media/photography.”
- “Signage for public transit. More food options. Better wayfinding, especially on riverwalk, no "you are here" dot.”
- “More safety for everyone, civilians and CTA workers etc. The buses feel safer, make trains safer.”
- “Increase high-tech industry to bring innovative companies to Chicago.”
- Garbage/trash pickup should be a priority.”
- “West to North transit connections.”
- “Perceived barriers to exploring neighborhoods outside of downtown.”
- “Secure bike parking and affordable housing are needed.”
- “Dedicated, car-excluded bus lane. Bicycle lanes with no cars crossing to park.”





# 27<sup>th</sup> Ward Stay in School Event

August 26, 2023

## OVERALL RESULTS – SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES

561 total stickers placed ~187 participants

### 13 and Under Boards:

- Parks and Playgrounds – **42 Stickers**
- Eating and Shopping – **35 Stickers**
- Free Fun Events – **30 Stickers**
- More Bike Lanes – **21 Stickers**
- Activities to Learn and Explore – **19 Stickers**
- Bird and Bee-friendly Plants – **14 Stickers**
- More Buses and Trains – **10 Stickers**
- Comfortable Sidewalks – **8 Stickers**



## TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Public green spaces, cyclists
- Affordable housing and amenities, mental health
- More activities for youth

## COMMENTS RECEIVED

- “Impact of development on wildlife and the subsequent planning to have nature trails/areas for people and wildlife to coexist.”
- “Homelessness has increased in Chicago. There needs to be more affordable and low-income housing that has wrap-around services such as mental health, addiction, workforce development, etc.”
- “More affordable grocery store options.”
- “Better streets for cyclists and non-vehicular methods of transportation.”
- “Mental Health resources, affordable and accessible.”
- “More activities and programs after school and on the weekends for teenagers.”
- “Increase and improve the parks in the Central Area.”
- “For the most part, Grant Park is occupied year round.”
- “Shared bikes and scooter programs should have a docking system that does not allow them to be left lying around.”
- “Wayfinding signage, knowing how to get places based on street signage for example closest train station, how far you need to east to get to Millenium Park.”
- “More affordable grocery store options and in general shopping options such as TJ Maxx, Marshalls, Ross, Nordstrom Rack.”

A scenic view of the Chicago skyline across a river, featuring a bridge and lush greenery in the foreground. The text 'Open Houses' is overlaid in white, with a red zigzag line below it.

# Open Houses





# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023



## Housing & Neighborhoods

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Prioritize improving access points to lakeshore trails and transit from high-traffic areas, promoting a seamless urban experience for residents, workers, and visitors.
- Advocate for diverse housing options, emphasizing condos for families and opportunities for low- and middle-class wealth building.
- Encourage the development of missing middle housing, increased density, and the transformation of outdated retail spaces into smaller, more community-oriented services.
- Address the need for more parks with trees, seating, and spaces for people to linger without a purchase obligation.
- Promote pedestrian-friendly spaces by reducing car lanes, investing in reliable transit, and implementing traffic calming measures.

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### Assets:

- Riverfront
- The riverfront and lakefront walking paths are wonderful, and I use them year-round.
- World-Class City
- The city should recognize and encourage the revitalization of N. Michigan Ave. as a world-class destination for visitors, workers, and residents.

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Housing & Neighborhoods Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

#### Opportunities:

- Access
- More accessible access points to the lakeshore trail.
- Improve access to transit from high traffic areas (Millennium Park, Art Institute, Museum Campus, Soldier Field, etc...).
- Housing diversity
- More opportunities for low- and middle-classes to build wealth as opposed to concentrating wealth in mega-developments. More family-sized residential condo developments and less studio, 1-bed, 2-bed residential apartment developments
- Increase affordable housing. Increase access to high quality healthy affordable groceries. Increase affordable childcare/public schools. Why is there no affordable parking?
- It would be better to have a greater diversity of housing options. Not just microunits for young singles. We need condos for families and housing for older people
- Not more expensive studios for young professionals. Need more 3+ bedroom units to encourage families
- Density
- Missing middle housing. Increase density by right. Make it easier to build small
- Trails, parks, and services to support high density housing like in NYC. Need to demolish outdated large-scale retail and make spaces for smaller scale retail/services

#### Gaps:

- Green space
- There needs to be more parks with trees and seating.
- We need more spaces for people to linger and enjoy without needing to make a purchase.
- Cleanliness
- More trashcans - sealed not overflowing. Especially on Wabash south of Roosevelt. A don't litter pride campaign to give clean streets a value
- Services
- There needs to be more grocery stores around the Central Area beyond Target, which is expensive.
- Increase the diversity of retail and local businesses.

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023



## Housing & Neighborhoods Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

#### Challenges:

- Car dependency
- Fewer car lanes and more pedestrian-oriented spaces. More reliable transit access - the Loop is the center of the city; I should be able to get to places easily without a vehicle. Lower speeds, esp. on major roads like Ida B Wells.
- Traffic calming, effective bus rapid transit, convert surface parking lots to parks
- Affordability
- I can afford to live in the Central Area because I bought a house 12 years ago. It would be hard for me to afford it now. We need more affordable and flexible housing here.
- Safety
- Feeling safer when out walking. Improved safety at intersection there were no stop signs or traffic lights
- Better overall walkability is needed to help people and bikers feel safe on the streets.

## Economic Development

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Focus on expanding outdoor dining, closing streets, and creating open spaces like public plazas to foster community engagement and activities.
- Encourage economic growth through small business incubators, affordable co-working spaces, and attracting larger businesses with a focus on providing valuable services.
- Promote the establishment of more grocery stores, local shopping opportunities, and diverse retail options, particularly concentrating on smaller stores instead of large chains.
- Prioritize safety in the pedway, install brighter streetlights to enhance both safety and the overall aesthetic appeal of the urban environment.

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Economic Development Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### Assets:

- People-first infrastructure
- Expand outside dining in summer and closed streets
- Create more open space like public plazas for lunch and activities which are used a lot.

#### Opportunities:

- Safety
- Build safer bike lanes to get to and from work
- Create a nicer space under the trains that people can enjoy and feel safe around
- Business attraction
- More small business incubators.
- Affordable community co-working spaces
- Attract big business but charge them for worthwhile services
- Extended hours, especially in the winter

#### Gaps:

- Services
- We need more grocery stores
- More local shopping opportunities (clothes, etc.).
- More groceries and smaller stores vs concentrated chains. More restaurants closer to Wacker. More outdoor dining.
- Public bathrooms
- Transit signage
- Larger covered bus stops with working tracking information
- Better visibility of CTA train arrivals

#### Challenges:

- Safety
- Ensure safety in pedway and noise control of the street bands amplification
- Put in brighter streetlights



# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Land Use

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Prioritize pedestrian safety and movement by reducing street parking and traffic lanes and replacing car infrastructure with pedestrian, bike, and transit-friendly alternatives.
- Enhance connectivity by developing parkland and providing more access to the lakefront, especially during events.
- Emphasize the importance of cultural hubs like Chinatown and older buildings to incorporate elements of city history.
- Revitalize streets in the Loop with improved streetscapes, reduced parking, more trees, and renovated facades.
- Move away from costly car infrastructure, freeing up space for housing. Add more mixed housing, including affordable options, and hotels.

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### **Assets:**

- Walkability
- Most people moving around the Loop are on foot so we should prioritize their movement by increasing pedestrian safety infrastructure and reducing street parking and traffic lanes.
- Replace car infrastructure with pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure.
- Event space
- Use existing park space for programming (including riverwalk)
- Keep State Street alive, especially the south end. Sundays on State are great.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Variety
- Would be nice to have interesting small local businesses not just box chains
- Preservation
- Preservation of Chinatown is important
- Cultivate community/green space and protect older buildings to incorporate elements of city history.
- Gathering space
- Seating/gathering around Buckingham Fountain
- Make Solider Field into a festival venue to free up Grant Park.
- Audit
- Revenue analysis on a by-lot basis to see which are costing the City money. Opportunity cost. Immediately tax vacant lots more.



# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023



## Land Use Continued

### EXISTING CONDITIONS CONTINUED

#### Gaps:

- Green space
- Parks/nature/green spaces. More access to lakefront/public parks (often closed to residents due to events). Community-focused spaces
- More active uses in Grant Park. I spend a lot of time in Millennium Park. Grant Park, in contrast, feels closed off a lot of the year and there isn't much reason to go there.
- Develop park land (especially Northerly Island). Reimagine Loop. Printers Row – Pedestrianize streets. Better lakefront access, Maximize riverwalk possibilities
- Connection
- Connect 606 to lakefront path to make downtown more accessible by bike
- State Street from Grand to the river needs love. Streetscape, less parking, trees, renovated facades

#### Challenges:

- Pedestrian infrastructure
- It feels very unsafe to cross the highway as a pedestrian and cyclist
- I want to walk more in winter but it's cold. Skyways? Expand pedway system?
- Roosevelt Corridor. Less car oriented, better bike and ped development
- Move away from costly car infrastructure to transport that creates revenue for the city and frees up space for housing
- Add more mixed housing, including affordable, and hotels to LaSalle corridor

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Transportation & Infrastructure

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Focus on creating Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and protected bike lanes.
- Prioritize rush hour reliability for trains, dedicated bus lanes, and more frequent public transit options to make public transportation a faster and more attractive alternative to driving.
- Reimagine key roadways as pedestrian-friendly spaces and enhance infrastructure for safer highway crossings for bikes.
- Encourage new developments to contribute to the greenness of the streetscape.
- Establish a connected, protected bike network linking the loop and lakeshore.
- Establish CTA staff or trained ambassador services to assist passengers and enforce rules, ensuring a positive and safe transit experience for all.

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### Assets:

- Water Taxi
- Can the water taxi run year-round?

#### Opportunities:

- Reliability of transit
- Make BRT and protected bike lanes. Eliminate parking, especially on Halsted
- Rush hour reliability for trains and dedicated bus lanes
- If public transit gets people where they need to go faster than driving, they'll take it. More frequent trains and buses, dedicated bus lanes/streets
- Improve experience of buses. The bus routes, including express buses, slow to a crawl during rush hour. It's really an impediment to the Central Area.
- More modern up-to-date trains and buses that work in tune with modern sustainability practices to compete with international transportation systems like Japan/Europe.
- Consistent shelter and real time info on apps
- Safety
- Protected bike lanes
- CTA staff or trained ambassador service on trains to help people who need it and enforce rules, not cops

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Transportation & Infrastructure Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

#### Opportunities Continued:

- More heat lamps in train stations in the winter
- Green spaces
- Similar to how developments along the river are required to include public green space, all new developments should be required to improve the greenness of the streetscape. Too many buildings do not have any trees or greenery in front of them.
- Tactical urbanism
- Prototype early and often. Try things temporarily to get feedback on people's lived experiences rather than on their fears of change.

#### Gaps:

- Pedestrian and cyclist safety
- Convert all plastic bollards to concrete planters
- Reimagine parts of S. Columbus Drive and S. Lakeshore Drive that cut through Millennium, Maggie Daley and Grant Parks as pedestrian-friendly spaces and not thoroughfares.
- Needs safer ways to cross highway (90/94) for bikes, there is no westbound bike lane between Randolph and Van Buren
- Better lighting in underpasses
- Fix broken sidewalks
- Connectivity
- Protected bike network, connect the loop and lakeshore
- Outer edge parking and then walk or bike or transit the rest of the way in

#### Challenges:

- Car volume
- Along Michigan Avenue, take delivery vehicles off during the day. Too much illegal parking.
- Safety
- Feeling safe on the trains, I don't take the red line after dark.



# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Public Health & Safety

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Expand existing programs like the Chicago Loop Alliance's Street Ambassador Program and promote unarmed ambassador programs.
- Create city-wide options for young residents, focusing on safety, recreation, and learning without heavy reliance on law enforcement.
- Promote pedestrianized areas, increased density of amenities, and convenient access to daily necessities.
- Introduce transit ambassadors to assist individuals in need of social services and enforce basic rules, fostering a safe and comfortable transit experience.
- Focus on improving cleanliness, especially around transit stations, to create a more welcoming environment.
- Address the perception of safety disparities among different groups, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all ages and disability levels.

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### **Assets:**

- Uplift existing organizations
- Expand programs like Chicago Loop Alliance's Street Ambassador Program.
- Unarmed ambassador programs like Corridor Ambassador Program and Chicago Loop Alliance Ambassadors.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Resources for all
- Finding safe housing for our unhoused neighbors
- House the houseless
- Provide public health (including mental health) and housing resources to get more people off the streets without resorting to disciplining them, without giving them a safe, stable place to go.
- We need much more investment in social services, non-profits, and publicly funded options.
- Programming
- Offering city-wide options for our young residents where their needs for safety, recreation, and learning are met every day
- Less reliance on CPD and more social services outreach from organizations that don't use the police.
- Long-term partnerships that educate and facilitate a positive, safe, and inclusive environment for all.



# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023



## Public Health & Safety Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

#### Opportunities Continued:

- Bring more people downtown
- Encouraging office occupancy is necessary to re-animate downtown which is 70% office by square footage. Planning for residential conversions will not solve the problem of downtown vitality by itself.

#### Gaps:

- Public health for all
- Benches/seating - oftentimes they are limited in parks and shopping areas.
- Water fountains
- Mental health mobiles (like food trucks)
- Safe and dignified housing for our unhoused neighbors.
- Reduce focus on automobiles, which is one of our biggest health hazards (accidents, pollution, global warming, economic impact of loss of green and blue space, reduced pedestrian space)
- Public bathrooms and water fountains
- Pedestrian safety
- Sidewalks are narrow in some places; you notice it when it gets crowded.
- Bollards along sidewalks on Michigan Ave. and State St. - like around federal courts
- More stores and active places for "eyes on the streets"
- Cap the highways and congestions pricing.
- Remove the lakefront highway.

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023



## Public Health & Safety Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

#### Gaps Continued:

- Elevator to riverwalk from Wacker
- More pedestrianized areas and an increase in density of amenities like grocery stores, medical facilities, and anything folks need to live their lives. Anything someone needs should be within a 10-minute walk and that walk should be safe and convenient. Anything that reduces vehicle pollution and incentivizes physical activity.
- Public transit safety
- Safe, clean, no smoking transit
- Good lighting and sidewalks
- Texting hotline to discreetly report issues on CTA trains and buses.
- Train/bus mental health ambassadors to help without involving cops. City of Denver has something like that.
- Transit ambassadors (unarmed) to help people in need of social services and enforce basic rules (smoking, laying down across seats, defecating etc.).

#### Challenges:

- Cleanliness, especially near L stations
- Perception of safety
- If a neighborhood, like the Loop, or a street like State Street, feels unsafe to visitors and residents, they'll start avoiding it which creates a cycle - the "broken window" effect.
- An identity that is based on the residents and not the needs/desires of tourists.
- Feeling of safety for all ages/disability levels
- Recognizing that downtown visitors and workers often have different perceptions of the city's safety from those of residents and that police presence and the optical signals of safety often speak to them and impact their perceptions of safety disproportionately.

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Arts & Entertainment

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Encourage diverse programming, including sports facilities, playgrounds, and public art installations west of Millennium/Grant Park.
- Foster cultural events showcasing diversity, including movies in different languages and performances from various countries.
- Improve communication through electronic street-level billboards for public notices.
- Address affordability concerns by introducing more deals geared towards locals, making cultural and recreational events more accessible to a broader audience.
- Promote smaller-scale events, such as lunchtime concerts and weeknight activities, catering to a variety of interests and talents.

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### **Assets:**

- Utilize existing places
- Shuttles to Northerly Island for events or more buses to that area.
- Utilize Grant Park as an event holding space and less of an empty green space.
- Flea market at Grant Park, farmers market at Grant Park
- Let's cover Grant Park pavement with fields, courts, and playgrounds.
- More programming and activations west of Millennium/Grant Park. Always could use more public art.

#### **Opportunities:**

- More amenities for downtown
- Provide equipment/spaces for different sports like soccer or badminton.
- Bike repair equipment
- More interactive street art, smaller/more prevalent art attractions (pop-ups)
- Spray painting/graffiti events
- More street festivals and more events
- Free live music
- Events on State Street
- Cultural-focused events, showing movies in Spanish, singers from different countries.
- No easy access to sports areas from the Loop
- Events celebrating the diversity of the City don't often take place centrally.
- Smaller concert venues, small scale festivals over lunch to bring workers out of their offices
- More weeknight events through the summer
- Events showcasing and catering to talent from the south and west sides.



# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023



## Arts & Entertainment Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

#### Gaps:

- Food
- Cheaper food that isn't fast food. Street food, food trucks, neighborhood food halls.
- Public market that is open every day like in Baltimore and Seattle
- Communications
- Public notice on the electronic street level billboards
- Accessibility
- Some events are not accessible (ADA). Create more accessible pathways for people to use and have more rapid transit available

#### Challenges:

- Affordability
- Can be prohibitively expensive. More deals geared toward locals would always be welcome.
- Safety
- Feel unsafe locking up my bike/riding in unprotected bike lanes
- Expensive Ubers and problems with ghost buses/trains
- Better and more reliable late night CTA options.
- Protected bike lanes to safely get to/from venues late at night



# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Lifelong Learning

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Focus on diversifying class options, particularly during nights and weekends to provide options for working adults, youth, and seniors.
- Prioritize community-based youth programming to provide accessible and inclusive educational options.
- Explore opportunities to showcase and blend neighborhood cultures in the central area through learning programs.
- Improve access to information about available programs to make educational opportunities more transparent.
- Highlight the need for long-term investments in community access and resources, particularly for at-risk youth.

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### **Assets:**

- Existing programs
- Need more free- or low-cost educational programs for retired persons/seniors; Oakton Community College and Northwestern have programs.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Expand programs
- More opportunities for continuing education, such as providing a diversity of night and weekend classes at Howard Washington Library.
- Community based youth programming (not privatized)
- You Media for seniors and grownups
- Cultural exchange
- Opportunities to showcase and blend neighborhood cultures in the Central Area through learning opportunities.
- Programs that bridge non-traditional (after K-12th) options to good quality, paid jobs

#### **Gaps:**

- Access
- Hard to enroll in community college courses as a working adult. Unclear process.
- Lack of transit access to South and West side communities, and from underserved neighborhoods
- Better access to information on available programs
- Later weekend hours - 6pm or 7pm

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023

## Lifelong Learning Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED CONTINUED

#### Challenges:

- Investment
- Long term investments in real Chicago community access and resources to at-risk youth
- More access to music education/tools. Harold Washington Library has the only free practice rooms with pianos
- Free admission/outreach for neighborhoods



## Environment, Climate, & Energy

### TAKEAWAYS + THEMES

- Add more green energy infrastructure and help existing developments incorporate them.
- Promote the creation of pocket parks and encourage the development of native habitats to support local wildlife, like the riverfront
- Embrace electronic micro-mobility options like e-bikes and scooters to reduce reliance on traditional vehicles.
- Implement protected bike lanes to encourage alternative transit methods and connect the Central Area to other trails.

# Open House at Harold Washington Library

May 23, 2023



## Environment, Climate, & Energy Continued

### COMMENTS RECEIVED

#### Assets:

- Existing development improvements
- Support existing buildings to find capital to decarbonize and ensure any requirements to do so are spread across all energy users
- Solar panels or windmills on roofs and green roofs
- Develop a cost-effective way for multi-unit residences to compost food waste.

#### Opportunities:

- Infrastructure
- Add more green energy infrastructure.
- Electric charging stations for EVs.
- More free water fountains (the ones with bottle fillers)
- Make all pavement porous to allow rainwater to flow into soil

#### Gaps:

- Greenery
- More trees to reduce heat island effect
- More dedicated green space with purposes like lunch for workers or athletic recreation
- Add more parks, green spaces, and pocket parks along/near streets. More native habitat for our animal/bird friends. Promote "no mow" spaces.
- Rethink boulevards, move beyond the bland grass only concept. Add native plants, add walking paths, create pocket parks and plazas.

#### Challenges:

- Car pollution
- Protected bike lanes to encourage transit that isn't cars.
- Encourage and embrace electronic micro mobility, E-bikes, scooters, etc.



# **Open House at Cultural Center**

December 6, 2023

**Engagement Summary  
To Be Added**