To: 3633 N. California Development Team
From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group
Date: 07.27.21

Thank you for taking the time to present your proposed design for 3633 N. California Avenue to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force development review working group on June 29, 2021. The presentation provided task force members with an overview of the most current iteration of the development and riverfront site plan, and highlighted the project's efforts to meet The Chicago River Design Guidelines menu of improvements criteria.

Following the development team's presentation there was a 'Q & A' session that allowed for Task Force members to highlight specific areas of the plan, ask clarifying questions, and provide general feedback. The following comments are representative of the group's feedback and include written responses and verbal input from meeting participants. These comments are organized around each of the three major criteria within the design guidelines menu of improvements: nature, recreation, and connectivity.

3633 N. California and River Edge Development on the North Branch
This proposed development is on a large seven acre riverfront parcel and will include 269 dwelling units and 391 parking spaces. What is ultimately constructed has the potential to set an example for future riverfront developments along the north branch. While this site may appear isolated or bypassed because of the ComEd property to the south and Riverview Bridge to the north, this is not the case, and it in fact represents an opportunity to make bold statements about how development, recreation, and robust riverine habitats can coexist.

Nature
The Chicago River Design Guidelines list multiple improvement items under the Nature menu, but three are elevated to priority status; New Naturalized Shoreline, Aquatic Wildlife Habitats, and Stormwater Best Management Practices. There is potential for this project to create New Naturalized Shoreline and Aquatic Wildlife Habitats simultaneously. While the development team presented a plan to repair and replace the existing sloped rip-rap shoreline, this task force stresses the need for creative solutions to meet the design guidelines. Existing vegetation on the shoreline is important habitat and care should be taken to retain healthy vegetation throughout the construction process. Potential strategies that prioritize habitat include replacing rip-rap with 'softer' systems such as emergent wetlands, vegetated shelves, naturalized shorelines, and submerged habitats. Layered vegetation must also be implemented to maximize on-shore habitat for birds and other wildlife. This includes creating a planting plan that not only includes a shrub layer but also a robust understory layer. Removing non-native plants and maintaining larger native trees should be paired with a layered native planting strategy as laid out in the design guidelines planting recommendations. A member of the task force, Urban Rivers, has also volunteered to connect with the development team to discuss ways to reuse trees in-stream to further enhance aquatic wildlife habitat.

The post presentation discussion briefly touched on proposed stormwater management strategies for the development. It is the task force's understanding that this project will fall under the city's sustainable development review process and the department of water management stormwater review. Stormwater management is especially important for projects located directly adjacent to the river, and the project team should work with city agencies to not only meet sustainability requirements and best management practices but exceed them. For instance, the design team could pledge no net increase in salt deposition in the river from runoff. The proposed development site plans show large paved surfaces and roof coverage that have the potential to create a significant amount of runoff during storm events. It is important for the development team and reviewers to implement stormwater best management practices. If water is being directed into the river

untreated, systems should be designed to consider velocity and water temperature. If water is filtering through rain gardens or swales, a robust maintenance and monitoring plan should be implemented to track plant health, salt immersion, and permeability. Paved surfaces within the development should be permeable paving where possible, and an alternative to salt should be considered for winter maintenance.

Recreation

The proposal aligns with many of the recreation menu items laid out in the River Front Design Guidelines. Because of the sloping shoreline and the site's adjacency to other recreation areas (Horner Park and River Park) a new river access point and kayak/canoe launch would be ideally located within the development. There is also considerable potential for additional river edge open space along the project's 'central alley' which could help to more clearly delineate it as public space. Incorporating these strategies would increase the recreation potential of the river's edge and the design guidelines can be referred to for additional information.

An often overlooked consideration for recreation space is when and how public access is controlled. Preventing public spaces from becoming 'public' in name only is integral in maximizing riverfront accessibility. In coordination with the City it should be clear if the public space is restricted to park district hours, or delineated between unlimited through access and restricted stationary access. It is also important to note that the riverfront is to be 'free and clear' and no gates should be installed to restrict access.

Connectivity

As noted above in the recreation section, an important aspect of connectivity is public access. There are opportunities to provide additional open space around the fringes of the development and along the 'central alley' to increase connectivity for public access. Because this site is adjacent to the Riverview Bridge crossing the river and bordered by two major roadways it will likely be a point of convergence for pedestrians, residents, and cyclists. The development team should carefully consider how this interaction takes place and implement precise signage and wayfinding strategies to alleviate the potential for collisions. The site should be easily visible and welcoming to the public, and signage should direct public access to the site from Addison and California.

Additional Feedback

Again, thank you for taking the time to present to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group. Your proposal is a meaningful step towards enhancing the riverfront from both a land and river perspective. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback early in the design process and look forward to the ongoing community outreach process for the project. Your consideration of the spirit of the Riverfront Design Guidelines is admirable, and we hope that implementing the above recommendations can be mutually beneficial for the development team, community residents, and the river itself. We welcome the opportunity for feedback, offer our services in the future, and look forward to your responses.

Thank you,

River Ecology Governance Task Force
Development Review Group