

NEAR WEST SIDE

Area Land Use Plan

July 2000



CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
Christopher R. Hill, Commissioner

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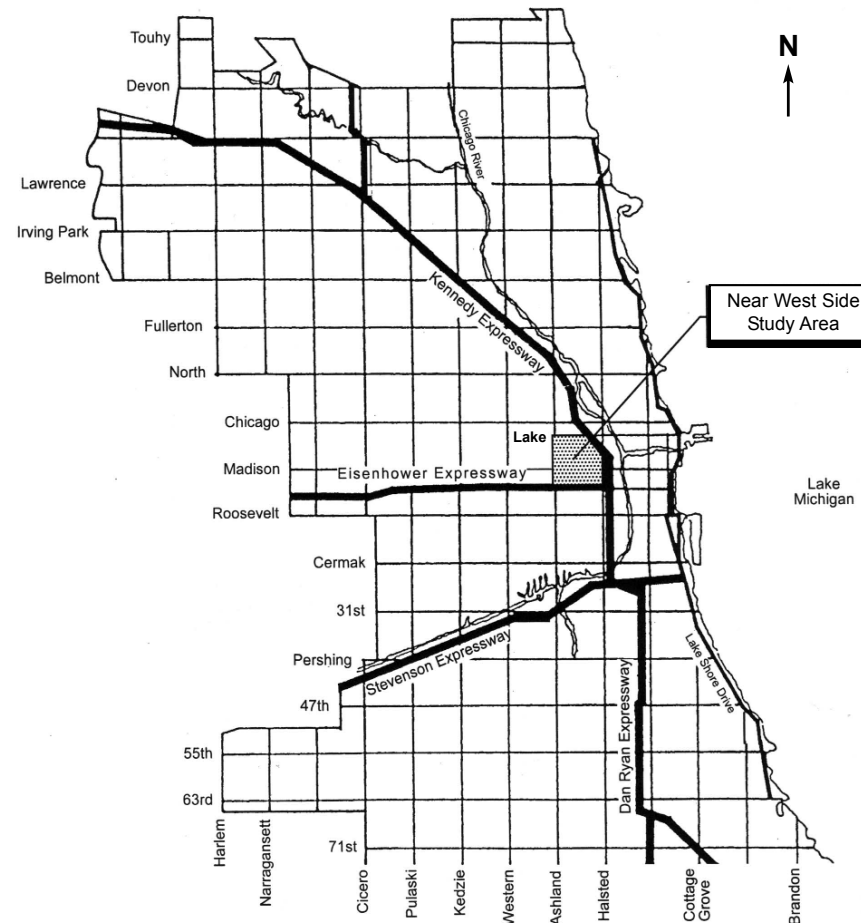
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NEAR WEST SIDE

NEAR WEST SIDE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

NEAR WEST SIDE

Introduction:

The following is a comprehensive Area Land Use Plan for the Near West Side of Chicago. The Plan encompasses approximately **88** city blocks bounded by Lake Street on the north, the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) on the south, the Kennedy Expressway (I-90/94) on the east, and Ashland Avenue on the west.

The Area Land Use Plan is presented in a summary format. Its planning and design recommendations are conceptual, and intended to identify opportunities for improving the Near West Side's land use mix, physical conditions, and transportation system.

City Team:

The Plan was prepared for the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) by the following consultant team:

The Lakota Group

(Planners, Urban Designers, Landscape Architects)

Campbell Tiu Campbell

(Planners, Architects, Construction Managers)

Okrent Associates

(Planners, Communications Specialists)

Metro Transportation Group

(Transportation Planners & Engineers)

The study was funded through DPD's Planning Now program with assistance from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Additional funding for the expanded transportation and transit analysis was provided by the West Loop Gate Association through a grant from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Participants:

The following agencies, organizations, and individuals provided input during the planning process:

- **Alderman Walter Burnett Jr., 27th Ward.**
- **Chicago Department of Planning and Development.**
- **University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).**
- **West Loop Gate Association.**
- **West Central Association.**
- **Randolph/Fulton Market Merchants Association.**
- **Greektown Special Service Area Commission.**
- **Jackson Boulevard Historic District Association.**
- **Chicago Transit Authority (CTA).**
- **Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT).**
- **Chicago Public Schools (CPS).**
- **Chicago Park District.**
- **Local residents, business owners, and property owners.**

BACKGROUND

Mission:

The Near West Side is a mixed-use area containing a wide range of commercial, industrial, institutional, and residential uses. It is located adjacent to Downtown Chicago. Many of its businesses, restaurants, and institutions serve the larger City and region as well as Downtown and the Near West Side.

While the area continues to develop due to its proximity to Downtown and excellent transportation system, rapid residential development, conflicting land uses, unattractive and deteriorating streetscape, traffic congestion, and limited parking are impacting its overall character and quality of life. After a long period of stagnation and a reputation as Chicago's "Skid Row", the Near West Side is now experiencing "growing pains".

Many of the area's residents and business owners have a strong loyalty to the Near West Side. They feel that its active, mixed-use and low density character should be preserved wherever possible.

In response to the need to take a comprehensive approach toward improving the Near West Side and guiding its future development, the City engaged the Lakota team to identify area needs and craft the Area Land Use Plan presented in this report.

Community Organizations:

Currently, seven community organizations serve the needs of local residents, businesses, and institutions:

- West Loop Gate Association.
- West Central Association.
- Greektown Special Service Area Commission.
- Greektown Chamber of Commerce.
- Randolph/Fulton Market Merchants Association.
- Jackson Boulevard Historic District Association.
- Industrial Council of Northwest Chicago.

Several of these organizations have overlapping service boundaries, specifically West Central and West Loop Gate. As a result, several businesses and institutions are members of both organizations.

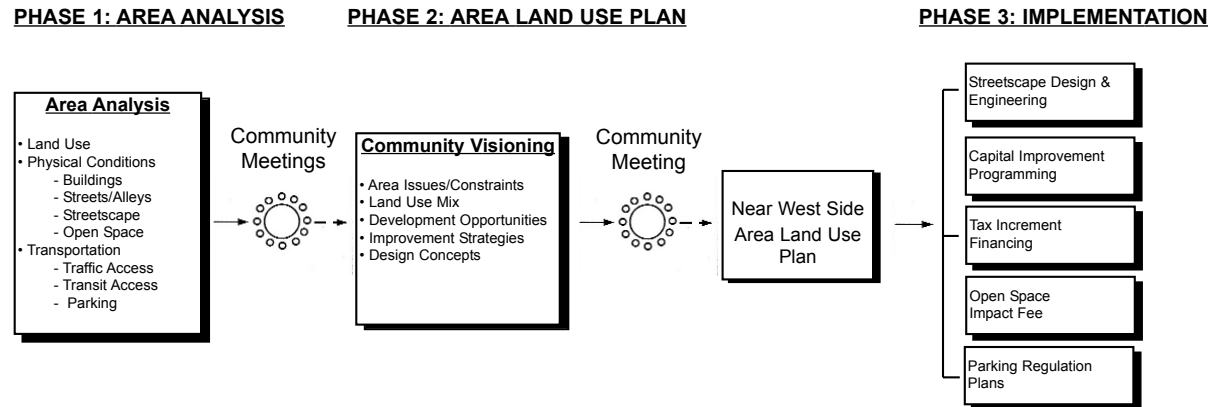
There is a need to continue to develop collaborative relationships between community organizations, residents, businesses, property owners, and institutions. West Loop Gate and West Central have established cross membership of their boards to further this effort.

NEAR WEST SIDE

PLANNING PROCESS

The Near West Side planning process involved:

- an assessment of the area's land use, physical conditions, and transportation.
- research meetings and interviews with the Alderman, DPD, CTA, CDOT, Chicago Public Schools, and area business/property owners.
- three workshops with the Alderman, DPD, local organizations, institutions, residents, and business/property owners to generate input on area issues and opportunities.
- meetings with the Alderman, DPD, and community to review the study's findings and preliminary land use strategy.
- a community meeting to present the draft Area Land Use Plan for public comment.



INTRODUCTION

PLANNING GOALS

The following goals were generated and refined during the planning process:

- The Near West Side Area Land Use Plan should be used as a long-range guide to foster area improvements and guide public and private sector redevelopment activities.
- A comprehensive rather than piecemeal or site specific approach should be taken toward planning for the Near West Side.
- A range of land use and transportation options should be considered to address the community's sub-areas, developing blocks, underdeveloped sites, and vacant land. These options may include neighborhood-level retail and service uses, office uses, industrial uses, residential uses, cultural facilities, open space, and parking.
- The Area Land Use Plan should encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings and new development consistent with the area's loft district character.
- The Near West Side's physical conditions should be improved with streetscape elements that enhance its commercial and residential viability.
- The Area Land Use Plan should emphasize the need to "clean and green" the overall area, especially its expressway "edges" and the Randolph Market District.
- The Plan should emphasize and build upon the area's unique mix of uses, numerous positive aspects, and major activity generators.



Greektown District



Industrial Building Converted to Residential

NEAR WEST SIDE

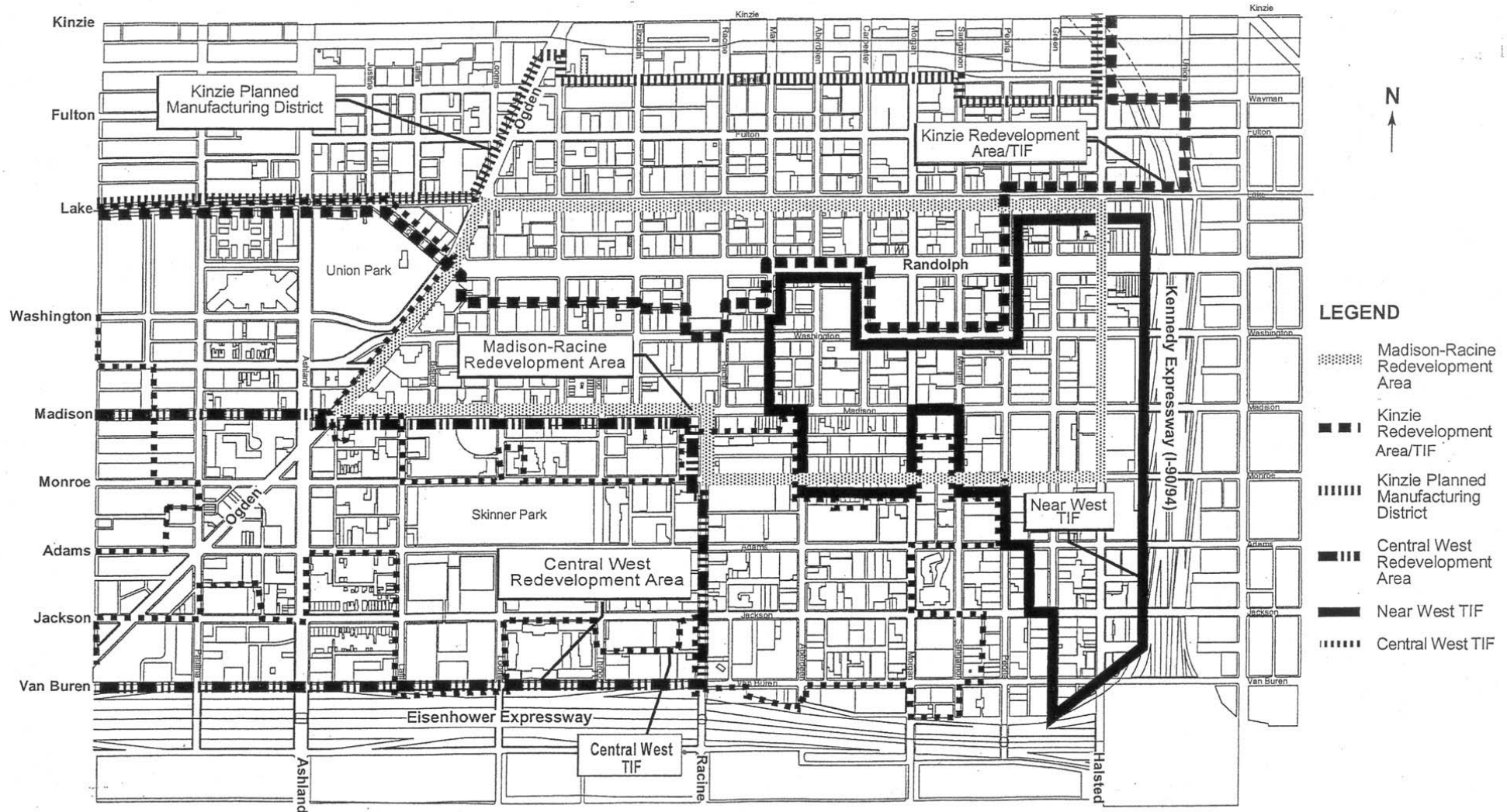
PLANNING INITIATIVES

During the past 30 years, the Near West Side has been the focus of numerous planning and revitalization studies. The scope of these studies has ranged from area-wide conservation assessments to transportation initiatives. The predominant focus of these documents, which are listed below, was the preservation of the Randolph Market and the need to create a livable mixed-use community within the area. Each of these studies was reviewed to determine their relevance to the area's current issues. Recommendations from these studies which were still applicable today were incorporated into the Area Land Use Plan. A summary of each document is provided in the Appendix.

- **Central West Redevelopment Plan**
(Chicago Department of Urban Renewal, 1969)
- **Madison-Racine Redevelopment Plan**
(Department of Urban Renewal, 1979)
- **West Loop Adaptive Reuse Analysis**
(Hasbrouck Peterson Associates, 1983)
- **West Loop Task Force Report**
(Chicago Central Area Committee, 1985)
- **Real Estate Market Trends Affecting Chicago's Near West Side**
(Applied Real Estate Analysis, 1988)
- **Corridors of Industrial Opportunity**
(Department of Planning & Development, 1992)
- **Near West Redevelopment Project Area Tax Increment Finance Program**
(former Madison-Racine TIF, 1989)
(Department of Planning & Development, 1994)
- **Chicago Food Wholesaling Market Districts: Revitalization Feasibility Study**
(Department of Planning & Development, 1995)
- **Randolph Street Market Planning Report**
(Okrent Associates, 1995)
- **Strategic Plan for Kinzie Industrial Corridor**
(Industrial Council of Northwest Chicago, 1996)
- **Central West Redevelopment Project Area Tax Increment Financing District**
(Department of Planning & Development, October 1999)
- **Kinzie Industrial Corridor Transportation Plan/Program (Draft)**
(Barton-Aschman Associates, 1997)
- **Kinzie Planned Manufacturing District**
(Department of Planning & Development, 1998)
- **Kinzie Industrial Conservation Area Tax Increment Redevelopment Plan and Project**
(Camiros, 1998)
- **Transit Oriented Development Plans at Selected CTA Green Line Stations**
(Camiros, Campbell Tiu Campbell, 1998)
- **Real Estate Needs Assessment for the Randolph/Fulton Market Area**
(Arthur Andersen, 2000)

INTRODUCTION

PLANNING INITIATIVES



NEAR WEST SIDE

NEAR WEST SIDE PLAN

AREA ANALYSIS

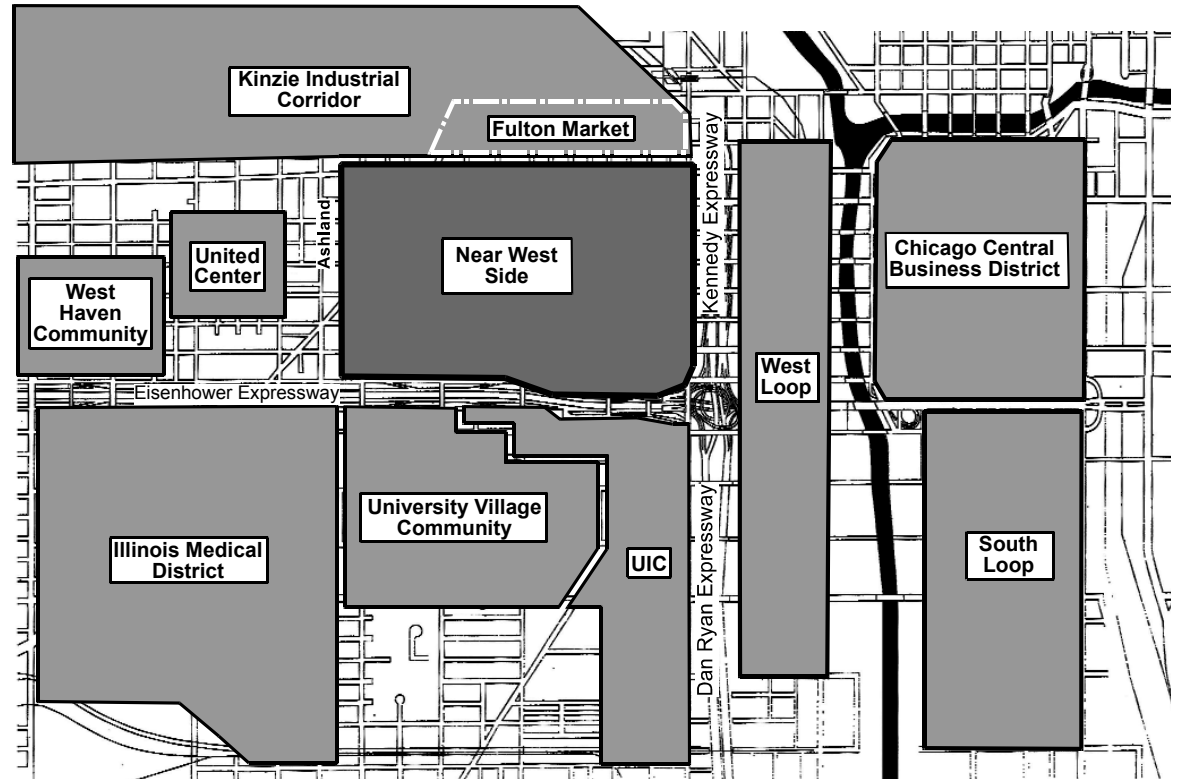
NEAR WEST SIDE

AREA CONTEXT

The Near West Side is a unique community with active industrial, commercial, institutional, and residential uses. It contains **88** blocks (**496** acres) and is surrounded by:

- the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and Illinois Medical District (IMD) on the south;
- the United Center sports stadium and West Haven Community on the west;
- the Fulton Market and Kinzie Industrial Corridor on the north; and
- Chicago's Central Business District on the east.

The Kennedy and Eisenhower Expressways are major physical boundaries on the east and south sides of the study area.



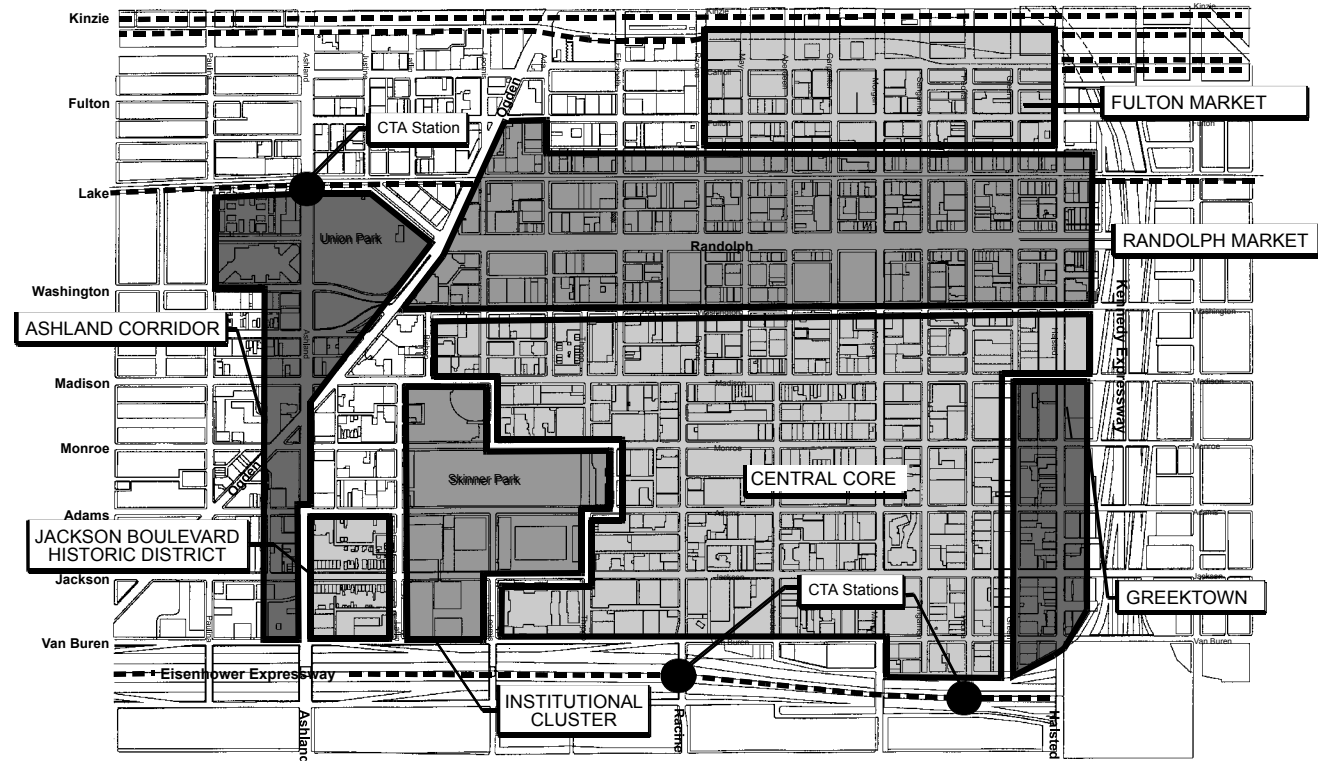
AREA ANALYSIS

SUB-AREAS/DISTRICTS

The Near West Side has several distinct land use sub-areas or character districts based on physical characteristics and development patterns. These sub-areas include:

- **Randolph and Fulton Markets:** (between Kinzie, Randolph, Kennedy Expressway, and Ashland).
- **Greektown:** (between Madison, Eisenhower Expressway, Kennedy Expressway, and Green).
- **Central Core:** (between Madison, Eisenhower Expressway, Green, and Elizabeth).
- **Institutional Cluster:** (between Madison, Eisenhower Expressway, Elizabeth, and Laflin).
- **Jackson Boulevard Historic District:** (between Adams, Van Buren, Laflin, and Ashland).
- **Ashland Corridor:** (along Ashland between Lake and Eisenhower Expressway).

The area's mixed-use character creates significant physical transitions at several locations between residential, commercial, and industrial blocks. For example, the dated facades of some of the industrial buildings on the north side of Randolph differ dramatically from the improved commercial and multi-story residential buildings along the south side of the street. The attractive historic residential homes along Jackson between Ashland and Laflin are dramatically different from the large scale of older buildings along Ashland and the large institutional uses to the east.



NEAR WEST SIDE

Randolph and Fulton Market:

The Randolph and Fulton Markets are primarily an industrial/commercial sub-area along the northern edge of the Near West Side. Wholesale produce and meat packing facilities have historically been located in the markets.

Sub-area features/issues include:

- one to four story buildings.
- buildings located close to the street.
- a congested street network, especially for trucks.
- the CTA Green Line along Lake Street and CTA station at Ashland.
- limited open/green space.
- limited parking for employees and/or visitors.
- chaotic and deteriorating business signage.
- deteriorated buildings, lighting, paving, and sidewalks.

A few older loft buildings in the Markets have been recently converted to residential use. Randolph near Halsted has also begun to develop as a popular new restaurant row.

Greektown:

The Greektown sub-area is the symbolic heart of the Greek community within Chicago and is comprised of several restaurants and businesses located primarily along Halsted between Madison and the Eisenhower Expressway. Greektown is a recognized tourist destination for the City and attracts large numbers of visitors annually to its businesses and festivals.

Sub-area features/issues include:

- Greek businesses and restaurants.
- low rise and mid-rise buildings.
- attractive architecture.
- attractive streetscape along the east side of Halsted, which is under development pressure, with identity gateways, decorative paving, lighting, benches, fencing, and plantings.
- excellent access via the Expressways and the CTA Blue Line along the Eisenhower Expressway.
- large parking lots along Halsted.
- expressway frontage.
- uncertain future use of the large Chicago Christian Industrial League social services complex located at Halsted and Monroe.

Greektown has experienced several improvements in recent years, including streetscape enhancements along Halsted, which have helped to further activate the area. Several developments are planned for the parking lots along the Kennedy Expressway, including 300 condominiums, a large grocery store, drug store, bank, and parking garage.

Central Core:

This sub-area is a mixed-use district containing a strong concentration of residential, office, and industrial uses. Located in the center of the Near West Side it provides good access to Downtown, the Expressways, and surrounding commercial and cultural districts.

Much of the residential population in the sub-area has developed in the last five years as former industrial buildings have been converted to residential loft condominiums and apartments.

Sub-area features/issues include:

- low to mid-rise buildings.
- more intensive uses along Van Buren and the Eisenhower Expressway.
- limited open/green space.
- excellent access to the Eisenhower Expressway and transit via the CTA Blue Line.
- attractive streetscape along Madison, and Randolph.
- lack of streetscape improvements along Adams, Jackson, and Van Buren.
- some neighborhood oriented commercial uses at the base of some residential buildings.
- a lack of neighborhood commercial uses to serve the growing residential population.
- infill housing of various densities and types.
- some vacant and underutilized industrial/commercial buildings/lots.

AREA ANALYSIS

Institutional Cluster:

Several large institutional uses are clustered in the southwest corner of the Near West Side study area:

- Whitney Young High School
- Skinner Elementary School
- Skinner Park
- Chicago Police Academy
- Chicago 911 Emergency Response Center

Sub-area features/issues include:

- large modern buildings.
- large community open space.
- attractive landscaping around the High School and Park.
- lack of parking.
- significant street crossings by pedestrians.
- a need for a new elementary school campus.

Jackson Boulevard Historic District:

The Jackson Boulevard Historic District, which is located between the Ashland Corridor and Whitney Young High School, contains a concentration of single family homes and townhouses located along Jackson and Adams between Ashland and Laflin.

Many homes were built in the late 1800's and share complementary architectural styles, building setbacks, heights, and massing.

Sub-area features/issues include:

- New in-fill townhouse development has occurred on vacant and/or deteriorated parcels.
- Attractive street trees and decorative fencing are located along Jackson.
- Parking is a problem for District residents and visitors.
- lack of convenient neighborhood commercial uses.

Ashland Corridor:

The Ashland Corridor is located along Ashland between Lake and the Eisenhower Expressway. Office, commercial, institutional, residential, and open space uses are located along the Corridor.

Sub-area features/issues include:

- Union Park, which is a large community open space, at the north end.
- significant vehicular traffic along Ashland with direct access to the Eisenhower Expressway.
- transit access to the CTA Green Line via a station at Lake.
- deteriorating streetscape.
- uncertain future use of the large Salvation Army social service complex located at Ashland and Monroe.
- uninviting pedestrian atmosphere.
- transit access to the Blue Line at Van Buren.

NEAR WEST SIDE

LAND USE

The Near West Side is comprised of approximately **496** acres of land including streets, alleys, and CTA rights-of-way. Within this total, approximately **317** acres of land is developed and **6.22** acres or **270,900** square feet of land is vacant (**1.2%**).

There are approximately **88** blocks within the Near West Side. Uses are mixed throughout the area from block to block, with the Randolph Market containing mostly industrial properties.

The Near West Side has historically been an industrial district with small residential blocks located mostly to the west near Ashland. This land use pattern has changed dramatically in the past five years as residential, office, and commercial uses have developed on many of its blocks. The increasing density from this rapid new development is perceived as “overwhelming” by some businesses, residents, and institutions.

The area’s overall density potential based on existing zoning, especially in the Halsted and Ashland corridors, may impact surrounding land uses, traffic access/circulation, and parking. If all the area’s vacant land and underdeveloped sites were to develop to its zoning potential, approximately 4.5 million square feet of space could be added.



Federal Express



Turek Hardware Supply

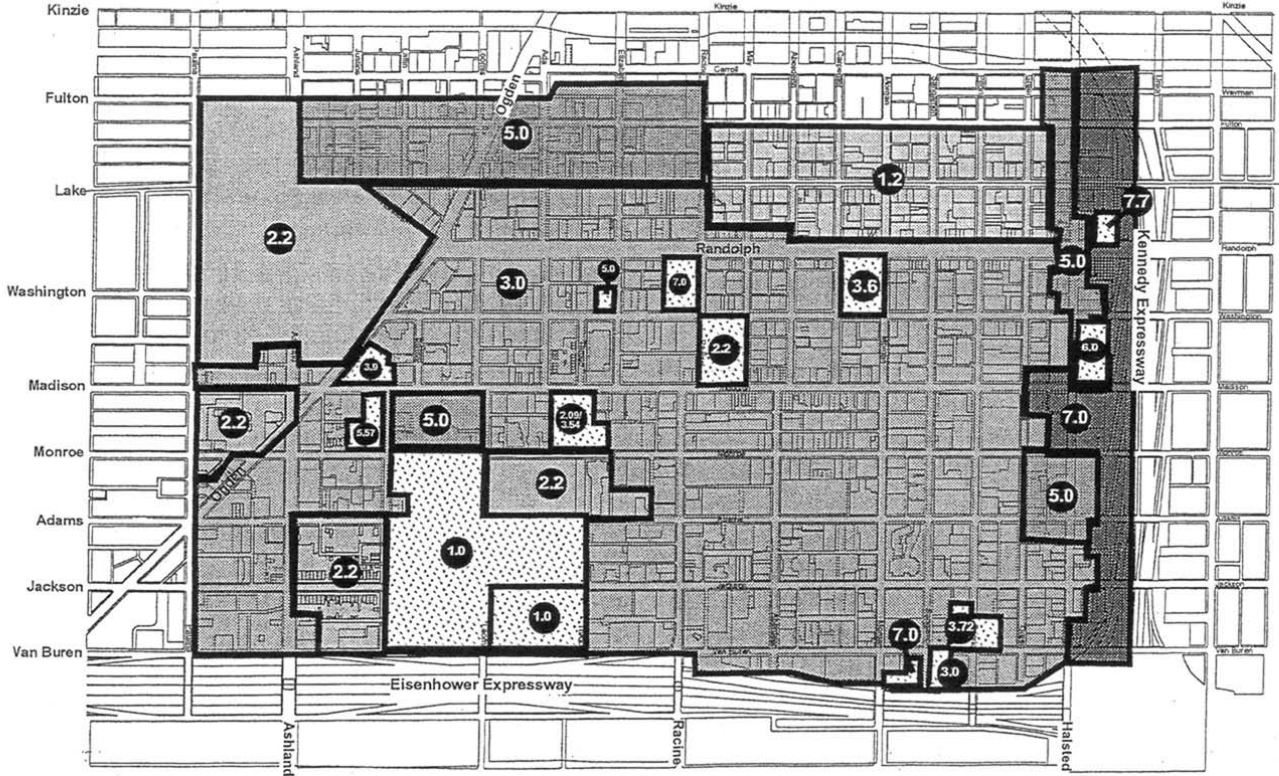
AREA ANALYSIS


DEVELOPMENT DENSITY

Floor-Area-Ratio (F.A.R.) is a measure of a site's build-out potential based on its zoning designation. A B5-3 zoning district, for example, has an F.A.R. of 3.0. Potential building space would be calculated for such a district as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Sample Lot Size: 10,000 square feet}}{\text{F.A.R.: } \times 3.0} = \text{Building Space: 30,000 square feet}$$

Most of the Near West Side has a Floor-Area-Ratio of 3.0. Zoning districts along the east and north edges of the area have higher densities at 5.0 and 7.0.



 Denotes Planned Development

NEAR WEST SIDE

Development Activity:

In the past five years, the Near West Side has experienced significant new investment. Former industrial buildings, vacant lots, and underutilized properties have been developed with new retail, office, and residential uses. During the same time, numerous established industrial, commercial, and service businesses have decided to remain in the area because of its excellent regional location and transportation system. Most of these businesses serve the Central Business District.

Sports-related commercial businesses have recently located in the area, along with several new restaurants and other retail/service businesses.

The Near West Side's wide range of business uses include:

- distribution facilities for FedEx and H2O;
- a production facility and retail outlet for Fannie May Candies;
- office facilities for True Value Hardware, CTA, Checker Taxi, several labor unions, and numerous small professional firms;
- numerous restaurants including: Red Light, Millennium, Flat Top Bar & Grill, Parthenon, Greek Isles, Marche, and Carmichael's Steak House;
- sports facilities including: Hoops the Gym, Johnny's Ice House, and Illinois Golf Academy;
- the Quality Inn Hotel;
- Harpo and WCCU television studios; and
- the Zimmerman Brush manufacturing plant.

There continues to be significant interest in the Near West Side from developers and businesses as demonstrated by the number of development initiatives that have recently been completed, started, and/or proposed for the area. Projects primarily include residential and commercial redevelopment.

While each project has potential benefits for the community, there is a need to coordinate project planning, especially regarding site and building design, vehicular access, and parking.

AREA ANALYSIS

Residential Use:

Residential rehabilitation and construction comprises the majority of development initiatives on the Near West Side. Over fifty projects have recently been completed, are currently underway, and/or are planned. Overall, approximately 4,000 new and/or rehabilitated residential units have been developed, planned, or proposed. Most of these projects have involved loft condominiums.

As the area continues to grow there is a need to diversify housing opportunities with various sizes and building types including townhouses, single-family houses, and affordable housing alternatives. Also, future residential development needs to be designed to create linkages with adjacent streets to promote the unique urban character of the community.

Commercial Use:

While neighborhood oriented retail and service businesses have been slow to develop to serve the area's growing residential population, a few commercial developments have recently been implemented. Ground floor retail should continue to be encouraged in both rehabilitation and new residential projects.

Small groceries, bakeries, dry cleaners, drug stores, convenience stores, and food/beverage shops are still needed. Opportunities for commercial development or expansion are decreasing as land and buildings are converted to residential use.

Adding retail food shops to existing wholesale food operations in the Randolph Market has been considered by local businesses. However, it is difficult to add such shops due to the Market's physical layout, lack of vacant land, and typical wholesale business operations and layouts.

Numerous art galleries have located in the area including: An Art Place; Frederick Baker Gallery; Gallery 312; Klein Art Works; Museum of Holography; and Vedanta Gallery.

Office Use:

Office development has increased as companies are attracted to the area because of its location and access. In recent years several loft industrial buildings have been converted to office space for small companies.

A major corporate campus for Whittman-Hart, an information technology company, is under construction nearby in the Kinzie Industrial Corridor west of the Fulton Market (at Fulton and Elizabeth Streets).

The campus, which is 3 acres, will include a parking deck and 485,000 square feet of office and training space in 3 new and 2 rehabilitated buildings. The high tech training center will include classrooms, an auditorium, and a theater. Dormitories for trainees will be considered in the future.

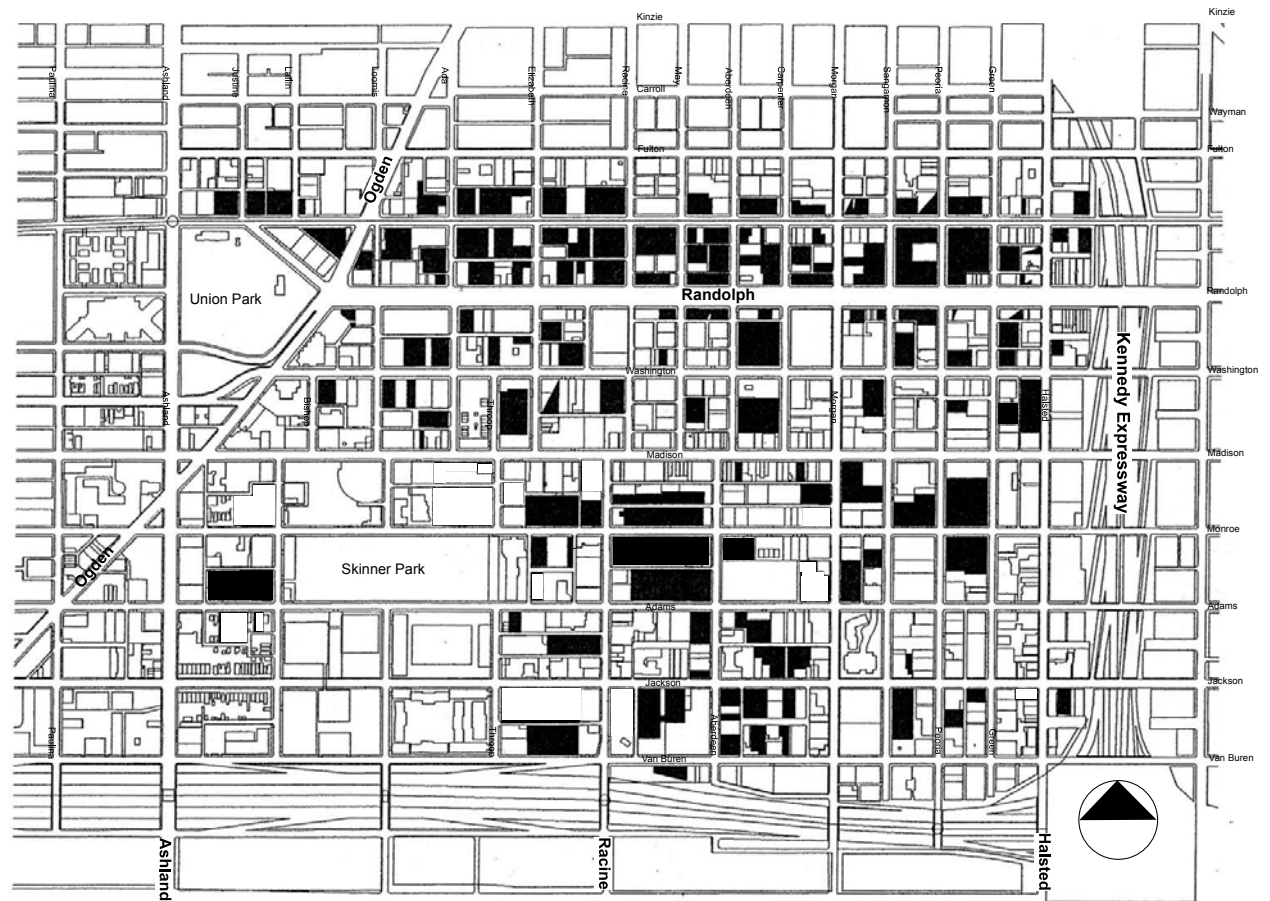
NEAR WEST SIDE

Industrial Use:

As noted earlier, several industrial businesses have chosen to stay in the area and in some cases expand due to the Near West Side's excellent location in the center of the City and region. The Near West Side is home to numerous small and large industrial businesses including:

- Wertheimer Box.
- Oxford Clothes.
- True Value Hardware.
- Zimmerman Brush.
- Fannie May Candies.

Industrial companies are important uses within the Near West Side, especially those serving other businesses located in the Central Business District. Increasing property taxes and new residential development are affecting the ability of some businesses to remain in the area. Recognizing the need for a central location for many Chicago area companies, the City has been working with individual companies to improve buildings and sites, as well as to establish the adjacent Kinzie Industrial Corridor for local businesses that may need to relocate and/or expand.



AREA ANALYSIS

Open Space:

With the exception of Union Park and Skinner Park on its far west edge, the Near West Side lacks open space for residents, employees, and shoppers. This is especially a need on the east side of the community where most of the new residential and office development has been occurring.

CitySpace: An Open Space Plan for Chicago (1987) recommends a minimum of two acres of open space be provided per 1,000 residents. The Plan proposes an eventual increase to three acres, along with the "greening" of undeveloped and under-developed land wherever possible to improve and beautify the City's physical environment.



Union Park

While Union Park and Skinner Park (24 total acres) currently meet the recommended open space acreage to serve the existing population, they are still considered a long distance for most residents to access on a daily basis and mini-parks distributed throughout the area are needed to better serve the community's residents, visitors, and employees. Some residents consider Union and Skinner Parks to be under-utilized by the community.

Union and Skinner Parks both provide active and passive recreational areas. They include ball fields, basketball and/or tennis courts, as well as playground equipment for younger users.

Union Park is physically divided by Warren and Washington Streets which cut through the south portion of the Park. The Park has been significantly improved in recent years with new landscaping, lighting, and fencing, as well as renovation of its field house. There is potential to further enhance the Park by narrowing Washington, closing Warren, and adding architectural elements that depict the history of the Near West Side.

Some residents perceive Skinner Park as being "fenced off" from the surrounding neighborhood. As a result the Park is sometimes under-utilized as a neighborhood open space. The City and Park District recently improved the Park by vacating Loomis, which bisected the Park, and creating a pedestrian path with new landscaping, paving, and lighting.

In addition to the two large area parks, a new plaza has been created as part of the Carmichael townhome development on Monroe between Morgan and Aberdeen.

Vacant lots and deteriorated buildings at several key locations have the potential to be redeveloped for mini-parks and plazas. The UIC Sangamon Building site at the northeast corner of Adams and Sangamon has potential to be redeveloped as a neighborhood park that serves the eastern end of the area. Depending on the needs of the community, this park could be programmed as a passive open space. The building may have potential to be rehabilitated as a park district/community facility.



Skinner Park

NEAR WEST SIDE

Institutional/Public Use:

The Near West Side contains numerous institutional, public, and social service facilities that serve the community and City. These facilities range from local churches and elementary schools to social service and drug rehabilitation centers. Some of the area's social service facilities are not optimally located in regards to transit access and proximity to employment opportunities. Also, some agencies are housed in buildings that are obsolete in layout and/or deteriorated.

As the area continues to grow and change with new residential and commercial uses, potential conflicts between area institutions and neighboring uses need to be identified and mitigated through sensitive planning. As institutions expand, opportunities to correct facility problems and locational issues should be addressed in the context of the area's overall land use setting.

Institutional and public uses located in the Near West Side study area include:

Educational Facilities

- A. Whitney Young Magnet High School
(211 South Laflin)
- B. Mark Skinner Elementary School
(111 South Throop)
- C. Spaulding School/Academy
(Ashland between Washington and Maypole)
- D. University of Illinois at Chicago (academic offices and facilities along Van Buren and Jackson)

Churches

- E. Christ Temple of Apostolic Faith
(14 South Ashland)
- F. Church of the Epiphany
(201 South Ashland)

Public Facilities

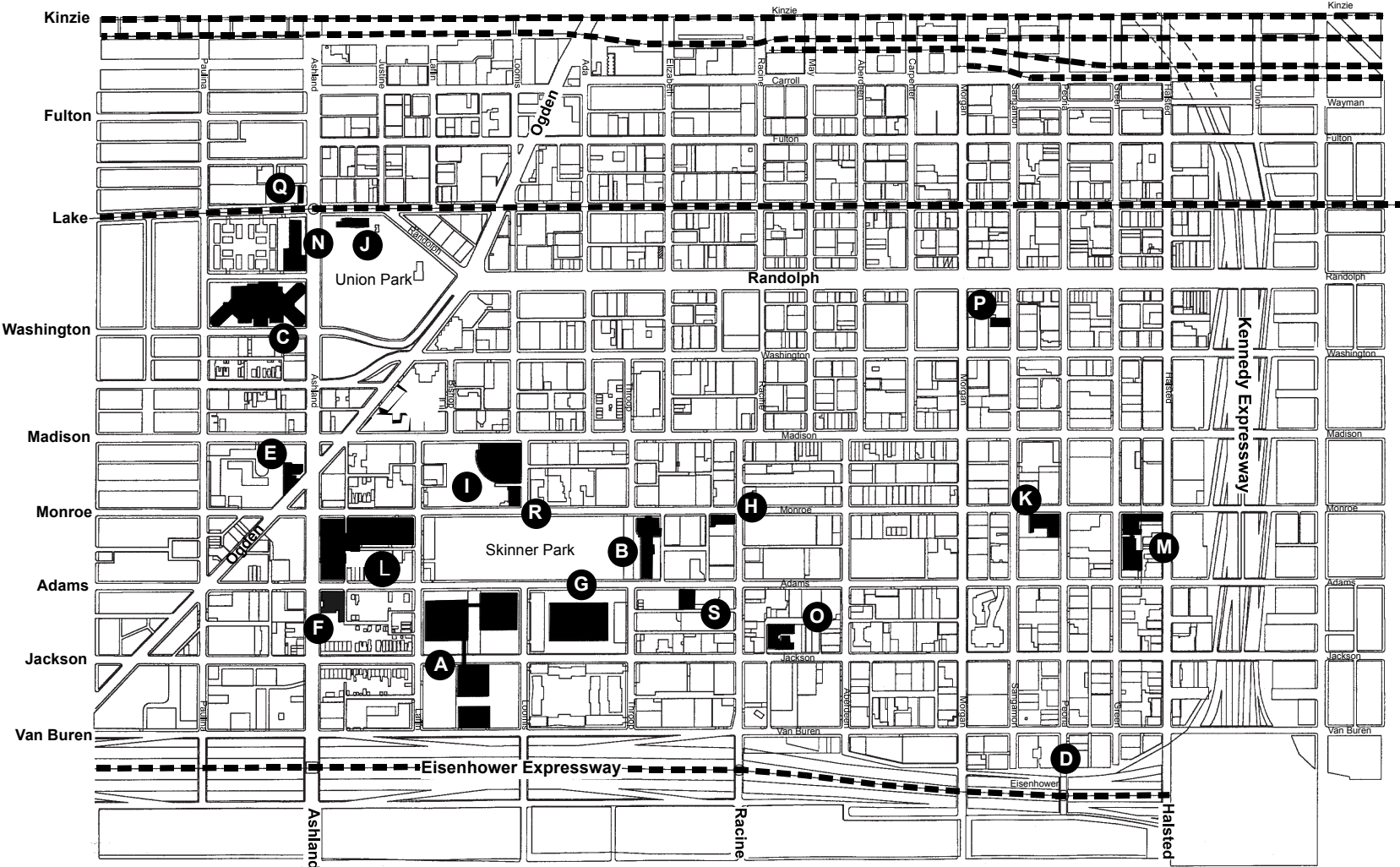
- G. Chicago Police Academy
(southeast corner of Loomis/Adams)
- H. Chicago Police Station (12th District)
(100 South Racine)
- I. Chicago 911 Emergency Response Center
(southwest corner of Loomis/Madison)
- J. Union Park Field House
(on Lake between Ashland and Randolph)

Social Service Facilities

- K. Illinois Public Aid Office
(935 West Monroe)
- L. Salvation Army Complex (psychiatric / medical / rehab / correctional programs)
(109 South Ashland & 1515 West Monroe)
- M. Chicago Christian Industrial League
(residential, rehabilitation, & job training programs) (123 South Green)
- N. Women's Treatment Center (residential shelter program for women & children)
(140 North Ashland)
- O. Mercy Home for Boys & Girls (residential shelter program for children ages 11 to 20)
(1140 West Jackson)
- P. Haymarket House (residential/detoxication programs) (120 North Sangamon)
- Q. Inner Voice Learning Center
(residential/learning center for homeless men and veterans)
(1600 West Lake)
- R. Monroe Pavilion Health Center
(1400 West Monroe)
- S. Illinois Social Security Office
(1277 West Jackson)

AREA ANALYSIS

INSTITUTIONAL/PUBLIC FACILITIES



NEAR WEST SIDE

The Salvation Army operates a psychiatric, medical, and rehabilitation center at the northeast corner of Ashland and Monroe. The organization has been considering expansion or a move to a new site. Relocation of the facility would provide a major redevelopment opportunity along Ashland as the agency owns two large sites (approximately 2.2 acres).

The Chicago Christian Industrial League (CCIL) runs an adult rehabilitation and job training program in a residential facility. The League is also seeking a new location as its present site along Halsted is crowded and has no room for expansion. Relocation of the facility would provide a major redevelopment opportunity between Halsted and Green. The CCIL owns a half block (approximately 1.5 acres) with frontage on Green and Halsted that could be redeveloped with uses more compatible with the Greektown district.

The High School, Skinner School, and Spaulding School are the only public educational facilities located in the area. Although new residential development has been occurring throughout the area, most units have been condominiums and townhouses, which typically do not have school age children. As a result, there has been minimal impact on local public schools. Continued residential conversion and development may require school improvements if more families with children move into the community. Skinner School is land-locked on its current site. The community has been active in an effort to expand or rebuild Skinner to better accommodate future growth in local school-age children, as well as to better integrate the campus park ideals of school design.

As part of the Chicago Public School System's capital improvement program, Whitney Young and Skinner are planned for approximately \$1 million and \$2.5 million of improvements, respectively, between 1999 and 2001. The planned improvements include:

Whitney Young High School

- Miscellaneous building improvements.
- Computer technology upgrades.
- ADA accessibility upgrades.
- Energy conservation enhancements.
- Minor site improvements.

Skinner Elementary School

- ADA accessibility upgrades.
- Roof, window, and environmental improvements.
- Miscellaneous building improvements.
- Computer technology upgrades.
- Energy conservation enhancements.
- Mechanical and electrical improvements.

During the Near West Side planning process, local residents expressed a need for a community center, library, and daycare center. Such facilities could possibly be combined into a single facility that brings together community, library, arts, cultural, and educational uses.

AREA ANALYSIS

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Overall the Near West Side is in fair to good physical condition with respect to its buildings, streets, alleys, streetscape, and signage. The City has implemented significant infrastructure improvements that have dramatically changed the physical setting of the Randolph, Halsted, and Madison Street corridors. Additional streetscape improvements along with numerous building improvements are needed to supplement these changes and beautify the overall area.

Buildings:

The Near West Side's buildings are primarily two to four story masonry construction in fair to good physical condition. Minor preventative maintenance and exterior repairs are needed on many structures.

Several vacant and deteriorated structures exist primarily in the Randolph and Fulton Markets. A few dilapidated structures appear to have limited rehabilitation potential.

Numerous buildings and storefronts have a dated appearance and are in need of facade improvements. In some cases facade changes have been insensitive to the original architectural character of the building, adjacent structures, and/or overall Near West Side setting.



Deteriorating Building



Deteriorating Building



Deteriorating Building

NEAR WEST SIDE

The long concrete/brick facades of several buildings in the 1100 block of West Adams, 100 block of North Ogden, and numerous blocks along Lake are especially harsh in appearance. Many of these buildings have bricked in display windows, deteriorated awnings and signage, and poor lighting. The buildings around the Halsted/Lake intersection, which is a highly visible gateway into the area, are especially deteriorated and unattractive.

Vacant buildings and lots are located at several locations, including the southeast corner of Monroe and Peoria, southeast corner of Jackson and Throop, and the southwest corner of Ashland and Adams.

Architecture:

While the appearance and condition of many buildings is fair to good, several could be considered to have attractive architectural proportions and details which help define the area's character. The residential buildings located in the Jackson Boulevard Historic District in the southwest corner of the community are especially attractive. Several rehabilitated Greektown buildings have successfully incorporated traditional architectural styles and details.

The Art Deco style buildings at the northeast corners of Adams/Lafin and Adams/Sangamon are architecturally interesting as are the large churches and Union Park's fieldhouse. The office building at the southwest corner of Adams and Sangamon is an example of an attractive new building.

As the area continues to redevelop there is a need to establish guidelines for design that are more consistent with the area's low scale density, urban loft district architecture, and growing residential activity.



Residential Adaptive Re-Use



Union Office Building



Jackson Historic District

AREA ANALYSIS

Streets/Alleys:

The area's streets and alleys are generally in fair to good condition. Randolph and Madison were extensively improved with new paving, curbs, lighting, and landscaped medians.

Some alleys along Madison, Monroe, Morgan, and Jackson are deteriorated and have flooding problems. Street, curb, and alley repairs are especially needed throughout the Randolph and Fulton Markets due to the amount of heavy truck traffic in these locations.

Improvements are currently planned for a three mile stretch of Halsted between Cermak and Fulton. Improvements will include at some locations, new curbs, gutters, resurfacing, lighting, and sidewalks. Improvements are scheduled to begin in 2000.

Pedestrian Circulation:

Sidewalks throughout the area are typically in fair to good condition. Several of the sidewalks in the Randolph and Fulton Markets are in poor condition.

Loading activity and parking in the Randolph and Fulton Markets have also negatively impacted pedestrian circulation. These blocks are poorly lit and perceived as unsafe, which discourages visitors from parking north of Randolph and walking along side streets to local restaurants, shops, and homes.

In some blocks, sidewalks do not meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for handicapped accessibility, which will become a bigger problem as more residents move into the area.



Fulton Market



Randolph Street



Fulton Market



Randolph Market

NEAR WEST SIDE

Streetscape:

With the exception of the attractive streetscape along Randolph, Madison, Halsted (in Greektown), and Jackson (in the Historic District) the Near West Side's streetscape is generally in fair condition. Decorative lighting, signage, paving, benches, and landscaping are lacking throughout the area.

The Near West Side lacks identity as a special area with recognized gateways. The area's northeast entrance at Lake, west entrances along Ashland and Ogden, and south entrances along Van Buren lack identity and character.

The area's east entrances at Halsted are marked by Greektown and Randolph Street which are recognized visitor destinations. Gateway elements have been installed along the Kennedy Expressway and Halsted as part of the Greektown streetscape improvement program, adding to the area's unique character.

Halsted is a major vehicular and pedestrian circulation route. It has narrow sidewalks, and limited landscaping and pedestrian amenities at its north end between Madison and Kinzie.

The streets north of Monroe have deteriorated sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping, and are especially unattractive. These streets are perceived as unsafe by area visitors and as a result are under-utilized for parking by visitors and restaurant patrons. The wide one way east/west streets: Adams, Jackson and Van Buren, especially need streetscape improvements.

Attractive landscaped medians are located along Randolph and Madison. These recent improvements have significantly improved the area's visual quality. However, the raised concrete planter boxes have created visibility problems for some motorists at some intersections, especially along Randolph and its frontage roads.



Greektown Gateway



Sidewalk needing streetscape improvements

AREA ANALYSIS

Comprehensive streetscape improvements, including gateway elements, landscaping, decorative lighting, and signage are needed throughout the area to:

- visually link the numerous blocks and diverse uses;
- improve the overall appearance and safety;
- create a visually distinct identity for the entire Near West Side as well as its sub-areas;
- direct people to the area's major activity generators including Greektown, the restaurants along Randolph, Union Park, and Skinner Park; and
- create visual interest and make the area more pedestrian friendly.

Streetscape improvements are needed on the following streets:

- Halsted (between Randolph and Kinzie).
- Adams (between Ashland and Halsted).
- Jackson (between Laflin and Halsted).
- Ashland (between the Eisenhower Expressway and Washington).
- Van Buren (between Ashland and Halsted).
- Lake (between Ashland and Halsted).
- Fulton (between Ashland and Halsted).
- Racine (between the Eisenhower Expressway and Kinzie).



Halsted Street



Lake Street



Madison Street

NEAR WEST SIDE

Wayfinding/Signage:

The area lacks directional signage, especially from the Kennedy and Eisenhower Expressways. Businesses, stores, restaurants, institutions, and parking lots are sometimes difficult to find for motorists and pedestrians due to:

- the Near West Side's large size;
- one-way streets;
- lack of directional signage to key businesses, institutions, and activity generators including Harpo Studios, Greektown, Whitney Young, Skinner School, Union Park, United Center, and Randolph and Fulton Markets; and
- lack of signage identifying off-street parking for shoppers and visitors.



Unattractive Business Signage on Lake Street

Where signage is provided, particularly in the Randolph Market along Randolph, Lake, and Fulton, it is often blocked from view by trucks that are parked or loading/unloading.

Several large billboards dominate the north, east, and west edges of the Near West Side. They are highly visible and unattractive to motorists and pedestrians entering the area along Randolph, Ashland, or Halsted. Consideration should be given to limiting large advertising billboards within the area, especially near residential blocks and gateway intersections. Where feasible, existing billboards should be removed to improve the attractiveness of the overall area.



Unattractive Billboard on Randolph Street

Attractive, well designed commercial signs have complemented some new development. More of this is needed, perhaps in banner form to let pedestrians know of upper story businesses.



New Business Signage

AREA ANALYSIS

TRANSPORTATION

Traffic Access:

The existing street system within and surrounding the Near West Side is extensive, and serves a wide variety of travel needs, including:

- local access to residential, industrial or commercial properties;
- connections to surrounding neighborhoods and districts via collector and arterial streets; and
- regional access to Downtown, the United Center, and expressways.

Bounded on the south by the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) and on the east by the Kennedy Expressway (I-90/94), the Near West Side and its arterial street network provides direct access to the regional expressway system. During the morning rush hour, one-way eastbound roadways such as Jackson and Washington serve as major thoroughfares into Downtown. During evening peak hours, one-way westbound roadways, including Randolph and Adams, serve as major routes out of Downtown.

Important north/south routes such as Ogden, Ashland, Racine, and Halsted provide connections between the Near West Side and districts to the north and south, as well as to the expressway system.

Average Daily Traffic

Existing traffic volumes vary throughout the area, depending on the individual street and location. Recent traffic counts for area streets at specific locations include:

Street	Segment	Daily Traffic Volume
Halsted	Washington to Madison	17,900
Ashland	Monroe to Adams Jackson to Van Buren	25,900 34,400
Racine	Monroe to Adams Jackson to Van Buren	5,200 11,600
Ogden	Ashland to Monroe	13,100
Randolph	Ogden to Racine Racine to Morgan	8,000 12,900
Washington	Ogden to Racine Morgan to Halsted	5,700 13,300
Madison	Loomis to Racine Morgan to Halsted	10,300 12,000
Adams	Loomis to Racine Racine to Morgan	3,500 6,000
Jackson	Ashland to Loomis Racine to Morgan	6,300 8,400
Van Buren	Racine to Morgan	9,200

One-Way Operation

Several east/west streets within the Near West Side currently operate as one-way streets. This is common in many communities throughout the City. One-way streets can allow for safer and more efficient traffic flow by eliminating some conflicting movements at driveways and intersections.

Conversion of some or all one-way streets to two-way operation was considered, but not found to be optimal due to existing traffic volumes that are at, or approaching their capacities. Conversion to two-way operation would increase the number of conflicting movements and the number of delays at the intersections. In addition, some existing one-way streets are not wide enough in some locations to provide for two-way traffic operation without impacting on-street parking. Further, given the amount of future development potential on the Near West Side, any existing excess traffic capacity will likely be needed in the future.

Source: CDOT and Metro Transportation Group

NEAR WEST SIDE

Local Streets

Local streets are usually intended to provide for local access to properties. However, due to the extensive mix of land uses within the Near West Side, there are often multiple and conflicting demands placed on the area's local streets. This mix of uses generates a variety of traffic types and each has different needs. For example, some businesses require sufficient curb frontage to accommodate delivery trucks, particularly during the morning hours. At the same time, residential development in the area requires on-street parking and curb-side pickup for residents. Restaurants and other retail uses require easy access, visibility, and parking for customers. In addition, employees of area businesses need parking.

The restaurants on both Halsted and Randolph have many valet permits, further restricting some access and parking.

Ashland Avenue

Ashland runs along the western boundary of the Near West Side study area. It is an important arterial street, carrying heavy traffic volumes, and linking the area to the Eisenhower Expressway, Ogden Avenue, and neighborhoods and industrial areas to the north and south. Ashland also provides a significant amount of on-street parking along its entire length. Traffic along Ashland is congested at key intersections between Ogden and the Eisenhower Expressway, especially during peak hours.

The number of travel lanes along Ashland is inconsistent from block to block, changing between two and three lanes in each direction. In some locations, turning lanes as well as on-street parking are provided. The inconsistent cross-section causes confusion for motorists, as well as congestion and potential safety problems due to vehicles shifting lanes and parking along the street.

Ashland's traffic operation could possibly be improved with a more consistent cross-section. Since the traffic volumes using Ashland diminish north of Ogden, two travel lanes in each direction may be sufficient. It may be possible to convert the third lane for more parking, loading areas, or additional streetscape. The Ashland street segments where this may be possible include: between Madison and Washington (east side), and between Lake and Maypole (west side).

Ashland between Ogden and the Eisenhower Expressway carries higher traffic volumes and may warrant three consistent travel lanes in each direction. However, the provision of an additional travel lane on segments with only two existing lanes may cause the loss of some on street parking, such as the east side of Ashland between Monroe and Jackson. A detailed engineering review would be needed along Ashland to balance the need for on-street parking and enhanced streetscape, with improved traffic operations and safety.

Further engineering analysis of Ashland should also consider intersection operations, as well as the need for turning lanes. The review should incorporate the potential for improving operation of the congested intersections of Ashland at Ogden, Madison, and Monroe. The junction of these four streets creates five tightly spaced and congested intersections. It may be possible to improve operations and decrease congestion by restricting some of the turning movements at this location.

AREA ANALYSIS

Randolph Street

Randolph currently provides two travel lanes operating one-way westbound, a one-way westbound service street on the north, and a one-way eastbound service street on the south. The two center westbound lanes are separated from the service lanes by two 12-foot wide landscaped medians.

The center westbound travel lanes operate as a major westbound arterial carrying higher speed, heavy traffic volumes from Downtown through the Near West Side to the neighborhoods to the west. This includes traffic headed to the United Center.

The local or service roads on either side of Randolph provide for local traffic movement, as well as access, parking, and loading for the various properties along Randolph. It is rare that a single roadway facility is required to serve so many different, and sometimes, conflicting functions.



Randolph Street

Most of the intersections along Randolph allow full access and all turns (assuming the inherent restrictions of one-way streets). Thus, each intersection becomes a potential point of conflict between the different turning movements and types of traffic. At the intersections with traffic signals, the traffic is controlled, and individual traffic movements are stopped until it is safe to proceed. However, at the unsignalized intersections, the traffic is not operating under controlled conditions. Also, the landscaped median planters reduce visibility at some of these intersections. The unsignalized intersections along Randolph include: Green, Peoria, Sangamon, Carpenter, Aberdeen, May, Willard, Elizabeth, and Ada.

The safety and efficiency of traffic along Randolph could be improved by limiting the number of conflicting movements at the unsignalized intersections. This could be achieved by restricting turn movements at each of these intersections.

There are ways to restrict turns at some or all intersections, by signing and striping. This would be relatively inexpensive, would still allow full access for emergency vehicles, and can easily be modified if not found to be effective.

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) is currently preparing a signing/stripping plan for Randolph to improve traffic flow, as well as redesigning the landscaped medians to improve visibility and safety. As the plan is implemented, traffic operations along Randolph will be monitored to determine whether any further actions/changes are warranted and/or feasible.

Union Park Intersections

The streets surrounding Union Park also serve a variety of functions. Randolph, Ogden and Ashland all carry heavy traffic volumes, some which travels through the Near West Side without stopping. In addition, each of these roadways serves local traffic, and provides access, parking, and loading for adjacent properties.

The Randolph/Washington one-way pair of streets transitions to the Washington/Warren one-way pair of streets within Union Park. These one-way streets carry heavy traffic volumes in and out of Downtown during rush hours, as well as traffic to and from the United Center. Each of these streets also provides on-street parking and/or pedestrian access to the Park.

Several improvements may be possible in the vicinity of Union Park to facilitate local and regional travel in the area. Randolph runs one-way northwest between Ogden and Lake adjacent to the Park. This stretch has 46 feet of pavement and provides parallel parking on both sides and a wide unmarked travel lane in the center. Since this street segment carries relatively low traffic volumes, a single travel lane should be sufficient.

NEAR WEST SIDE

The width of the center travel lane could be reduced, and the parallel parking on the Park side of the street could be converted to diagonal parking. This would increase the number of parking spaces and improve the ability to maneuver around the Park for visitors and local businesses.

Warren jogs northeast between Ashland and Ogden, linking to Washington. There is also a roadway link along the old alignment of Warren heading east between Ashland and Ogden. This link carries little traffic, and is no longer needed. The segment of old Warren between new Warren and Ogden could be vacated, and the right-of-way converted to sidewalk or green space. Such an improvement would also eliminate an intersection along Ogden, which would facilitate traffic movement.



Intersection of Ashland and Ogden

The one-way westbound street linking Randolph to Washington cuts through Union Park between Ogden and Ashland. This segment is currently four lanes wide, and splits the Park into two segments. Although elimination of this segment would link the two park areas, this roadway link is too important to eliminate entirely. However, the current four-lane width may not be needed. Due to the traffic signal at the Ogden/Randolph intersection, no more than two travel lanes of traffic enter this street at any time. This includes the two westbound travel lanes on Randolph, and the two southwestbound travel lanes on Ogden.

In addition, Washington narrows back to two travel lanes west of Ashland. Thus, the current four travel lanes do not appear to be needed for traffic flow. A detailed engineering analysis should be conducted at this location to determine whether it would be feasible to reduce the width of this street segment by one or two lanes. If the width of this street segment can be reduced, it could allow for additional parking along the north side of Randolph, or a conversion of some of the pavement to green space thereby increasing the Park area.

Halsted Street/Greektown

At the northeast corner of the study area, the intersection of Halsted and Lake acts as a gateway into the area. Also, Halsted and Lake carry significant traffic volumes. Traffic flow at this intersection is often a problem due to the location of the CTA's elevated transit line (Green Line) support pillars. The pillars are located in the intersection, blocking vehicle movements, especially for trucks or other oversized vehicles.

It appears that the pillars will not be reconstructed in the near future as part of a transit project since the Green line was recently reconstructed. A short-term solution is needed. By cutting a turning lane into the sidewalk at each corner and creating small median islands around the pillars, a right turn lane could be created on the inside or right-hand side of the pillars. This would allow vehicles making right turns to proceed without delay and without blocking other movements at the intersection. Ideally, the pillars would be moved as far away as possible from the intersection to allow for a full widening of the intersection.

CDOT will be making major improvements to Halsted beginning in 2000 from Cermak to Fulton. The project will include resurfacing, curb and gutter replacement, additional left turn lanes at some intersections, new traffic signals, and better lighting. The project may also include the relocation of the Lake/Halsted transit pillars discussed above, although funding for this aspect has not been identified.

Restaurant patrons visiting Greektown often stop and drop-off passengers, slowing traffic flow on Halsted and the east/west streets. The valet parking service operated by many of the restaurants also slows traffic on Halsted and often spills over and impacts traffic operations on east/west streets just west of Greektown.

In addition, drop-off and valet activity can interfere with pedestrians crossing the streets in this special district. Traffic flow could improve if all of the restaurants developed a shared valet service with pick-up and drop-off areas at designated locations least disruptive to traffic flow and pedestrian safety. Further discussion of the valet operations within Greektown is included in the parking section.

Madison/Racine Intersection

There is currently an offset or unaligned intersection at Madison and Racine. This location has two signalized "T" (three-way) intersections separated by approximately 130 feet. Realigning Racine could replace the two "T" intersections with a single four-way intersection. This would allow for safer and more efficient traffic flow.

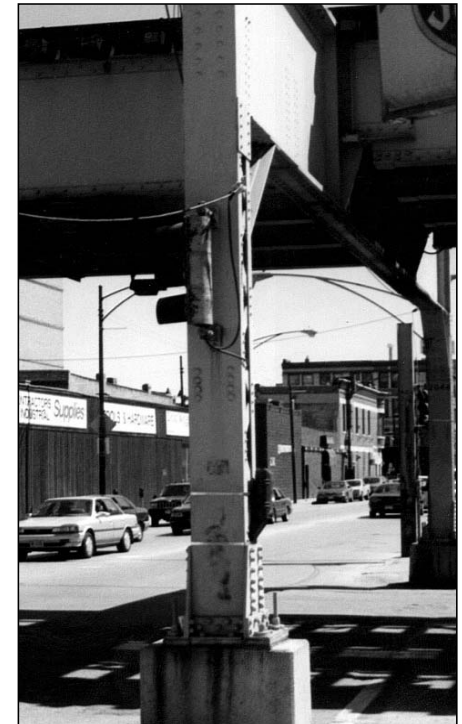
Madison/Peoria Intersection

A traffic signal should be considered for the Madison/Peoria intersection due to recent accident problems at this location.

Adams/Loomis & Adams/Lafin Intersections

The intersections of Adams/Loomis and Adams/Lafin are located along the south side of Skinner Park and north side of Whitney Young High School. Adams/Loomis is a signalized three-way "T" intersection. CDOT is planning to modernize the signal, including a pedestrian button to better accommodate student crossings.

The conversion of this traffic signal to a flashing red on all approaches has recently been considered. However, CDOT determined that modernization of the signal was preferable. Since the concern is primarily due to student crossings, crossing guards or police supervision at appropriate times during the day should help to ensure that students cross only when it is safe.



CTA Pillars at Halsted and Lake

NEAR WEST SIDE

The Adams/Laflin intersection is currently unsignalized with traffic approaching north and south on Laflin controlled by stop signs. High School representatives have requested that this intersection be considered for a four-way stop control. The concern is for students crossing Adams, which carries one-way westbound traffic that is not required to stop at this location.

Initially, it appears that a four-way stop control at this intersection is not warranted since student crossings generally take place at very specific times during the day. A crossing guard and/or police supervision should be sufficient at this location. However, this intersection should be further assessed to determine if a four-way stop control is warranted.

Jackson/Loomis & Jackson/Laflin Intersections

The Jackson/Loomis and Jackson/Laflin intersections, which are located in the middle of the Whitney Young campus, also have a significant amount of student related pedestrian traffic. The Jackson/Loomis intersection is a signalized four-way intersection. The Jackson/Laflin intersection is controlled by stop signs on Laflin north and southbound and Jackson eastbound.

Since the pavement width on Jackson narrows to 22 feet through the Jackson Boulevard Historic District located just west of Laflin, more than two lanes may not be needed between these two intersections. It may be feasible to extend the curb faces (sidewalk bump-outs) on Jackson just east of Laflin to match the pavement

width through the District. This would shorten the crosswalk length across Jackson east of Laflin from 46 feet to approximately 24 feet.

East of the crosswalk and extending east to Loomis, the sidewalk on the south side of Jackson could be widened beyond the current eight feet to provide additional space for pedestrians. In addition, a designated drop-off lane might be possible on the south side of Jackson to facilitate drop-off of students by parents. It would be safer for students being dropped off on the south side of Jackson to enter the school building located south of Jackson and cross Jackson via the elevated bridge located above the street. Crossing guards and/or police supervision may also be warranted at these locations.



Adams/Loomis Intersection



Adams/Laflin Intersection

AREA ANALYSIS

United Center

The United Center generates a tremendous amount of traffic traveling through the Near West Side. The traffic is coming from Downtown on the arterial streets, as well as from the expressways. Since the stadium is located on Madison, many people assume it is the best route to take from Downtown or the Kennedy Expressway. However, Madison is a two-way roadway with a single lane in each direction (two lanes during events due to parking restrictions).

Randolph/Washington are one-way streets that feed the Washington/Warren one-way pair. They are designed to carry heavier traffic volumes and are more appropriate routes for stadium traffic coming from Downtown. From the Kennedy Expressway, it is more efficient to exit at Ogden and travel southwest towards Washington than to travel into Downtown and exit at Madison.

Although there are more appropriate routes than Madison, not all stadium visitors are aware of them. The following should be considered:

- A simple route map could be sent in the mail with tickets to outline "best route to stadium". Cooperation from stadium and ticket operators would be needed, but they have a vested interest in seeing traffic arrive and depart in the easiest manner possible.
- Signs or variable message boards on the Kennedy Expressway identifying Ogden and other appropriate routes to the United Center could be installed.
- Signs or variable message boards on the Dan Ryan Expressway encouraging traffic to use the Eisenhower Expressway and exits at Ashland or Damen instead of using Madison could be installed.
- Signs at various locations in Downtown suggesting optimal or alternative routes to the United Center could be installed.



United Center Stadium



Randolph/Washington One-Way Streets