

## PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Final Recommendations contained in this report are divided into three broad categories: transit service, access and urban design, and commercial development. Each set of recommendations was developed to support the study area Planning Principles outlined at the beginning of each study area section to follow, with an emphasis on identifying feasible and actionable strategies for implementation.

- **Transit Service Recommendations** describe short-term transit improvements based on near-term development and existing conditions and long-term transit improvements which may become viable as additional development and investment takes place or transit usage patterns change. The transit recommendations also include estimated order-of-magnitude costs for such improvements.
- **Access and Urban Design Recommendations** depict areas of priority for urban design improvements and potential locations for pedestrian nodes. Additionally, these recommendations highlight community assets and areas of new development that will need improved transit access in the future. Urban design treatments and techniques germane to all three study areas are presented in the following section: *Public Investment to Foster Re-Connection*.
- **Commercial Development Recommendations** depict pending future land uses and determine commercial development priorities for the study area, based on the desires of the community with respect to the location of retail and service options.

## PUBLIC INVESTMENT TO FOSTER RE-CONNECTION

The quality of the public realm encourages transit usage and neighborhood vitality. Targeted public investments in pedestrian and bicycle access and circulation improvements, landscaping and other site enhancements, public plazas, open spaces, streetscape and public art features can all contribute to a unique neighborhood identity, foster transit ridership and improve the business and retail climate. The implementation and ongoing maintenance of high quality public improvements are essential elements for ensuring a pleasant and inviting neighborhood for pedestrians and cyclists, be they local residents or visitors. This section describes and illustrates some of the key strategies to be implemented in each study area: streetscape enhancements, pedestrian crossing improvements, community gateways, identity elements, and wayfinding.



A well-shaded streetscape provides a pleasant pedestrian experience in the Near North (above left), an unconventional fence enhances the sidewalk in the Mid South (center), and well-maintained historic facades in the Near West reinforce a consistent street wall (above right).



## Streetscape Enhancements

Implementation strategies for streetscape enhancements include introducing design elements such as plazas and encouraging facade elements articulated to address a pedestrian scale. Plazas and architectural features can be used to provide interesting and significant enhancements to the streetscape. Plazas should be strategically positioned, highly visible, of high quality design, and constructed from materials that are coordinated to complement the adjacent public right-of-way streetscape. Plazas should be framed by complementary ground floor uses such as coffee shops, restaurants, or other uses which can help bring people to occupy the space. Building design elements should be articulated at the ground floor, with fine-grained facade elements that break up the scale of larger buildings and attract pedestrian exploration. Signage and entrances clearly identifying the access points to businesses should be visible from the street, and oriented to take advantage of adjacent sidewalks, open spaces or plazas. Street furniture such as benches and trash cans should be provided for the comfort of the pedestrian, especially near building entrances and at pocket parks or plazas. Trees and landscaping should be generously planted and well managed; ensuring that adequate visibility into and out of parks and plazas is maintained.



**Deteriorated existing sidewalk in the Near North (top), an auto-oriented streetscape in the Near West (center), and a street corner in the Mid South (bottom) lacking street furniture and a consistent visual identity.**

## Sample Design Treatments



**For an enhanced pedestrian environment, incorporate urban plazas (top) where possible, orient building entrances toward the street to create a consistent street wall and eyes on the street (middle) and incorporate shade trees, benches, and plantings (bottom).**



## Sample Design Treatments



Define crosswalks by incorporating alternative paving materials (above), and provide bumpouts (below) at corners where they will not interfere with bus movement.



## Pedestrian Crossing Improvements

Implementation strategies for pedestrian crossing improvements include consistent design treatments along major roadways and at busy intersections that include safety elements. These elements include upgraded paving that clearly defines crosswalk areas, improved pavement markings, countdown signaling and, where feasible, providing corner “bumpouts” or median islands that reduce pedestrian crossing distance and increase available sidewalk area for street furniture, bicycle racks, or outdoor cafes.



Existing pedestrian crossing conditions at the intersection of Division and Sedgwick (above) in the Near North area.

## Community Gateways and Identity Elements

Implementation strategies for creating community identity elements include constructing gateway treatments to signal arrival into each study area. Gateways can provide both landmarks for easy navigation and informational signage, supplying the area with a unique arrival identifier while also directing visitors to other places of interest in the area. Other neighborhood identity elements could include seasonal banners that provide a consistent visual treatment for each area.

## Sample Design Treatments

Seasonal banners (right) and gateway features (below) create a consistent place-based identity.



## Wayfinding

Implementation strategies for improved wayfinding include the development of orientation systems that include recurring visual elements and informational signage visible to pedestrians, cyclists and drivers to guide visitors to local recreational amenities and other destinations. Directory maps or kiosks near transit stations, major bus stops and other area destinations will encourage use of neighborhood amenities. Additionally, pedestrian walkways and seating areas should be well lit and provide views (if possible) to other activities. Bike racks should be available at recreational destinations, consistent with the City of Chicago's *Bike 2015 Plan* specifications.



Impeded circulation in the Near North for pedestrians at the Riverfront pathway (top) and along Blackhawk Street (bottom).



## Sample Design Treatments



Provide clearly delineated pedestrian routes (above) and informative signage for cyclists and pedestrians (below).



The broad based strategies presented above are all applicable to improving the public realm. Area-specific application of these strategies is described in the next sections. The sections to follow will guide and facilitate transit improvements, pedestrian access and urban design enhancements in each study area. They will also provide direction for the planning of new commercial and mixed use development in a timely, efficient and equitable manner.