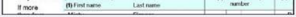

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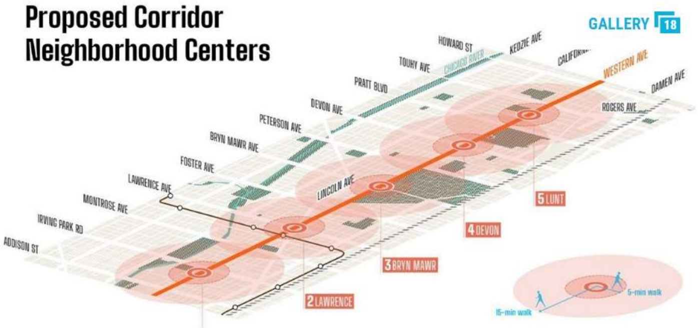
CITYWIDE

Plan Commission adopts Western Ave Corridor Study

The plan calls for public realm improvements within a development framework

NOVEMBER 20, 2022, 7:00AM LUKAS KUGLER ↓ 5 COMMENTS


Proposed Corridor Neighborhood Centers
GALLERY 18
HOWARD ST
KEDZIE AVE
TOUHY AVE
CHICAGO RIVER
CALIFORNIA
WESTERN AVE
PRATT BLVD
DAMEN AVE
DEVON AVE
ROGERS AVE
PETERSON AVE
BRYN MAWR AVE
FOSTER AVE
LAWRENCE AVE
LINCOLN AVE
MONTROSE AVE
5 LUNT
IRVING PARK RD
4 DEVON
ADDISON ST
3 BRYN MAWR
2 LAWRENCE
5-min walk
15-min walk

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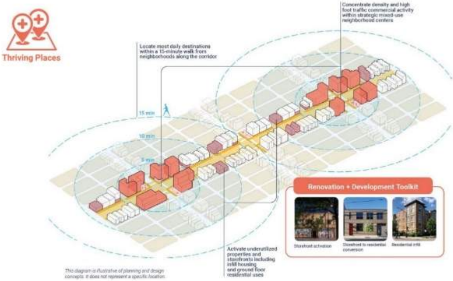
The Chicago Plan Commission has adopted the Western Avenue Corridor Study. Developed as a community-based planning initiative, the study looks at land use, development patterns, and circulation along a northern 5-mile stretch of Western Ave. Stretching from W. Addison St to the south up to W. Howard St to the north, the study spans four wards and many neighborhoods.

On the city side of the project, DPD and CDOT co-led the study. The city retained Site Design Group, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, Latent Design, Sam Schwartz, and Borderless to help draft and complete the study. With almost two years of community input and discussion, the plan looks to envision a corridor with thriving places, safe and attractive streets, and resilient communities.


Thriving Places
Concentrate density and high foot traffic commercial activity within strategic mixed-use neighborhood centers
Locate most daily destinations within a 15-minute walk from neighborhoods along the corridor
15 min
10 min
5 min
Renovation + Development Toolkit
Storefront activation
Storefront to residential conversion
Residential infill
Activate underutilized properties and storefronts including infill housing and ground floor residential uses
This diagram is illustrative of planning and design concepts. It does not represent a specific location.

Western Ave Corridor Study

DPD

For thriving places, the study looks to concentrate density and high foot traffic in strategic mixed-use neighborhood centers, with lower density housing infill in between those neighborhood centers. With lots of underutilized retail spaces, ground floor housing is envisioned for those lower density buildings in between the high-density nodes. Placemaking efforts are envisioned for the high-density centers, with

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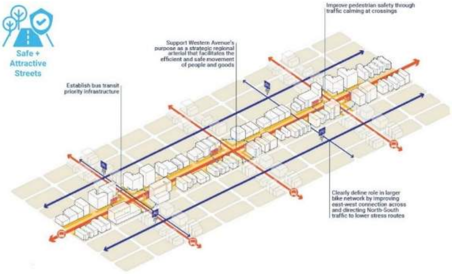
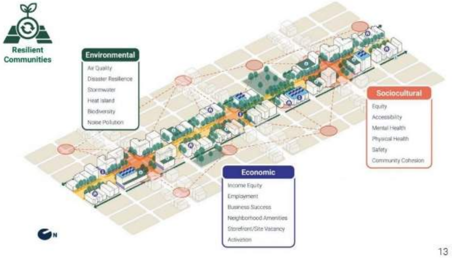
landscaping, site furniture, public spaces and programming, public art, and branding proposed. Buildings would be setback along narrow sidewalks and a toolkit has been prepared for activating underutilized storefronts.


Safe + Attractive Streets
Improve pedestrian safety through traffic calming at crossings
Support Western Avenue's purpose as a strategic regional arterial that facilitates the efficient and safe movement of people and goods
Establish bus transit priority infrastructure
Clearly define role in larger bike network by improving east-west connection across and directing North-South traffic to lower stress routes

Western Ave Corridor Study

DPD

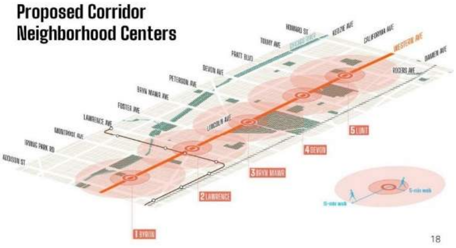
With Western Ave as a strategic, regional arterial street, the plan looks toward creating safe and attractive streets for the corridor. As a more efficient way of moving people, the study would prioritize bus infrastructure including bus lanes, bus bulb-outs, and optimizing signal timing for bus travel and pedestrians. Pedestrian safety would also be improved at intersections as well as bike infrastructure would be integrated with new east/west crossing improvements. North/south bike traffic is intended to be directed off of Western Ave to lower-stress routes.


Resilient Communities
Environmental
Air Quality
Disaster Resilience
Stormwater
Heat Island
Biodiversity
Noise Pollution
Sociocultural
Equity
Accessibility
Mental Health
Physical Health
Safety
Community Cohesion
Economic
Income Equity
Employment
Business Success
Neighborhood Amenities
Storefront/Site Vacancy
Activation
N

Western Ave Corridor Study

DPD

To create resilient communities, the study identifies three main drivers to reach more resilient neighborhoods. The first, environmental, looks towards improvements in air quality, disaster resilience, stormwater, heat island effect, biodiversity, and noise pollution. Economic, the second factor, looks at income equity, employment, business success, neighborhood amenities, storefront and site vacancy, and activation. The final driver, sociocultural, looks at equity, accessibility, mental health, physical health, safety, and community cohesion. All policy changes and redevelopment along Western Ave is charged with supporting these resilient initiatives.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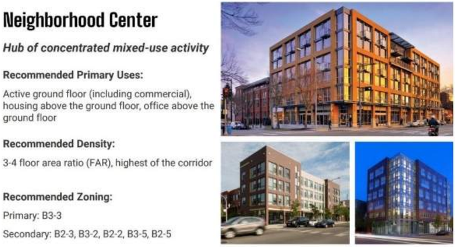
BRYN MAWR AVE
FOSTER AVE
LAWRENCE AVE
LINCOLN AVE
MONTROSE AVE
IRVING PARK RD
ADDISON ST
5 LUNT
4 DEVON
3 BRYN MAWR
2 LAWRENCE
1 BYRON
5-min walk
18

Western Ave Corridor Study

DPD

With more detail in the land use framework, the neighborhood center is defined as a mixed-use core with higher density and the clustering of commercial, institutional, transit, and housing. The plan recommends commercial and retail space on the ground floor with residential or offices above. A B3-3 zoning and FAR of 3-4 is suggested for these zones. Five neighborhood centers have been identified as part of the study, which include Irving Park, Lawrence, Bryn Mawr, Devon, and Lunt.



Neighborhood Center

Hub of concentrated mixed-use activity

Recommended Primary Uses:

Active ground floor (including commercial), housing above the ground floor, office above the ground floor

Recommended Density:

3-4 floor area ratio (FAR), highest of the corridor

Recommended Zoning:

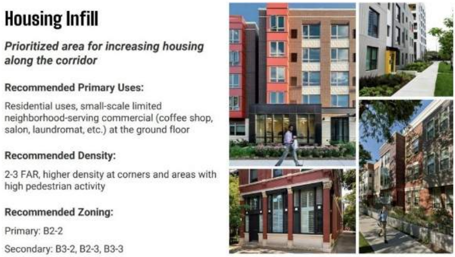
Primary: B3-3

Secondary: B2-3, B3-2, B2-2, B3-5, B2-5

Western Ave Corridor Study

DPD

In between the neighborhood centers, the housing infill zones are charged with increasing housing along the corridor. Recommending residential uses with some limited small-scale commercial uses, the plan suggests an FAR of 2-3 and a zoning B2-2. The final zone is the commercial transition zone, which would be predominantly commercial uses with some potential for residential or office above. This lower density model would suggest an FAR of 2-3 and a B3-2 zoning.



Housing Infill

Prioritized area for increasing housing along the corridor

Recommended Primary Uses:

Residential uses, small-scale limited neighborhood-serving commercial (coffee shop, salon, laundromat, etc.) at the ground floor

Recommended Density:

2-3 FAR, higher density at corners and areas with high pedestrian activity

Recommended Zoning:

Primary: B2-2

Secondary: B3-2, B2-3, B3-3

Western Ave Corridor Study

DPD

DPD developed a Renovation and Development Toolkit to go along with the study's materials. To be used in addition to typically required zoning standards, the toolkit supplies inspiration and identifies best practices for the corridor. The toolkit looks to promote renovation and reuse of historic buildings including the conversion of storefronts to housing in the housing infill zones. It also looks to prioritize underutilized sites for new construction.

Renovation + Development Toolkit

- **In addition to required zoning standards and other applicable guidelines**, like the Neighborhood Design Guidelines
- To gain **inspiration and identify best practices examples** for common project types along the corridor
- To **review proposed projects** along the corridor

DPD
Design Excellence
Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Pedestrian Street Design Standards

25

Western Ave Corridor Study

DPD

With adoption by the Plan Commission, DPD and its co-contributors will look towards implementation. Next steps include identifying and allocating resources for projects based on study recommendations, as well as piloting innovative policies and projects along the corridor and then evaluating impacts to refine and expand on what works. DPD and aldermen will also look to promote development opportunities to businesses, property owners, and developers while assisting them through the process to align with the study's vision.

WESTERN AVE CORRIDOR STUDY

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Best Newest Oldest

Spyro Boukalis

3 months ago

Plan appears to be dead on arrival and am hoping the City can prove otherwise:
- No tram, train, subway or even BRT envisioned
- No dedicated protected bike lanes in spite there being ample space for a bike expressway
- No immediate zoning changes. Just last week more construction started on strip malls and a day care with giant parking lot where the study indicated larger Mixed Use.
- The CVS on Western and Irving closed down. This would be an idea spot for the plan to accomplish something.
- Why is the Hero's sandwich spot (closed for 3-4 years now) not listed as an opportunity site? It is on Addison and Western at a very busy intersection.

At least they should start with planting median islands .... the lack of greenery makes Western depressing.
Best luck to those behind the study, hope they can make something good materialize :)

2 0 Reply • Share ›

garco ➜ Spyro Boukalis

3 months ago edited

I agree. I think *in theory* it's a start, but lacks so much vision. In my opinion, Ashland and Western will someday resemble Halsted's density that we see in West Loop and increasingly in River West, western Lincoln Park. There's already a few high density developments built or planned on/around Ashland. They're major arterial corridors with huge potential for transit-oriented development, not the ad hoc mix of cinder block three flats, townhomey gated communities, and suburban big box strip malls we mostly see now. The plan seeems to demonstrate a general push for higher density, but still quite conservative.

And I totally agree, for the city to grow, evolve sustainably I think we must prioritize public transportation and dense transit and pedestrian-oriented development. No it won't look like Manhattan or London anytime soon, but we have the foundation, the good bones to take advantage of and build on. We need to stop catering to neighborhood highways, traffic, and parking. A combination of light-rail and BRT should be one of the top priorities on the CMAP 2050 Plan and the City's new plan, not adding lanes and rebuilding highways.

Obviously I'm being idealistic— funding is always the major issue. We live in a capitalist, car-centric society where cash-strapped cities have much more pressing issues (certainly Chicago) than building the new Burnham Plan. Realistically none of this can happen overnight, but if we could bulldoze the urban fabric of most American cities, totally rebuild our society to revolve around cars, build thousands of miles of highways, and endless suburban sprawl in a few decades, we definitely can and should drastically readjust to and plan for the inevitable urban, sustainable future.

0 0 Reply • Share ›

Drew → garco — ⚑

3 months ago

I dream of bold Mayor Daley's going around with their bulldozers and ripping up every parasitic highway viruses across the US. No more 90 in Milwaukee. No more 101 in LA. No more inaccessible waterfronts in New York.

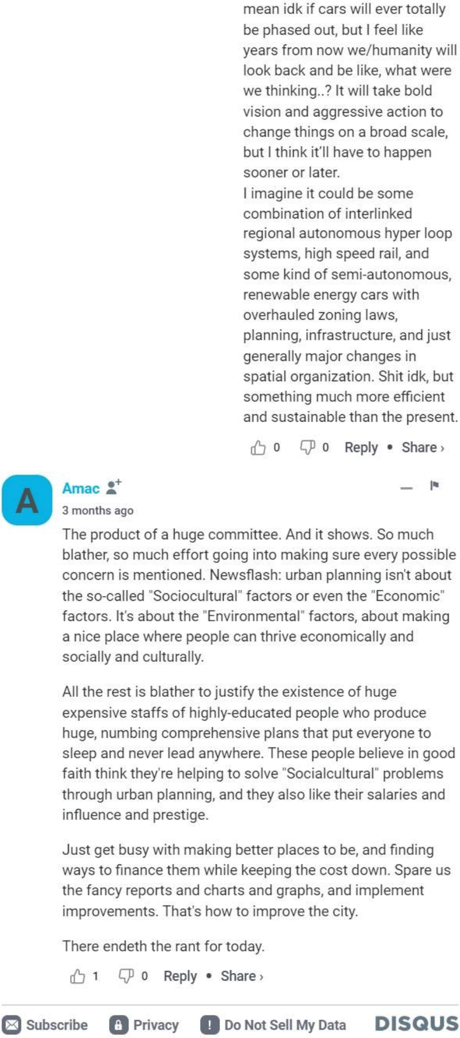
The initial will probably be pure chaos, but the next step will be high-speed rail bliss. Like it or leave it. Of course this is a part of my fantasy fiction, but a person can dream.

1 0 Reply • Share ›

garco → Drew — ⚑

3 months ago edited

Lol, gotta start somewhere! I



mean idk if cars will ever totally be phased out, but I feel like years from now we/humanity will look back and be like, what were we thinking..? It will take bold vision and aggressive action to change things on a broad scale, but I think it'll have to happen sooner or later.
I imagine it could be some combination of interlinked regional autonomous hyper loop systems, high speed rail, and some kind of semi-autonomous, renewable energy cars with overhauled zoning laws, planning, infrastructure, and just generally major changes in spatial organization. Shit idk, but something much more efficient and sustainable than the present.

0
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Reply • Share ›

A

Amac

3 months ago

The product of a huge committee. And it shows. So much blather, so much effort going into making sure every possible concern is mentioned. Newsflash: urban planning isn't about the so-called "Sociocultural" factors or even the "Economic" factors. It's about the "Environmental" factors, about making a nice place where people can thrive economically and socially and culturally.

All the rest is blather to justify the existence of huge expensive staffs of highly-educated people who produce huge, numbing comprehensive plans that put everyone to sleep and never lead anywhere. These people believe in good faith think they're helping to solve "Socialcultural" problems through urban planning, and they also like their salaries and influence and prestige.

Just get busy with making better places to be, and finding ways to finance them while keeping the cost down. Spare us the fancy reports and charts and graphs, and implement improvements. That's how to improve the city.

There endeth the rant for today.

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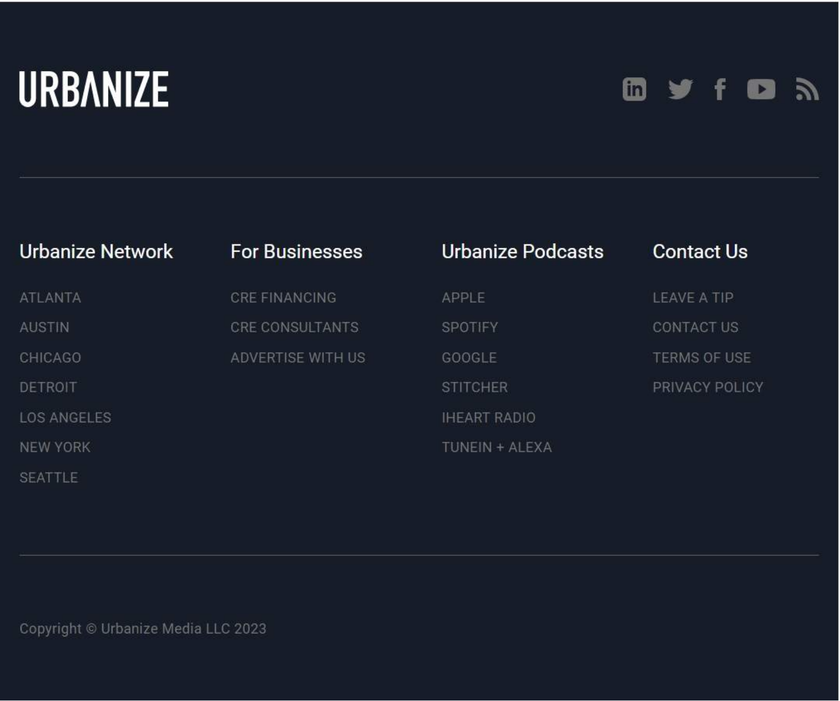

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