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Memorandum

To: David Chandler, CNT

From: Robin Stark
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Blue Island Charrette Results: Streetscape

The Blue Island Community Charrette, held on March 4, 2009, attracted approximately 40 participants, including community residents, local employees, and other interested contributors. Farr Associates lead a series of streetscape activities to collect community input regarding the goals, priority sites, and appropriate elements for streetscape improvements throughout the Uptown area. Following is a summary of the streetscape activity results.

Activity 1: Prioritization of Redevelopment Goals

Out of nine possible redevelopment goals, each participant marked the three goals that they felt were most important for the redevelopment of Uptown. Table leaders then tallied the table's votes, as shown below:

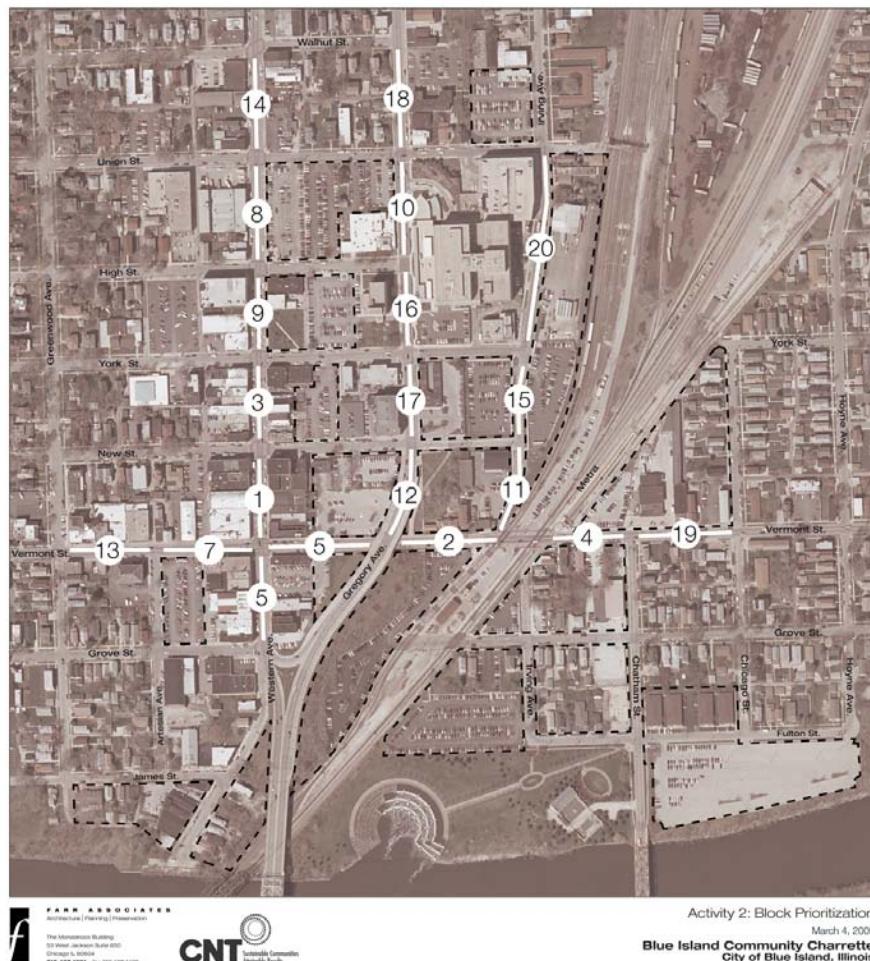
Goal Prioritization		
Instructions: Tally participant priorities and rank the top 3 priorities.		
1	11	Pedestrian Comfort & Safety
2	11	Beautification
1	1	Access to Metra Station
	—	Access to Bicycle Transportation
1	1	Create an Entrance to the Hospital
0	111	Enhance the Environment for Pedestrian Shopping
1	1	Greening the Downtown
2	11	Building Conditions
1	1	Wayfinding
	—	Other _____

The goal that received the most votes by participants was “To Enhance the Environment for Pedestrian Shopping,” followed closely by “Greening the Downtown.” Tied for third place was “Beautification” and “Building Conditions.” Two additional goals – “Pedestrian Comfort & Safety” and “Access to Metra Station” also received a significant number of votes.

From these results, we have concluded that participants strongly support streetscape improvements that will improve the appearance and beauty of Uptown and make it a better shopping destination. Creating pedestrian connections with Metra appears to be a secondary priority.

Activity 2: Prioritization of Blocks

Each table prioritized the importance of streetscape improvements on 20 blocks within Uptown, with “1” being the highest priority. We took an average of each table’s ranking for each block and determined the following summary ranking:



Not surprisingly, and on the heals of Uptown’s previous charrette, the core shopping area along Western Avenue consistently ranked the highest among groups. Vermont Street,

however, ranked almost as high, showing that since the previous charrette, there is a greater focus on pedestrian connections with the Metra Stations. It should be noted that groups occasionally ranked the hospital entrance along Gregory Avenue as an important block.

Activity 3: Streetscape Improvements

Each group created two streetscape plans for a sample block within Uptown. Four groups focused on a typical block within the core shopping district, two groups focused on an area around the Metra Stations, and two groups focused on a block flanked by a mix of buildings and parking lots.

Each streetscape element that a group could use for their streetscape plan had an assigned value, based on its relative cost and ease of installation. Small ticket items included the following:

- Way Finding Signage (0 points)
- Public Art (1 point)
- Banners (1 point)
- Hanging Baskets (1 point)
- Bike Racks (2 points)
- Planters (2 points).

Large ticket items included the following:

- Benches and Trash Cans (4 points)
- Fencing and Screening (4 points)
- Trees (6 points)
- Lighting (6 points)
- Special Pavement (6 points)
- Sidewalk Extensions (6 points)
- Façade Rehabilitation (8 points)

Each group created two plans. The first plan created had an unlimited budget (Design 1); the second plan created had a modest budget (Design 2). Following is a summary of how the groups utilized the streetscape elements for each design:

Core Shopping District:

- All streetscape elements were used, regardless of budget, except for “Fencing and Screening.”
- Between Design 1 and Design 2, the overall number of small ticket items decreased by about one-third, and the overall number of large ticket items decreased by about one-half. The percentage of total budget spent on small and large ticket items remained relatively stable.
- “Hanging Baskets” was the only small ticket item to increase in number between Design 1 and Design 2. “Lighting” was the only large ticket item to increase in number between Design 1 and Design 2.
- Three large ticket items remained important between Design 1 and Design 2 – “Trees,” “Lighting,” and “Façade Rehabilitation.” They made up approximately 45% of the total budget for Design 1 and 75% of the total budget for Design 2.
- “Special Paving” and “Sidewalk Extensions” were reduced significantly between Design 1 and Design 2. They made up approximately 40% of the total budget of Design 1, while only making up approximately 8% of the total budget of Design 2.

Metra Vicinity:

- All streetscape elements were used in Design 1. All streetscape elements were used in Design 2, except for “Banners,” “Hanging Baskets,” and “Fencing and Screening.”
- Between Design 1 and Design 2, the overall number of small ticket items decreased by about one-third, and the overall number of large ticket items decreased by about one-half. The percentage of total budget spent on small and large ticket items remained relatively stable.
- “Public Art” was the only item to increase in number between Design 1 and Design 2.
- Four large ticket items remained important between Design 1 and Design 2—“Trees,” “Lighting,” “Sidewalk Extensions,” and “Façade Rehabilitation.” They made up approximately 60% of the total budget for Design 1 and 86% of the total budget for Design 2.
- “Planters,” “Benches and Trash Cans,” “Fencing and Screening,” and “Special Paving” were reduced significantly between Design 1 and Design 2. They made up approximately 35% of the total budget of Design 1, while only making up approximately 6% of the total budget of Design 2.

Mix of Buildings and Parking Lots:

- All streetscape elements were used in Design 1. All streetscape elements were used in Design 2, except for “Banners,” “Lighting,” and “Special Paving.”
- Between Design 1 and Design 2, the overall number of small ticket items decreased by about one-quarter, and the overall number of large ticket items decreased by about two-thirds. The percentage of total budget spent on small ticket items increased slightly.
- “Public Art” was the only item to increase in number between Design 1 and Design 2.
- Five large ticket items remained important between Design 1 and Design 2—“Benches and Trash Cans,” “Fencing and Screening,” “Trees,” “Sidewalk Extensions,” and “Façade Rehabilitation.” They made up approximately 60% of the total budget for Design 1 and 80% of the total budget for Design 2.
- “Lighting” and “Special Paving” were reduced significantly between Design 1 and Design 2. They made up approximately 31% of the total budget of Design 1 and were not used at all in Design 2.

A few conclusions can be summarized from the above results:

- The percentage of total budget spent on small and large ticket items remained relatively stable, which shows that with a limited budget, large ticket items are still important to incorporate into the streetscape.
- The importance of individual small ticket items varies depending on the context of the street. “Hanging Baskets” and “Planters” were the most important elements of the core shopping district; “Way Finding Signage,” “Public Art,” and “Bike Racks” were the most important elements in the vicinity of the Metra Stations; and “Way Finding Signage,” “Public Art,” and “Planters” were the most important elements in an area flanked by a mix of buildings and parking lots.
- “Trees” and “Façade Rehabilitation” are the most important large ticket items, followed by “Lighting” and “Sidewalk Extensions.”
- While desired with an unlimited budget, “Special Paving” is not necessary when the budget is limited.

Resulting Design Goals

1. Prioritize streetscape improvements that improve the appearance and beauty of Uptown and make it a better shopping destination.
2. Prioritize streetscape improvements that create pedestrian connections with Metra.
3. Focus streetscape improvements on the core shopping area along Western Avenue and the blocks along Vermont Street that connect the Metra Stations with the core shopping area.
4. Even when funding is limited, large ticket items, such as trees and façade rehabilitation are important to incorporate.
5. Tailor small streetscape improvements to the context of the area. For instance, beautify shopping areas with flowers, provide way-finding signage and bike racks in the vicinity of the Metra Stations, and include public art and planters where parking lots front the street.