Uptown

Corridor Development Initiative

Final Report—July 2014
The 46th Ward is a wonderful place to live. Many neighborhoods in the 46th Ward are unique in terms of their historic character, architectural style, and community engagement. The 46th Ward is home to over 30 diverse neighborhood organizations through a Community Engagement Organizations (CEO) committee comprised of representatives from various block clubs, condo boards, housing advocacy organizations, affordable housing buildings and expertize in urban planning and historic preservation. Every resident has at least one representative serving on this committee as each organization sends one representative of their choosing to the Zoning and Development Committee. Anyone from the public is also welcome to attend these meetings.

In 2011 when I first took office, the Wilson Station was the only Red Line station in the ward. It has been voted the least crowded station every year by the Chicago Reader. My first priority was to secure funding to get this station rehabilitated. In 2011, I received the good news that the funding had been secured. The $203 million Wilson Station Reconstruction Project will be one of the largest Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) ‘L’ station projects in the agency’s history. The station will become a stop for CTA Purple Line express trains and become accessible to persons with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. A part of this project will include additional space that the CTA is planning to find a contractor to develop.

Last year, we received the bad news from Chicago Public Schools that Stewart Elementary School would be closed. After taking office in 2011, I organized a number of Transition Teams that created the basis for the original 46th Ward Master plan, published in 2011. This plan incorporated many voices from the Ward and combined them with surveys of retail needs, housing stock, population and infrastructure to create a framework that helped guide the community and me in planning and decision-making. Since then, I have continually updated the Master Plan based on goals we have achieved and feedback from residents. Additionally, I created the 46th Ward Zoning and Development Committee comprised of representatives from over 30 diverse neighborhood organizations throughout the ward. Representatives include members from various block clubs, condo boards, housing advocacy organizations, federal, state and local government agencies, as well as experts in urban planning and historic preservation. The MPC staff led small groups in creating development proposals and gave them the tools to assess building designs, feasibility and how the project would fit into the surrounding corridor.

The staff and volunteer experts from the Metropolitan Planning Council were incredibly knowledgeable and experienced in development and urban planning. I can’t thank them enough.

This report is a culmination of the work that the residents of the 46th Ward created during the planning process. It should not only be used as a guide for these two projects, but for the larger Broadway corridor. It’s an honor to serve a community where residents actively participate in making our neighborhoods a better place for everyone.

Sincerely,

Ald. James Cappleman
46th Ward
Executive summary

The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has long emphasized the importance of supporting quality development near transit. Transit-oriented development (TOD) supports thriving neighborhoods by improving access to jobs and amenities across the city and suburbs, decreasing cost of living and reducing traffic congestion and air pollution. Working with government, community and business leaders across metropolitan Chicago, MPC is pushing for equitable TOD on three fronts:

1. Revising local land use policies, such as the City of Chicago’s 2013 TOD ordinance, to engage greater density near transit.
2. Researching new financing tools to encourage TOD that is accessible to people across the income spectrum; and
3. Engaging communities in shaping their local vision for TOD through our Corridor Development Initiative (CDI).

When MPC learned that two City of Chicago-owned properties adjacent to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Wilson Station in Uptown would be put up for bid in late 2014, we jumped at the chance to work with Ald. James Cappleman (46th Ward) to engage community stakeholders in shaping a vision for these two parcels. The two parcels are the former Stewart School and an empty site adjacent to Wilson Station, near the intersection of Wilson Avenue and Broadway. The CTA is investing $203 million in these two TOD opportunities.

In May 2014, MPC engaged the community in a transparent process for creating exciting, viable development proposals for these two parcels, noting their ideas in realistic information about what the market can support. Through three public CDI workshops and an online survey, hundreds of participants provided specific recommendations about their vision for these two parcels. We expected—and heard—a wide range of opinions about how to preserve what works in the neighborhood and improve what doesn’t through these two TOD opportunities.

This report details the results of the rich community engagement process and points the way toward securing equitable development that serves the neighborhood near Wilson Station. It is important to note that our collective goal was not to reach consensus on any vision, but to determine agreement about the future of these two sites and the corridor context. The results and recommendations from Uptown’s efforts also can inform future TOD opportunities across the region, and in metropolitan areas across the nation.

Uptown is fortunate to have two City-owned sites that are prime candidates for transit-oriented development, which improves access to jobs, decreases cost of living and reduces traffic congestion.

Recommenda­tions and next steps

Ald. Cappleman, CTA and CPS have committed to using the results of the Uptown CDI to determine the most appropriate, realistic uses for the land adjacent to Wilson Station and the Stewart School. According to the latest information available, in the second half of 2014, CPS will undertake its disposition process for all 50 public schools closed in 2013. Meanwhile, CTA is planning to open a request for proposals (RFP) disposition process in 2015 to sell or enter into a long-term rental agreement for the land adjacent to Wilson Station. These recommendations should be integrated into both planning and development processes. If the community’s vision for these sites is to be fulfilled, zoning for the Stewart School site must be changed to B2-3 or B2-5 and the RFPs introduced by CPS and CTA must weigh bids based on their ability to provide a neighborhood, whether as a community, arts or youth center, a farmers market or otherwise.

MPC will distribute this report widely and continue conversations with the City of Chicago, the Alderman’s office, CPS, CTA and the local advisory committees to advocate for a redevelopment plan that best reflects the community’s needs and priorities. Even as Uptown advances its vision to shape these two important, transit-accessible sites, the City of Chicago, greater metropolitan region and urban areas across the country are focusing greater attention on the benefits of well-planned development near transit. Uptown’s CDI experience and outcomes should serve as a model for how proactive planning can attract development that meets the needs and desires of local residents and businesses. Working with Truman College and local businesses, CTA should improve light andFacing a need for affordable housing and other strategic needs, MPC will use lessons learned from this rich community engagement process with Uptown to inform our broader advocacy for policies that support well-planned, equitable transit-oriented development in the greater Chicago region and regions across the country.

Please follow our Uptown work at metrop­lan­ing.org/uptown and learn more about our broader transit-oriented development initiative at metrop­lan­ing.org/tod.

The following summarizes the primary conclusions of the majority of participants in the Uptown CDI workshops and online survey. For more details, see page 18.

Both sites

1. Dense, mixed-use buildings that fit within the urban fabric of Uptown are preferred.
2. Many participants stated that any new housing developments should only include the minimum required parking spaces.
3. If the building is not reused as a school, at least part of the redevelopment should serve the needs of the community, whether as a arts or youth center, a farmers market or otherwise.
4. New construction should be planned for the park-like lot adjacent to the school, at a scale similar to the school building (about four to six stories).
5. Retail options should be incorporated at the ground level if possible, preferably facing Broadway.

Wilson Station site

1. The redevelopment of Wilson Station offers the opportunity to significantly improve the space under the elevated rail tracks. Working with Truman College and local businesses, CTA should improve light and Facing a need for affordable housing and other strategic needs, MPC will use lessons learned from this rich community engagement process with Uptown to inform our broader advocacy for policies that support well-planned, equitable transit-oriented development in the greater Chicago region and regions across the country.

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Stewart School site

1. The existing school building, a beautiful, historic and important structure in Uptown, should be preserved and reused.
2. If the building is reused as a school, the common parking preference is that it be a public school.
The Corridor Development Initiative (CDI) is a participatory planning process that engages communities in proactively planning for real-world development scenarios. Through three public meetings, participants gain a deeper understanding of issues such as density, transit-oriented development, affordable housing and the true cost of development, and create a set of priorities to guide community leaders as they plan for future development in their neighborhoods. Developers can use the CDI report to understand local opportunities and values. Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) partners with communities across Chicago to use CDI to encourage quality, equitable development near transit.

Through an exercise using wooden blocks and aerial maps of the proposed sites, participants have the opportunity to “build” what they would like to see and test whether their projects are financially feasible. Participants then work together to consider development options and explore how their ideas would pan out on the ground. The CDI is not a master planning process but can be integrated with such processes.

Meeting 1

Existing conditions and goals

The first meeting provides an overview of current land use policies and demographic and commercial changes in the community. Participants discuss development opportunities and challenges and set concrete goals.

Meeting 2

Block exercise

At the second meeting, community members explore design and financing options for their ideas through a hands-on block exercise. Participants create hypothetical development options for three specific sites using various wooden blocks that represent different building uses. As community members build their proposals, they are sketched by design advisors, while a real estate advisor calculates development costs, revenues and any financing gaps.

Meeting 3

Development recommendations

The final meeting features a panel of real estate experts and/or developers who respond to the outcomes of the block exercise in light of current market trends. These recommendations are then compiled into a report that community leaders can present to potential developers to provide them with a community-led, feasibility-tested vision.

Uptown and the Broadway corridor

Community demographics

Uptown is one of 77 community areas in Chicago. The neighborhood is defined by a rich history that includes a once-thriving entertainment and theater district. Waves of immigrants have settled here, making its population among the city’s most economically, racially and ethnically diverse. Uptown is located along the CTA Red Line and Lake Michigan, providing great access to transit and recreation amenities. Uptown is one of the few North Side communities with affordable rental housing opportunities, but the market has not kept pace with the need. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of households that are housing cost-burdened—meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing—jumped from 38.8 percent to 50.5 percent, according to the Chicago-Rehab Network. This trend threatens the neighborhood’s stability and the ability for residents of all incomes to remain in the community.

Development plans and prospects

The Uptown Entertainment District and the Broadway corridor that stretches from Uptown to Edgewater are key city and community stakeholders. A plan crafted by the 46th Ward (see page 9) call for a range of strategies to improve housing and recreation opportunities, including improved streetscaping, bike lanes, park space and potential new developments. The plan calls for re-use Stewart School have all generated momentum for development in Uptown.

To sustain this momentum and encourage equitable TOD, MPC and Ald. Cappleman focused on engaging the community to plan for two key sites: the Stewart School, including the parking lot adjacent to the school; and the empty land made available by the reconfiguration of the CTA Wilson Station. These sites are described and mapped in further detail on the following pages.

Uptown by the numbers

Population: 56,362
Housing units: 32,541
Median household income: $40,706
Households earning less than $25,000: 37 percent
Households in poverty: 26 percent
Median monthly gross rent: $730
Median monthly homeowner cost: $2,049
Cost-burdened rental households: 51 percent
(Those that spend more than 30 percent of income on housing)

Unemployment rate: 8 percent
Increase in unemployment since 2005: 20 percent
Weekday boardings at CTA Wilson Station: 6,000
(2013 average)
Weekday train volume at CTA Wilson Station: 510 trains per day (2013 schedule)
Increase in ridership at Wilson Station: 1999: 40 percent
Increase in ridership since 2000: 20 percent (through 2013)

All data 2010 unless otherwise noted. Source: Chicago Rehab Network, Affordable Housing Factbook.
Wilson Station site

Wilson Station, completed in 1923, is one of the Chicago Transit Authority’s (CTA) most popular stations, serving an average of about 6,000 daily boardings on 510 trains. As with other North Side rail stations, the site of Wilson Station has grown. Over the past 15 years, daily ridership at the station has increased by almost 40 percent.

The station’s structure, along with that of the entire North Side Red and Purple Lines, has deteriorated over the years. The CTA has committed to the reconstruction of all Red and Purple Line tracks north of Belmont. The Wilson Station renovation is the first step of that process and will include the realignment of the tracks, creation of a new station headhouse, construction of a new entrance at Sunnyside Avenue and renovation of the Gerber Building at the intersection of Wilson Avenue and Broadway. When this $203 million project is completed in 2017, riders will be able to board both Red and Purple Line trains at Wilson.

The realignment of the tracks will open up several parcels east and west of the tracks between Wilson and Sunnyside avenues. CTA has proposed a TOD project on this land, but has not developed specific site plans, which is one reason why MPC’s CDI process was particularly applicable here. Given that pedestrian use of Wilson Station has grown: Over the past 15 years, riders will be able to board both Red and Purple Line trains at Wilson.

The Wilson Station site

CPS/PBC development constraints

CPS is required to sell the property to the highest “responsible” bidder. All proposals must be adequate-
ly financed and sustainable. All properties are sold “as is, where is,” and will be conveyed to new owners once the Board of Education has approved the sale. Property title is held by Public Building Commission of Chicago (PBC).  

Stewart Station site

The Graeme Stewart Elementary School, 4525 N. Kenmore Ave., is one of the city of Chicago’s most beauti-
ful, historic school buildings. Dwight Perkins, who worked with Frank Lloyd Wright and created many of Chicago’s noteworthy buildings, including the lion at the Lincoln Park Zoo and the fieldhouse at Hamlin Park, 3035 N. Moyne Ave., designed Stewart School and a number of other schools.

Stewart School was opened in 1907 and, according to a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) evaluation of the 107-year-old building, it “clearly meets Chicago landmark criteria and should be designated.” The building’s exterior has been restored, and its interior includes three murals from the 1930s Works Progress Administration period. The school site includes an adjacent parking lot previously used for teachers and staff, as well as a public green and playground carefully constructed on the public right-of-way of Kenmore Avenue.

Stewart School was closed in 2013 along with 49 other Chicago schools; it had a 41 percent utilization rate in 2012. According to a CPS analysis, the building requires about $12 million in repairs to bring the entire structure up to date. Though the 90,400 sq. ft. building has always been used as a school, it is a strong candidate for adaptive reuse. In addition, the adjacent parking lot is large enough to accommodate a new building. Adjacent to the Broadway corridor near the soon-to-be-renovated Wilson Station, the Stewart School can remain a community asset.
Outreach
MPC worked closely with Ald. Cappleman, as well as representatives from the Chicago Mayor’s Office, Chicago Dept. of Planning and Development, CPS, CTA and Trueman College. MPC also established a local advisory committee, consisting of the following members, to advise on outreach, implementation and the report:

• Chinese Mutual Aid Association
• Inspiration Corporation
• Organizing Neighborhoods for Equality: Northside
• Uptown Chicago Commission
• Uptown United
• Voice of the People

With the aid of Ald. Cappleman’s office and members of the local advisory committee, MPC conducted outreach throughout the community. Emails were sent through local channels; social media tools including Everyblock, Twitter and Facebook were used to promote the event; news stories were featured in local media, such as DNAInfo and Curbed Chicago; and multiple media outlets, such as DNAInfo and Curbed Chicago; and multiple media outlets, such as Everyblock, Twitter and Facebook were used to promote the event. Meeting attendees were generally representative of the Uptown community, though participation by nonwhite households and renters was disproportionately lower than Uptown’s population.

Participation
The three free public workshops on May 8, 12 and 29, 2014, took place in the gymnasium of the Clarendon Park Community Center from 6 to 8 p.m. Attendance ranged between 71 and 100 each meeting. Fifteen percent of total people at the events attended all three events and 22 percent attended two of the meetings. Meeting attendees were generally representative of the Uptown community, though participation by nonwhite households and renters was disproportionately lower than Uptown’s population.

To gather input from the Uptown public, MPC provided a survey online for Uptown stakeholders. Between May 30 and June 13, 373 individuals completed the survey. Ninety-four percent of whom live and/or work in Uptown, 94 percent of whom live and/or work in Uptown, 88 percent of whom did not answer; 4 percent responded to the survey were far more likely to be white and middle-aged (between 31 and 50) than those who completed the survey expressed that the top goal should be to produce more affordable housing for families. In spring 2014, Uptown United, which represents local businesses, held a vision-generating and dialogue session with the school about the assistance of the planning firm Lakota Group. Participants proposed to see uses such as housing, hotels, offices, institutions or retail provided in the school. According to the report, “an affordable component being incorporated into a market-rate project is preferred, while an exclusively affordable project is not.”

All of these plans were made available during the workshop process for participants to review.
Meeting 1: Community goals

Although the primary aim of the CDI was to engage community members in creating development plans for the Stewart School and Wilson Station sites, the community clearly communicated a number of needs that are relevant to all future development in Uptown.

Building off Uptown’s strengths

CDI participants overwhelmingly stated that Uptown’s diversity and cultural richness are among the community’s greatest assets. The immense diversity of culture is considered a pillar of the community upon which the community clearly communicated a number of needs that are relevant to all future development in Uptown.

Affordable housing

A number of attendees at the meeting stated that Uptown needs well-maintained, safe affordable housing units. Many expressed that the neighborhood’s affordable housing and single-room occupancy (SRO) buildings are being threatened by high-end developments and want to see Uptown revitalize and grow without the displacement of current residents. The need for affordable housing was expressed clearly by attendees throughout the process, and all of the housing proposals designed by participants throughout the workshops included some affordable housing, though many of the proposed programs were designed for people with a mix of incomes.

Online survey respondents were less emphatic about the importance of affordable housing. Of those who mentioned housing types, 78 percent suggested that they would prefer more market-rate housing over affordable housing; many others stated that Uptown already has an abundance of affordable units.

Community space and programming

Many meeting participants cited a need for more programming and informational technologies, and suggestions included access to Lake Michigan (28 percent); a convenient transportation (22 percent); a convenient shopping (21 percent); new restaurants (17 percent); an ice cream shop and restaurants and cafes in Uptown to dine at the restaurants on Wilson and Argyle. Popular suggested amenities include a movie theater, an ice cream shop and restaurants and cafes with patio seating. At the final CDI meeting, the most popular retail need noted by participants included a farmers market (21 percent); new restaurants (17 percent); a coffee shop or bakery (15 percent).

Retail and entertainment

Many meeting attendees believe Uptown will thrive with additional retail and entertainment opportunities. Currently there is a lack of retail stores selling clothing, home needs and sporting goods, resulting in residents leaving the community to shop and reducing local spending. Popular suggestions were to attract a convenience store close to locate near Wilson Station, improve the storefronts on Wilson Avenue between Broadway and Shelden Road, attract quality restaurants and introduce a farmers market at Truman College or Stewart School to serve residents and draw people into the area.

Numerous participants stated that Uptown’s many entertainment amenities are underspent and could be better utilized to bring people into the area. Artists who provided input into how to improve the Broadway Corridor and Wilson Station expressed a need for better retail and restaurants. Many meeting attendees said they would like to see more uses of the Broadway Entertainment District theaters staying in Uptown to do at the restaurants on Wilson and Argyle. Popular suggested activities include a movie theater, an ice cream shop and restaurants and cafes with patio seating. At the final CDI meeting, the most popular retail need noted by participants included a farmers market (21 percent); new restaurants (17 percent); and a coffee shop or bakery (15 percent).

Meeting attendees overwhelmingly stated that Uptown's diversity and cultural richness are one of its greatest strengths to build upon.

Community Gardens or a farmers market (10 percent of attendees and 17 percent of those surveyed online).

Space and programming for youth (11 percent for attendees and 9 percent of those surveyed online); and

Community gardens or a farmers market (10 percent of attendees and 17 percent of those surveyed online).

Safety and Placemaking

Participants expressed that work needs to be done to attract major employers, particularly technology companies or an increase in jobs with additional retail and entertainment opportunities. In the form of shared office space, classes and monetary resources—to maintain the community’s unique ethnic stores and to encourage more community members to start small businesses in Uptown. Ideas included a shared workspace where interested parties pay a fee to have a co-working space that provides equipment, such as 3D printers, a woodworking shop and other tools, to support artisan industries. Many people also stated that the Wilson Station rehabilitation and the reuse of the Stewart School will catalyze more development and business attraction.

Business attraction

Many many participants expressed that work needs to be done to attract major employers, particularly technology companies or an increase in jobs with additional retail and entertainment opportunities. In the form of shared office space, classes and monetary resources—to maintain the community’s unique ethnic stores and to encourage more community members to start small businesses in Uptown. Ideas included a shared workspace where interested parties pay a fee to have a co-working space that provides equipment, such as 3D printers, a woodworking shop and other tools, to support artisan industries. Many people also stated that the Wilson Station rehabilitation and the reuse of the Stewart School will catalyze more development and business attraction.

The community identified Uptown’s diversity and cultural richness as one of its greatest strengths to build upon.
Meeting 2: Scenario development

During the building block exercise in meeting 2 (described on page 4), attendees were given the opportunity to develop whatever ideas they desired, though they were encouraged to be willing to compromise on their concepts to create visions that could actually be implemented. The goal of the process was not to create a specific site plan but to identify concepts that most appropriately matched the community's goals with development realities. These development realities, including real-world constraints developed by CTA and CPS and the benefits and limitations of a range of public subsidies, affordable housing programs and other significant capital sources, are noted in the online appendix: metroplanning.org/uptown.

Analysis and development panel

MPC staff and technical volunteers analyzed each proposed development plan, offering insight into their feasibility, both in terms of site constraints and financing. Volunteers and staff mocked up the plans digitally and inputted them into a real estate pro forma that MPC developed with U.S. Equities Realty to reflect current Uptown market construction costs, occupancy rates, maintenance costs, affordable housing aid and other financial details. Additional information on the subsidies, rents, revenue and other key factors that were assumed to be granted to the development scenarios can be found in the online appendix.

For each project, MPC produced an information sheet describing the proposal’s characteristics and compared them to costs and subsidies that would theoretically be needed to fill the gap in funding for the projects. None of the scenarios initially developed at the second workshop were financially feasible and required compromise and adjustments to be viable from a financial and development perspective.

Five proposals that best represented the community’s ideas were selected for detailed analysis.

Stewart School proposals

Scenario 1

This project would renovate the Stewart School and add a mid-rise building to the current parking lot. The school would primarily house a new school and nonprofit uses, but also include residential and retail space. State affordable housing tax credits and federal historic preservation tax credits are available for this project, but as currently designed the project would need more than $7 million to fill its financing gap. This is primarily a result of the limited number of residential units provided and high amount of nonprofit space.

Financials

Construction and acquisition costs $21 million

Development and operations costs covered by revenues $3 percent

Financing gap $7.15 million

Low-income housing tax credit (4 percent) equity $1.6 million

Historic preservation tax credit (20 percent) equity $2.3 million

Modifications to increase feasibility

An alternative development scenario, which would reduce affordable housing to 50 percent of units and add market-rate units in the parking lot building, would reduce the financing gap to $6.6 million (development finance aims to secure 120 percent of total development costs). Of those who attended the meetings and completed the online survey, more than two-thirds were willing to make this change. A separate alternative, which would increase the size of the proposed parking lot building from 30 to 90 residential units, would reduce the project financing gap to $6.2 million; this was supported by 57 percent of attendees at the public meeting.

Five proposals that best represented the community’s ideas were selected for detailed analysis.
Stewart School proposals

Scenario 2
This project would renovate the Stewart School and fill it primarily with nonprofit uses, though there would be some retail provided in addition. On the adjacent parking lot, a six-story residential building, with green space on top, would be added. This project would cover about 84 percent of its operating costs and debt service through rent revenues, and has a $5.8 million financing gap.

Financials
Construction and acquisition costs $30 million
Development and operations costs covered by revenues 84 percent
Financing gap $5.8 million
Low-income housing tax credit (4 percent) equity $1.6 million
Historic preservation tax credit (20 percent) equity $2.3 million

Modifications to increase feasibility
An alternative development scenario that would reduce the size of the community space, replacing two-thirds of the proposed space with apartments, would cover 105 percent of operating costs and debt service and reduce the financing gap to only $2.5 million (development finance aims to secure 120 percent of total development costs). This option was supported by a plurality of meeting attendees and those voting online, 47 percent and 49 percent respectively, though a large number of respondents were unwilling to part with the significant amount of community space provided. Reducing the area devoted to parking from 120 spaces to the 31 spaces required by zoning was proposed by MPC to reduce the financing gap by $300,000. Two-thirds of meeting attendees said they were in favor of this change.

Scenario 3
This largely residential project would add 159 apartments to a renovated Stewart School and a new, 12-story building constructed on the parking lot. A portion of the school’s first floor would be devoted to nonprofit uses, such as a makerspace, an arts incubator or a theater. The project faces a $12.3 million financing gap because of its large number of affordable units.

Financials
Construction and acquisition costs $43.4 million
Development and operations costs covered by revenues 54 percent
Financing gap $12.3 million
Low-income housing tax credit (4 percent) equity $10.8 million
Historic preservation tax credit (20 percent) equity $2.5 million

Modifications to increase feasibility
An alternative development proposal, which would reduce the affordable housing component to 50 percent of units and bring in market-rate units to fill the remainder of the project, would reduce the financing gap to $3.7 million and cover 103 percent of project development and operations costs with rent revenues (development finance aims to secure 120 percent of total development costs). More than 60 percent of both meeting attendees and online survey respondents said they would be willing to accept this change. This $3.7 million gap could be further reduced if some of the remaining affordable units were converted to market-rate.

Parking lot
Stewart School
Nonprofit (39%)
71,280 sq. ft.
Classes, camps, dance, theater with program- ming, kitchen, daycare
Parking (14%)
120 spaces
Open space
Residential (40%)
69 units
73,920 sq. ft.
100% rental 40% affordable Mix of unit sizes
Retail (7%)
13,200 sq. ft.
Cafe in school building, mar- ket in parking lot area
Parking list
Stewart School
Nonprofit (9%)
21,120 sq. ft.
Makerspace, arts incubator, Hull House Theater
Parking (8%)
70 spaces internal
Residential (83%)
159 units
203,280 sq. ft.
100% rental 100% affordable 25% 1 bedroom 25% 2 bedroom 50% 4 bedroom
Parking list
Stewart School
Wilson Station proposals

Scenario 1

This project would include two buildings, divided into three masses, of seven to 15 stories. The project incorporates retail, office, nonprofit and residential uses, in addition to open space fronting on Wilson Avenue, between several of the buildings and on the rooftop of the second story of one of the buildings. The project would create a landscaped pedestrian path under the tracks. The project has a $7.8 million financing gap because it covers only 87 percent of its operating and development costs through rents.

Financials

Construction and acquisition costs $37.8 million
Development and operations costs covered by revenues 87 percent
Financing gap $7.8 million

Not eligible for affordable housing subsidies because of limited unit count (must have more than 20 affordable units).

Modifications to increase feasibility

An alternative development scenario would replace two-thirds of office space with residential space, and this would cover 95 percent of development and operations costs with revenues and reduce the financing gap to $5.6 million. A majority of both meeting attendees and those who filled out the survey online, 51 percent and 50 percent respectively, said there was not a need for additional office space in Uptown.

Scenario 2

This project proposes a temporary, small-scale intervention in the area adjacent to the ‘L’ tracks and under the tracks themselves, designed for community gatherings, food trucks and the like. The project also would include a small, permanent structure for retail.

Financials

Construction and acquisition costs $5.3 million
Acquisition cost alone $3.91 million
Development and operations costs covered by revenues 10 percent
Financing gap $3.57 million

Modifications to increase feasibility

Because of the high costs of acquiring the land, this low-density project would be difficult to finance. To make it more feasible, the project would either have to incorporate more density or receive reduced-cost use of the land from the CTA. If the space were provided for free use, the financing gap would be reduced to less than $600,000 and 84 percent of the project’s development and operations costs would be covered through rent revenues.
The physical site development plans that were created during the first workshop and discussed during the third workshop were used as examples of what could be built on the sites in consideration. The community was invited to participate in negotiations with the City of Chicago, CPS, and the CTA. While all previous public meetings emphasized examples that MPC staff assisted in facilitating, the third workshop participants were asked to contribute to a discussion of how the sites might be used.

Many participants stated that any new housing built should be targeted to income levels, with at least some portion of the building affordable to low-income households. Of the 13 projects initially proposed by community members through the process, four were made up entirely of affordable units, and no proposed some mix of affordable and market-rate units, with an Affordable- Omitment ranging from 10 to 55 percent. No proposal included only market-rate units. All of the housing awards for the Wilson Station land and three-quarters of those designed for the parking lot provided a mix of affordable and market-rate housing. When asked about whether they would support reducing the share of affordable units in two proposals for the Stewart School, 60 percent or more of participants at the workshops and people surveyed online agreed.

Of the 15 projects analyzed during the second workshop, the proposals for the Wilson Station building and the CTA rail line.

When asked about whether they would be willing to reduce parking provided in a proposal, 70 percent of those surveyed at the workshops and people surveyed online agreed. When asked about whether they agreed that the school building should be retained as a school. Of the six proposals designed for the building, two proposed a new building on the parking lot, with only about 20 percent opposed. Only three of the proposals included a retail component, with 46 percent of respondents suggesting that they were open to a building on the parking lot, ranging from three to 12 stories. About 70 percent of respondents believed it was important for the neighborhood asset to retain. The existing school building, a beautiful, historic structure in Uptown, should be preserved and reused. The existing school building, a beautiful, historic structure in Uptown, should be preserved and reused. The community’s strong preference is that it be a public school. The workshop that focused on the Stewart School building’s landmark status as an important neighborhood asset to retain.

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