Executive summary

Chinatown Parking Management Plan

Managing supply and demand
to strengthen the neighborhood.

Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

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In the final stages of developing the Chinatown Parking Management Plan, the world changed dramatically due to the rapidly spreading Coronavirus (COVID-19). As business slowed to a trickle in Chicago's Chinatown and public health became the primary focus, the release of the plan was delayed. Looking back, we long for the days of not being able to find parking in Chinatown. While a quick return to normal is unlikely, there is hope that business activity will resurge, and the area will go back to being an important regional attraction. This plan outlines solutions to make it easier to find parking — as a resident or a visitor — while improving safety and vibrancy for all.

The general premise of parking management is to balance supply and demand with price. Currently, the demand for parking is so low that there is no need for management strategies or price changes. Businesses are struggling with reduced activity. Low levels of parking revenue in the Chinatown Square Mall parking lot also mean that many local organizations will see reduced funding. The pandemic is exacerbating every possible vulnerability in our society, and recovery will likely be slow.

Whatever degree of normalcy returns, drivers will hit the roads again and their numbers may increase with time. As restaurants adjust to the higher demand for takeout, and delivery vehicles crowd the streets, the rapid turnover of spaces takes on higher importance. Encouraging delivery by electric cargo bicycles can help to reduce traffic and parking congestion. Providing and encouraging commuters to use safe transit service also remains a priority, as 40 percent of Chinatown residents do not have access to a vehicle. Other countries have seen transit ridership slowly coming back to their cities with no related increases in COVID-19 transmission. With more commuters opting for bicycling and walking to avoid potential transmission, there is an urgent need to prioritize safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Parking problems will return in a post-COVID world, and implementing recommendations from this document will help the neighborhood prepare for that future. While these are complicated times, we can come out stronger and better prepared for future challenges.

Sincerely,

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community 华埠更好团结联盟
Project Steering Committee members

Sadik-Kahn, Janette and Seth Solomonow. "Fear of Public Transit Got Ahead of the Evidence," The Atlantic, June 14, 2020. Accessed online: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/fear-transit-bad-cities/612979/

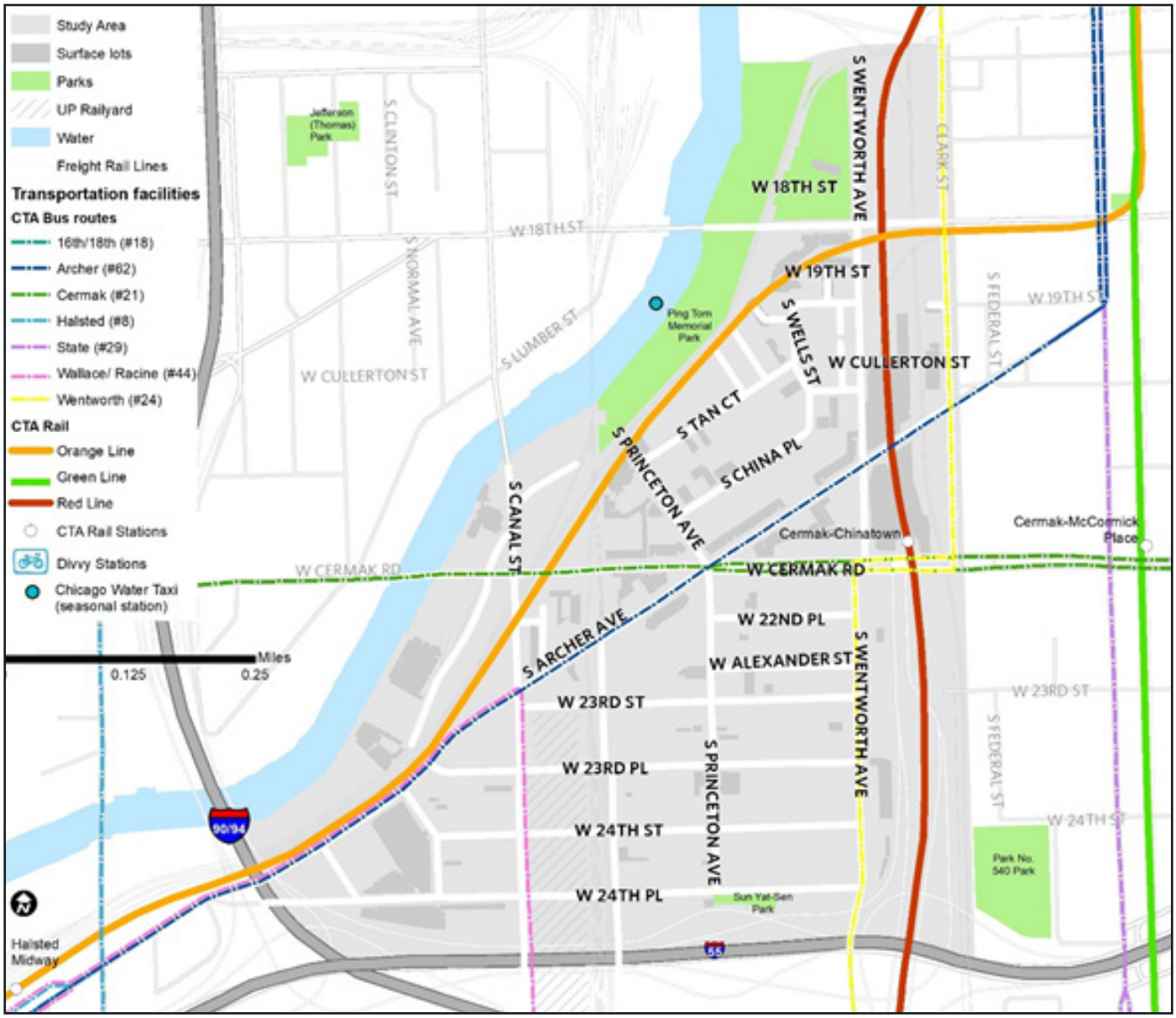
Goals for the Chinatown Parking Plan

Building off the recommendations and goals in the 2014 Chinatown Community Vision Plan, the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) partnered with CMAP's Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program to address parking management. Prioritizing access to the area through multiple transportation options, as well as making parking less complicated and less congested, will serve everyone, including the shopper who wants to park their car for a quick errand, the person walking to meet friends, the visitor out for an exciting evening, or a resident coming home after a long day.

As communities grow, their parking needs change too, requiring different types of parking management. Driving and parking make up just one facet of a community's transportation infrastructure, and solutions to parking problems require a multi-modal transportation system evaluation. This parking plan aims to address the typical parking congestion experienced on weekdays and weekends. While there are recommendations for special events, the focus is on improving everyday conditions in Chinatown.

The boundaries of the study area are essentially 18th Street on the north, the Stevenson Expressway on the south, Clark Street on the east, and the Chicago River on the west. This area represents the commercial core of the Chinatown neighborhood (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. **Chinatown Parking Study Area**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

In an area as walkable and transit-friendly as Chinatown, many people are able to live without cars and walk or use transit for most trips. The area also has many people who get around by bicycle and others who use informal shuttle services. Continuing to support active transportation options helps to reduce the strain on parking, enables residents to lead healthier lives, and can be better for businesses, which may see more foot traffic.

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The recommendations in this plan seek to further the following goals:

Help Chinatown continue to grow and residents to thrive

Ensure cultural vitality and business growth

Make it easier to find parking and reduce congestion from drivers “circling”

Reduce transportation inequities and improve safety

Prepare for changes in coming years

Accepted realities in Chinatown

Any effort to improve the status quo will be met with resistance, and in order to make progress in the management of parking, we are accepting the following realities:

Changes will be difficult for some people.
Not everyone will be happy with changes to the streetscape, changes to prices, or inconveniences to their daily routine. We also understand that the current parking situation is very frustrating and changes are needed. If there are people upset with price increases, CBCAC and CMAP will work with them to better understand their perspective.

Pilot projects will be necessary to test out strategies.
No one has figured out a miracle cure to parking problems, without eliminating the use of cars. We must test out strategies that we believe will help improve parking management. We want to be innovative to push the boundaries of what has been done before. Therefore, we must be flexible and open to some degree of trial and error.

Retaining revenue locally is central to community buy-in.
Chinatown has been marginalized in the past. The community was pushed out of the central loop downtown. Chinatown today is crisscrossed by highways and rail yards that divide the community. It is perfectly reasonable for people in Chinatown to assume that parking meters are another way for the city to marginalize their community. To change this perception, we must see some of the revenue from new meters staying in the community, to make the area better for those who live here. This is possible within the constraints of the Parking Concession Agreement for the City of Chicago.

Parking problems won't be solved overnight.
Chinatown's streets are among the oldest in the city, designed before widespread car usage. The problems associated with car usage have taken decades to reach their current state and will take time to address. Today's vehicles are bigger than ever before in history, taking up a lot of room on these small streets. No solution will fix the problem right away and we must continue to make small improvements.

Additional free parking won't solve the parking problem.
More free parking will simply encourage more people to drive, and most roadways cannot handle additional traffic at peak hours. Parking functions as any economic good, subject to the laws of supply and demand. Price is the only factor that will balance demand. Nearby developments will bring many people to the area and free parking will encourage them to drive, rather than use other transportation options.

Creating parking options for people is important.
Some people who want to visit Chinatown will never pay for parking. Some people don't have time to circle the block looking for parking and are willing to pay more for their time and convenience. The parking solutions developed must be cognizant of the varying needs of residents, employees, and visitors to create options.

Increased sharing of parking resources will be needed.
Several large private parking lots are underutilized at peak parking periods. Sharing should not be forced, but incentivized through meaningful parking agreements to help owners of lots earn additional revenue and contribute to the overall parking supply.

Change is coming to the neighborhood, and CBCAC wants to be prepared
In the past several years, the Chinatown community has seen big changes: a new library, a field house and vast park, a re-routed Wentworth Avenue, and more. Major developments are breaking ground to the north, in Motor Row/ McCormick Place to the east, and smaller developments are popping up all over, even within Chinatown. CBCAC understands that development is coming and wants to think critically about how to protect the cultural integrity of the neighborhood while benefiting from growth. Much of the area is in a transit-oriented development zone, which allows for increased density and reduced parking provisions near CTA stations and along major bus corridors. This plan seeks to adopt strategies that will adjust to changes in the neighborhood, while continuing to bring benefits locally.

Overview of the plan

The plan is organized to present a logical flow of information to share how conclusions were drawn. The first chapter gives an introduction to the plan, with background and goals. The second chapter summarizes the project approach, gives an overview of data collected and key findings that were presented in the existing conditions report. The third chapter introduces general parking management strategies and approaches. The fourth chapter identifies parking recommendations to achieve the goals of the plan. The fifth chapter concludes with the implementation plan and final thoughts, with a focus on actions areas and next steps.

Chapter 1 / Introduction

Chapter 2 / Overview of current parking conditions

Chapter 3 / Introduction to general parking management strategies

Chapter 4 / Parking management recommendations

Chapter 5 / Implementation

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VERTICAL
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Highlights from Chapter 2:

Overview of current parking conditions

The abundance of restaurants, shops, and other attractions in Chinatown draws many people to the neighborhood both as visitors and employees. The existing parking supply serves a diverse set of needs, including parking for residents, businesses loading and unloading, people working in Chinatown, and people visiting the neighborhood. This creates challenges when many of those visitors come to the area by car. Lunch and dinner hours, as well as weekends, are particularly challenging times to find parking. In contrast, off-peak hours have underutilized parking throughout the neighborhood, especially in private parking lots. Aside from parking challenges, the public engagement process highlighted the following additional key findings:

Safety is a primary concern for residents and visitors. Large neighborhood barriers, such as poorly lit underpasses, make some of the parking supply much less desirable to residents and visitors — and encourages driving for short trips.

Many employees are driving to Chinatown from surrounding neighborhoods — often within a mile or two.

Many people, especially older residents, walk for most trips; there are also many using bicycles for transportation, and numbers are growing.

Some employers offer discounted parking passes to employees, but very few offer transit benefits or support for active transportation, like walking and biking.

The area south of Cermak has the most free parking and the highest average occupancy — with many employees and students parking on the residential streets.

The area north of Cermak has the most parking overall, due to the large public lots — which fill up on the weekends, and are sometimes used by people who take the red line out of the neighborhood.

The area west of Stewart has the most large-scale commercial lots, which are inaccessible to people visiting multiple or different locations and are often underutilized.

On average, free parking is almost always full (90 percent occupied), while metered and permit averages about 70 percent full.

People parking in free spaces tend to leave their cars for extended periods; on a weekday surveyed, cars averaged about five hours parked in free spaces and one to two hours at metered spaces.

Highlights from Chapter 3:

Parking Management Concepts

Everyone has a different set of priorities when searching for parking. Most people consider the cost to park, the time needed to look for a space, the distance from their destination, how long they will take, and the safety of the location. For some people, cost is the most important and they will not pay for parking but they will walk further. For others, time is critical and they will pay for a space. For some concerned about safety, they will only walk further if the walk feels safe.

When all parking is free, the most convenient spaces are filled up by whoever arrives first — usually employees opening stores or businesses. Those who are willing to pay for convenience or to feel safer are left without options — except to drive around in circles until a space opens up. This is frustrating to the customer who just wants to complete their errand, and hurts the neighborhood with extra traffic. When the most convenient and desirable spaces are priced according to demand, people who are willing and able to walk will no longer use those spaces. The first spaces to fill up will be the most convenient free ones; after that, some people will pay for the convenient spaces and others will go for the less convenient free spaces. This spreads the demand out throughout the neighborhood.

The City of Chicago has flexibility to adjust prices and to add new meters, and even to share some revenue. However, the concession agreement stipulates a certain level of payment that the private firm, Chicago Parking Meters LLC, expects to receive and the city must pay for any shortfalls. Until the city is no longer paying a "true-up" fee, they are hesitant to experiment.

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Highlights from Chapter 4:

Parking goals and recommendations

There are 16 recommendations that fall within six strategies for improving parking management in Chinatown, highlighted in the implementation table below.

Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 / Make it easier to find parking
The area south of Cermak Road has an urgent need for more paid parking options to increase access to businesses and restaurants — options include leasing a parking lot from the State of Illinois, changing street configurations, and improving shared use of parking lots. Improving signage, maps, and information about transportation options can help to spread parking demand throughout the neighborhood and encourage non-auto use. Some areas may benefit from some "convenience" spaces that charge more to encourage quick turnover.

Recommendations 6 and 7 / Address safety concerns to improve walkability
If people don't feel safe walking, they will chose to drive for short distances. If you are willing to walk further, additional parking spaces become an option.

Recommendations 8, 9, 10, and 11 / Enhance transportation options
In a world of carrots and sticks, sticks are the prices charged to park and carrots are things that would make alternatives to driving more appealing. Options for enhancing transportation include enhanced safe routes for riding bicycles, better lighting and information at bus stops, more frequent transit service, extended routes, weekend service, employer support for transit, etc.

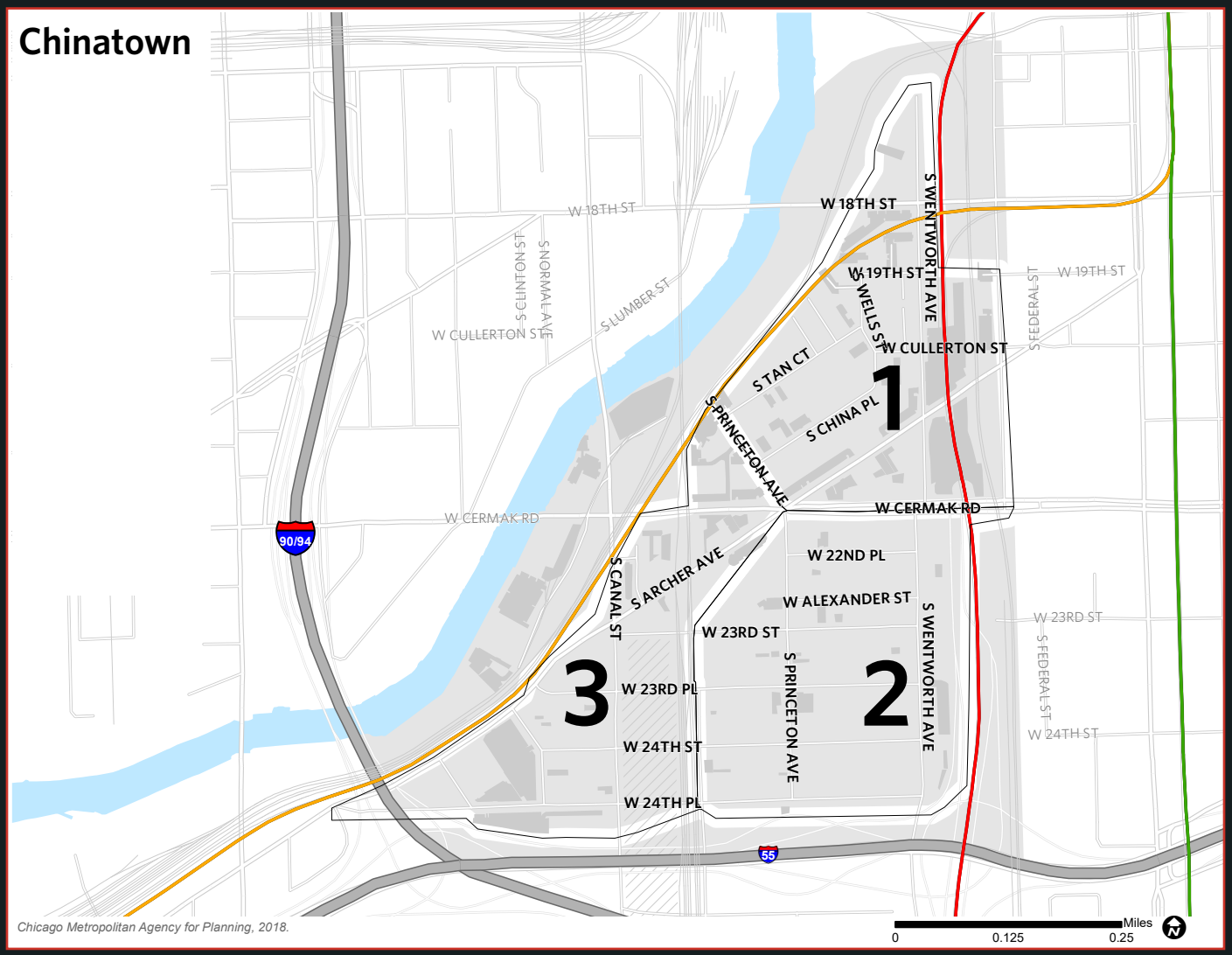
Recommendations 12 and 13 / Outline the long-term vision for parking management
Promotion of transportation options can help some people opt not to drive for large events, when most know that parking will be challenging. Use of remote parking lots and clear signage and information can help direct drivers to a parking area instead of circling, looking for parking.

Recommendations 14 and 15 / Outline the long-term vision for parking management
New developments can bring new activity, which can lead to increased parking problems. Requiring more parking isn't necessarily the answer, as more parking usually encourages people to bring more cars, and required parking is usually restricted to the general public. Requiring parking costs to be separate from the cost of housing is important, as well as targeting permit programs to specific challenges. The creation of a parking benefits district — revenue sharing with the local community — should be explored with city officials.

Recommendations 16 / Provide additional public parking as needed
At $30,000 per space or more, constructing a parking garage is unlikely to be done without subsidies. When drivers are wiling to pay more to park on-street (about $20/day), a garage becomes a better investment — especially if used to consolidate surface parking. The area should avoid the addition of private, restricted parking and shift toward publicly available, shared parking that is paid for by the end user.

As Chinatown grows and changes, its parking needs will also shift.

The following are area-specific themes for three sections of Chinatown, divided by Cermak Road and the Union Pacific Railyard.



Section 1

Share resources, improve transit, work with future developers

As shown in the existing conditions report, the area north of Cermak has the most off-street parking (residential and public) and much less on-street supply. The limited on-street parking is due to infrastructural barriers, lack of a standard street grid, and small size of the area. Currently, several streets do not allow on-street parking and South Tan Court does not allow parking on the north side of the street. The area sees the most parking demand, which is largely satisfied with the public parking lots. In the case of development on the public lots, the area would have a hard time accommodating all the cars that come to the neighborhood — especially on the weekends. Ping Tom Park Field House has a high demand for parking because, unlike most other city parks, there are infrastructural barriers on three sides of the building — meaning no on-street parking. There is limited CTA access between the park and the neighborhoods east and west, making it hard for visitors to arrive without a car or bicycle.

The priority for this part of town should be to share parking resources and ensure that future developments do not supply parking that is private and unavailable to visitors. Making parking shared and available to the public (with payment) will help to create turnover, mitigate demand, and create more options for visitors.

New on-street parking

If the pilot back-in angled parking works in the south area of Chinatown, this could be considered for South Tan Court, where the street width is sufficient to have angled parking on one side, but not wide enough to have parking on both sides and retain two-way traffic. This would be different because the two-way traffic would be retained but the parallel parking on the south side would be replaced with reverse-angled parking, which would require significant on-the-ground education and engagement. This area could also see parking along the extended Wells Street, as it gets built into "the 78." The new Wells Street within "The 78" should be metered to ensure turnover and prevent commuters and employees from leaving their cars all day long. Alderman Sigcho-Lopez and the Park District Board have discussed the pros and cons of several options for improving the Field House parking, including meters, time restrictions, and sale of parking lot passes in the Field House at a small price.

New off-street parking

This area, like most of Chinatown, has limited developable land to convert to parking. It does, however, have two very large public parking lots. These lots may be appropriate for a pilot of "stacked parking," which adds parking capacity at a much lower cost than traditional structured parking, and could be utilized in the case of development on the public lots or on a portion of the lots. Stacked parking requires an attendant and spaces can be deployed or taken down quickly. If the Chinatown Parking Corporation is interested in deploying stacked parking before a developer comes in, they could convert the southernmost portion of either lot into a separate payment system and allow for stacked parking.

Section 2

Shift away from strict residential permits to permit/meters, add new supply with street redesign, work with IDOT to add new lot to supply

The older, more traditional area of Chinatown has the highest concentration of residential units and on-street parking. There are very few large public parking lots, and one of those lots is already slated for development. The best options for new parking include street reconfiguration (Recommendation 1), converting some free parking to combination metered/permit (Recommendation 3), and possibly leasing the vacant public lot south of I-55 from IDOT.

New on-street parking

As proposed in Recommendation 3, converting one block of West 24th Street to one-way westbound with back-in angled parking could add new parking spaces. Additionally, the free parking in the area does not allow for much turnover, which creates problems on these blocks that have a mix of uses — including hotels, schools, restaurants, and grocery stores. All of these destinations are employment locations and all employees who drive will try to park on the streets with free parking. To increase turnover, the use of residential permit parking with meters (Recommendation 4) is recommended in place of traditional permits and along mixed-use blocks, like 22nd Place.

New off-street parking

This area has very little space for new parking, but there is a vacant parking lot south of Interstate-55 that is owned by Illinois Department of Transportation. The Chinatown Parking Corporation could work with the State of Illinois, with Representative Mah's guidance, to lease the parking lot and offer additional paid parking for the south area. There is less demand for this parking, because it is less convenient than the large public lots to the north. It could be helpful during events and when the small public parking garage on Wentworth is converted into a corridor with a hotel.

Section 3

Shift away from private parking to shared parking and consider meters as development intensity increases

The western edge of Chinatown is more industrial in nature, but also has residential properties, a grocery store, Connie's Pizza, and a nightclub. It has the least amount of parking of the three sections, but has the most auto-oriented feeling due to the high amount of off-street commercial parking spaces and large residential parking lots. There is very little metered parking, and only a handful of residential permit parking spaces.

New on-street parking

Almost all of the on-street parking in this area is free, which means that there is very little turnover and it is very hard to find parking. There is not enough activity to warrant parking meters and the large businesses have their own parking lots. However, a combination of permit and metered would work in this area, and could work on Normal Avenue or 24th Street. Normal Avenue would not help the businesses that are located on 24th Street, but would be less controversial because there are no residential units on the west side of the street, and the units on the east side of the street have off-street parking. The north side of Archer Avenue should have metered parking installed to create the turnover needed for the businesses that will be opening in the new development.

New off-street parking

In this area, newer development has taken the approach of providing free parking for customers that cannot be shared by people visiting other businesses. This creates an over-supply of parking that is insufficient at certain hours, but underutilized most of the time. It is an incentive to drive, adding to the congestion on the streets, while also increasing the impervious surface area in the neighborhood. A better approach to parking would be to create a shared parking resource that all the businesses can use, that comes at a small cost (to prevent employees from using it and residents from leaving their cars). Assuming that the tenants run successful businesses, the new development at Archer and Canal will likely see a congested parking lot and will find that the free spaces in front of businesses will be full all day if they are not converted to customer-oriented metered parking.

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Highlights from Chapter 5:

Implementation strategies

Along with assessment of cost, difficulty of implementation, and priority, the project team assessed each strategy for alignment with project goals. The implementation matrix contains the results of this assessment. The ease of implementation is assessed on a relative basis through the cost, political hurdles, and level of difficulty, while the priority and impact columns help identify which recommendations can have the biggest impact, or be quick wins, and which are high priority based on community input. Each recommendation is assessed for the general timeframe within which progress is likely to occur. And finally, the suggested lead agency or organization to help move implementation forward is highlighted in bold along potential partners.

Recommendation	Alignment with project goals				
	1	2	3	4	5
Make it easier to find parking					
Expand public parking supply in the south part of Chinatown	●	●	●		●
Improve parking signage and maps		●	●		
Increase number of metered spaces with residential permit exceptions	●	●	●		●
Create an easy way for owners of private parking spaces to offer public parking and capitalize on peak demand periods	●		●		
Create convenience parking spaces in high-demand locations	●		●		●
Address safety concerns to improve walkability					
Improve feelings of safety in underpass walkways	●	●		●	●
Activate and revitalize public spaces	●	●		●	●
Enhance transportation options					
Encourage employees to take transit, walk, and bike to work	●	●	●	●	●
Improve CTA bus and rail experience	●	●		●	●
Encourage CTA to re-instate weekend service to local bus routes	●	●		●	●
Make improvements to bicycling safety and utility	●			●	
Managing transportation for special events					
Encourage visitors to take advantage of the transportation options available in the area		●	●	●	
Identify potential remote parking lots that could be used during events		●	●		●
Outline the long-term vision for parking management					
Provide parking recommendations and guidelines for new developments yet to be proposed	●	●	●		●
Plan for future residential permit space management				●	●
Provide additional public parking as needed					
Strategically invest in public and shared parking supplying key locations	●	●	●		●

Project goals
1 Help Chinatown continue to grow, residents to thrive
2 Ensure cultural vitality and business growth

Implementation					Completion Timeframe			**Leads** and partners
Status	**Cost**	**Impact**	**Difficulty**	**Priority**	**0–2 yrs**	**2–5 yrs**	**5+ yrs**	
New	2	3	3	4				**CDOT**, **CMAP**, Alderman, Department of Finance
Enhance	1	2	1	2				**Chamber of Commerce**, business groups, SSA, CDOT
New	2	2	4	3				**CDOT**, Alderman, Department of Finance
Enhance	2	2	2	2				**CBCAC**, CDOT, SpotHero, ParkingPanda, ParkMe, ParkWhiz
New	2	3	4	3				**CBCAC**, CDOT, CPS, banks
Ongoing	3	2	3	4				**CBCAC**, **CMAP**, CDOT, CPAG, local artists, young people, community members
Ongoing	2	2	2	3				**Chamber of Commerce**, business groups SSA, CDOT
Enhance	0	2	1	3				**Chambers**, business groups/ orgs/religious, ActiveTrans, SSA, Divvy, CBCAC
Enhance	3	2	4	2				**CTA**, CDOT, Alderman, CBCAC
Ongoing	4	3	4	3				**CTA**, CDOT, Alderman, CBCAC, community members
Enhance	2	3	3	4				**CDOT**, ActiveTrans, Divvy
Enhance	2	1	1	3				**Chamber**, CDOT, CBCAC, CTA, RTA
New	1	1	1	2				**CBCAC**, CDOT, Chamber
Enhance	1	1	3	3				**DPD**, CDOT, CBCAC, Developers at the 78
New	1	1	2	2				**Alderman**, CDOT
Enhance	3	2	3	3				**Chambers**, **IDOT**, CDOT, Representative Mah

3 Reduce "circling" for parking spots / **4** Reduce transportation inequities and improve safety
5 Prepare for changes in coming years

CHINATOWN
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endations

Credit : Daniel Schwen

Recommendation 1:

Expand public parking supply in the south part of Chinatown

Challenge

- There is a shortage of publicly available spaces along Wentworth Avenue south of Cermak.
- There is very little turnover on streets with a mix of uses, such as 22nd Place.
- The abundance of parking in the south part of Chinatown is free and sees very little turnover.

Strategy:
Make it easier to find parking

**Cost: $$**$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

While there is a need to increase turnover and open up parking spaces throughout Chinatown, the problem of a limited parking supply is hurting the area south of Cermak between Wentworth and the rail yard the most. There are two feasible ways to add parking — either on street through a redesign of traffic flow, or with the addition of surface parking lots. A private developer could also construct a parking garage, but the public sector is unlikely to benefit from such an investment. The most desirable parking is on the street, closest to destinations. However, if the parking is free, there will be very little turnover and more students and employees may decide to drive — getting the neighborhood right back where it started, only with more traffic.

The best solution for the neighborhood would be to add metered parking with some form of local revenue sharing, to ensure that some of the money spent to park in Chinatown stays to help improve Chinatown. Revenue sharing would require the use of "reserve meters." Unfortunately, the City is working to build up a supply of "concession meters" before they will add "reserve meters," and it could be several years until they are ready to enter into a revenue sharing agreement. Additionally, a street reconfiguration can take time with engineering and studies. Meanwhile, there is an existing surface parking lot, owned by the state that is not being used. Opening up the surface lot would be a good first step until the City is interested in working with the alderman to add metered spaces with local revenue sharing.

Work with the Finance Department, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the 25th Ward Alderman to add meters with local revenue sharing

Through public open houses and workshops during this planning process, as well as the development of the Chinatown Vision Plan, the number one concern has always been safety. While adding parking is also very important, generating funds to improve safety is also important. One of the top priorities for improving safety and walkability is a safer, more vibrant pedestrian connection under the Union Pacific (UP) rail yards. For this reason, CBCAC would like to prioritize a revenue-sharing agreement before adding new meters to the neighborhood.

Alderman Sigcho-Lopez should continue to work with CDOT and the Department of Finance to develop a pilot program to add metered parking spaces (with revenue sharing) without taking away from the total number of free parking spaces. The easternmost block of 24th Street should be evaluated for the pilot. Metered spaces create increased turnover, making the spaces available for many visitors throughout the course of the day. The preferred design would be one-way west bound with back-in angled parking, to increase capacity while keeping the design safe for people entering and exiting spaces. A community-led agreement for revenue sharing should be pursued to use additional meter revenue to improve safety and walkability in the neighborhood.

After requesting a parking pilot on 24th Street, Ald. Sigcho-Lopez should work with CDOT and the Finance department to determine what percentage of revenue can be designated for infrastructure projects within the Chinatown study area. This would be a pilot project unlike any other in the City of Chicago, and determining where additional money goes is tricky. The fundamental principle should be transparency so that anyone can review income generated by meters and how it is being spent.

Before the street reconfiguration is implemented, CMAP and CBCAC should produce educational materials in English and Chinese and plan to have volunteers on-site for opening day to help drivers understand the updated street configuration. There are back-in angled spaces in Chicago and some suburban locations, but it is not common and there will be a learning curve. It will also help to get CDOT permission to park some cars correctly before the parking opens, to set the stage for how cars should be parking.

If this pilot strategy is successful and approved by the community, it could be expanded to other select locations. There will be limitations to its applicability because maintaining a two-way street network is generally preferable to the creation of additional parking spaces.

As revenue is generated and set aside from new meters, CDOT should prioritize the project to improve viaduct underpasses and implement the 2018 Chinatown Walkability Study recommendations. CBCAC should work with the Chicago Public Arts Group and solicit bids from artists to create an LED lighting display. After completion of 23rd Street viaduct, future revenue should focus on addressing the walkability needs identified in the 2018 Chinatown Walkability Study. The Alderman should continue to solicit community feedback on project desires and preferences.

Recommendation 2:

Improve parking signage and maps

Challenge

- Visitors who are unfamiliar with the area are the ones who need the most direction; Chinatown has many out-of-town visitors
- People don't always take time to stop and read signs, even if they are informative
- Some parking areas might be underutilized because people don't know they exist
- Some people may not be aware of the transportation options available to them

Strategy:
Make it easier to find parking

**Cost: $**$$$

Impact ●●○○

Level of difficulty ●●○○

Priority ●●○○

Distinctive and consistent signage with parking information can help people in their search for parking, and in their understanding of available options. Signage can make drivers aware of the parking areas within Chinatown and help direct them to underutilized parking lots or facilities. Walking and biking maps can encourage people to skip the car for short trips and neighborhood maps can make people aware of their public transit options (routes and stations for buses, rail, and Divvy stations).

Create a map that provides people with clear information on options for parking, walking, biking, and public transit
CBCAC should create a neighborhood specific map that tells people where various parking options are in the community, highlights popular pedestrian and bike routes, and pinpoints bus, rail, and Divvy stations. Signs should be strategically placed in high traffic areas throughout Chinatown. CBCAC should also make certain that event information on flyers, websites, and social media includes information about biking and transit, as well as parking.

Make sure that residents, visitors, and employees are aware of online parking applications ("apps") that assist with finding a parking spot
By creating an accessible map that clearly informs users of where parking is located and at what rate, drivers will better understand the options available and pick the parking that best suits their trip's needs. Phone apps have proven to be one of the most effective means of accomplishing this task; being aware of where and when spots are available will decrease the amount of time people spend circling the streets to locate empty spaces. The apps can inform drivers how long they are able to remain in their spot for a given period of time. Applications such as SpotHero, Parking Panda, ParkMe, and ParkWhiz provide users with real-time information about available parking in a neighborhood. The city's metered parking is also made more convenient with the use of their app, ParkChicago. There is a convenience fee for stays shorter than two hours, but there is also an option to extend your time remotely to avoid getting a costly ticket.

Recommendation 3:

Increase the number of combination residential permit and metered spaces

Challenge

- Residential permit spaces are unavailable to customers, even when most residents are not parking at home
- Some residents have been rumored to sell day passes to area employees (a resident can purchase 45 day passes/month for just over $0.50 each)
- The City of Chicago does not yet have the technology to recognize license plates and allow for residents to park during metered hours

Strategy:
Make it easier to find parking

**Cost: $$**$$

Impact ●●○○

Level of difficulty ●●●●

Priority ●●●●

One challenge with most residential permit programs is that the street will be full at some times and empty at other times – even when drivers need parking. A program that allows drivers to pay to park in a residential permit space can create designated spaces for residents while allowing for the spaces to be used when demand is low. This will prevent underutilized parking spaces by opening them up to non-residents. The use of meters will be most important in areas with businesses that benefit from increasing the turnover and availability for customers. This could be tested on the mixed use street of 22nd Place or on the western side of Chinatown where parking demand for the Park to Shop (formerly Hong Kong Market) market is high and the free on-street parking is generally filled without much turnover.

The trick will be to make sure that there are fewer permits issued than spaces available, and that prices are based on demand. Using market prices, while retaining some revenue locally, has the potential to generate money to pay for public services, while helping to manage demand. Creating a revenue sharing agreement with the City would allow local residents to see financial reward and infrastructure improvements because of newly priced parking in the neighborhood. At the same time, the market-priced parking would make it easier to find a parking space.

Work with the Finance Department, Chicago Department of Transportation, and the 25th Ward Alderman to develop a pilot metered residential permit zone

Ald. Sigcho-Lopez should work with CDOT and the Finance department to pilot a new kind of residential permit zone, which allows drivers to pay to park without a permit. This zone should not allow for the sale of daily passes (because a driver can pay to park as needed), to reduce the potential for illegal sales of daily permits. The Alderman can also work to develop a plan for revenue sharing for these meters as well. Ideally, the meters would be priced to balance demand so that the spaces are not so well-used by visitors that residents cannot find a space to park. This may require limits on the amount of permits sold, and/or higher prices than traditional residential permits. As with the proposal for new metered spaces, any proposal for sharing revenue with the City is complicated and transparency is extremely important. The revenue could go into the same "pot" for safety and walkability improvements through CDOT. If the City is not interested in piloting a new type of permit, the Alderman could instead look into a small section of evening permit/metered parking spaces. This would be less appealing to residents on the block who would have to pay to park during the day, even if they had a permit.

Conduct an educational campaign to help residents understand the new configurations and anticipated benefits

After approval of the pilot study, CMAP and CBCAC should hold workshops and produce educational materials in English and Chinese. They should also plan to have volunteers on-site for opening day to help drivers avoid getting tickets.

Recommendation 4:

Create an easy way for owners of private parking spaces to offer public parking and capitalize on peak demand periods

Challenge

- Private parking lots with excess capacity are unavailable to the public who need parking
- Owners of these parking lots are not able to earn money from underutilized parking

Strategy:
Make it easier to find parking

**Cost: $$**$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

There are parking lots with excess capacity in the study area – even on days when demand for parking is highest. Developing a parking app, or promoting the use of an existing app, that allows private parking lots to open their spaces to public use at their off-peak hours could help address parking shortages on weekends and make use of underutilized lots throughout the neighborhood. By harnessing technology, residents could rent out their empty spaces; schools and banks could open their parking lots on weekends. This could create an additional source of revenue for businesses, residents, and schools.

Contact owners of underutilized parking lots to identify opportunities
CBCAC should identify and contact the owners of parking lots that had low occupancy on weekend afternoons, when parking demand in Chinatown is highest. This includes schools, residential complexes, and banks with parking lots. The initial contact to lot owners would be to determine their level of interest in opening up parking lots to paid public use, and to determine if there is a preference for using an existing company's platform or creating a platform for Chinatown. The latter could potentially help keep more revenue in Chinatown, but the former would be much easier to implement. CBCAC could convene a panel discussion with owners of underutilized parking areas and invite the owners who are already using online apps.

Help publicize the new parking options
When the new parking app is either created or decided upon, CBCAC should help to promote the spaces on neighborhood maps, through social media, or in newsletters.

Address potential fears of sharing parking resources
Some parking lot owners have cited concerns over insurance and liability claims as a fear for sharing their parking with the public. CBCAC can investigate what the lot owners are worried about and assess which approach would solve those problems. One parking lot in Chinatown recently started renting spaces through both Spot Hero and Parking Panda, one lot is on ParkMe, and one residential space is advertised on Park Whiz. These sites can take away the risks associated with sharing parking spaces.

Recommendation 5:

Create convenience parking spaces in high-demand locations

Challenge

- A high concentration of restaurants in the neighborhood makes the peak parking demand more concentrated
- During a 7-hour turnover survey, nearly half of all free on-street spaces had no turnover, meaning a single car remained in the spot for the entire day. In comparison, only 2 percent of metered parking spaces had drivers parked all day
- People across nearly all income levels with an urgent need for parking are willing to pay for convenience

Strategy:
Make it easier to find parking

**Cost: $$**$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

Identifying and reserving a handful of the most convenient parking spaces for quick errands can help reduce congestion as drivers could quickly locate a space, rather than circling and waiting for someone to leave. This would provide anyone the option of paying a slightly higher price in return for less walking and less time spent searching for a space. This can be useful to someone who is making a quick errand and won't park long, or to someone with difficulty walking, or for a visitor from out-of-state who would rather spend time at the local shops than looking for parking.

Identify locations for convenience parking spaces
The CBCAC should identify off-street parking spaces closest to the spaces that have the highest average occupancy. A small number of spaces could make a big difference at peak periods when drivers can spend a long time circling for parking – such as on weekend afternoons. The first step is to identify locations and ownership of the spaces to determine if the owners are interested. Some spaces in the main public parking lots could be considered, if the process to make them available did not place significant burdens on the CPC and their current system.

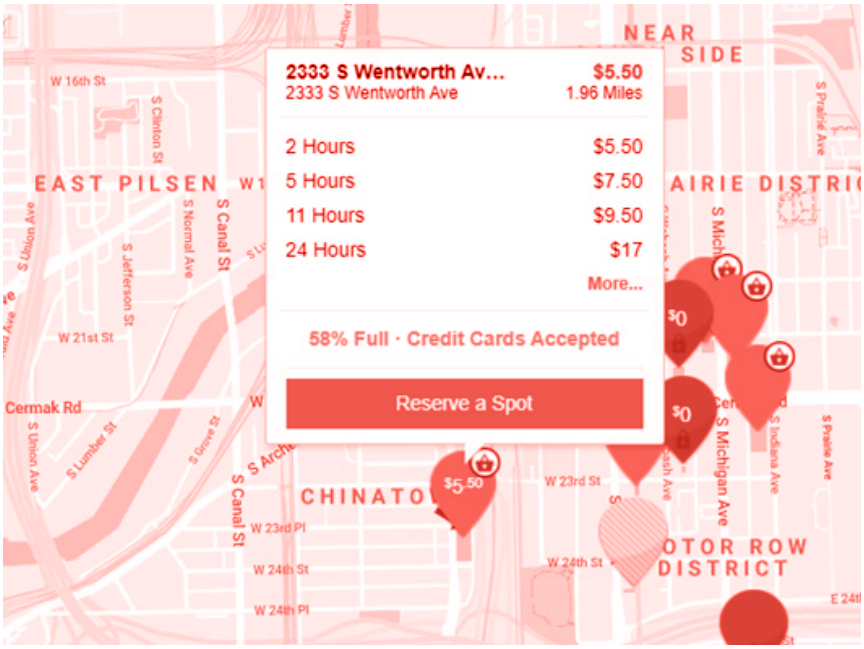
Create a plan for marketing the convenience spaces
The most convenient parking spaces will not be useful if people are not aware that they exist. CBCAC should develop a marketing plan for convenience spaces and identify ways to prevent and deter abuse of the spaces. We see a lot of double-parking in the neighborhood, and it is possible that double-parkers would be inclined to use the convenience spaces without paying. Considering that the spaces are intended for visitors, and not employees or residents, the signage for the spaces should be clear and bilingual.

It is also worth considering the importance of loading zones, which are not always used properly in the City of Chicago. According to the legal description of loading zones, the spaces are only to be used by commercial vehicles in the act of loading or unloading goods. A non-commercial vehicle that wishes to use loading zones must possess a non-commercial vehicle loading permit, and must be in the act of loading to use the space. In Chinatown (and other neighborhoods), some businesses feel that they are entitled to use the loading spaces if they have paid for the permit. They also think that since they paid for it, it is only to be used by patrons or providers of their business. In fact, any commercial vehicle may use a loading zone; it cannot be controlled by one entity. To solve the problem of congested loading zones, the City of Chicago created a metered loading zone pilot in the central area. This sort of "convenience space" could be considered for Chinatown, if abuse of loading zones continues to be a problem.

Provide guidance on pricing

Convenience spaces should be priced to encourage turnover, so that means a higher price than existing parking meters. CBCAC can provide parking lot owners with a range of pricing options, comparing the pros and cons of hourly, daily, and monthly rates. Convenience spaces should favor hourly pricing to encourage turnover, and/or an increasing fee for each additional hour. The additional revenue would stay in the community (either to the owner of the lot or the CPC). If the spaces belong to the CPC, the added revenue could go towards establishing a fund for additional parking in the neighborhood, support for employee transit passes, safety initiatives, or other relevant projects.

The Chinatown Parking Lots are provided as a service to businesses and prices are intentionally kept low. In addition, when costs exceed $2, the City of Chicago imposes an additional tax. However, the very low price creates an incentive to drive—even for people visiting other neighborhoods, as they can catch the train to a White Sox game or downtown. The cost to park in the public lots could be higher on the weekends without turning away many visitors. Some visitors may instead chose to arrive via alternate modes, thereby reducing overall demand.



Screenshot of pricing options for the parking lot on Wentworth
Source: Parkme.com, 2019.

Recommendation 6:

Improve feelings of safety in underpass walkways

Challenge

Current conditions for pedestrians along and below the rail yard, highways and train lines in Chinatown are not pleasant

- Residents do not feel safe walking, especially below the rail yards
- With different jurisdictions responsible for maintenance and improvements, it is difficult for local residents to even know who to talk to for changes
- When residents don't want to walk in certain places, they end up driving for shorter trips
- Parking spaces on one side of the underpass are not desirable for people going to the other side

Strategy:

Make it easier to find parking

Cost: $$$$

Impact ●●○○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

Local residents consistently cite safety as the primary concern for those living in the neighborhood. It is recommended that CDOT work with local organizations, IDOT, and Union Pacific to overhaul underpass walkways. While all underpasses need attention, the community has designated 23rd Place under the UP rail yard as the top priority.

Install brighter lighting
With the approval of UP officials, CDOT should review existing lighting conditions at underpass locations and install bright and welcoming lighting where needed to improve visibility and feelings of safety as a first step until more decorative and transformative changes are possible.

Create accessible sidewalks at underpasses
CDOT should bring sidewalks up to acceptable ADA standards as soon as possible, and also improve upon their current condition. Under the UP rail yard, 23rd Place is over 30′ wide, yet the sidewalks are less than 5′ wide in places, and do not have accessible curb ramps. Wider sidewalks along the underpass would be desirable and curb bumpouts could shorten the crossing distance at the corners.

Create a power-washing plan that includes underpasses
The special services area (SSA) currently power washes sidewalks that fall within their jurisdiction. Community groups, and possibly homeowners associations, could partner with the SSA to develop a plan for regular power-washing and help cover fees to expand to underpass locations. However, the Alderman has recently proposed a 70 percent reduction in the SSA budget, which would reduce their ability to perform such duties.

Work with CDOT and IDOT to improve walkability
CDOT and IDOT should work with CBCAC to address the findings of their walkability report. For immediate attention, the lack of accessible sidewalks and visible crosswalks along Canal Street and Cermak Road deserve immediate attention.

Several cities have shown what is possible with space below highways. In Chinatown, the space under I-55 and I-90, south of 24th Street, is fenced off and not accessible. If IDOT were to allow programming beneath highways, there would be opportunities for markets or other pop-up events. Along 24th Street, parking is underutilized below the highway because of the desolate, unwelcoming nature of the space. Creative and colorful lighting along this stretch of 24th Street would make the area feel safer and make parking more desirable.

Hire a lighting artist to create bright, colorful pathways
Using artistic lighting in underpass walkways and under highways is a popular way to liven up desolate spaces. This can be expensive, and permission is required from the authorities that maintain the infrastructure. Ideally, any money generated from additional meter pilot projects (Recommendation 1 and Recommendation #3) in the study area can be used to fund this transformative project. The first step in such a safety and beautification project would be to work with the City of Chicago's Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), CDOT, and the UP Railways to submit a beautification request to UP. Details to be worked out would include a maintenance agreement, what sort of preparation needs to be done to the surfaces, and identification of leaks that may affect the artwork. If UP agrees to the project, a local agency would need to enter into an agreement with UP for maintenance. This would have to be with BACP or CDOT, rather than the community organization. There would be letters of support from local elected officials, police department, and possibly others.

1931

Case study: LightRails
"LightRails" is an architectural light sculpture by artist Bill FitzGibbons. Downtown Birmingham was looking to improve feelings of safety in the dark and unwelcoming underpass, to improve walkable connections between a new park and heart of downtown. This is one of several planned light sculptures to enhance underpasses in the city.

Location: Birmingham, AL

Project cost: $200,000

Completed: 2013

Client: Rev Birmingham

Consultants: S&W Electric General Contractor

Recommendation 7:

Activate and revitalize public space

Challenge

- People don't want to park in places that are desolate, and they don't want to walk through desolate places
- Many Chinatown residents want to "age in place" and maintain physical activity
- There is limited public space and park space outside of Ping Tom Park
- Spaces that are inactive and abandon invite unwanted activity and reduce feelings of safety

Strategy:

Address safety concerns to improve walkability

Cost: $$$$

Impact ●●○○

Level of difficulty ●●○○

Priority ●●●○

Healthy public spaces are great community builders. In Chinatown, activating public space can be tied to increasing "eyes on the street" as well as bringing people together in a common location. Chinatown has seen great success at public space development with Ping Tom Park and new murals. Smaller scale improvement can help activate the neighborhood.

Secure grant funding to purchase outdoor exercise equipment

Many residents of Chinatown remain physically active throughout their lives. In order to help residents age in place and stay active, outdoor exercise equipment should be purchased and installed in visible and easily accessible locations around the neighborhood. If located near somewhat isolated attractions, they can help increase a feeling of safety. For example, if the City would allow for the installation of equipment under the orange line tracks on Wentworth, south of 18th Street, it would help connect the rest of Chinatown to the Field House across the street. The space would likely need to be considered part of the Chicago Park District system, for liability concerns. It would also make the walk to the Field House more comfortable if the space below the tracks were activated. Outdoor recreation equipment is popular in many cities in China and has recently gained attention in the US as a way to help keep older adults healthy. A small setup can fit in many locations throughout the neighborhood, beyond the more obvious locations of Ping Tom Park, the Field House, Sun Yat-Sen Park, or Chinatown Square Plaza.

Reclaim road space for safety

Some parts of Chinatown with a lot of pedestrian activity and a high demand for parking experience illegal parking that obstructs visibility of other drivers. Many "No Parking" zones in the area have been established to create sight lines for the pedestrian crosswalks. When a truck or car parks illegally in a no parking zone, they block those sight lines and create a dangerous situation for pedestrians. Some small curb bump outs with amenities that have been requested by residents can help to prevent that unsafe condition. For example, Wentworth Avenue has very heavy pedestrian traffic and a lot of illegal parking. A curb extension could add public space for pedestrians, flowers, or greenery, while helping to make the street space safer. While the National Association of City Transportation Officials recommends planting street trees in curb extensions, CDOT does not allow for them.

Add public seating with an eye to providing temporary respite for elderly citizens
Public seating creates a public, social area where people can rest, chat with neighbors, or people-watch. Enticing people to linger creates great public spaces. Providing seating is something that can be done by private entities, the special services area (SSA), community groups, or individuals. Seating that is located on the public right of way needs to be approved by CDOT.

Locations where seating could be added include: bus stops with simple two-person seat that attaches to a signpost, areas with extra sidewalk width, or within curb extensions. Fears of loitering have prevented the widespread use of benches, making it difficult for people with limited mobility to take long walks. To address these fears, seating should be designed to encourage sitting and discourage lying down.

For example, Simme-Seats offer bus stop seating that is indestructible, easy to install, and virtually maintenance-free. simmeseat.com

Case study:
Hankham Primary School
Upon receipt of a small health improvement grant (£10,000), Hankham Primary School identified a need for outdoor exercise equipment for the students. They worked with a British manufacturer to install a simple set of five machines plus safety surfacing. The colorful surface creates an eye-catching background to activities that help improve the health of their students.

Location: South East England

Project cost: ~ $12,330 (£10,000)

Size: Less than 300 square feet

Completed: 2017

Client: Primary school

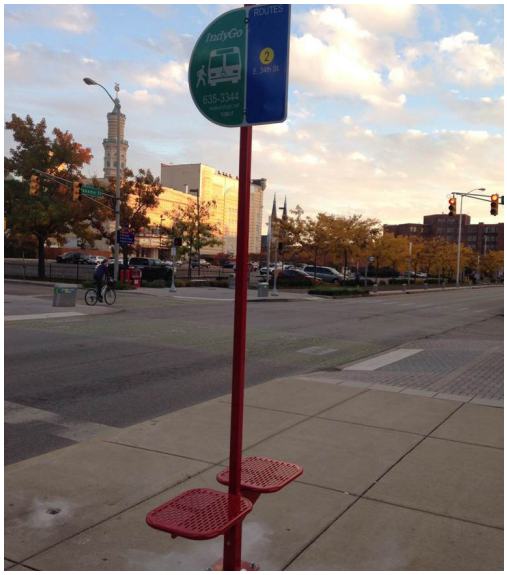


Photo credit: Joe Smoke, on UrbanIndy.com

Recommendation 8:

Encourage employees to take transit, walk, and bike to work

Challenge

- For many employees, driving to work is the quickest and most efficient option
- Most companies are not able to provide incentives to employees for walking, biking or taking transit to work, but some provide parking
- Some employees are coming into Chinatown from places where public transit options and connections are limited

Strategy:

Improve parking information and enhance transportation options

**Cost: $**$$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

Having a free parking space encourages people to drive, even if they have other options. Most people who drive to Chinatown for work seek free parking on residential streets. Many purchase a monthly pass to park in the Chinatown parking lot, and some employers provide the parking pass as a free benefit. Given the costs involved in providing additional transportation benefits, it is unlikely that many employers would subsidize transit, walking, or biking. However, employers — particularly the large employers in Chinatown — can encourage more tax-free transit benefits and non-driving travel, and help to reduce parking demand on the weekends.

Encourage local businesses to promote active transportation to their employees through incentives programs

The goal of employer parking strategies is to reward people who drive less. With certain incentives or disincentives, they may carpool, take transit, ride a bicycle, or walk. Employers who promote alternatives to driving reduce the overall demand for parking. There are programs that employers can promote, yet many employers may not be aware of commuter benefit options available to them. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) offers discounted transit passes and pre-tax transit benefits, which can save employers up to 7.65 percent on average in payroll tax savings. Employees could save as much as 40 percent on commuting costs. Employees might also be interested in biking to work using Divvy, Chicago's bike share system. Annual memberships are available for $99 per year (which includes unlimited 45-minute rides) and the Divvy for Everyone (D4E) program offers discounted memberships at $5 per year for those who qualify. Lastly, employers could consider discounted or preferential parking for carpool vehicles.

Make active transportation easier and more comfortable for employees
One common barrier that employees face when considering active transportation is not having a clean place at work to get themselves ready. While most facilities do not have access to lockers or showers, employers can make sure that bathrooms are clean and have simple amenities such as hooks, mirrors, benches, and paper towels. Employers should encourage employees to give themselves enough time to transition from their commute to their workday, especially if they need to freshen up. Employers can also provide a safe place for employees to lock their bicycles, or make sure that employees have strong bicycle locks and that there are good bicycle racks nearby.

Create a weekday-only employee parking pass
Chinatown has an incredible amount of activity on the weekends compared to weekdays. While most employees in Chinatown work more than the traditional "9 to 5," there may be some employees whose work is limited to Monday through Friday. Those employees may also be using their monthly pass to come to Chinatown when they are not working and when the demand for parking is highest. Given the high demand for weekend parking, the creation of a weekday-only employee parking pass may be useful to discourage the use of the parking lot at peak periods on the weekends. The pass could be cheaper than the full monthly pass, to give employees more incentive to park in the large lots. This may encourage them to take transit, walk, bike, or park further from the congested core on the weekend. Of course, this would only apply to people who do not work on weekends. While many employees do work on the weekends, shifting even a small portion of cars from those public lots would help to ease parking congestion.

Case study: Transit benefits parity
In 2019, the Pui Tak Center reviewed their transportation benefits and identified the subsidized parking as a benefit offered only to driving employees, which was not fair to employees who take transit to work. They revised their policy to provide a transportation benefit equivalent to the amount of subsidy that they are providing to drivers, available for tax-free transit fares. They worked with RTA to enhance their transit benefits. While they don't expect that it will shift many drivers to transit, they do recognize that the new policy is more equitable for staff.

Location: Chinatown, Chicago, IL

Project cost: TBD

Organization: Pui Tak Center

Recommendation 9:

Improve CTA bus and rail experience

Challenge

- The recommended improvements are costly and finding funds could be a challenge
- Working with the City of Chicago to make these improvements might take longer than desired

Strategy:

Improve parking information and enhance transportation options

Cost: $$$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

While Chinatown has many good public transit options, residents are increasingly living in the Greater Chinatown area where transit routes may be less convenient, or take longer than driving. Many people avoid bus and rail because it doesn't take them to their destination or doesn't align with their schedule. For some people, fears about safety or a lack of familiarity with how it works can be a barrier. Furthermore, if Metra and Pace service were cost-effective and quick, many suburban residents who currently drive to Chinatown could be taking transit. Real-time information displays and better infrastructure at bus stops and rail stations can help address some barriers to public transit and encourage more riders.

Advocate for the installation of more real-time transit displays at bus stops

Chinatown businesses should work with CTA to display bilingual real-time train and bus tracker information. CTA has real-time information available for every train and bus that a rider can access online or through a text message service. To make the information even more accessible, the use of real-time message boards at key locations is recommended especially for individuals who may not own smartphones or do not know how to text. Information about text-messaging for real-time transit information or more simply, a list of destinations, should be placed on bus signs and outside transit stations. Private businesses can also use the publicly available real-time data to create their own transit displays. The Pui Tak Center has installed such a sign in their window and this simple move can encourage people to take transit when they are presented with its availability.

Improve bus stop and CTA station conditions

Bus stops and CTA stations in Chinatown could benefit from increased lighting, shelter protection, more trash cans, digital signs, and better seating options. The study recommends that CBCAC conduct an analysis of bus stops in the neighborhood to identify locations that need these basic amenities. In concert with an improvement in conditions, a campaign to combat the negative associations with transit, particularly safety and cleanliness,could be helpful to encourage more people to use transit.

Case study: Real-Time Transit Information
In 2012, Nerve Collective created a branded digital sign for Big Shoulders Coffee in West Town that displays real-time CTA information for local bus and train routes. This service has been a huge convenience for customers who can track their transit while waiting in line for coffee. Nerve Collective used publicly sourced data from the CTA to develop a website that hosts the relevant information. The display monitor is connected to a computer and is viewable from outside the shop.

Location: Chicago, IL

Project cost: Initial cost of approximately $2,100 plus website hosting fees

Organization: Nerve Collective

Client: Big Shoulders Coffee

Recommendation 10:

Encourage CTA to evaluate weekend service to local bus routes

Challenge

- An increase in service is complicated and expensive
- Without weekend bus service, it is hard for residents to reduce car usage when they can't rely on the bus seven days a week
- Parking demand in Chinatown is highest on the weekends, when some bus routes are not running

Strategy:

Improve parking information and enhance transportation options

Cost: $$$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

One major barrier to encouraging visitors and residents to rely on transit more is that some bus routes do not operate on the weekends or late at night. People cannot be dependent on a bus that does not work with their schedule. As new development continues north on Wentworth ("The 78"), a high quality bus route connecting Chinatown to downtown would be very convenient for many in the area and should be prioritized. Other bus routes in the surrounding area should also be evaluated for service coverage, with the intended goal of enabling car-free mobility.

Initiate a neighborhood campaign to re-instate weekend and late-night bus service
CBCAC should continue to work with the Active Transportation Alliance and other neighborhood organizations and businesses to create a campaign aimed at re-instating Chinatown bus service on the weekends and late at night. Weekends are the busiest time of the week in Chinatown (and accordingly, have the highest parking demand), so increased bus service would provide visitors with the option to take the bus; it would also relieve some of the weekend parking demand. Aldermanic support for this initiative would be crucial to this campaign. To this end, the plan recommends that community members work with Aldermen and gain their support.

Encourage real estate developers to advocate for increased bus service
Large developers may have more ability, power, and money to advocate for better bus service in Chinatown than many local organizations. In collaboration with the local alderman, community organizations should work with developers to ensure that they build in a way that supports bus infrastructure. Developer support for the campaign for weekend and night owl service along major corridors such as Wentworth and Archer would also be helpful to the community. Archer currently has "night owl" service (#N62), but the bus routes away from Chinatown to travel north on Halsted.

Recommendation 11:

Make improvements to bicycling safety and utility

Challenge

- More people on the road makes it safer to bike, but many people won't ride unless they feel safe first on the infrastructure
- There is no local bike shop with Cantonese or Mandarin speakers
- There are no Divvy bike stations in the residential center of Chinatown
- Learning to ride a bike can be very intimidating

Strategy:

Improve parking information and enhance transportation options

**Cost: $$**$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

Many people ride bicycles in Chinatown, from moms taking kids to school to recreational riders passing through the neighborhood. There are not many bicycling accommodations in the neighborhood besides the Archer Avenue buffered bike lane. The residential streets are comfortable to bike on with low levels of slow-speed traffic. In public outreach, several people expressed that bicycling is in the Chinese culture but that it does not feel safe here. One of the best remedies to unsafe conditions is to have more bicyclists on the road. The mere presence of people on bicycles helps to bring awareness to drivers to go slower and drive carefully.

Increase bike infrastructure to encourage higher ridership

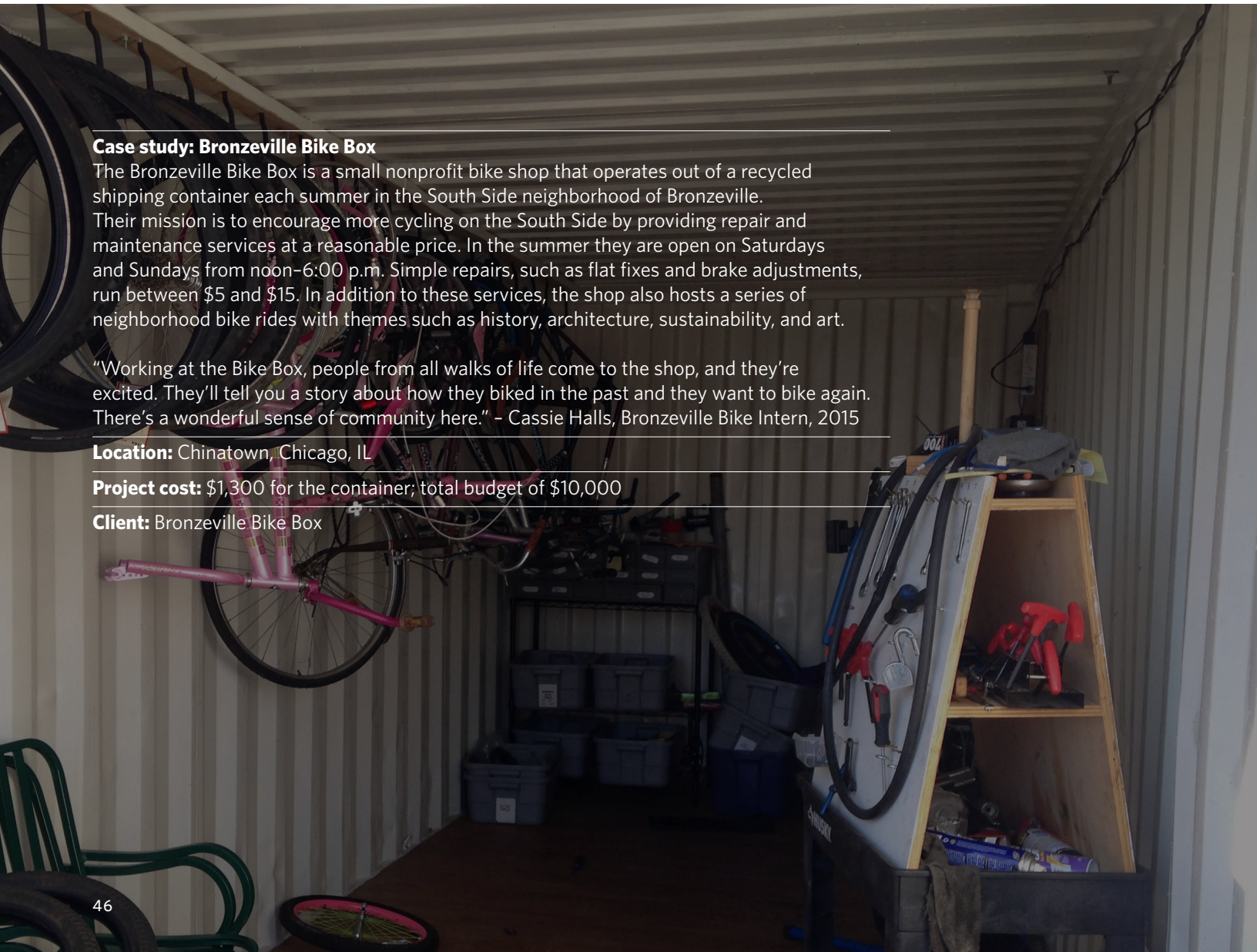
As part of the Chicago Streets for Cycling 2020 Plan, new bike lanes were installed along Archer Avenue and State Street while South Canal Street was designated as a bike-friendly corridor. Although these recent updates have benefited Chinatown, the plan recommends that the neighborhood install more bike infrastructure such as bike racks, bike parking, and increased signage to encourage more people to ride. This effort to increase infrastructure can be collaborative amongst surrounding neighborhoods to help strengthen the overall bike network.

Bring awareness to the Divvy bike share system

CBCAC and The Chinatown Chamber of Commerce should help promote the Divvy bike share and the Divvy for Everyone (D4E) program, which offers discounted rates on annual memberships to those who qualify. One major obstacle to biking is the lack of a reliable bicycle and a place to keep it safe; Divvy helps solves that. Residents can take advantage of the three Divvy bike stations in the neighborhood that connect them to a wide network of bike paths designed for both commuting and leisure rides.

Encourage residents to attend a learn-to-ride bike class
CDOT offers free bicycle riding classes for adults that are offered in the summer. The classes are taught by CDOT's team of Bicycling Ambassadors and are designed to encourage adults who have never ridden a bike or haven't ridden recently to feel comfortable riding a bike on city streets. Participants in the two-hour classes will receive a free helmet. The classes are also open to children if space is available, however, children under 16 are required to provide their own bike, as Divvy does not allow riders under 16. Classes are offered at various locations throughout the city. CBCAC should continue to work with CDOT to hold classes in the neighborhood and work with other organizations to assist with translation services, as needed.

Investigate the feasibility of a pop-up bike shop with multi-lingual attendants
With a lack of bike shops in the neighborhood, Chinatown residents have no choice but to either transport their bikes to a shop elsewhere or maintain and repair their bikes themselves. If they don't have those skills, it can be a tedious and expensive process – or it may mean that people give up biking. One idea is to offer a pop-up bike shop during the summer months when there tend to be more riders. A pop-up bike repair shop would offer bike maintenance, repair, and other services that would benefit the residents of Chinatown. Ideally, the shop would be staffed with bilingual residents to cater to the Cantonese and Mandarin speaking populations in Chinatown.



Case study: Bronzeville Bike Box
The Bronzeville Bike Box is a small nonprofit bike shop that operates out of a recycled shipping container each summer in the South Side neighborhood of Bronzeville. Their mission is to encourage more cycling on the South Side by providing repair and maintenance services at a reasonable price. In the summer they are open on Saturdays and Sundays from noon–6:00 p.m. Simple repairs, such as flat fixes and brake adjustments, run between $5 and $15. In addition to these services, the shop also hosts a series of neighborhood bike rides with themes such as history, architecture, sustainability, and art.

"Working at the Bike Box, people from all walks of life come to the shop, and they're excited. They'll tell you a story about how they biked in the past and they want to bike again. There's a wonderful sense of community here." – Cassie Halls, Bronzeville Bike Intern, 2015

Location: Chinatown, Chicago, IL

Project cost: $1,300 for the container; total budget of $10,000

Client: Bronzeville Bike Box

Recommendation 12:

Encourage visitors to take advantage of the transportation options available in the area

Challenge

- Chinatown receives a huge influx of visitors for special events and holidays, from all over the region—many of them driving
- Infrequent visitors are less familiar with the area and are harder to market to; they seek out convenience
- Maps and flyers publicizing events may cite parking options, but sometimes overlook other transportation options

Strategy:
Managing transportation for special

**Cost: $$**$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

Generally, all recommendations in the plan also apply for special events, but the intensity of the "parking problem" is magnified during major events. While the construction of a parking garage is unlikely to be a good financial investment, the neighborhood can take some steps to direct drivers to certain parking areas, encourage non-auto travel, and secure additional temporary parking areas for special events.

Promote transportation options broadly
For every major event or holiday, CBCAC should continue to promote the use of CTA trains and buses to come to Chinatown. Additionally, they can promote parking lots that are listed on shared parking websites (Spot Hero, ParkingPanda, ParkMe, and Park Whiz), as well as the use of taxis/Uber/Lyft. CBCAC should also publicize bus schedules and Divvy locations. Transportation information is difficult to find on the Chinatown Chamber's website and it suggests transit at the bottom of the page, after driving and the water taxi, which is seasonal. There is no mention of Divvy stations or bike routes.

Encourage bicycling to events with the use of bike valet services
For large summer events, the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce may want to consider providing a bicycle valet service in a convenient location. This can encourage people in the neighborhood to ride bicycles instead of driving. Some services also provide bicycle repair and maintenance on-site.

Prioritize transit and bike facilities on wayfinding neighborhood maps that are used for events
Ensure that the maps distributed for events contain information about buses, train services, Divvy locations, water taxi, connections to suburban Metra lines, and bike lanes and routes. Maps with estimated walking times can also help improve a driver's perception of where to park, if they know how long it will take them to walk to their destination.

Case study: Pedal to the People Bike Valet
During large summer festivals, many attendees avoid the hassle of parking by riding their bikes. In places where bike racks are limited, this can quickly lead to bicycles crowding sidewalks and street signs. A bike valet service creates a safe, secure bike parking lot and provides repair service on-site. Pedal to the People has been offering bike repair services for over a decade in Chicago and expanded to bike valet service for festivals and events. pedaltothepeople.com/bikevalet

Location: Chicago, IL

Project cost: $650 for half-day, $1040 for full day

Client: Various festivals

Recommendation 13:

Identify potential remote parking lots that could be used during events

Challenge

- Shuttle services are very expensive
- Large underutilized parking lots border the area, but the walk to the core is unpleasant and too far for some people

Strategy:

Managing transportation for special events

**Cost: $**$$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

Shuttle services and remote parking can be very costly, and drivers are unlikely to be willing to pay enough to cover the cost of shuttles. One option is to work with owners of large industrial parking lots that are within a reasonable walking distance of the core area and open them up for paid event-day parking. Parking lots that are further out could be utilized, if they are along bus routes, but it is unlikely that people will be willing to pay for a bus pass on top of parking. Some people will drop off their family close by, park far away, and walk a long distance or get a cab/Uber/Lyft to get to the event.

Also, if a bilingual app is available that would allow residents to rent out parking spaces, many industrious residents would move their car for the day to make some extra money. Potential under-utilized space includes the vacant lots below Illinois Department of Transportation highways that cross the study area. There is one lot below I-90/94 between I-55 and 24th Place, and another to the east by Wentworth and 27th Street.

Approach owners of large underutilized parking lots

CBCAC should identify and contact the owners of large, industrial parking lots just outside of the core Chinatown area. The initial contact to lot owners would be to determine their level of interest in opening up parking lots to paid public use, and to determine if there is a preference for using an existing company's app platform or creating a platform for Chinatown. The latter could potentially help keep more revenue in Chinatown, but the former would be easier to implement. They may also want to hire a parking lot attendant for the event.

Help to promote the remote parking lots

In developing marketing materials for events, especially maps, local organizations should be sure to include the options for remote parking. Printed flyers, online maps, and social media can be used to promote the use of remote parking lots.

Recommendation 14:

Provide parking recommendations and guidelines for new developments yet to be proposed

Challenge

- New developments bring new activity and new activity can bring more parking problems
- The more parking a development has, the more cars are invited to drive and park in the neighborhood
- If a building does not provide parking for all car owners, neighbors worry about contributing to more parking congestion on-street
- Even during busiest times, many off-street spaces are underutilized due to parking restrictions

Strategy:

Outline the long-term vision for parking management

**Cost: $**$$$

Impact ●○○○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●○

Much of the Chinatown neighborhood falls into a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) zone, which allows for a reduction in the amount of parking provided for new development in certain parcels, if certain conditions are met. Any new large development would work with the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to determine the unique parking needs of each site. To the greatest degree possible, any new parking supply should be shared and open to the public, be managed as part of the larger parking system, and be "unbundled" (paid separately from rents or leases).

Support efforts to require unbundled parking in new developments
Most residential parking is provided as an inseparable part of housing cost whether rented or purchased, ultimately making housing more expensive, especially for those who own fewer cars and do not use as much parking. Separating the cost of parking from the cost of the housing is an essential first step towards getting people to understand the economic cost of parking. When developers or landlords separate the cost of parking, it gives a discount to households with fewer cars, and an economic incentive for people to opt out of parking and make alternative travel decisions. It is a strategy that brings the cost of parking to light without penalizing drivers.
This strategy would work well in an area like Chinatown, where forty percent of households do not have a vehicle but they do have many transportation options. The local efforts would be to educate people on the high costs of "bundled parking" and the potential benefits of "unbundled parking," and to share those concerns with DPD. The biggest fear with unbundled parking is that the cars will come regardless of the amount of parking, and that they will overwhelm the streets. This fear is generally not found to occur in real life, but fears can be minimized by restricting residents of new buildings from obtaining nearby residential parking permits.

Require that development on existing public parking lots replaces parking either on-site or nearby
Chinatown's public parking lots are an important asset to the community and local businesses. Since the CPC does not own the public lots, it is possible that they will be developed, and the new development would not be required to provide parking. This would make it difficult for many Chinese families and visitors that live in the suburbs to continue to drive to Chinatown, support the businesses, and help it thrive. It would also be detrimental to the many organizations that depend on the parking revenue for sustained funding. If the parking lots are developed, the new developments should include parking available to the public. Parking for building tenants should be optional and unbundled, meaning that tenants could pay less rent if they do not use parking. New parking should include clear public wayfinding and technology to communicate the number of spaces available (from the street). With an uncertain future for parking needs, the parking facilities should be either easily dismantled or designed to be converted into other uses if the demand for parking diminishes.

Another potential solution would be for the state to allow the Chinatown Parking Corporation to continue to operate a parking system in unused land owned by the IDOT. Ultimately, local organizations should push for a neighborhood-wide parking benefit district.

Case study: parkplusinc.com

Start conversations with City officials about the creation of a parking benefit district
One of the big downsides to development of the parking lots would be the loss of parking revenue for local community organizations. This underscores the need for a parking benefits district (PBD), which has not been done in Chicago and could be politically challenging. A PBD is a program that mandates that some portion of parking meter revenue generated within the neighborhood stays in the neighborhood. PBDs have been used in other cities to provide free public wifi, power washing, and beautification. Any initiative generating revenue sets itself up for potential corruption, and parking revenue is no exception. If a PBD is established, a percentage of revenue could be directed toward non-profit agencies operating in the neighborhood for at least five years with more than five employees, and the amount should be proportional to the total number of full time employees.

Recommendation 15:

Plan for future residential permit space management

Challenge

- The current reactionary approach to permit parking moves the parking problems around and creates new parking problems
- Any 24-hour permit space is off-limits to other drivers, even when few residents are using the spaces

Strategy:

Outline the long-term vision for parking management

**Cost: $**$$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●●●●

In Chicago, there is no citywide approach to managing permit parking. Each alderman determines how permit parking is handled in her or his ward, on a street by street basis, responding to resident complaints. This is problematic because it tends to push parking problems around and create new parking problems. In an area with many restaurants and commercial activity, the use of 24-hour residential permit parking is not recommended. It makes those spaces unavailable to customers when residents are not using them. The exception to this would be if the streets were in a zone where drivers could pay to park without a permit, which is an approach that the area would benefit from, if some portion of the revenues could be retained locally.

Determine the last time that the Comptroller reviewed existing residential permit areas

According to Chapter 9-94 of the municipal code, the City Comptroller is supposed to review all residential parking permit zones created before 1990 that either: (1) are less than three blocks in size, or (2) restrict parking for 24 hours a day. It is possible that the permit areas were not created before the effective date of the ordinance and are therefore not reviewed. In conducting a review, the Comptroller determines if 80 percent of occupied frontage at ground level is residential in use, and at least 75 percent of the on-street parking in the permit zone is being used during the restricted hours (determined by a parking study). If both conditions are met, the zone is continued. If not, the Comptroller may recommend that the permit be amended or revoked. Some residential permit areas in the neighborhood do not appear to meet those criteria.

Publicize the pros and cons of residential parking permits

Residential parking permits (RPPs) have evolved to protect residential street parking from the "spillover" parking demand from neighboring mixed-use or higher density areas. Because parking demand is not balanced with price, any parking that is free and close to high demand areas will be full most of the time. An RPP system helps to prevent that "spillover" of parking onto residential streets. There are pros and cons to instituting an RPP system, and potential remedies for some.

Advantages	Disadvantages	Potential remedy
Older, denser areas of Chinatown have less off-street parking. Residents with cars and no garages have an easier time finding parking with RPPs.	Some people may use their garage for storage and park on the street because the permit price is cheaper than paying for a storage unit.	Adjust the price of the permit to manage demand. This would require an ordinance and support from the Alderman.
Free parking is an incentive to drive; the permits are charging a nominal fee, which may lower the demand for parking.	Residents on blocks without permits suffer from increased congestion as parking demand is pushed onto their streets.	Allow for the permit to be in effect from early evening to early morning, allow metered parking during non-permit hours and exempt permit-holders. This would require enforcement technology that has license plates stored, something that the City does not yet have. The next best approach would be to have some hours metered and other hours permit—currently used in some Chicago neighborhoods.
Permit parking can prevent abuse from people taking the train downtown and going to work all day and leaving their car.	There is a potential for illegal sale of parking permits, which limits the effectiveness of the permit area.	Use the permit/ meter combination mentioned above and do not allow for the sale of daily permits.
Creating a permit district when a low-parking housing development goes in and restricting that building from getting permits can be used to help alleviate fears of parking problems.	Permits essentially privatize a public resource that all city residents are paying for.	Assess the parking occupancy after six months to one year. If the area is below 75 percent occupied, allow for residents of the building to purchase permits. As occupancy goes up, raise the price and spend the money on localized safety and walkability needs.
	There is no guarantee that a permit holder will find a parking space.	Establish the permit price using a uniform price auction, after determining how many spaces to auction. Use additional revenue to improve safety and walkability in the neighborhood. Conduct a new auction every year to establish the price.
	The permit process may be difficult for limited English speakers or undocumented residents.	Ensure that translation services exist to help navigate the process.
People who own more cars will have to pay more with a permit system.	The price of a permit does not even cover the cost to maintain the roadway, so the system is inherently unfair, as many people do not own cars and pay taxes to fix the roadways.	Increase the fee for the permit after each additional vehicle per household. Use additional revenue to improve safety and walkability in the neighborhood.
	If the price is not used to balance demand, the parking may become just as congested at before.	Set the price with a uniform price auction or raise the permit price with demand.
	Visitors and employees who drive to the area cannot use the parking during restricted hours.	Use the permit/meter combination mentioned above, which will allow visitors to pay the meter fees and park. Evaluate occupancy levels to determine if occupancy is low enough to warrant employee permits. An employee permit system can be complicated to enforce, but could be tested as a pilot.

When new residential permits are requested, the local aldermen collect data on parking occupancy; they must show that at least 45 percent of the vehicles parking on the street are not owned by residents of the proposed zone and that 85 percent of on-street parking in the proposed zone is occupied during the time periods requested for the permit. The latter piece of data is less relevant to the need for a permit than the former in Chinatown (as parking occupancy is high on just about every street). Occupancy by drivers who do not live in the area is an issue, but one that is not necessarily solved with permit parking. Many people who work in Chinatown drive and park on the residential streets. It is suspected that some park on residential permit streets by purchasing daily parking passes from residents.

Work with the alderman to outline neighborhood goals for permit parking

When permit parking is requested in the neighborhood, the CBCAC should work with local residents to understand their needs. An examination of existing conditions, paired with interactive engagement will help to identify what parking strategies should be pursued and hours/days of enforcement, in the case of permit parking.

Recommendation 16:

Strategically invest in public and shared parking supply in key locations

Challenge

- Standard parking garages cost between $30,000 per space and $40,000 per space added (if replacing a surface lot), and are expensive to maintain ($500 annually)
- When free parking is an option, people will automatically try to get the free parking first and paying to park is a "last resort"—leading to congestion on street
- Different areas of Chinatown have differing parking resources and needs

Strategy:

Provide additional public parking as needed

Cost: $$$$

Impact ●●●○

Level of difficulty ●●●○

Priority ●○○○

While a parking garage is cost-prohibitive and unlikely to be developed by a private entity, there are benefits to consolidated parking resources, and ensuring that each area of Chinatown has some public parking resources. Construction of new parking garages to consolidate or supplement surface parking is recommended when the price that drivers are willing to pay in the most desirable spaces on-street can cover the daily maintenance and operational cost of a space in a structure. When full annual maintenance costs are covered at approximately $500 per space, the daily cost of a space in a garage is about twenty dollars, excluding local property taxes and land costs. When many drivers are comfortable paying twenty dollars to park, and there are not free on-street spaces, a garage can help consolidate parking resources. The fear of crime – real or perceived – makes a garage a potential liability if drivers do not feel safe using it. A garage may also provide a safer parking experience, if it is designed well. Some cheaper options exist, but they still cost more than what drivers are currently willing to pay for parking in Chinatown.

In short, the previous 15 strategies should be prioritized over an expansion of parking supply to address current issues related to high on-street parking demand. The area should avoid the addition of private, restricted parking and shift toward publicly available, shared parking that is paid for by the end user.

North Chinatown: Share resources, improve transit, work with future developers
As shown in the existing conditions report, the area north of Cermak has the most off-street parking (residential and public), and much less on-street supply. The limited on-street parking is due to infrastructural barriers, lack of a standard street grid, and small size of the area. Currently, several streets do not allow on-street parking and South Tan Court does not allow parking on the north side of the street. The area sees the most parking demand, which is largely satisfied with the public parking lots. In the case of development on the public lots, the area would have a hard time accommodating all the cars that come to the neighborhood—especially on the weekends. Ping Tom Park Field House has a high demand for parking because, unlike most other city parks, there are infrastructure barriers on three sides of the building – meaning very little on-street parking. There is limited CTA access between the park and the neighborhoods to the east and west, making it hard for visitors to arrive without a car or bicycle.

The priority for this part of town should be to share parking resources and ensure that future developments do not supply parking that is private and unavailable to visitors. Making parking shared and available to the public (with payment) will help to create turnover, mitigate demand, and create more options for visitors.

New on-street parking
If the pilot back-in angled parking works in the South area of Chinatown, this could be considered for S. Tan Court, where the street width is sufficient to have angled parking on one side, but not wide enough to have parking on both sides and retain two-way traffic. This would be different because the two-way traffic would be retained but the parallel parking on the south side would be replaced with reverse-angled parking, which would require significant on-the-ground education and engagement. This area could also see parking along the extended Wells Street, as it is built into "The 78." The new Wells Street within "The 78" should be metered to ensure turnover and prevent commuters and employees from leaving their cars all day long. Alderman Sigcho-Lopez and the Park District Board have discussed the pros and cons of several options for improving the Field House parking, including meters, time restrictions, and selling parking lot passes in the Field House at a small price.

New off-street parking
This area, like most of Chinatown, has limited developable land to convert to parking. It does, however, have two very large public parking lots. These lots may be appropriate for a pilot of "stacked parking," which adds parking capacity at a much lower cost than traditional structured parking, and could be utilized in the case of development on the public lots or on a portion of the lots. Stacked parking requires an attendant and spaces can be deployed or taken down quickly. If the CPC is interested in deploying stacked parking before a developer comes in, they could convert the southernmost portion of either lot into a separate payment system and allow for stacked parking. Finding the initial seed money for this project would be challenging, as the spaces still cost around $10,000 each.

South Chinatown: Shift away from strict residential permits to permit/meters, add new supply with street redesign, work with IDOT to add new lot to supply
The older, more traditional area of Chinatown has the highest concentration of residential units and on-street parking. There are very few large public parking lots, and one of those lots is already slated for development. The best options for new parking include street reconfiguration (Recommendation #1), converting some free parking to combination metered/permit (Recommendation #3), opening restricted private parking to public use (Recommendation #4), and possibly leasing the vacant lot south of I-55 from IDOT.

New on-street parking
As proposed in Recommendation #1, converting one block of W. 24th Street to one-way westbound with back-in angled parking could add new parking spaces. Additionally, the free parking in the area does not allow for much turnover, which creates problems on these blocks that have a mix of uses – including hotels, schools, restaurants, and grocery stores. All of

these destinations are employment locations and all employees who drive will try to park on the streets with free parking. To increase turnover, the use of residential permit parking with meters (Recommendation #4) is 29 recommended in place of traditional permits and along mixed-use blocks, like 22nd Place.

West Chinatown: Shift away from private parking to shared parking and consider meters as development intensity increases

The western edge of Chinatown is more industrial in nature, but also has residential properties, a grocery store, Connie's Pizza, and a nightclub. It has the least amount of parking of the three sections, but has the most auto-oriented feeling due to the high amount of off-street commercial parking spaces and large residential parking lots. There is very little metered parking, and only a handful of residential permit parking spaces.

New on-street parking

Almost all of the on-street parking in this area is free, which means that there is very little turnover and it is very hard to find parking. There is not enough activity to warrant parking meters –and the large businesses have their own parking lots. However, a combination of permit and metered would work in this area, and could work on Normal Avenue or 24th Street. Normal Avenue would not help the businesses that are located on 24th Street, but would be less controversial because there are no residential units on the west side of the street, and the units on the east side of the street have off-street parking. The north side of Archer Avenue should have metered parking installed to create the turnover needed for the businesses that will be opening in the new development.

New off-street parking

In this area, newer development has taken the approach of providing free parking for customers that cannot be shared by people visiting other businesses. This creates an over-supply of parking that is insufficient at certain hours, but underutilized most of the time. It is an incentive to drive, adding to the congestion on the streets, while also increasing the impervious surface area in the neighborhood. A better approach to parking would be to create a shared parking resource that all the businesses can use, that comes at a small cost (to prevent employees from using it and residents from leaving their cars). Assuming that the tenants run successful businesses, the new development at Archer and Canal will likely see a congested parking lot and will find that the free spaces in front of businesses will be full all day if they are not converted to customer-oriented metered parking.

FY21-0032

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is our region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a new long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See cmap.illinois.gov for more information.

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