



Chinatown Community Vision Plan DRAFT



December 2014

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Chinatown Community Vision Plan

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Why Does Chinatown Need a Community Vision Plan?

In 1912, the Chinatown community moved from the southern edge of downtown Chicago to its present location centered at Cermak Avenue and Wentworth Road. The neighborhood has developed its own unique sense of place over the years, from the 1928 opening of the On Leong Merchants Association Building (now known as the Pui Tak Center) to the arrival of Chinatown Square and Ping Tom Park in the 1990s to the recently-completed Ping Tom Park Fieldhouse and upcoming construction of Chinatown's new showcase library at the center of the community. However, Chinatown has never had its own plan to guide development in ways that align with community priorities.

Building upon the recent celebration of its centennial, Chinatown has the opportunity to help shape the neighborhood's future through the Community Vision Plan, which provides a framework in which decisions affecting the future of Chinatown can be made with some certainty that today's choices—whether large or small—contribute to achieving the long-term goals and vision of the community. In addition to improving Chinatown, the plan will strengthen the community's integral role in planning decisions that are vital to the future of the entire City of Chicago.

Figure 1.1. Study area. [PLEASE NOTE: In draft plan, all maps are found at end of document in Appendix A]

Relationship with the GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan

As part of the larger Chicago metropolitan economic region, Chinatown both influences and is influenced by the region. CMAP is the official regional planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. CMAP developed and now guides the implementation of GO TO 2040, metropolitan Chicago's first truly comprehensive regional plan in more than 100 years.

To address anticipated population growth of more than 2 million new residents, GO TO 2040 establishes coordinated strategies that will help the region's 284 communities address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues. The plan contains four themes and 12 major recommendation areas:

Livable Communities

1. Achieve Greater Livability through Land Use and Housing
2. Manage and Conserve Water and Energy Resources
3. Expand and Improve Parks and Open Space
4. Promote Sustainable Local Food

Human Capital

5. Improve Education and Workforce Development
6. Support Economic Innovation

Efficient Governance

7. Reform State and Local Tax Policy
8. Improve Access to Information
9. Pursue Coordinated Investments

Regional Mobility

10. Invest Strategically in Transportation
11. Increase Commitment to Public Transit
12. Create a More Efficient Freight Network

Although exceptional in many ways, Chinatown serves as a microcosm of the larger region. Each of the 4 themes and nearly every recommendation area is relevant to Chinatown, even within the core area that is the focus of this plan.

Reinvesting in existing communities

GO TO 2040 puts particular emphasis on reinvesting in existing communities, encouraging the development of communities that are compact, mixed use, and walkable, with access to transit. Chinatown's core already possesses these essential characteristics. It needs reinvestment that respects and builds upon Chinatown's existing assets, character, and local context.

Transportation

Transportation in Chinatown already has many important elements already in place, but it needs wise, carefully targeted improvements to improve its function. Especially for a dense community located near Chicago's downtown, Chinatown's core has easy access to and from interstate highways, but it also has a large volume of truck traffic passing through the community, and many visitors find parking to be extremely difficult to find, especially on weekends.

While Chinatown is already relatively well-served by transit, it needs to be supported and enhanced through small-scale infrastructure improvements and land use planning. Chinatown is already one of the most walkable communities in Chicago, but pedestrians need further enhancements at key intersections and highly-used corridors to ensure their safety and encourage this least resource intensive form of transportation.

Last, many residents and, especially, workers in Chinatown's core use bicycles as their main form of transportation, and the community's proximity to downtown makes access via bicycle relatively easy, whether by personal bike or Divvy bike share. The City has installed bike lanes along Archer Avenue and is in the process of installing lanes along Canal Street as well as the expected Wells-Wentworth Connector that will provide a direct north-south route to and from the center of the community. Coupled with other small-scale improvements that facilitate transport by a wide variety of bicyclists—including residents, everyday workers, and visitors—

these important improvements by the City can help Chinatown evolve into one of Chicago's most bike friendly neighborhoods.

Parks and open spaces

While Ping Tom Park is extraordinary and cherished by the community, Chinatown has relatively few open spaces and, especially, green areas. Increasing the overall amount of green space, even by means of small scale improvements distributed throughout the community, could dramatically improve Chinatown's landscape and image, making it a more attractive place to be, whether visiting on the weekend or raising a family.

Education and workforce development

Unlike many other Chinatowns in the United States, Chicago's has withstood the loss of some residents to the suburbs—and even grown—over the years through a sustained influx of new immigrants from China. Arriving with energy, as well as fresh hopes and aspirations, recent immigrants often encounter additional obstacles as they navigate the common challenges of everyday life, such as finding rewarding employment or raising children. The future prosperity of Chinatown and the entire City of Chicago is linked to their prosperity. By improving education and workforce development, as well as integrating the two, Chicago can ensure that Chinatown's residents are able to contribute fully to the city's future.

Collaborative planning

GO TO 2040 places particular emphasis on the need for collaborative planning. Neither Chinatown or the City can do it alone: to implement the recommendations in this plan and address other important challenges and opportunities that arise will require the commitment and involvement of Chinatown's residents, workers, and other stakeholders, working in close collaboration with the community's elected officials and the City of Chicago.

Planning Process

The planning process to create the Chinatown Community Vision Plan included multiple steps and lasted a little over a year from when the project was launched. The process was crafted in close consultation with the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) and Alderman Daniel Solis, and was designed to include extensive input from Chinatown's residents, business owners, workers, and community leaders throughout.

- **Project initiation** (*April, 2013*)
- **Community outreach and engagement** (*April – December, 2013*)
- **Study of existing conditions and opportunities** (*April – October, 2013*)
- **Preliminary recommendations** (*January – February, 2014*)
- **Development of draft Community Vision Plan** (*March – June, 2014*)



- **Plan completion and approval** (*July, 2014 – January, 2015*)
- **Community implementation of plan** (*begins February, 2015*)

Community engagement activities

To better understand and address the community’s needs and vision for Chinatown’s future, a number of community engagement activities were conducted to gather public feedback. In addition to the ongoing input of the project’s Steering Committee, this included conducting confidential interviews with key stakeholders throughout the community as well as extensive surveys and public workshops to identify the primary concerns of local residents. Since the start of the planning process, approximately 1,800 residents and stakeholders have participated in the community engagement process.

Survey

Approximately 1,300 individuals responded to the project’s widely-distributed survey, offered in English and Chinese, which asked several questions intended to help the project team understand the community’s opinions and priorities regarding a variety of areas, including the appearance of Chinatown, transportation, parks and public spaces, community services, economic growth, education, healthcare, and housing. Examples of specific questions include the following:

- *What physical changes would improve Chinatown?*
- *What could make it easier to get around Chinatown?*
- *What would make the parks, playgrounds, and public squares in Chinatown better?*
- *What additional community services would you like to see?*
- *What type of housing would you like to see more of?*

In addition to these questions, the survey asked a basic, open-ended question: “What are your top 3 concerns?” Closely corresponding with observations and opinions gathered through the project’s other outreach activities (such as key person interviews and public workshops), responses to this question revealed three top concerns:

1. **Safety** was the number one concern, accounting for 29 percent of all survey responses. People mentioned high robbery rates, frequent car break-ins, and feeling unsafe walking around at night.
2. **Cleanliness** of the streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces in Chinatown was a close second, making up 21 percent of all survey responses. Many of the comments referred to behavioral habits, such as people spitting and smoking, or restaurant waste practices. Others referred to increasing the number of facilities or infrastructure to improve cleanliness, such as having more garbage cans or public toilets.
3. **Transportation** was the third top concern, with 13 percent of all responses. The specific transportation concerns broke down into three main categories: (1) transportation access,



such as increasing the frequency of bus service or adding more bus stops within Chinatown; (2) transportation infrastructure improvements, such as more stop signs, traffic lights, pedestrian under/overpasses, or bike lanes; and (3) parking, which accounted for over a quarter of all transportation concerns.

Visioning workshop

The project team utilized the results of the survey to develop questions that were then used in anonymous keypad polling conducted at a visioning workshop attended by over 150 community members. These visioning workshop questions were intended to help identify community priorities at a more precise level of detail. Examples include the following:

- *What would be the best way to address sanitation and cleanliness?*
- *Where would you like to go but don't have a good way to get there?*
- *What would be most useful in helping to maintain and attract more small businesses to Chinatown?*
- *What types of job training are most needed in Chinatown?*
- *What is the best way to strengthen the cultural identity of Chinatown?*

The wealth of information gathered through community responses to questions asked by the project's survey and visioning workshop—coupled with feedback and insights obtained from the confidential interviews with key stakeholders—provided the basis for the recommendations in the Chinatown Community Vision Plan.



Chapter 2: Guiding Principles

Based upon the findings from the first phase of the planning process, the following overarching principles emerged as goals to guide the strategies outlined in the Vision Plan:

1. Build upon the past accomplishments and current efforts of Chinatown’s community organizations, family associations, business leaders, community residents, and elected officials.
2. Strengthen Chinatown as the center for Chinese culture and community in Chicago and the surrounding region
3. Foster a lively, safe, clean, and vibrant community that provides a mix of retail, restaurants, services, and other amenities for both visitors and residents
4. Connect “Old Chinatown” and “New Chinatown,” enhancing connectivity of amenities and services by strengthening the community’s central core
5. Facilitate cooperation between the City and business community to attract and maintain thriving local and small businesses
6. Improve transportation accessibility in and around Chinatown
7. Strengthen human capital in the community by improving opportunities for education and career development for all Chinatown residents



Chapter 3: Plan Recommendations

The Chinatown Community Vision Plan’s recommendations are divided into the following sections:

1. Safety
 2. Transportation, Circulation, and Streets
 3. Residential Community
 4. Economic Development
 5. Education and Workforce
 6. Parks and Public Spaces
 7. Future Development
 8. Long-Term Capacity Building
-

1. Safety

Community vision:

Chinatown will become a more vibrant neighborhood, where the community feels comfortable, connected, and at home.

“Safety” (related to crime) was revealed to be the number one concern of people responding to the project’s survey. This issue also came up in most of the confidential interviews with key stakeholders, as well as other outreach activities conducted during the community engagement process.

Recommended Strategies

- 1.1 Increase activity in key areas and make Chinatown’s public areas places where people want to be
 - 1.2 Utilize and coordinate all available resources to improve communication to strengthen the community (and reduce crime)
-

1.1 Increase activity in key areas and make Chinatown’s public areas places where people want to be

Throughout the Chinatown Community Vision Plan are recommendations that address this important issue. In addition to recommending specific strategies such as the targeted improvement of lighting in public spaces such as parks and along sidewalks (especially passing under viaducts), the plan focuses many of its recommendations on increasing activity—in particular, increasing the presence of pedestrians—in key areas throughout the community. To achieve this, the plan seeks to make Chinatown’s public areas places where people want to be.



This is especially important for Chinatown’s most frequently used public spaces—its streets. Not only should Chinatown’s streets be easy and comfortable for pedestrians (of all ages) to traverse, ideally they should also be pleasant places for them to linger and socialize. At present, the consensus in the community appears to be that neither is true. Therefore, this plan offers many recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the ease of use, comfort, and attractiveness of Chinatown’s heavily used streets and sidewalks.

Fortunately, implementation of many of these recommendations is already planned for the center of Chinatown, as part of the City’s improvements related to the upcoming realignment of Wentworth Avenue, construction of Chinatown’s new showcase library, and creation of the new Wells-Wentworth Connector up to Roosevelt Road. In addition, commercial development that is expected to accompany these large-scale physical improvements by the City will help fill in key gap areas currently located in between destinations and, most importantly, increase pedestrian activity and improve safety.

1.2 Utilize and coordinate all available resources to improve communication to strengthen the community (and reduce crime)

Overall, implementation of the physical recommendations in this plan will help facilitate long term improvement in the amount of activity and the sense of safety in key areas of Chinatown. More immediately, concerned members of the community should utilize—and coordinate—all resources currently available for reporting crime and fostering active dialogue with the Chicago Police Department.

Language and cultural dynamics can pose challenges to reporting on safety and crime. In Chinatown’s core, 65 percent of residents are foreign born (9 percent of whom first arrived in the U.S. during the past three years), and 57 percent speak Chinese at home and speak English less than “very well.”¹ The City’s recent [Chicago New Americans Plan](#) commits the City to “improve its policies and procedures to ensure immigrants feel welcomed and protected,” observing that:

Currently, immigrants in Chicago struggle to access services, build relationships with law enforcement officials, and integrate fully. Some City services are not provided in the languages immigrants speak, and because Chicago does not have a city-wide language access policy, immigrants do not know which services will be made accessible to them. Many immigrants report poor relationships with public safety officials: some immigrants have had poor experiences with police officers in their home countries, leading to a mistrust of Chicago police officers. Finally, immigrants often live in segregated neighborhoods, limiting their interactions with non-immigrants and slowing their integration....

Immigrants are important allies in building safe, stable neighborhoods. Increasing trust and communication between the Chicago Police Department and immigrant communities will better equip police officers to solve crimes, strengthen communities, and reduce violence. By demonstrating its

¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-12 American Community Survey.

commitment to immigrant safety, the City will ensure that immigrants play an active role in cooperating with police to reduce violence.²

The New Americans Plan details several initiatives intended to address some of the key obstacles that can stand in the way of building these essential relationships between the community and law enforcement. They include:³

Initiative 16 - Pass a Welcoming City ordinance: *The City will pass an ordinance affirming and expanding basic protections for undocumented Chicagoans. (Note: ordinance was passed on September 12, 2012)*

Initiative 17 - Establish Welcoming City training: *The City will train key personnel, including police officers, fire and emergency personnel, and other City staff about the Welcoming City ordinance.*

Initiative 18 - Engage the Chicago Police Department: *The City will work with the Chicago Police Department to create opportunities for regular meetings between immigrant advocates, community-based organizations, and local police commanders.*

Initiative 20 - Implement a language access policy: *The City will implement a language access policy to ensure that immigrants are able to access critical services and information in the most common languages spoken in Chicago. The City will work to develop customized language access plans for departments and agencies that interact with immigrants.*

The Steering Committee for the Chinatown Community Vision Plan can provide leadership to ensure that all available resources are serving to build this essential relationship between the community and law enforcement. As discussed in Strategy 8.1, the plan recommends that the Steering Committee that was formed to guide the development of the plan be responsible for facilitating cooperation between members of the community, in partnership with the City, to implement the plan's recommendations in the coming years.

Since no plan can cover every issue or opportunity that will need to be addressed by the community in the coming years, the plan recommends that the Steering Committee help establish a framework for sustained, inclusive community involvement to address a variety of community concerns, including advocating for important local issues at the City level. The Steering Committee can strengthen awareness and coordination of existing community resources and services aimed at fighting crime and promoting safety in Chinatown, and ensure that they are serving to strengthen the essential relationship between the community and law enforcement, as stated in the Chicago New Americans Plan.

² Office of New Americans, City of Chicago: *Chicago New Americans Plan* (2012), p. 32-33.

³ Office of New Americans, City of Chicago: *Chicago New Americans Plan* (2012), p. 33-36.

2. Transportation, Circulation, and Streets

Community vision:

The Chinatown neighborhood will be accessible to residents and visitors alike. The existing transportation network will provide all users with a variety of safe options for moving in and around Chinatown. The transportation network will seamlessly connect pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers to both Old and New Chinatown.

Transportation infrastructure plays a central role in defining Chinatown's core. Rail lines, roadways, highway exit ramps, and viaducts establish the neighborhood's boundaries, limit the land available for development, and serve as physical barriers that segment the community.

- **Chinatown residents use a diverse mix of transportation modes to get around.** While 46 percent of residents in greater Chinatown report driving alone to commute to work, resident-reported survey data reveals a more even mode split for getting around for work and other trips. The highest percentage of residents report using CTA bus (37 percent), followed by car (32 percent), walking (31 percent), CTA train (25 percent), and bike (10 percent).
- **Chinatown's core is dense and well connected, but pedestrian safety remains an issue.** The core area of Chinatown has a high Walk Score of 90/100 and high ratio of intersections/square mile, but many factors make the area unfriendly for pedestrians. With heavy congestion at peak times, a high volume of freight and local traffic, and a significant number of vehicular and pedestrian crashes, it is difficult to walk, bike, and even drive through many parts of Chinatown.
- **Public outreach survey participants identified transportation as the third-highest concern in the public outreach surveys.** Transportation issues from transit access to parking management to pedestrian infrastructure comprised 13 percent of total survey responses about residents' top concerns for the community.

Recommended Strategies

- 2.1 Improve the experience of taking transit to, from, and within Chinatown
 - 2.2 Improve sidewalk conditions and key pedestrian crossings
 - 2.3 Improve bicycle infrastructure
 - 2.4 Conduct a comprehensive parking management study
 - 2.5 Strengthen the connection between Old and New Chinatown
-

2.1 Improve the experience of taking transit to, from, and within Chinatown

Chinatown's core is well served by transit: it is immediately adjacent to a recently upgraded CTA Cermak-Chinatown Red Line station and sits along multiple CTA bus routes. The existing



transit options are well-used, with over 60 percent of residents that report using CTA bus or train lines to get around. At the same time, many people expressed dissatisfaction with transit stops as dirty and unsafe. The elderly, young children, and others with mobility limitations, in particular, often require additional transit amenities to be able to comfortably use transit.

To better serve current transit riders and further increase transit ridership, the Chinatown community should take steps to improve existing transit infrastructure and make it easier and more comfortable for people to access trains and buses.

Figure 3.2.1. Transit in Chinatown's core.

Transit stations

Working in cooperation with CDOT, the community should increase the amount of bus shelters, add heated shelters when possible, and include bus schedule displays. These strategies are especially helpful for improving transit experiences for mobility-challenged riders who may not be able to withstand long standing times or waits in inclement weather. While some shelters in the neighborhood do exist, priority for adding shelters should be given to other high-use stops along the 62, 24, and 21 bus lines—routes reported as most frequently used by Chinatown residents.

Wayfinding

In addition to bus station enhancements, the community should focus on better connecting its transit with Chinatown's many amenities. When arriving at Chinatown from the CTA Red Line Station and other public transit stops, it can be difficult for visitors to orient themselves and navigate around the neighborhood for the first time. Providing physical improvements to and around the CTA Red Line station will make it easier for visitors to navigate to neighborhood destinations within Chinatown.

Establishing easy-to-read wayfinding signage that directs visitors from the Red Line to local Chinatown attractions can make public transit a more attractive option for visitors traveling to Chinatown. Signage would be most useful at both exits of the Cermak-Chinatown CTA Red Line station, the bus stops for common CTA buses lines (such as the 62, 24, and 21 buses), the boat launch at Ping Tom Park, as well as in other common thoroughfares. In addition to providing transportation directions, wayfinding signage should provide information tailored to first time visitors in English and Chinese and include informational maps that highlight the locations of key destinations. Signs can also include QR codes that provide full instant directories of local businesses or notable historical or cultural information about significant places.

Beautification

The overall environment immediately outside of the CTA Red Line Station can also be improved to help transit riders feel safer and more welcome upon arrival to Chinatown. The Chinatown-Chicago Public Art Group project to beautify the viaduct under the train tracks is a key first step for improving the overall condition of the transit station. The community should continue to explore other funding sources and project ideas to enhance the aesthetic quality of

the station in line with the placemaking and beautification strategies outlined in the Parks and Public Spaces section.

2.2 Improve sidewalk conditions and key pedestrians crossings

Around 30 percent of Chinatown residents, particularly recent immigrants and seniors who lack car access, rely upon walking to get from place to place. CDOT crash data and public feedback identify several places along main walking routes that are unsafe for pedestrians. Chinatown's roadways have not only high traffic volumes and heavy motor congestion, but also large numbers of pedestrians, causing tensions in both vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

Recently, 25th Ward Alderman Solis and the community have worked together to implement important safety interventions at key locations. Expanding upon those recent achievements, the community should work with CDOT and DPD to prioritize infrastructure improvements to the pedestrian landscape.

Pedestrian crossings

Calming vehicular traffic along arterial roads and installing additional safety measures at crossings can help to reduce incidents of pedestrian crashes and enhance the overall pedestrian environment. In accordance with CDOT's [Chicago Pedestrian Plan](#), the community should incorporate the following interventions:

- [Curb extensions/bump outs](#) and [in-road stop signs](#) to slow vehicular traffic in high-pedestrian areas
- Curb cuts/ramps, [pedestrian refuges](#), and [leading pedestrian intervals](#) that clearly demarcate safe places to cross streets to reduce jaywalking
- Focus on particularly challenging intersections, such as Wentworth and Cermak; Wentworth and Archer; Wentworth and 18th Street; and Cermak, Archer, and Princeton. As part of the anticipated realignment of Wentworth, CDOT plans substantial improvements to the street's intersections at both Cermak and Archer. CDOT also plans to install a new stoplight at Wentworth and 18th Street (with a new stop sign in the interim), which will enable pedestrians, particularly children and the elderly, to safely travel by foot to Ping Tom Fieldhouse.

Sidewalk conditions

Beyond intersections, it is important to ensure good sidewalk conditions along all of Chinatown's streets, particularly for the use of strollers, wheelchairs, and other mobility devices. This includes not only maintenance of sidewalk pavers, but also the conditions of the walkways beneath the many viaducts that cross the neighborhood.

Chinatown residents are often more familiar with the infrastructure updates and repairs such as street light outages or street repairs that are most needed in the community. To help residents better provide input to the City, the community and the 25th Ward Alderman's office should

promote the use of the City's 311 service. If language barriers are an issue, the community should provide a mechanism for people to submit comments through high-traffic community centers, such as CASL, the library, or the Pui Tak Center, so that these organizations can help submit comments and issues collectively for 311.

The community should work with the Alderman from the 25th Ward, CDOT, IDOT, and the Union Pacific Railroad to help install lighting and improve the lighting, cleanliness, and appearance of underpasses. In particular, the viaduct at 23rd Place should be prioritized since it is a common route that children use to walk to Haines Elementary School. In the event that large-scale infrastructure updates or improvements are scheduled for the viaducts, beautification improvements should be undertaken alongside the structural changes. Public art projects, such as the planned project at the CTA rail line, can also be employed in viaducts around Chinatown as part of aesthetic enhancements to the pedestrian environment.

2.3 Improve bicycling infrastructure

Although bicycling is the least common way to get around in Chinatown, it still accounts for 10 percent of Chinatown residents' modes of transportation. The arrival of four Divvy bike sharing stations in Chinatown's core area, not to mention several more stations located throughout greater Chinatown, signifies a growing shift toward bicycling in the community. As the City continues to expand bike infrastructure across Chicago through the Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan 2020, the number of cyclists traveling to and around Chinatown is likely to increase.

Figure 3.2.2. Bicycling infrastructure in Greater Chinatown.

For travel to many destinations within and nearby Chinatown, bicycling is an ideal alternative to driving. While Chinatown's core area is not very large, residents frequently use key amenities, such as the public schools, hospitals, and the Fieldhouse, that are located further from the heart of the community. Moreover, Chinatown is situated in close proximity to other thriving destinations, including McCormick Place, the Loop, and Pilsen. Encouraging people to bike for such short- and mid-distance trips, when and where feasible, will not only increase ways for visitors to access the community, but also help to alleviate automobile congestion and promote more active alternatives to vehicular travel.

Transforming the community into a more bike-friendly neighborhood entails a few main challenges. The fast speeds and high volume of traffic on Archer Avenue and other main thoroughfares can make roadways unwelcoming for cyclists. In addition, there are insufficient bike racks in many places, including the Pui Tak Center, CASL, Chinatown Square, and Ping Tom Park.

To make bicycling a safer and more viable option for more people, the community should continue to expand and strengthen bicycle infrastructure to improve connections to the City's existing and proposed bicycle network routes in accordance with the Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan 2020.

Safer bike lanes

The community should first prioritize making its existing bicycle lane along Archer Avenue a safer and more welcoming place to bike. Working with CDOT, DPD, and IDOT, the community should explore options for adding hatching, bike boxes, or bicycle traffic signals to ease bicycle crossings at major intersections.

More bike lanes

Second, the community should work with CDOT to build new bike lanes that can improve Chinatown's connectivity to other existing and planned lanes in the city. The Chicago Streets for Cycling 2020 Plan proposes adding 645 miles of bicycle routes, as well as commits to providing bicycle accommodations within a half-mile of every resident. In the plan, a new crosstown protected route is proposed through Chinatown along Canal Street; nearby lanes are proposed for Wabash and Indiana avenues to the east and 29th and 31st Streets to the south.

In the rollout of new bike infrastructure, the community should work with CDOT to ensure that these and other planned bike lanes include adequate protective barriers and bike crossing infrastructure at particularly dangerous intersections so that the routes are safe for cyclists. This is especially important in Chinatown because of the high proportion of seniors in the Chinatown community: the presence of cyclists traveling at higher speeds can make street-crossing overwhelming for the elderly, so it is helpful to make sure that bike lanes and crossings protect the safety of cyclists and pedestrians alike. Plans for the realignment of Wentworth will provide for buffered bike lanes from Cermak to the Fieldhouse and beyond, which will help to connect the northernmost part of Chinatown to areas in the south. Cermak is also a good bike route candidate to help connect Chinatown to new development planned for McCormick Place and Motor Row to the east.

Supporting bike infrastructure

Creating more bike lanes alone does not make bicycling safe and accessible; communities must also have infrastructure to support bicycle commuting. Most of the community's existing bike racks are concentrated on the southern part of Wentworth Avenue, yet residents still report insufficient bike racks at high-traffic destinations such as the Pui Tak Center. More bike racks should be installed at key destinations, such as Chinatown Square, Ping Tom Park and Fieldhouse, the upcoming Chinatown Library, CASL, Pui Tak Center, and Haines Elementary School. While Chinatown is now well connected by four Divvy stations, the community should work with Divvy and CDOT to explore other locations for Divvy stations, such as at the new Ping Tom Park Fieldhouse, to improve the north-south and east-west bicycle circulation as more bike lanes are established.

2.4 Conduct a comprehensive parking management study

Residents and visitors voiced concerns about the difficulty in finding parking in Chinatown. Many businesses even cited insufficient parking as a major barrier for commerce. It can also be an obstacle to promoting the full utilization of public amenities such as Ping Tom Park, including its new Fieldhouse. The neighborhood has very limited space available for the

creation of additional parking that is convenient to popular amenities. In addition, the community has limited ability to alter parking prices and regulations, which are governed by the City and a privately contracted company.

Before moving forward with concrete strategies to address this issue, more data is needed regarding actual parking demand and availability at different times of the day, week, and year in different key areas of Chinatown. Therefore, the community should conduct a comprehensive parking study to accomplish the following:

- Determine actual demand and availability of parking
- Identify methods for managing existing parking supply and demand
- Assess needs and options for structured parking in different locations within the community.

CMAP's [Parking Toolkit](#) is a useful resource to guide the community in determining next steps for conducting a more in-depth parking study, but such an effort will likely require further technical assistance.

2.5 Strengthen the connection between Old and New Chinatown

A broad spectrum of the community is concerned about the division between “Old Chinatown,” defined by Wentworth Avenue and other areas south of Cermak Road, and “New Chinatown,” defined by Chinatown Square and the area north of Archer Avenue. Despite having much in common, the two areas currently serve different functions and each possesses a distinctive character.

Old and New Chinatown

The traditional heart of the community, Old Chinatown is defined by its dense commercial corridor along Wentworth, which is especially bustling during weekday mornings, when local residents gather for their daily errands and social traditions. These include many restaurant workers, typically recent immigrants from mainland China, who gather to be transported to their work at restaurants located throughout the region, as well as the drivers, who also pick up supplies and socialize with friends on the sidewalk. The Pui Tak Center occupies Chinatown's most recognizable historic building at the corner of Wentworth and 22nd Place, providing English as a Second Language classes for hundreds of students of nearly every age. The Chinese Christian Union Church is located two blocks to the south, on the corner of Wentworth and 23rd Street. Dense, but relatively quiet residential streets fan out to the west of the busy Wentworth corridor, some containing community institutions tucked within the block, such as the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, Haines Elementary School, and both the St. Therese Chinese Catholic Church and its nearby elementary school. Overall, Old Chinatown has not changed much in recent decades, retaining a comfortable familiarity for local residents. While most shopkeepers and restaurant owners have properly maintained the front facades, signage, and interiors of their businesses, dramatic improvements are somewhat rare.

The development of Chinatown Square and new residences north of Archer created what many refer to as “New Chinatown.” Generally quiet during weekday mornings, New Chinatown

typically builds energy as the day and the week progresses, the main draw being Chinatown Square's stores, services, bakeries, and many restaurants. Weekends are especially popular, as visitors descend on the commercial center, including many Chinese-Americans who reside in the region's suburbs but venture into Chinatown on the weekend to do shopping, see friends, and go to church. As might be expected, parking is particularly challenging in this area during the weekend. Residential areas just to the north of Chinatown Square are distinctively new and relatively upscale in comparison with those in Old Chinatown. New Chinatown is also home to the headquarters of CASL and its adjacent senior housing community, as well as Ping Tom Park and its new Fieldhouse.

While Old Chinatown and New Chinatown both serve important roles in the community, there is a division between the two sections, and the benefits enjoyed by one are not fully shared with the other. For example, the community's many weekend visitors are primarily drawn to Chinatown Square and generally do not think of spending time and money in Old Chinatown, whether on Wentworth or even on nearby Cermak. The public engagement process revealed a widespread concern among residents and other stakeholders about the future prospects of businesses along the Wentworth corridor in Old Chinatown. Multiple factors contribute to this divide. Many stem from the triangle-shaped block formed by Cermak, Archer, and Wentworth Avenue, which currently functions as a barrier for pedestrian visibility and travel between Old and New Chinatown, especially between the center of Chinatown Square and the gateway to Old Chinatown at Wentworth and Cermak. In addition, difficult pedestrian crossings currently exist at all three corners of the block.

Figure 3.2.3. Key locations for strengthening the connection between Old and New Chinatown.

Intersection of Wentworth and Cermak

The most heavily-traveled crossing, at the intersection of Wentworth and Cermak, will be greatly improved by the City's plan to realign Wentworth. Not only will the realignment remove the existing offset intersection, which has seen a relatively high rate of crashes involving pedestrians and automobiles, and add an additional pedestrian crossing across Cermak (on the east side of the intersection), it will dramatically improve visibility and ease of travel for pedestrians between Old and New Chinatown.

Figure 3.2.4. Intersection of Wentworth and Cermak.

Intersection of Wentworth and Archer

As part of the Wentworth realignment, the City also plans to make improvements to the intersection at Wentworth and Archer, which is used by most visitors to Chinatown Square, whether coming from either of the exits for the CTA Red Line station, the community's central parking lots, or walking from Wentworth south of Cermak in Old Chinatown. Chinatown's new showcase library, expected to receive very heavy use from the community, will be located at the southwestern corner of this intersection. Crossings at this intersection are currently somewhat awkward, due to a variety of factors. One is the skewed angle of the intersection, which has been shown to leave vehicles more exposed to conflicts, increase the amount of time pedestrians

are exposed to vehicle traffic, and generally reduce an intersection's capacity.⁴ While the angle of the intersection is set, the City plans to introduce improvements to the intersection which should strengthen the clarity of pedestrian crossings as well as vehicle travel through the intersection.

Figure 3.2.5. Intersection of Wentworth and Archer.

Even with these important planned improvements, pedestrians wishing to reach Chinatown Square from the south via Wentworth must cross Archer at an angle that seems to direct the pedestrian away from the two-level commercial center, especially away from its central plaza. Conversely, pedestrians at Chinatown Square Plaza who wish to travel south to the Wentworth corridor in Old Chinatown must travel to the north to reach the intersection. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that there are many pedestrian crossings mid-block across Archer. After reaching the northwestern corner of the intersection, it is somewhat unclear where the nearest entrance into Chinatown Square is located, as Chinatown Square Plaza is distantly located to the left and the nearest entrance, to the right, is partially hidden due to building layout; both routes cross substantial curb cuts, which accommodate vehicle access to and from a parking area located between the sidewalk and Chinatown Square (problems with this parking area, as well as potential options for improvement, are discussed in Strategy 7.1).

The City is considering the addition of a mid-block crossing across Archer that would facilitate a more direct pedestrian route between the southern side of Archer and Chinatown Square Plaza. This would need to be approved by IDOT, as Archer is under IDOT jurisdiction. Given the potential to improve safety and ease pedestrian travel between Old and New Chinatown, the community should work with the City and IDOT to explore options to add a new mid-block crossing, including options for siting as well as other improvements along this block of Archer that have the potential to enhance the safety of the crossing, such as additional street calming strategies.

Figure 3.2.6. Potential site of new pedestrian crossing near Wentworth and Archer.

Intersection of Cermak, Archer, and Princeton

While Wentworth serves as the principal connector between Old and New Chinatown—and, in the future, between Chinatown and downtown Chicago—there is a third intersection to the west that also plays a vital role in the overall framework of the community. A large, six-corner intersection is formed by Cermak Road and Archer Avenue, both large east-west thoroughfares with heavy truck traffic, and Princeton Avenue, a well-used, but relatively quiet neighborhood street running north-south.

Figure 3.2.7. Intersection of Cermak, Archer, and Princeton.

This intersection was identified as one of the most problematic locations in the entire Chinatown core during the public engagement process, by key stakeholders and in hundreds of community survey responses. Community members complained of long waits, especially for pedestrians, but also for cars—particularly waiting north of the intersection on Princeton, where

⁴ [Federal Highway Administration, "Intersection Angle," in *Signalized Intersections: Informational Guide*, August 2004.](#)

cars are said to sometimes have to wait through multiple lights. Concerns were also expressed about long crossings for pedestrians across streets with heavy truck traffic, without amenities like pedestrian islands (see Strategy 2.2 for general recommendations on pedestrian infrastructure improvements).

Of particular concern is the safety of Chinatown's children and growing population of elderly residents. The two main elementary schools in Chinatown's core (Haines Elementary School and St. Therese Chinese Catholic School) are both located near Princeton in Old Chinatown; to reach Chinatown Square, activities at CASL, Ping Tom Park, or the new Fieldhouse, children and mothers with strollers are likely to cross via this six-corner intersection. Similarly, approximately one thousand residents 65 or older live south of Cermak within Chinatown's core, with approximately 750 living in the main residential section of Old Chinatown (between Stewart Avenue and Wentworth), typically in either the Chinatown Elderly Apartments (located at the corner of Princeton and 23rd Street) or lower-density housing along the area's east-west side streets. CASL's many activities for seniors, CASL Senior Housing, and Chinatown Square are located nearby on Princeton, but on the other side of the six-corner intersection. The Chinese Community Center of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) of Chicago, located on 22nd Place just south of the intersection, has a wide variety of services for seniors and a broad range of the Chinatown community, many of whom must pass through the difficult intersection to access the services they need.

This intersection has been helped by recent City improvements, such as bike lanes that were added along Archer and dedicated left turn lanes added to Cermak at this intersection. Proposed future enhancements include signal phasing and pedestrian countdown signals, which will improve the operation of the intersection and safety for pedestrians and vehicles. Two bump outs are also being considered to shorten crossing distances for pedestrians. In addition, the City plans to remove a street parking space located just north of the intersection on Princeton—the location mentioned above where cars are said to sometimes have to wait through multiple lights—creating two lanes for cars entering the intersection from the north, which should improve flow into and through the intersection.

These proposed future enhancements are certain to improve the intersection, but additional planning may be required, especially given Chinatown's growing population of elderly residents and its ambition to be a community where families can raise their children. Therefore, the community should work with the Alderman and the City to comprehensively assess the problem and explore the full array of potential strategies and best practices implemented in the United States and around the world that may assist with the further improvement of this problematic intersection. Examples could include changes to curb return radii, channelized right turns, alternative forms of intersection control (such as roundabouts) and crosswalk configuration (such as "all-way" pedestrian crossings), roundabouts, curb extensions, additional bicycle lanes, and design considerations for bus stops near the intersection.⁵

⁵ [Institute for Transportation Engineers, "Intersection Design Guidelines," in *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach* \(2010\).](#)

Overall, not only is there is great potential to dramatically improve the function and safety of this key intersection as it is used today, comprehensive and farsighted planning can help position the area for future development as a new lively hub of activity, popular with both residents and visitors.

Parking for businesses at southern end of Wentworth

In addition to widespread complaints about the availability of parking throughout Chinatown, several persons interviewed and surveyed specifically focused on the need for public parking in Old Chinatown at the southern end of Wentworth, preferably in a location north of the Stevenson Expressway. There seemed to be general agreement that businesses in this area, especially restaurants, are suffering because this area of Wentworth does not receive enough foot traffic, in large part because Chinatown’s main public parking is located several blocks away, north of Cermak. The community previously attempted to provide public parking nearby this area, but apparently it was unpopular due to its location just to the south on the other side of the Stevenson Expressway.

Figure 3.2.8. Potential site for new parking, southern end of Wentworth.

As discussed in Strategy 2.4, more data is needed regarding actual parking demand and availability at different times of the day, week, and year in different key areas of Chinatown— including the southern end of Wentworth. Before moving forward with concrete strategies to address this issue, the community should conduct a comprehensive parking study to determine actual demand and availability of parking, identify methods for managing existing parking supply and demand, and assess needs and options for structured parking in different locations within the community.

Key Implementation Steps

ACTION/ TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	DESCRIPTION
Provide opportunity for community residents to provide input and feedback to the City on transportation issues.		
Timing: 0-3 months	Lead: Steering Committee	Create a working group. The Steering Committee should form a transportation working group that is open to interested residents and community stakeholders to comprehensively assess transportation issues within the neighborhood and provide feedback on potential strategies to assist CDOT with future transportation improvements.
Timing: 6-12 months	Lead: Transportation Working Group	Organize forums. The transportation working group, which should convene at regularly scheduled intervals, should prioritize addressing the intersection of Cermak, Archer, and Princeton, as well as upcoming CDOT projects as they arise.
Timing: 12-24	Lead: Transportation Working	Liaise with CDOT. Once the transportation working group is established, it can serve as a community liaison to CDOT. As new

months	Group Supporting: CDOT	transportation projects arise, CDOT should work with the group and disseminate information about public meetings and comment periods, as well as solicit community feedback on the projects, during the planning process.
Conduct a comprehensive parking study.		
Timing: 0-3 months	Lead: Transportation Working Group Supporting: CDOT	Identify resources and determine scope for parking study. Working with the broader Steering Committee, CDOT, and other partners as needed, the Transportation Working Group should identify resources to fund the parking study, looking at potential funding sources within the community and outside sources such as government grant or technical assistance programs. Once resources are secured, define objectives and overall scope of parking study, including determination of whether a consultant with expertise in parking management should be hired to lead the effort.
Timing: 6-12 months	Lead: Transportation Working Group Supporting: CDOT Consultant (if applicable)	Evaluate parking supply and demand in Chinatown. Depending on the approach and scope determined in the previous step, the Transportation Working Group should work with the consultant or other project lead to gather all existing data related to parking supply and demand, especially in key areas (such as the community's commercial areas and Ping Tom Park). As needed, a parking utilization survey should be conducted to supplement existing data. This may include a survey of the turnover rate of parking spaces. Existing data and survey results should be supplemented with feedback from stakeholders and compiled to report the results to the Chinatown community.
Timing: 6-12 months	Lead: Transportation Working Group Supporting: CDOT Consultant (if applicable)	Evaluate potential strategies. Guided by the findings of the previous step, the project team should consider the full range of relevant strategies for managing existing parking supply and demand. If needed, this can be followed by an assessment of the need and options for structured parking in different locations within the community.
Timing: 9-15 months	Lead: Transportation Working Group Supporting: CDOT Consultant (if applicable)	Select strategies and develop implementation plan. The project team should select strategies and draft an implementation plan for review by the Steering Committee and presentation to the Chinatown community.



3. Residential Community

Community vision:

Chinatown will become Chicago's showcase "age-friendly" neighborhood, able to support a high quality of life for a wide range of residents and adapt to changing needs over time.

Chinatown continues to serve as a gateway and cultural center for Chicago's Chinese population, although the community has undergone significant demographic changes, including an aging senior population and a higher percentage of recent immigrants from mainland China. The following key findings provide some context about how the community can improve residential housing and amenities that meet the needs of the variety of residents living in the neighborhood.

- **Chinatown continues to be a core for Chicago's Chinese population and port of entry for new Chinese immigrants.** Unlike many historic Chinatowns in the United States, Chicago's Chinatown has retained and even increased its Chinese population, while growing its total population by 26 percent between 2000 and 2010. As of 2011, 81 percent of Chinatown's population identified as ethnically Chinese, compared to only 4 percent in Chicago and 3 percent in Cook County.
- **Chinatown has a large elderly population.** 18 percent of Chinatown's population is over 65 years of age, compared to only 10 percent in Cook County and 11 percent in the region.
- **3 out of 5 Chinatown residents are renters.** Renters make up 61 percent of Chinatown residents, which is slightly higher than the rental rate in Chicago (55 percent). About 50 percent of the community's housing stock has five or more units, while another 29 percent are two to four unit buildings. The age of the housing supply is split: 20 percent was built before 1939, while 26 percent was built in 2000 or later. Overall, median age of housing is 26 years younger than Chicago.

Figure 3.3.1. Residential areas in Chinatown's core.

Recommended Strategies

- 3.1 Make Chinatown an "age-friendly" neighborhood
 - 3.2 Ensure quality affordable housing by connecting landlords to resources to improve their properties
-

3.1 Make Chinatown an “age-friendly” neighborhood

The influx of younger immigrants to Chinatown, along with the aging population of long-term residents, means that community facilities and services must simultaneously cater to distinct demographics. As a main provider of elderly services in the community, CASL has many effective and well-used programs that have helped over 17,000 seniors in the Chicago region. To build upon CASL’s extensive programs, the community should incorporate age-friendly strategies into the built environment and community programming.

Age-friendly design

Age-friendliness entails adapting infrastructure and services to be accessible for people of all ages and with varying degrees of mobility and mental health—particularly elderly with disabilities or wheelchairs, caretakers with strollers, and young children. As the planned Wentworth realignment, library construction, and other development and capital improvement projects move forward, the community should consider some interventions that would make Chinatown a more accessible place for its diverse residents. For instance, many residents noted the lack of outdoor benches and seating in Chinatown’s public spaces. Providing adequate public seating throughout main pedestrian thoroughfares can ease walking journeys for the elderly or caretakers of young children, who may need to rest or pause when traveling short distances. In addition, adequate handicap access to buildings and wide walkways to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs can ease the burden of running errands or even socializing. Planning for these and other simple interventions during any new building or infrastructure construction will help ensure that housing stock and neighborhood amenities are adaptive, able to support a range of resident types that may change over time.

Age-friendly mobility

Because seniors, young children, and people with disabilities often lack access to cars, targeted pedestrian and transit infrastructure improvements can significantly improve mobility within a community. To better communicate pedestrian rights of way for people with poor eyesight or hearing, the community should work with CDOT to add some basic provisions that make it safer and more comfortable for people with limited mobility to get around. Visual and auditory crossing signals would improve the safety of pedestrian crossings at large intersections, such as the six-corner intersection of Cermak, Archer, and Princeton, as well as Wentworth’s intersections at Archer and 18th Street. Bus stop benches should be installed at highly frequented bus stops to encourage greater use of public transit. Priority should be given to stops along the 62 bus route, which was identified through public surveys as the most used bus line by Chinatown residents. Mobility is often limited by language barriers: a reported 96 percent of elderly Chinese Americans in the Chicago region only speak Chinese or speak Chinese better than English.⁶ Publicly displayed information on transit schedules and routes (in both English and Chinese), as well as handicap-accessible transit stations, can also help people better plan trips and feel confident traveling.

⁶ DONG, Xin Qi. The PINE Study. Chinese Health, Aging, and Policy Program, Rush Institute for Healthy Aging, Rush University Medical Center. <http://chinesehealthyaging.org/pinereports.html>.

Age-friendly programming

Improving the age-friendliness of a neighborhood also entails supporting activities and destinations targeted toward a range of age groups. While CASL, CCBA, and other organizations already offer a variety of popular classes and activities for seniors, they should coordinate with the Chicago Park District (where only two senior activities are offered) to expand activities available for seniors, ensure complementary programming, and align activity scheduling. The community should also consider organizing senior and youth group field trips or even practical errands to destinations outside of Chinatown, which may help relieve the burden of planning trips outside of the community alone.

Senior housing

In addition to mobility-enabling infrastructure, the community should also consider establishing an assisted living facility. Many residents indicated the need for greater senior housing through the public engagement survey. While Chinatown has options for nursing homes and independent living for seniors, the community lacks an intermediary level of housing alternative for elderly who may require more medical attention than they can receive in independent living, but less than what is provided in a nursing home. As new opportunities for housing development arise, the community should assess the need for assisted living housing and advocate for such a facility if appropriate.

Model age-friendly neighborhood

As Chinatown pursues these strategies, the community should work with the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Social Services to position Chinatown as a model age-friendly neighborhood under the City's broader age-friendly agenda. Since 2012, Chicago has been undergoing a process to be recognized as a World Health Organization Age-Friendly City. The City is in preliminary stages of what will be approximately a five-year process that will include developing an action plan and identifying funding to implement subsequent programs. Early coordination, especially with service providers such as CASL and CCBA, will help ensure that the community and City's activities are in alignment and help Chinatown be at the forefront of implementing age-friendly programs on the ground.

3.2 Ensure quality affordable housing by connecting landlords to resources to improve their properties

Although housing costs in Chinatown are relatively inexpensive in comparison to other places around the city, the availability of quality affordable housing continues to be a major concern for many residents. In addition to yielding commentary on a presumed "underground" housing market in Chinatown, outreach and interviews identified lack of good affordable units, as well as issues of overcrowding, neighborhood safety, and poor housing quality, as key concerns. Renters (many of them recent immigrants) make up a majority of Chinatown residents, however, which poses logistical and financial barriers to investing in housing repairs and improvements.

Building upon CASL’s extensive financial education and housing services, the community should compile the many owner assistance resources and programs for in a one-stop-shop for landlords and promote these opportunities through an education and awareness campaign. Because CASL is already engaged in many existing home improvement programs, encouraging and soliciting landlords to participate in these services is the critical aspect of this step. To improve landlord participation in the programs open to them, the community should organize a landlord commission to maintain a network for communicating with property owners. Building this commission enables community groups to carry out education and awareness campaigns targeted to property owners and keep them updated on any new programs or regulatory changes from the City. Outreach should also target renters to ensure that tenants understand the sorts of improvements that landlords have access to. Resources should be made available to tenants and landlords alike in both English and Chinese, and assistance should be provided to landlords in applying for these opportunities. Ultimately, this would help the community effectively align the needs of renters and services provided by owners to improve the physical condition of Chinatown’s housing stock.

Key Implementation Steps

ACTION/ TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	DESCRIPTION
Organize a landlord commission		
Timing: 0-12 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: CASL	Recruit participants and create the commission. The first step to creating an organized network of property owners is collecting and compiling information on landlords. While this process may take some time, the Steering Committee should start with a community-wide outreach effort to reach landlords. Such outreach components should entail creating a sign-up mechanism, posting information about benefits and purpose of the landlord commission at community spaces, working with CASL to identify landlords already participating in housing assistance or placement programs, and encouraging residents to encourage their landlords to participate.
Timing: 3-6 months	Leads: Steering Committee, Landlord Commission	Establish governance structure. At this stage, the Steering Committee should also decide an organizational structure for the commission, such as having point people who can serve as liaisons among relevant community groups or City departments. Commission leadership should establish methods of communication with all participating landlords and identify any workshops or discussion forums that would be helpful to educate landlords about funding opportunities, procedures, and application processes for housing programs, or for discussion forums of how to address common issues facing landlords in Chinatown.
Timing: 0-12 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting:	Provide resources. The Steering Committee should also begin compiling and developing resources relating to home improvement grants, permitting, and other housing programs to build a repository of information available to landlords in the



	CASL	neighborhood. This should occur concurrently with the landlord outreach step. Once landlords join, they should be informed about and given access to the resources.
Engage Chicago Department of Family and Social Services (DFSS) on Chicago age-friendliness initiatives		
Timing: 0-6 months	Lead: CASL Supporting: DFSS Steering Committee	As Chicago moves forward with developing and implementing age-friendly strategies across the city, CASL should begin working with DFSS to become an active stakeholder in age-friendly planning efforts. While the community can immediately begin initial relationship-building steps, such as meeting key players at the City and participating in stakeholder meetings, the broader involvement of the community in DFSS' initiative should continue in the long-run. Such ongoing activities may include encouraging engagement of Chinatown residents in providing feedback or participating in focus group meetings as the initiative continues.

4. Economic Development

Community vision:

Chinatown will build upon its extraordinary tourism potential and will be known as the center of Chinese culture and community in metropolitan Chicago. Residents and visitors alike will have access to a unique combination of retail, restaurants services, and amenities reflective of Chinatown's cultural diversity and strengths. Small businesses will continue to be integral to the success of Chinatown, and supporting the success of local business owners will be a top priority of the community.

Chinatown's economy is made up of a thriving network of small and locally owned businesses. While this contributes to Chinatown's diverse and unique commercial offerings, it can also make it difficult to coordinate and organize the business community. Moreover, Chinatown faces unique economic development challenges, with businesses that cater to the demands of both residents and tourists.

- **Chinatown core's employment base is comprised of many small businesses.** Of the top ten largest employers, eight employ fewer than 100 people, and six employ fewer than 50. The average number of employees is 9.
- **Retail makes up two-thirds of the available commercial space.** By comparison, retail makes up only 24 percent of commercial space in the Southern Chicago Submarket (roughly all of Chicago south of Roosevelt Road) and 24 percent in the region.
- **Residents would like to see a higher diversity of retail.** The top three types of businesses they are interested in attracting are convenience stores (21 percent), clothing stores (20 percent), and grocery stores (18 percent).



The following recommendations provide guidance for the community’s future commercial growth. The strategies outlined in this section not only encompass collective actions that improve the visibility and appeal of Chinatown as a destination for local, national, and international visitors alike, but also include approaches that build the entrepreneurial capacity of local business owners.

Figure 3.4.1. Commercial areas in Chinatown’s core.

Recommended Strategies

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- 4.1 Leverage partnerships to strengthen training and support for existing local businesses
 - 4.2 Strengthen Chinatown’s capacity to build upon its tourism potential
 - 4.3 Conduct a market study to determine viable options that will increase the diversity of Chinatown’s retail to meet residents’ needs
-

4.1 Leverage partnerships to strengthen training and support for existing local businesses

Building entrepreneurial and management capacity for existing businesses is critical to maintaining a thriving local economy in Chinatown. Through the Visioning Workshop, the community identified a strong need for more resources to help business owners understand regulations, address common challenges and questions, and provide translation for business resources.

Training resources

According to a survey of Chinatown merchants, members of the business community are most interested in expanding opportunities for networking, group business trainings, workforce development, and advertising and marketing. The Chinatown Chamber of Commerce should work with the business community to expand training workshops for those identified needs.

The Chamber may want to explore social media and digital training to help members create or improve their web presences and reach wider audiences. The Chamber can advertise Business Affairs and Consumer Protection workshops at City Hall on social media and technology topics, or present or adapt presentations that are recorded on YouTube if Chinese translation is needed.

Sector-specific training

The Chamber should consider gearing resources toward prominent industry clusters in the community. Given the role of the restaurant industry in Chinatown’s economy, the Chamber should prioritize resources and events for the food sector. Such activities should help the food service industry build a stronger network; conduct joint advertising campaigns; share information and address common sector-specific challenges and issues.



For instance, when the City amends its food service regulations for licensing, permitting, or inspections, the Chamber should conduct outreach to restaurant owners to inform them about these changes and hold trainings for food handlers or other restaurant employees to obtain any new certifications. To do so, the Chamber should coordinate with the City to through either the Business Affairs and Consumer Protection Liaison to Chinatown to deliver this information, or the City's mobile business services program proposed in the [Chicago New Americans Plan](#) to provide onsite licensing and permitting. The Chamber should also work with the Illinois Restaurant Association to keep members up-to-date on industry trends and news.

Given the current space, financial, and staff limitations of the Chamber to hold such training s, the Chinatown Chamber should establish partnerships to alleviate resource constraints. For example, the Chamber should partner with community centers with sufficient space, such as the new library, the fieldhouse, or the Pui Tak Center, through sharing agreements, MOUs, or other informal arrangements for use of community meeting space for networking and training activities.

4.2 Strengthen Chinatown's capacity to build upon its tourism potential

Chinatown is already a major tourist destination for local, regional, and even international visitors. Embarking on joint promotional campaigns and better equipping local businesses to work with the tourism industry will help the community better capitalize upon and attract business from tourism.

Community promotion

Choose Chicago, the City's tourism bureau, has begun to focus on strengthening neighborhood-level tourism across the city. The business community reports that Chinatown's existing community-wide events already have the effect of increasing retail sales and visibility. Rather than relying upon each business to conduct individual marketing, the community should develop more community-wide promotional events and campaigns that will encourage visitors from existing events to stay in the neighborhood for dining and shopping, and draw more visitors at other off-peak times of the year. Working with the Chamber and Choose Chicago, as well as other partners such as the Chinese-American Museum of Chicago, the community should develop additional events designed to bolster tourism and stimulate the local economy.

Possibilities include a variety of ideas:

- Organizing a Chinatown Restaurant Week with weeklong promotions at restaurants and retailers
- Coordinating Taste of Chinatown or other themed dining promotions on a monthly or regular basis to showcase Chinese regional cuisines and provide visitors and provide visitors with tips and suggestions about specialty dishes and cultural diversity across China



- Developing guided or self-guided tours of the neighborhood, with an attention to cultural or historic landmarks and leaders of the Chinese American community in Chicago
- Organizing art, film, or performance fairs that celebrate Chinese and Chinese American artists, filmmakers, musicians, and chefs (similar to the Chicago South Asian film Festival held at the Siskel Film center every year)
- Arranging a holiday shopping trolley tour or promotion week with sales for visitors to buy holiday gifts and souvenirs
- Coordinating a scavenger hunt as a fun and participatory way to bring people to different places within Chinatown and learn more about the community

These activities can help to bring more foot traffic into local businesses and provide more visible advertising for Chinatown's many commercial establishments.

When possible, the community should align these tourist-promotion campaigns with other major events in Chinatown that already bring an influx of visitors to the community. Business owners report as much as 30 percent increased foot traffic or sales volume during the Chinese Lunar New Year Parade. Major holidays and cultural events are not the only generators of tourism; businesses also report significant increases in visitors or sales during the Chinatown Summer Fair and generally expressed interest in additional special event coordination to help stimulate business. To better meet this need, the community should develop tourism campaigns that entice visitors to stay in Chinatown for dining and shopping after such events through restaurant deals and storefront open houses.

In addition to exploring options for additional tourism-generating events, the community should also build the administrative and marketing capacity of local restaurateurs and small businesses to connect and work with regular tour groups. The Chinatown Chamber already works on an ad hoc basis with many tourist agencies to host tour groups, from mainland China. One way to leverage Chinatown tourism is by offering tour packages for international visitors that include package deals for restaurants, hotels, sightseeing, and/or transportation. While this may require some upfront training and additional paperwork or logistical coordination, the payoff of having a recurring, large-volume customer base is worthwhile. Many tour operators already regularly bring groups to Chinatown, but the small size and other capacity barriers of many Chinatown restaurants means that local establishments are not taking full advantage of these tour groups. Responses to the merchant survey identified a strong collective desire for greater Chinatown advertising through general marketing, maps and business directories, and design assistance to develop better promotional materials. Many business owners have limited web- or marketing-savviness, and the Chamber does not currently have the capacity to field the hundreds of the calls and requests from visitors and tour groups.

Low-capacity events

Recognizing that events often require significant monetary or staff capacity, the community should identify strategies to help reduce barriers to event organizing. Some activities only require coordinated business promotion and advertisement rather than any active oversight or management. While others, such as tours or street fairs, necessitate time and personnel, the community should explore options for volunteer docents and organizers to relieve the burden of relying entirely on paid staff for implementing these campaigns. Using decentralized event formats can also eliminate the need to secure large spaces for major events (See box/sidebar).

[BOX/SIDEBAR: In 2013, the Wicker Park-Bucktown Chamber of Commerce organized the community's first annual ChillFest to boost the local economy and highlight local vendors in the neighborhood. This decentralized event paired local retailers with musical performances throughout the day. The hosts ranged from an eyeglass store to clothing retailers to restaurants. The event not only advertised the range of businesses in Wicker Park-Bucktown, it successfully brought visitors into those local businesses. Because the performances occurred in storefronts and musicians provided their own equipment, the event did not require the typical preparations, costs, or labor associated with holding concerts at formal venues.]

Marketing and advertising

Working more closely with Choose Chicago can help alleviate some of the volume of promotional work for the community. The community should explore options for partnering with Choose Chicago, whose mission includes promoting Chicago businesses to visitors, including developing collective web and print promotional materials that can greatly increase the advertising reach of Chinatown establishments. Providing Choose Chicago with a directory and map of Chinatown businesses, as well as basic language or materials to communicate cultural, commercial, and historical information about Chinatown to visitors, will better allow Choose Chicago to promote or cross-promote Chinatown in other venues on behalf of the community.

Posting more physical signage or web-based directories about the many retail and dining options in Chinatown can help direct visitors to more places when they arrive in the community. Putting up a comprehensive directory and map of businesses in Chinatown Square, or along the Wentworth corridor or other areas, will help orient visitors when they arrive in commercial nodes and provide suggestions of places that they should visit. Using the QR code feature (as described in Strategy 2.1) can also help to provide further information on types of cuisine and recommended dishes to visitors unfamiliar with Chinese culture.

The Chinatown Chamber may explore the possibility of developing this under the auspices of a mobile and web app that can provide directory information and dish recommendations. An example of another Chamber app in Chicago includes the Lakeview East Chamber and Lakeview Chamber's "[Go Lakeview](#)" app, which the Chinatown Chamber may be interested using as a model app.



4.3 Conduct a market study to determine viable options that will increase the diversity of Chinatown’s retail to meet residents’ needs

Public outreach efforts revealed a strong demand for increasing the diversity of Chinatown’s retail to include more stores catering to daily needs, such as clothing stores, convenience stores, and grocery stores. The community should capitalize upon new opportunities for expanding or attracting new retail during the Wentworth realignment process. An initial market analysis can assess the viability of options for commercial development along the Wentworth corridor. Such a study would also provide the community with a strong basis for ensuring that any development can fill the commercial gaps most needed in the community. Ultimately, strengthening the commercial cohesion along the Wentworth corridor can also strengthen the connections between Old and New Chinatowns.

Because the majority of Chinatown’s economy is dependent upon local businesses, the community should focus on potential strategies that provide greater support for new and potential entrepreneurs in the long-run. Expanding bilingual services and encouraging immigrant entrepreneurship is a major cornerstone of the Chicago New Americans Plan. Working with the Office of New Americans and the Chicago Business Affairs and Consumer Protection department, the community should look into opportunities to educate more people about opening and operating small businesses through current and new workforce development and job training programs. As many planned programs to support immigrant entrepreneurship through the Chicago New Americans Plan are still in nascent stages, the community should also make sure to stay informed about new pilot projects or training initiatives that arise so that they can connect more people, particularly new immigrants, to ongoing City efforts in local economic development.

Key Implementation Steps

ACTION/ TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	DESCRIPTION
Organize a Food and Restaurant network within the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce		
Timing: 0-6 months	Lead: Chinatown Chamber Supporting: Chinatown restaurants Chinatown Food and Restaurant Network Illinois Restaurant Association Chinatown Square Association	Organize members. The Chamber of Commerce should organize existing Chamber members working in the food and restaurant industry to form a targeted food sector network within the Chamber.
Timing:	Lead:	Create and carry out resource development strategy. As the



0-9 months	<p>Chinatown Chamber</p> <p>Supporting: Food and Restaurant Network Illinois Restaurant Association Steering Committee</p>	<p>purpose of such a network is to provide more targeted support and resources to grow and strengthen Chinatown’s food sector, the Chamber should begin developing targeted materials and events for the group once it is up and running. As part of the resource development phase, the Chamber should make sure to ask participating members the type of resources that would be most useful. From this list, the Chamber should put together a work plan for materials and events to research and finalize in the short-, medium-, and long-terms.</p> <p>These resources will be tailored to the group’s expressed needs and requests. Examples may include written FAQs addressing common question or issues (such as foreign workforce permits or marketing questions), designing training workshops, and planning gatherings to share best practices, develop and promote community-wide business events , and network.</p>
Timing: 9-15 months	<p>Lead: Chinatown Chamber</p> <p>Supporting: Food and Restaurant Network Chinatown Square Association</p>	<p>Launch initial network-building activities. The Chamber should begin organizing initial network-building activities as soon as participating members are identified. These events can not only start to build relationships among restaurateurs and other food-related businesses, but also allow the Chamber to solicit initial feedback on the services that members would find most helpful to get out of the network. During this phase, the Chamber should also consider recruitment of new businesses to network and the Chamber.</p>
<p>Work with Choose Chicago to enhance marketing materials and outreach</p>		
Timing: 12-15 months	<p>Lead: Chinatown Chamber</p> <p>Supporting: Choose Chicago Chinatown Square Association</p>	<p>Develop marketing copy. With some concrete ideas for how to better promote Chinatown businesses, the Chamber should then work with its members to develop and refine marketing copy and compile high quality photos and images that can be shared with Choose Chicago for use in promotional materials.</p>
<p>Develop bilingual, publicly accessible business directory</p>		
Timing: 0-6 months	<p>Lead: Chinatown Chamber Local businesses</p> <p>Supporting: Choose Chicago Steering Committee</p>	<p>The Chamber should develop and publish a free, comprehensive business directory that is broken down by geography and business type.</p>
<p>Recruit volunteer docents and event organizers</p>		
Timing: 0-12 months	<p>Lead: Steering Committee Chinatown Chamber</p> <p>Supporting:</p>	<p>Given staff limitations of many organizations in Chinatown, the community should recruit Chinese- and English-speaking volunteers to lead neighborhood tours and help organize or staff community events, such as street fairs and festival activities.</p>



	community partners community residents	
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5. Education and Workforce

Community vision:

Local service providers will work together to ensure that all of Chinatown's residents have equitable access to education and career development opportunities.

Preparing Chinatown residents for good jobs requires access to a range of quality education programs for people with different educational needs.

- Chinatown residents' lower levels of education attainment and English proficiency compared to the region present additional challenges for addressing education and workforce development.** In Chinatown, the percentage of people with high school diplomas is about 23 percent less than in the region, while the percentage of people with bachelor's degrees is 10 percent less than in the region. Furthermore, because elementary and secondary school students make up 10 percent of Chinatown's immigrant population, language is a major barrier to education access, and to parental engagement. In fact, 78 percent of Chinatown residents speak Chinese at home. Of that population, over three-quarters report speaking English "less than 'very well.'"
- Additional public high school options are desired by many residents.** During the community engagement process, several residents expressed a desire for better public high school options for children living in Chinatown. The neighborhood's two receiving high schools for students living within Chinatown's core, Tilden and Phillips, have very low Asian attendance (1.7 percent and 0.4 percent respectively), suggesting that many high school students from Chinatown's core are opting out of neighborhood public high schools.
- Half of Chinatown residents are employed in three sectors:** accommodation and food services (26 percent), healthcare and social assistance (13 percent), and manufacturing (11 percent).
- Chinatown residents expressed interest in job training opportunities** in services (30 percent), IT (30 percent), manufacturing (23 percent), and healthcare (13 percent).

Recommended Strategies

- 5.1 Ensure service provision for Chinatown's high school students with limited English proficiency



5.2 Strengthen resources and improve options for students entering high school and their parents

5.3 Work with the City Colleges of Chicago to develop pipelines for residents to enter the workforce

5.1 Expand services for Chinatown's residents with limited English proficiency

Accessing City services can be difficult for immigrants who are unfamiliar with City programs and may not have the language proficiency to interact with service providers. Community leaders and groups, such as the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, have provided ad hoc translation services to the City on occasion, but more systematic cooperation with the City is needed.

The community can play a significant role in facilitating better access to City information to the Chinese-speaking businesses community through the new language access policy set forth in the [Chicago New Americans Plan](#). The policy ensures that City services and information are available to immigrants in common languages spoken in Chicago and entails working with each City department to develop a language access plan for issues that are most relevant to immigrants. The community should begin by working with local service providers and organizations, such as CASL, to compile a list of high priority the documents and services that would be most helpful if translated into Chinese. Categorizing the documents into high-, medium-, and low-priority groups can make it easier for City agencies to allocate resources to this activity. Once the list is compiled, the community should work with the Office of New Americans to submit the translation requests to relevant departments. To accompany the prioritized list of documents and services, the community should also include basic statistics that inform City departments about the number of Chinese immigrants and language proficiency levels⁷ of the Chinese community in Chicago to make the case for prioritizing translation into Chinese.

5.2 Strengthen resources and improve options for students entering high school and their parents

At the town hall meeting in which community members provided input on the Existing Conditions Report, education was identified as the third most important community priority, after safety and physical environment.

There appears to be broad consensus in the community that Chinatown has a number of good options for education at the elementary school level including John C. Haines School,

⁷ Some information on the Chinatown community can be found in the Chinatown Community Vision Plan Existing Conditions Report. Additional information on Chinese speakers and Chinese Americans across the city can be found here: <http://www.socialexplorer.com/>.

St. Therese Catholic School, Pui Tak Christian School, magnet schools, and selective enrollment schools.

There also appears to be broad consensus that many families living in Chinatown have few good options for education at the high school level. The academic progress of the two neighborhood receiving high schools for students living within Chinatown's core is low, with only 3 percent of students considered "ready for college coursework" at Tilden and at 1 percent at Phillips Academy High School (compared to averages of 26 percent in Chicago and 46 percent in Illinois)⁸; these schools have very low Asian attendance (1.7 percent at Tilden and 0.4 percent at Phillips⁹), suggesting that many high school students from Chinatown's core are opting out of neighborhood public high schools.

Some of Chinatown's high school students are accepted into excellent selective enrollment schools while others try to find a good school that will accept them. Of particular note is Kelly High School, a neighborhood high school for McKinley Park and Brighton Park, which has welcomed Chinese American students living outside the school's attendance boundaries; even though this school is located over 3 miles from Chinatown's core. Over 300 Asian students are enrolled at Kelly High School and Asians make up 13.1 percent of the student body.

The Chinatown community should work closely with local elementary schools and high schools (beginning with Haines Elementary School and Kelly High School) to develop practical resources that help students entering high school and their parents to navigate the education system. In addition to assisting its high school students to find the best option to meet their needs, the community should work with nearby public and charter schools so that these schools can better understand the students' needs and develop appropriate programming, especially for immigrant students with limited English proficiency. CPS' Office of Language and Cultural Education and the City's Office of New Americans may be helpful resources.

The community should also begin exploring long-term solutions to improve educational options for its high school students. Current enrollment data and community input indicate that the issue is a priority for Chinatown. The community should engage in a comprehensive examination of Chinatown's educational needs at the high school level, especially any shared with neighboring communities, working closely with the Chicago Public Schools and elected officials to evaluate all feasible options, such as new targeted programs or institutions.

The Chinese American Service League and Pui Tak Center have offered after school programs for many years. In recent years, for-profit businesses have also begun providing tutoring services. All of these programs should be encouraged to ensure that they are fully meeting the needs of students with limited English proficiency, by providing appropriate curriculum and individualized attention to students.

⁸ Illinois State Board of Education, *Illinois Report Card 2012-2013*.

⁹ Chicago Public Schools, *School Profiles 2014-2015*.

Last, helping students to achieve educational excellence also requires support from parents, caretakers, and families. Getting guardians involved in their kids' primary and secondary education can be challenging for immigrant parents who are not familiar with the country's education system. The Chinatown community should expand opportunities for immigrant parents to engage with the school community. Expanding CPS's Parent Engagement Centers to local schools would be a beneficial way for immigrant parents to learn about the classroom and participate in school activities alongside other Chinatown parents.

5.3 Work with the City Colleges of Chicago to develop pipelines for residents to enter the workforce

As a main hub for the Chinese community in Chicago, Chinatown can play an important role in facilitating opportunities for workforce development for Chinese Americans and recent Chinese immigrants. Because Chinatown residents have varying levels of English abilities, education levels, and occupational skills and interests, it is important for the community to consider sequential and tailored pipelines that prepare different demographics for the workforce.

Building upon CASL's current adult job training programs, which includes a one-month pre-employment class for job seekers and an on-site chef training course, the Chinatown community should work with the City Colleges of Chicago's Colleges to Careers (C2C) program specializations to enable more residents to obtain training in their fields of interest.

City College	Specialization	Distance from Chinatown	Percent of people most interested in this job training for this sector*
Harold Washington	Business/professional services	2.8	30 percent
Wilbur Wright	Information technology (IT)	12.7	30 percent
Richard Daley	Advanced manufacturing	10.5	23 percent
Malcolm X	Healthcare	3.7	13 percent
Olive-Harvey	Transportation/logistics	12.9	4 percent

Washburne	Culinary	8	(not polled)
* Source: Keypad polling results from Visioning Meeting			

The structure, classroom environment, and language abilities required of workforce training or degree programs can present challenging environments for some students—and particularly immigrants—to enter, and many students are not ready to begin job training programs after only one ESL course. Currently, CASL’s adult education program provides a small-scale two-week “kitchen English” ESL course in advance of their chef training program, but is limited by staff capacity to hold longer courses with more gradation for skill levels. This overall model of sector-specific ESL courses that pair with workforce training programs should be expanded to develop a more comprehensive suite of courses that provide more varied levels of ESL instruction and classroom-ready preparation tailored for specific sectors or occupations. The City Colleges work with community partners to offer tailored ESL classes free of charge to the community and students. Aligning such community programs with City College workforce programs can help connect the workforce pipeline that better equips Chinatown residents to enter the workforce.

The community should first identify a cohort of individuals for a pilot sector with sufficient interest. Once those students are language- and classroom-ready, the community can help students with the registration and enrollment process. The community may look into pooling resources or partnering with City Colleges for providing transportation from Chinatown to the college if it is not easily accessible by public transit.

Contingent upon success of the first cohort, the community can expand this program to offer a variety of ESL, job training, and educational opportunities in a wider range of sectors. The community can play an important role in coordinating between local employers within Chinatown to help with job placements or apprenticeships.

Last, given Chinatown’s lower-than-average percentage of residents with high school diplomas, many in the community would also likely benefit from City Colleges’ Tuition Free GED program, which currently offers preparation for the GED (high school equivalency) examination in either English or Spanish. The community should explore options with City Colleges to offer the program in Chinese.

Key Implementation Steps

ACTION/ TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	DESCRIPTION
Work with City Colleges of Chicago to develop a pilot job-training pipeline		

Timing: 6-18 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: City Colleges of Chicago Pui Tak Center CASL	Develop a curriculum. Working with the City College liaison to the Chinatown area, the community and City Colleges should identify a sector for the pipeline based on the City College specialization. The selection of the sector will be a factor of greatest interest from the Chinatown community and logistical and capacity considerations of the City Colleges. Once the sector has been identified, the community and City College staff should work together to design a curriculum that will prepare students to become language- and classroom-ready, with lessons that are relevant to the chosen sector and classroom exercises that dovetail with the types of activities that will be expected of students at the C2C program. In this step, the community and City College liaison should also identify teachers to staff these classes. Staffing can be a mix of teachers already working in the community and teachers provided by the City Colleges.
Timing: 12-18 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: Pui Tak Center CASL	Identify a pilot cohort. Once the program curriculum and staffing have been developed, the community should recruit the first cohort of students to participate in the program. As this will be the pilot group, the community should try to select students of a similar language skill level for the initial cohort.
Organize network for caretakers of Chinese American students at Haines Elementary and Kelly High School		
Timing: 6-12 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: Haines Elementary Kelly High School community partners community residents CPS Office of Language and Cultural Education City of Chicago Office of New Americans (ONA)	In order to build a support network for Chinese American families—particularly immigrant students and caretakers—in the public education system, the community should organize a group that meets regularly with relevant CPS schools, in coordination with the CPS Office of Language and Cultural Education, to better educate and involve parents and other caretakers in school activities, course decisions, and post-secondary options for Chinatown students. First efforts should be focused on Haines and Kelly, but should later include Tilden and Phillips, the neighborhood receiving high schools for Chinatown’s core.

6. Parks and Public Spaces

Community vision:

Our community will strive to protect and enhance local parks and amenities. Chinatown will build off of prized community assets, like Ping Tom Park, and encourage additional pocket-parks or green space that will be safe, clean, and accessible assets for residents of all ages.

Chinatown is located in close proximity to two great environmental assets: the Chicago River and Lake Michigan. Yet, the Chinatown’s dense built environment has limited both access to



the riverfront and availability of open spaces. Residents were interested in both increasing the amount of park and open space in the community, as well as improving the conditions of those spaces. The data and information collected through the existing conditions research and public engagement activities reveals the following findings:

- **Chinatown residents have very little open or green space.** Chinatown residents have only 2.5 acres of park space per 1,000 residents, which is much lower than the recommended National Recreation and Park Association standard of 4 acres per 1,000 residents—the same standard used in GO TO 2040.
- **Residents are most interested in making parks and public spaces cleaner, safer, and more active.** Only 1 percent of people identified parks as a standalone top priority, but significantly more people touched on public spaces—including parks, plazas, and streets—in relation to safety and cleanliness, which made up the top two overall concerns. Residents’ top priorities included increasing safety, maintaining cleanliness, and increasing programmed activities to improve enjoyment of Chinatown’s open spaces.
- **Access to open space has improved recently, but is still lacking.** Chinatown’s core only has two parks, which account for 9 percent of the total land area. Ping Tom Park, the largest of the two, makes up 98 percent of Chinatown’s park space and plays an important role in the recreational and cultural life of the community. Although most surveyed residents expressed general satisfaction with Ping Tom Park, they were interested in increasing the number of open spaces, even if new parks were smaller.

The Vision Plan recommends ways to maximize use of existing parks and open spaces, while also exploring alternative strategies for introducing additional green space into the community in well-used public spaces such as Chinatown’s streets, given limitations on land availability.

Figure 3.6.1. Open space areas in Chinatown’s core.

Recommended Strategies

- 6.1 Improve the safety of parks and public spaces through effective lighting and landscaping strategies
- 6.2 Engage the stakeholders of Chinatown in the maintenance of their community
- 6.3 Activate parks and public spaces through innovative “placemaking” and enhanced streetscaping
- 6.4 Develop effective signage and advertising to increase awareness of park amenities and activities



6.5 Identify priorities for increasing community green spaces as part of future redevelopment

6.1 Improve the safety of parks and public spaces through effective lighting and landscaping strategies

Safety emerged as the number one priority issue identified by residents in the public engagement survey. Many residents reported feeling unsafe in various parts of the neighborhood and voiced that addressing safety concerns would improve their use of Chinatown's parks and open spaces.

The physical characteristics of the built and natural features of open spaces can affect both the perpetration and perception of crime. The community should take steps to address safety through a variety of interventions for the built and natural environment.

Lighting

Proper lighting is essential to ensuring a sense of safety along sidewalks. While many street lamps do a good job of lighting the street for drivers, and may even provide officially required levels of lighting to sidewalk zones, they often don't provide the "face-to-face" lighting pedestrians prefer and which enables them to comfortably see the features of oncoming pedestrians and provides a sense of safety. Adequate lighting also permits better nighttime surveillance by sight or camera.

As a general rule of thumb, lighting should provide good visibility 12 to 15 feet away and provide coverage throughout an entire area or street. With elderly populations who tend to have more difficulties with vision and feel more insecure walking alone, adequately bright lighting is even more critical. It is important that lighting interventions not only occur within park boundaries, but also along routes to and from the parks so that residents feel safe traveling to open spaces. The community should focus on lighting conditions on routes to Ping Tom Park and Fieldhouse, which are set apart from the rest of the neighborhood and require a relatively far walk for some. Traveling under the viaducts and along less populated streets can be major barriers accessing to the park at dusk or nighttime. The 18th Street viaduct and elevated rail tracks that pass over the route to Ping Tom Park were identified as places that residents do not like to pass through and should be targets of initial interventions. The community should also direct attention to other viaducts on the western edge of Chinatown's core that lie along common routes to Sun Yat-Sen Playlot Park and Haines Elementary School.

Lighting strategies should also be applied more widely to streets and other public spaces for safer, more visible, and more utilized paths. Particular attention should be paid to areas where criminal activity such as robberies and car break-ins frequently occurs. The community should not only publicize use of the 311 line to notify the City of any light outages, but also work with



CDOT to identify additional gaps or needs in current street lighting throughout the neighborhood and reach consensus on priorities for eventual replacement, especially where existing street lighting is nearing the end of its expected lifespan.

Landscaping

Landscaping can also be used to help mitigate opportunities for crime and augment feelings of security. While having more greenery provides many important ecological and community benefits, park landscaping should be designed to preserve clear sightlines into the park from afar. Reducing secluded or isolated areas within open spaces, as well as keeping the perimeter landscaping sufficiently low or spaced apart, removes potential places for offenses to occur and allows consistent interaction with other park users and passers-by. Given that Ping Tom Park and Fieldhouse are situated outside of the hustle and bustle of the center of Chinatown activity, the community should make sure that landscaping on those plots does not further seclude the facilities from the rest of the neighborhood.

But even the best landscape design cannot overcome lack of maintenance and upkeep. The Ping Tom Park Advisory Council and other community partners need to work closely with the Chicago Park District to ensure that maintenance is sufficient, which may require the community to locate a dedicated and sustainable funding source to assist with the maintenance and upkeep of Chinatown's few park spaces.

6.2 Engage the stakeholders of Chinatown in the maintenance of their community

Every day, Chinatown's public spaces support a large volume of activity and use within a highly concentrated area. While this activity contributes to the liveliness of Chinatown, it also presents challenges for safety and cleanliness. Complaints about overflowing garbage cans and litter on sidewalks and in planters were frequently heard during the community engagement process. Civic and business leaders in Chinatown voiced frustration about the problem, stating that it has been a topic of concern and discussion for decades, without any resolution. At the same time, according to the City's Streets and Sanitation Department, trash is picked up in Chinatown at a greater frequency than that of nearly any neighborhood outside of the Loop. Even more, Chinatown's streets need to become places for which individual members of the community feel a sense of ownership, responsibility, and pride.

In order to ensure cleanliness of public places, including parks, sidewalks, and plazas, the community should organize a "Clean and Green" campaign that engages residents in the maintenance of their public assets. A variety of clean-up activities should be guided by such an overarching campaign effort that aims to not only educate residents, but also provide opportunities for residential participation in neighborhood clean-up.

Household and commercial waste disposal

While there is some debate over whether there are enough public garbage bins, especially in high traffic areas such as Wentworth Avenue, there appears to be broad agreement that the habits of individuals are the primary cause of the problem. Residents habitually dump their

household trash into public garbage cans. Residents cite multiple reasons for this behavior, including a lack of access to back alleys where residential dumpsters are located and lack of education about waste disposal. Not only does trash overflow from these public garbage cans and litter the street, it is common for business owners to eventually insist that the City remove the trash cans altogether, further contributing to littering by pedestrians, who have nowhere to put their garbage.

The community should work with landlords and businesses to ensure that all residences and commercial establishments have access to designated dumpsters for their properties, and that those dumpsters are used. The community should work with the Streets and Sanitation Department to investigate whether BigBelly solar-powered trash compactors, or similar garbage cans with large capacity, are a feasible investment for streets like Wentworth Avenue that see significant pedestrian and sidewalk activity. The community should also consider soliciting business sponsorship of new public garbage cans to increase private sector investments into keeping the streets clean.

In conjunction with these efforts, the community should also conduct a broader Chinatown-wide public awareness campaign to keep Chinatown clean. Simple posters or signage can discourage commonly identified issues, such as littering, spitting, vandalism, public urination, and other property crime, while also notifying people about opportunities to participate in clean-up activities, as described in the following section. Outreach can be done through a variety of methods, including public service announcements in the community's Chinese language newspapers, presentations or flyers distributed to students and their parents via public and private schools, brief presentations at ESL classes, and visible public displays near garbage cans. Such signs could be displayed in prominent storefront windows and public locations, such as Chinatown Square, Ping Tom Park, Sun Yat-Sen Playlot Park, the plaza on Wentworth and 23rd Street, and within the residential areas as appropriate.

In addition to creating and disseminating general educational resources on littering and illegal waste disposal, the community should also develop bilingual flyers to notify community members of the appropriate protocol for notifying the Streets and Sanitation Department of full public garbage containers.

Neighborhood stewards

To further encourage greater long-term community participation in neighborhood clean-ups beyond clean-up days, the community should establish an "adoption" for organizations and residents to maintain planters, trees, blocks, benches, or other types of public infrastructure. Many adopt-a-planter, adopt-a-block, and other such programs exist throughout the city. These programs encourage groups and individual residents to take responsibility and ownership of neighborhood assets and collectively help to keep public spaces clean. Responsibilities that would come with volunteering to adopt these assets typically include regularly monitoring the cleanliness of the site and providing minimal maintenance to any landscaping features. Given that many members of the community voiced significant interest in introducing community garden plots to the neighborhood, this program would provide a similar opportunity to become



a good neighborhood steward. It should be noted that when possible, planters should be designed to be ADA accessible to accommodate seniors.

Public space clean-up events

In many Chicago neighborhoods, local park advisory councils assist in park clean-up activities to help meet the demands of keeping parks and open space up to community standards. The Ping Tom Park Advisory Council, which has already begun to expand some functions to include other parks and open spaces beyond Ping Tom Park exclusively, should organize periodic and recurring clean-up activities in Chinatown's park and open space areas. Clean-up efforts that encourage community participation not only alleviate the burdens on City agencies, but also help to invest more neighborhood residents in the maintenance of public spaces around them. Scheduling the clean-up days monthly, or at other appropriate intervals, can help make it a standing and expected community-wide activity. The Council may also want to explore partnerships with community service organizations to contribute additional hands (see sidebar). Aside from targeting outreach to general Chinatown residents, the community should also look for partners in the business community to sponsor clean-up days or to offer rewards programs for residential participation in such events.

Once established for Chinatown's parks and open space areas, this effort can serve as a pilot for clean-up activities that are also needed in Chinatown's most heavily used public spaces, especially its main commercial areas, main corridors for travel to and from Ping Tom Park, and streets that are home to the community's schools. Learning from the Council's experience cleaning up parks and open spaces areas, the plan Steering Committee should organize a broader community effort, possibly supported with funding from partners in the business community and City programs such as the Neighborhood Business Development Centers grant program (offered by the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection), solicited by community organizations such as the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce.

[BOX/SIDEBAR:

[Friends of the Parks](#)

"FOTP provides educational and technical assistance to park advisory councils and assists in their efforts to improve their neighborhood park operation and programming. FOTP serves park advisory councils by attending meetings in various neighborhoods. We work to form new park advisory councils by coordinating meetings with the Chicago Park District and other interested parties. We attend special issue meetings as an invited guest and provide written information and educational materials to help councils solve neighborhood problems. FOTP serves as the fiscal agent for park advisory councils who do not have a 501C3 designation. Using FOTP's tax identification number, contributions for park improvements are tax deductible."

Eckhart Park, West Town, Chicago

Located in Chicago's West Town neighborhood, Friends of Eckhart Park (FEP) is the park advisory council to [Eckhart Park](#). FEP is comprised of local residents and businesses helping to guide the development of Eckhart Park and its programs. FEP holds a number of park clean-up events throughout the year. FEP has successfully worked with a number of local youth volunteer programs that provide

students with needed services hours – AmeriCorp VISTA, [BuildOn](#), and neighborhood schools – to assist in park clean-up activities.]

6.3 Activate parks and public spaces through innovative “placemaking” and enhanced streetscaping

Chinatown may only have two parks, but it has many other places in the public realm—such as sidewalks, plazas, streets, and parking lots—that can serve functions similar to traditional parks through innovative and resourceful “placemaking” efforts.

Apply creative “placemaking” strategies to activate Chinatown’s public spaces

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Focusing placemaking efforts on Chinatown’s public spaces can increase the feeling of proximity to open spaces without setting aside additional land for parks.

Placemaking initiatives entail first engaging the public to define a common vision for their public places. These visions can then evolve quickly into implementation steps that begin with small-scale that can bring immediate benefits public spaces and the people who use them.

Currently, the community is in the process of developing a major public art project near the CTA Red Line station, which represents a great opportunity for placemaking. As a follow-up step to this project, the community should identify other areas within the neighborhood that are appropriate for other placemaking projects at various scales. The community may seek to partner with external organizations, such as the Metropolitan Planning Council and the City’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events to pursue funding to develop a more robust and long-term initiative. Alternatively, the community may choose to utilize existing guidance resources to implement placemaking strategies on its own.

While the specifics of where and how to design and programming public spaces may emerge from public visioning activities, feedback already received from past public outreach efforts indicate that the community should make sure to consider some initial small- and mid-scale physical enhancements:

- Installing basic outdoor exercise equipment
- Outdoor park and sidewalk furniture for eating, playing chess, or socializing
- Pocket parks
- Public art
- Plaza and sidewalk planters

Regarding possibilities for siting these interventions, the community should identify projects that are scalable and keep in mind the most appropriate activities and designs that are best suited for larger public spaces, such as the Wentworth or Chinatown Square plazas, versus linear corridors, such as the wide sidewalks of Archer Avenue or spaces underneath the viaducts. The community should also explore options for programming or designing shared

uses on underutilized land, such as holding community activities on the Ping Tom Fieldhouse fields during the hours that they are not in use.

Overall, these placemaking strategies will allow a greater acreage of public spaces to provide programmatic functions of more traditional parks, as well as many other environmental benefits, such as mitigating stormwater runoff and improving air quality.

Enhance Chinatown's main streets through Chicago's Complete Streets program

As the placemaking strategies above highlight, there are many possibilities for activating open spaces that go beyond traditional definitions of park lands. Chinatown may only have two parks, but it has many other places in the public realm, such as sidewalks, plazas, streets, and parking lots, that can provide many similar functions to traditional parks. Building off of the concepts and strategies discussed above, the community should consider these streets and sidewalks as an extension of the open space network and take steps to green and enhance the streetscape through streets-specific initiatives and strategies.

As part of its Complete Streets program, CDOT has provided significant guidance, resources, and funding for a variety of improvements to the street environment. These projects include widening sidewalks, planting street trees and landscaping, and installing street furniture. Increasing the greenery along Chinatown's streets can increase the feeling of proximity to open spaces without setting aside additional land for parks, while also providing shade and comfort to pedestrians.

Beyond just addressing infrastructure components of the City's roadways, CDOT also promotes incorporating placemaking strategies in sidewalks, streets, and parking spaces. As the most widely shared public spaces, streets should not only serve as a means of getting from one place to another, but as places where Chinatown's residents, workers, and visitors enjoy walking through and even lingering. CDOT's *Make Way for People* program aims to create public spaces that cultivate community and culture in Chicago's neighborhoods. One of the initiative's signature programs involves the creation of *People Spots*, which are parklets or temporary platforms adjacent to sidewalks, typically within existing parking lanes that create seasonal space for outdoor seating and dining by expanding the sidewalk. Usually developed with compatible businesses, such as coffeehouses, these spaces generally feature planters that provide a refreshing infusion of greenery.

Physical enhancements such as People Spots are relatively low-cost and flexible strategies that may be appropriate for Chinatown's core, especially given the community's need for additional public spaces that are convenient, well used, and green, as well as the limited space available for the creation of new amenities.

In implementing this recommendation, the community should first identify areas along Chinatown's busiest streets for standard streetscape improvements, such as street trees, sidewalk planters, street furniture, sidewalk pavement materials, and directional and informational signage. Priority streets should include Wentworth (Ping Tom Park Fieldhouse to

24th Place), Archer Avenue (Princeton Avenue to CTA Red Line viaduct), Cermak Road (from Princeton Avenue to Wentworth Avenue), and Princeton Avenue (from Tan Court to 24th Place).

Playground renovation

Sun Yat-Sen Playlot Park, located on 24th Place at the far southern end of Chinatown's core, could be an excellent candidate for the Chicago Plays! Program, a City program which targets the replacement of equipment at over 300 aging playgrounds throughout Chicago. The community should work with the Alderman from the 11th Ward and other partners to nominate the playground for inclusion at the next call for nominations in 2015. While Sun Yat-Sen Playlot Park should be top priority, other playgrounds in Chinatown's core may also be good candidates for nomination in subsequent years.

6.4 Develop effective signage and advertising to increase awareness of park amenities and activities

Although the community's parks and open spaces are major assets to Chinatown, many visitors and residents alike are not aware of these amenities, or are unsure of how to access the parks themselves because they are off of Chinatown's beaten path. Simple way-finding signage that directs visitors to Ping Tom Park, the Fieldhouse, and Sun Yat-Sen Playlot Park from the CTA Red Line Station, as well as at main intersections along Wentworth, Cermak, and Archer can help to encourage more pedestrian traffic to those park spaces. In addition, the interviews with key stakeholders anecdotally revealed that many people who pass by the Fieldhouse on a regular basis do not know what the building is.

Having a directional sign on the 18th Street side of Ping Tom Fieldhouse will help increase the visibility and prominence of the Fieldhouse within the community. A sign that includes icons of the Fieldhouse's amenities be especially useful in advertising the types of activities offered there to the greater public. Additionally, signs at major parks and open space locations to other Chinatown amenities would help improve overall wayfinding within the community.

6.5 Identify priorities for increasing community green spaces as part of future redevelopment

Beyond making the most out of existing parks, there are creative ways that the community can increase the amount of open space. The community should work with developers and City agencies to advocate for the provision of publicly accessible green spaces in new development projects. The upcoming realignment of Wentworth and adjacent construction of the new Chinatown library present two upcoming opportunities for the community to shape new development. This objective entails the community first identifying, prioritizing, and coming to consensus about the amount and types of public green spaces they would like to see in Chinatown so that they are equipped with informed data and requests for developers as new development projects arise.

Key Implementation Steps

ACTION/ TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	DESCRIPTION
Organize days and locations for neighborhood public space clean-up activities		
Timing: 0-6 months	Lead: Ping Tom Park Advisory Council (pilot) Steering Committee Supporting: Chamber of Commerce	The community should identify times, dates, and community leaders for hosting clean-up activities at Chinatown's parks and open spaces. This will serve as a pilot for a broader effort, led by the Steering Committee with likely assistance from the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations.
Timing: 3-9 months	Lead: Steering Committee Chamber of Commerce	For additional help during clean-up events, the community should partner with AmeriCorps or other similar service programs to provide opportunities for service corps members to assist clean-up in the neighborhood.
Expand placemaking initiatives in Chinatown		
Timing: 0-6 months	Lead: Steering Committee	To oversee and shepherd placemaking initiatives in Chinatown, the Steering Committee should form a Placemaking Working Group. The current Steering Committee of the public art project by the Red Line Station can serve as the basis for the Placemaking Working Group.
Timing: 6-12 months	Lead: Placemaking Working Group	Recruit volunteers. Given staff limitations of many organizations in Chinatown, the community should recruit Chinese- and English speaking volunteers to help organize or staff community events or lead walking tours. This will not only provide additional organizing capacity for such activities, but also help engage a greater number of people in community building activities.
Timing: 6-12 months	Lead: Placemaking Working Group	Increase type, size, and location of community activities. In order to diversify summer programming in Chinatown, the community should develop both large- and small-scale events that utilize different parks, plazas, and open spaces around the community.
Nominate Sun Yat-Sen Playlot Park for playground renovation through the Chicago Plays! Program		
Timing: 0-6 months	Lead: Ping Tom Park Advisory Council Supporting: 11 th Ward Alderman	After gathering full support from partners in the community and city, the community should nominate Sun Yat-Sen Playlot Park for the Chicago Plays! Program at the next call for nominations in 2015.
Timing: 1-2 years	Lead: Ping Tom Park Advisory Council Supporting:	Sun Yat-Sen should be nominated first, but the community should identify needs for renovation of other playgrounds in Chinatown's core and apply in subsequent years.



7. Future Development

Community vision:

The community will work together and in partnership with its neighbors to identify and evaluate the opportunities for future development within Chinatown's core and in adjacent areas, determining wise priorities that will improve the function and enhance the character of the neighborhood and the surrounding area.

Bounded by transit rails to the east, the Chicago River to the west, and highways to the south, Chinatown's core has very limited space available for growth and few opportunities for development. As a result, while the core remains the heart of the Chinatown community, the Chinese population has expanded beyond its boundaries, especially to the southwest into neighborhoods such as Bridgeport, which now has a Chinese population that is approximately 57 percent larger than that of Chinatown's core. At the same time, the spread of businesses aimed at serving the Chinese population is already transforming the landscape of the commercial corridors in these neighboring areas.

Nevertheless, opportunities for future development exist within Chinatown's core, a few with the capacity to play a pivotal role in improving the function of the neighborhood. In addition, large scale development, with the potential to greatly benefit—or even expand—Chinatown, is underway or expected in adjacent areas outside of the core. By comprehensively identifying and evaluating these opportunities within and outside of Chinatown's core, the community can wisely plan and prepare for both.

Recommended Strategies

- 7.1 Define community priorities for future development within Chinatown's core
 - 7.2 Position the community to work with neighboring communities and benefit from anticipated development in adjacent areas
-

7.1 Define community priorities for future development within Chinatown's core

A few of the opportunities for development within Chinatown's core are located in key areas which have the potential to dramatically redefine the landscape of the community.

Figure 3.7.1. Potential opportunities for future development in Chinatown's core.

East side of Wentworth, between Cermak and Archer

The realignment and other capital improvements planned for Wentworth Avenue will provide

room for new development projects within the neighborhood's center, located strategically between Old and New Chinatown next to the CTA Red Line station. In particular, an expanded block will be created on the east side of Wentworth, between Cermak Road and Archer Avenue.

Figure 3.7.2. East side of Wentworth, between Cermak and Archer.

This conveniently located site is currently used for public parking, which is especially popular on weekends when Chinatown sees a rush of visitors. There appears to be wide agreement within the community that Chinatown cannot afford a reduction in the overall number of parking spaces located within short walking distance of this central area. The City understands this concern and is considering development options that would retain or increase the overall number of parking spaces while providing opportunities for development within this expanded block. Ideas include structured parking, accompanied by new ground-level retail along the street edge of Wentworth, Cermak, and Archer, possibly also including a new landmark building (such as a hotel or commerce center).

Whatever configuration of development ultimately occurs on the expanded block, it would be difficult to overstate the importance of this site to the future of Chinatown's core. Effective development could serve to enhance and redefine this location as the heart of the community and Chinatown's central arrival point, especially for those traveling by the CTA Red Line or from McCormick Place and revitalized areas in between (whether as pedestrians or possibly via a free trolley service along Cermak).

Relationship to Old Chinatown

Lively commercial development along Wentworth, with popular stores and restaurants, can help to connect Old and New Chinatown, especially if coupled with effective streetscape improvements. It will be particularly important to make sure that development at the northeastern corner of the intersection of Wentworth and Cermak has a complementary relationship and orientation toward Chinatown Gate and Wentworth south of Cermak, as there is a need to encourage visitors to explore Old Chinatown; conversely, there is a need for new development on this block to become an integral part of the community, and not be seen as an island unto itself by Chinatown residents and workers, especially those whose daily activities are based within Old Chinatown.

Potential benefits to Cermak, between Wentworth and Archer

Similarly, development and planned streetscape improvements at this realigned intersection have the potential to ease access and help orient visitors toward the stretch of Cermak located between Wentworth and its six-corner intersection with Archer and Princeton to the west. This historic block receives a high volume of automobile and truck traffic, but is far less popular with pedestrians, especially visitors to Chinatown. Possessing good urban form and relatively attractive building stock, this section of Cermak has the potential to become thriving commercial block. Planned improvements at Cermak's intersection with Wentworth, especially if coupled with improvements to the six-corner intersection at the western end (as discussed in

Strategy 2.5), could substantially enhance the pedestrian experience, easing travel down Cermak, especially for those on route to or from the western end of Chinatown Square.

Potential benefits to Cermak, between and east of CTA/Metra tracks

Meanwhile, new retail development on this expanded block can help areas along Cermak to the east of its intersection with Wentworth. It could set the stage for future development between and to the east of the CTA Red Line and Metra Rock Island District Line tracks, improving conditions and the sense of security for transit riders and pedestrians traveling underneath the tracks, and ultimately helping connect Chinatown to large scale development and improvements planned or already underway between State Street and McCormick Place (as discussed in Strategy 7.2).

Potential benefits to southeastern corner of Wentworth and Archer

Retail development would likely improve the southeastern corner of Wentworth and Archer Avenue, especially by increasing pedestrian activity and enhancing the sense of safety around the northern entrance of the CTA Red Line station. Together with streetscape improvements planned as part of the Wentworth realignment, new retail development along the street edge should help redefine the corner, particularly in relation to Chinatown's new showcase library being built across the street (but also Chinatown Square), enhancing the gateway into Chinatown via Archer Avenue and likely strengthening the potential for future corridor development along Archer east of the tracks.

East side of Wentworth, north of Archer

Development on this block, especially at this corner, will likely spur or be paired with development just to the north, on the eastern side of Wentworth between Archer and Cullerton Street. In general, development on this land, which is currently used for surface parking, would have multiple benefits. Input from local business owners suggests that many would want any future development located on land currently occupied by surface parking to include structured parking.

As with development at the southeastern corner of Wentworth and Archer, ground level retail would broaden the benefits to this area, increasing pedestrian activity and enhancing safety, as well as improving streetscape definition on the corner, enhancing the gateway into Chinatown via Archer, and strengthening the Archer corridor itself. But ground level retail would also help define and activate the main pedestrian route up Wentworth to and from Ping Tom Park and, especially, its new Fieldhouse. Also, with the planned construction of the Wells-Wentworth Connector, this location will eventually serve as the southern end of a new mixed-use corridor stretching up to Roosevelt Road, featuring new bus transit and bicycle and pedestrian activity.

Figure 3.7.3. East side of Wentworth, north of Archer.

Development on this east side of Wentworth Avenue would probably extend up to Cullerton Street, as the existing terrain to the north slopes upward toward the tracks used by the CTA Red Line and therefore currently favors improved landscaping. As part of its improvements for Wentworth, the City plans to create a sidewalk on the east side of the street (where there

currently is none), including decorative enhancements at the intersection of Wentworth and 19th Street to highlight the entrance to Ping Tom Park a block away to the west. It will be important to create a high-quality environment for pedestrians along this side, in order to encourage pedestrian activity and foster a sense of security. This will probably require landscaping and street lighting that are appealing and provide high visibility for pedestrians – along with consistent upkeep and maintenance. Without these elements, it is possible that pedestrians would avoid using this side of Wentworth, reducing the sense of security not only on the east side of Wentworth, but quite possibly for the entire street, which could hinder City efforts to generate a popular, lively mixed-use corridor up to Roosevelt Road.

Northern side of Archer, between Wentworth and Cermak

While Chinatown Square offers an intimate, well-defined outdoor space for pedestrians within its main interior, full of retail establishments and restaurants, this has been at some cost to the street and the surrounding neighborhood. The view from Archer Avenue, which is typically the first view of Chinatown Square seen by visitors, is largely defined by its service entrances, which face the street. This is not only less-than-ideal in terms of attractiveness, it appears to lead to some confusion for visitors who are unaware of the vibrant stores, restaurants, and pedestrian mall that are found within Chinatown Square, making them far less likely to venture within.

Figure 3.7.4. Northern side of Archer, between Wentworth and Cermak.

Problems with current configuration

Chinatown Square's outward facing service entrances are set far back behind two linear parking areas alongside the north side of Archer Avenue. These parking areas are owned by the City and have the potential to be the site of future commercial development that would complement Chinatown Square, expanding space for additional stores and restaurants while also dramatically improving the appearance and function of this important block. This stretch of Archer lacks definition and has a relatively low-quality streetscape, in large part because of these parking areas. Large curb cuts in the sidewalk interrupt the path of pedestrians, and are the location of frequent traffic coming in and out of these limited parking areas, especially on weekends, which creates hazardous conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and even cars traveling along Archer. Last, the narrow sidewalk along this side of Archer is not maintained by Chinatown Square, which sometimes creates difficult conditions for pedestrians, especially in winter.

These parking areas have other unintended consequences for this area. Chinatown Square Plaza, one of the community's few large public spaces, currently lacks definition, primarily because most of its outer edge is defined by these parking areas and Chinatown Square's service entrance exterior. Since the parking area at the eastern end of Chinatown Square stretches around the corner on the western side of Wentworth; as a result, the sidewalk suffers from similar problems as Archer. Due to a large, unavoidable curb cut for cars or trucks entering the parking area, pedestrian travel is awkward and potentially hazardous, whether en

route to Chinatown Square's Wentworth side entrance, the adjacent Richland Center, or north to Ping Tom Park or the Fieldhouse.

Potential benefits to Chinatown Square and priorities for improvements

Improvements to Wentworth Avenue and, especially, the construction of Chinatown's new library are likely to highlight the shortcoming of this area and provide an incentive to address them. Therefore, the City, working with the Alderman, Chinatown Square, and the community, should explore the options for new commercial development in these two parking areas alongside Archer Avenue. Priorities should include improving the outward appearance of Chinatown Square and the quality of the streetscape along Archer and the corner area on the western side of Wentworth. Another important priority would be enhancing the definition and quality of Chinatown Square Plaza; sensible improvements could help the plaza become the dynamic neighborhood gathering place it is intended to be, perhaps justifying a new mid-block pedestrian crossing (as proposed by the City), which would help create more direct path between Chinatown Square Plaza and Old Chinatown south of Cermak.

Although new commercial development in this location has the potential to improve the area, care will need to be taken to make sure that any parking that is lost is replaced or provided for nearby, access to Chinatown Square service entrances is preserved, and any new development enhances the overall appearance of Chinatown Square and does not obscure the visibility of its existing signage from the street.

Southern side of Archer, between Wentworth and Cermak

This important block of Archer can be further enhanced and revitalized by future infill development along the southern side of the street. Chinatown's new library at the southwestern corner of Archer and Wentworth will help generate new activity and energy that can extend the length of the block, especially if the block's multiple vacant sites (currently being used for parking) are filled in with commercial infill development that provides additional destinations for residents and visitors.

Figure 3.7.5. Southern side of Archer, between Wentworth and Cermak.

Development can be coupled with new streetscape improvements, possibly including more ambitious enhancements, such as a "parklet" or "people spot" (as discussed in Strategy 6.3). Improvements to the six-corner intersection of Archer, Cermak, and Princeton (as recommended in Strategy 2.5), will ease crossings and access to this side of the block for pedestrians crossing Archer from Chinatown Square as well as Cermak from Old Chinatown, facilitating additional pedestrian activity on this block. Overall, increasing activity on this block is a priority, not only to help it reach its economic potential but also to improve security.

Undeveloped site on the northern side of Tan Court, between Princeton and Lee Parkway

There is an acute shortage of senior housing within Chinatown's core. At present, hundreds of people are on the waiting list for CASL Senior Housing, and currently no assisted living housing is available within Chinatown's core. The demand for senior housing in Chinatown, especially assisted living residential options, is expected to grow in coming years.

New senior housing, preferably assisted living, could be ideally suited to this undeveloped site, located virtually adjacent to CASL (with its many services for seniors) and just around the corner from CASL Senior Housing, a Walgreens, and Chinatown Square.

Figure 3.7.6. Undeveloped site on the northern side of Tan Court, between Princeton and Lee Parkway.

7.2 Position the community to work with neighboring communities and benefit from anticipated development in adjacent areas

During the past few decades, the Chinese population has expanded south and southwest from Chinatown's core. This is likely to continue, expanding many people's definition of what constitutes "Chinatown." In addition, significant development activity is expected in several other areas adjacent to Chinatown's core, to the north, east, and west. Although important details about the timing and nature of these anticipated developments remain unknown at this stage, there is broad community interest in their potential to benefit Chinatown, whether through expansion of the neighborhood or the creation of nearby amenities and other assets. To maximize the benefits generated by development in these neighboring locations, a framework needs to be created that provides a framework to help the community contribute to future planning decisions outside of Chinatown's boundaries, which will ensure that Chinatown is poised to work with neighboring communities when new developments arise.

Figure 3.7.7. Potential development areas, adjacent to Chinatown's core.

North (Area 1)

More than 60 acres of vacant land lie just to the north of Chinatown's core, between Ping Tom Park and Roosevelt Road. This area, strategically located alongside the Chicago River between Chinatown and downtown Chicago, has been a focus of attention for the City and developers for decades. The City has announced plans for the creation of a new Wells-Wentworth Connector through this area, as the third component of a multi-phase project that will follow first phase improvements to Wentworth Avenue between 17th Street and 19th Street (to be completed by Fall 2015) and the realignment of Wentworth between Archer Avenue and Cermak Road during the second phase (to be completed by Spring 2017).

Figure 3.7.8. Potential development area, north of Chinatown's core.

The entire project will create a new road between the Loop and Chinatown, setting the stage for major new development throughout the area. While the specifics of this development will be worked out at a later date, the City expects the new Wells-Wentworth Connector will become a vital mixed-use corridor, passing through a variety of new residential development.

The entire area falls within the new boundaries of the 25th Ward. Working together in collaboration, the steering committee for the Chinatown Vision Plan, the Alderman, and relevant City agencies (such as DPD and CDOT) can develop a task force focused on helping engage the Chinatown community in future planning for this area. While market supply and

demand can be expected to drive future development, providing a well-defined opportunity for input from the Chinatown community can help to identify issues and opportunities in advance that, once addressed, can strengthen City investments in this area and ensure community buy-in as planning and development moves forward.

East (Area 2)

Significant development is planned or already underway to the east between Chinatown and McCormick Place, including a new station for the CTA Green Line at Cermak Road and State Street, private development along the historic Motor Row and Michigan Avenue, a new McCormick Place event center that includes a basketball arena, and a 1,200 room hotel. This series of projects is the foundation of City plans to create a vibrant entertainment district to benefit visitors from McCormick Place and area residents, as well as create a revitalized, walkable commercial corridor along Cermak between the convention center and Chinatown.

Figure 3.7.9. Planned and potential development area, east of Chinatown's core, with potential gap area (between planned development and Chinatown) highlighted.

In order for this planned development to realize its full potential for this area of Chicago, it will be essential to ensure that its benefits reach Chinatown, creating an unbroken corridor between the community and McCormick Place that is active, safe, and cohesive. While the stretch of Cermak between the new CTA Green Line station and Chinatown is well-landscaped and has recently-installed street lighting and two extensive playgrounds, it is not an active area at many times of the day. On the northern side of the street are the Hilliard Towers Apartments, set back far from the sidewalk amidst broad landscaped grounds, while the southern side is occupied by the National Teachers Academy and empty lots where the Harold Ickes Homes used to stand. It appears that these existing structures on either side of Cermak are primarily accessed through large parking located at the rear of each block. In addition to these factors which contribute to the modest pedestrian activity that currently exists along this relatively long block, pedestrians walking toward Chinatown must pass under tracks for both the Metra Rock Island District Line and the CTA Red Line, as well as cross both an Interstate off-ramp and on-ramp on the southern side of Cermak.

Planned development and improvements between the new CTA Green Line station and McCormick Place will undoubtedly generate more activity near Chinatown, but there may be little incentive for visitors and residents in this area to venture west of the Green Line tracks unless appropriate development and wise enhancements are extended to Cermak's intersection with the realigned Wentworth Avenue in the heart of Chinatown. Likewise, without these improvements the large number of visitors to Chinatown, especially common on weekends, may not choose to explore areas and patronize businesses located to the east of the neighborhood.

This key stretch of Cermak falls within the new boundaries for the 3rd Ward until it crosses the boundary into the 25th Ward at Clark Street. The creation of an active, unbroken corridor that links Chinatown and areas to the east is a shared interest for the aldermen of each ward, along

with residents and other stakeholders in both areas, who should work collaboratively across ward boundaries and with the DPD and CDOT to maximize City investments by guiding suitable development, facilitating comfortable travel, and ensuring a sense of personal safety among pedestrians.

West (Area 3)

Interviews with key stakeholders and feedback from residents in Chinatown indicates that some community attention has focused on vacant lots and low use sections within the area located immediately to the west of Chinatown's core between the Chicago River and the Dan Ryan Expressway.

Figure 3.7.10. Potential development area, west of Chinatown's core.

Labeled on most Chicago neighborhood maps as "East Pilsen" north of Cermak and "South Loop" south of Cermak, this area's current zoning reflects the diversity of its land use. South of 18th Street, the majority of the area is zoned as a Planned Manufacturing District (intended to preserve the City's industrial base), a Light Industry District, or a Commercial, Manufacturing and Employment District—all of which prohibit residential uses.

But the zoning in over a quarter of the area allows at least some residential uses, such as Neighborhood Shopping District, Community Shopping District, and Neighborhood Commercial District (all of which allow apartments above the ground floor); most of these zoning designations are located in the northwestern corner of this area as are nearly all of its residential buildings. A large cluster of vacant lots lie adjacent to this residential section immediately to the south. They are designated for Planned Development and fall within the Pilsen Industrial Corridor TIF District, which also includes essentially all non-residential sections of the area.

The new boundaries of the 25th Ward cover the non-residential section and largest vacant lot within the area north of Cermak while the new boundaries of the 11th Ward cover the most of the residential section of the area as well as all sections south of Cermak. The entire area falls within the study area for the Pilsen and Little Village Plan currently being developed by the City's Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Given that Chinatown is located immediately adjacent to the study area, it would be beneficial to provide an opportunity for the community to participate in conversations conducted during the public engagement process of the plan.

Key Implementation steps

A new framework is needed to help the community work with the City and neighboring communities to wisely plan and prepare for potential future development within Chinatown's core and in adjacent areas to the north, east, and west. As is discussed in Strategy 8.1, the Steering Committee that was formed to guide the development of the Community Vision Plan can provide leadership that is broad and representative. It can facilitate cooperation between

members of the community, in partnership with the City, to implement the plan's recommendations, including defining community priorities for future development within Chinatown's core and positioning the community to work with neighboring communities and benefit from anticipated development in adjacent areas.

ACTION/ TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	DESCRIPTION
Define community priorities for future development within Chinatown's core		
Timing: 3-6 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD CDOT	Identify potential opportunities for future development with Chinatown's core. Using the locations discussed in Strategy 7.1 as a starting point, the Steering Committee, the community's aldermen, and liaisons from the DPD and CDOT should identify potential opportunities for future development that currently exist within Chinatown's core. Essential details about each site should be compiled, such as ownership, market status, zoning, known development hurdles, etc.
Timing: 3-9 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD CDOT	Determine community priorities for future development. Once a comprehensive, up-to-date inventory of potential sites is developed, the Steering Committee, the community's aldermen, and City liaisons should determine which sites have the most potential for future development based on availability and potential to address community priorities.
Timing: 6-18 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD CDOT	Develop strategy for pursuing development for priority sites. The Steering Committee, the community's aldermen, and City liaisons should agree upon a strategy that will facilitate development of priority sites.
Timing: 12-24 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD CDOT community partners	Provide opportunities for community input for future development. Although the Steering Committee, the community's aldermen, and City liaisons are likely to have identified relevant community priorities for any sites within Chinatown's core, if development is expected to proceed on a given site, community members should be given an opportunity to provide their input through periodic meetings organized by the Department of Planning and Development.
Position the community to work with neighboring communities and benefit from anticipated development in adjacent areas		
Timing: 0-6 months	Lead: Steering Committee	Discuss potential development located in adjacent areas outside of Chinatown's core. The Steering Committee, the community's aldermen, and City liaisons should comprehensively



	Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD	discuss potential development in adjacent areas to the north, east, and west of Chinatown’s core. In addition to discussing the details and timeline of development that is already underway in these areas, the discussion should focus on potential opportunities for future development that remain. Overall, participants should consider how future development could benefit Chinatown, as well as determine how the Steering Committee could work with neighboring communities and contribute to planning decisions in adjacent areas.
Timing: 0-9 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th , 3 rd , and 4 th Ward aldermen DPD Neighborhood community groups from adjacent areas	<i>Participate in future planning for Cermak corridor east of Chinatown.</i> As discussed in Strategy 7.2, the potential of development underway or planned in the area to the east between State Street and McCormick Place to benefit Chinatown is impressive. There is a need for the Chinatown to participate in ongoing planning for the entire Cermak corridor, and the Steering Committee can serve this role.

8. Long-Term Capacity Building

Since its beginning, Chinatown has prospered due to the bold vision and perseverance of the community. Facing discrimination and an uncertain future, in 1912 community leaders chose to move Chinatown from its original location in the Loop to its current location at Wentworth Avenue and Cermak Road. Chinatown would continue to face many challenges including, at times, an uneasy relationship with the City of Chicago, and community leaders were required to be exceptionally resourceful in order to move the community forward.

The community has retained its spirit of self-reliance and independence. At the same time, working together Chinatown and the City have made extraordinary progress on behalf of the community and the entire City of Chicago.

Going forward, Chinatown’s response to the wide variety of issues and opportunities it faces—whether large or small in scale, physical or social in nature, short- or long-term in duration—should be guided by a new framework for sustained, community involvement. Doing so will strengthen Chinatown’s long-term capacity for implementing the recommendations of the Community Vision Plan, as well as address other important challenges and opportunities that arise.

Recommended Strategies



8.1 Create a framework for sustained, inclusive community involvement in planning decisions

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The past accomplishments of Chinatown—led by community organizations, family associations, business leaders, community residents, and elected officials—are remarkable. To build on this legacy, Chinatown should implement the Community Vision Plan.

The Steering Committee that was formed to guide the development of the plan can provide leadership that is broad, representative, and responsible for facilitating cooperation between members of the community, in partnership with the City, to implement the plan's recommendations. The committee's members are diverse in representation and opinion, but share a commitment to Chinatown and have dedicated themselves to ensuring the community's future prosperity. Possessing a shared understanding of the reasons behind the plan's recommendations—and an appreciation of the extensive effort that went into developing them—the committee's members are well-suited to shepherding the crucial implementation phase of the plan.

One of the most important duties of the Steering Committee will be to work with—and facilitate coordination between—the community, elected officials, and the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and Department of Transportation (CDOT). Beyond the implementation of plan recommendations, the goal should be to ensure that this effort is inclusive, transparent, and comprehensive. Other key roles are likely to include raising funds for community development projects and assuming some responsibilities within the neighborhood to supplement public services, such as overseeing the maintenance and cleanliness of parks and streets.

The successful implementation of the Community Vision Plan's recommendations will require considerable focus and commitment of time and resources. At the same time, no plan can cover every issue or opportunity that will need to be addressed by the community in the coming years. Therefore, the Steering Committee should aim to establish a framework for sustained, inclusive community involvement in planning decisions. Potential benefits to the community include serving as a forum for any resident to provide input on future planning decisions affecting the community and helping the community to comprehensively identify and strategically address both immediate and long-term issues. The Steering Committee can advocate for important local issues at the City level, such as increased educational opportunities, as well as strengthen awareness and coordination of existing community resources and services aimed at fighting crime and promoting safety in Chinatown.



A central theme that emerged from interviews with key stakeholders was an appreciation of individual community leaders without whom many of Chinatown’s greatest accomplishments may not have been realized. This was often paired with a concern for the future of the community, due to the aging and passing of many of these leaders without clear evidence that a new generation is stepping forward to assume this vital role. Therefore, a long-term objective of the Steering Committee should be to ensure that opportunity and responsibility for community leadership is shared across a wider, diverse network of people. This should help to foster the next generation of community leaders, as well as help to strengthen and preserve knowledge of best practices and institutional memory.

Key Implementation Steps

ACTION/ TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	DESCRIPTION
Establish the role and responsibilities of the Community Vision Plan Steering Committee		
Timing: 0-2 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD CDOT	Confirm committee participation and determine representatives from City. Existing Steering Committee members should be asked to commit to serve for the next two years. The committee should identify representatives from DPD and CDOT that agree to serve as liaisons between these City departments and the Steering Committee; City liaisons should commit to attending scheduled quarterly committee meetings and should identify alternative department representatives who can fill-in if unforeseen scheduling conflicts arise.
Timing: 0-2 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: community partners	Designate youth representatives to committee. In order to foster future generations of community leadership, at least two high school-aged residents of Chinatown should be designated as youth representatives to the Steering Committee. Youth representatives should be encouraged and, as appropriate, asked to provide their input to committee discussions.
Timing: 0-2 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD CDOT	Schedule quarterly meetings. The Steering Committee should schedule quarterly meetings for the following two years, obtaining confirmation from City department liaisons. While additional meetings may be required from time to time, particularly for assigned working groups, it is important that the committee establishes a consistent meeting schedule that is known well in advance by all participants.
Timing: 0-3 months	Lead: Steering Committee Supporting: 25 th and 11 th Ward aldermen DPD CDOT	Determine committee priorities. Using the recommended implementation steps identified in the plan as a guide, the Steering Committee and City department liaisons should determine which recommendations in the Community Vision Plan will be tackled first, as well as the timeline for taking action on remaining items. The committee should also identify any other important community issues that the committee wants to address in next two years.



<p>Timing: 4-6 months</p>	<p>Lead: Steering Committee</p> <p>Supporting: Chinese language newspapers and other community media sources</p>	<p>Establish community reporting strategy. The Steering Committee should establish a comprehensive, sustainable strategy for informing the community, on a consistent basis, of progress on implementing the recommendations of the plan as well as other priorities issues it is working to address. As appropriate, it should also inform the community of open meetings and other opportunities to provide input.</p>
<p>Timing: 18-24 months</p>	<p>Lead: Steering Committee</p> <p>Supporting: community partners</p>	<p>Develop grant writing task force. The Steering Committee will need to obtain grant funding to fully implement some of the recommendations in the plan. A dedicated team should be identified to achieve this important objective. This team will likely be composed of committee members, along with other individuals from partner organizations and the wider Chinatown community. Assigned responsibilities should be realistic and well-defined, ideally with required tasks (such as grant research, writing, and partner coordination) divided up fairly among members of the team.</p>

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Appendix A: Maps (will be integrated into final plan document)

Figure 1.1. Study area.

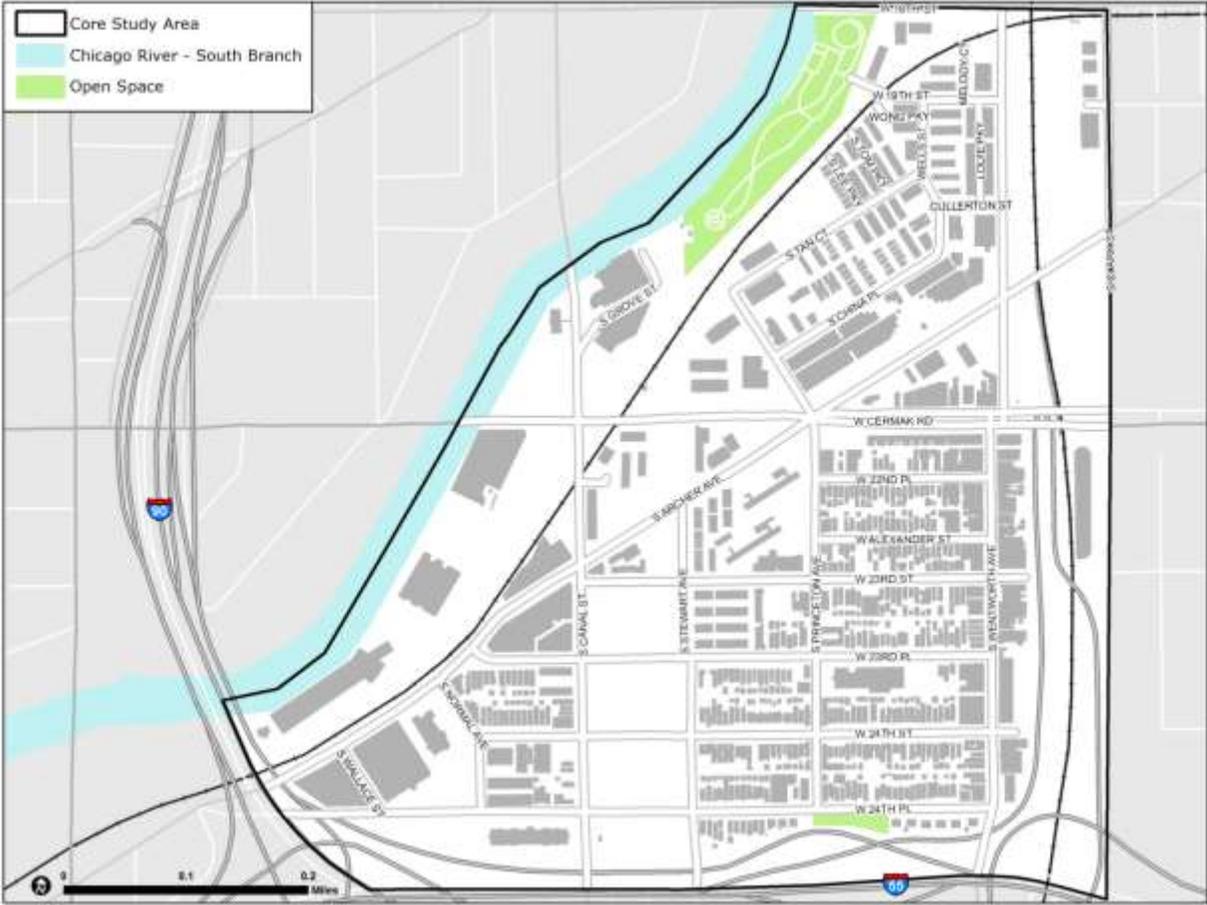


Figure 3.2.1. Transit in Chinatown's core.

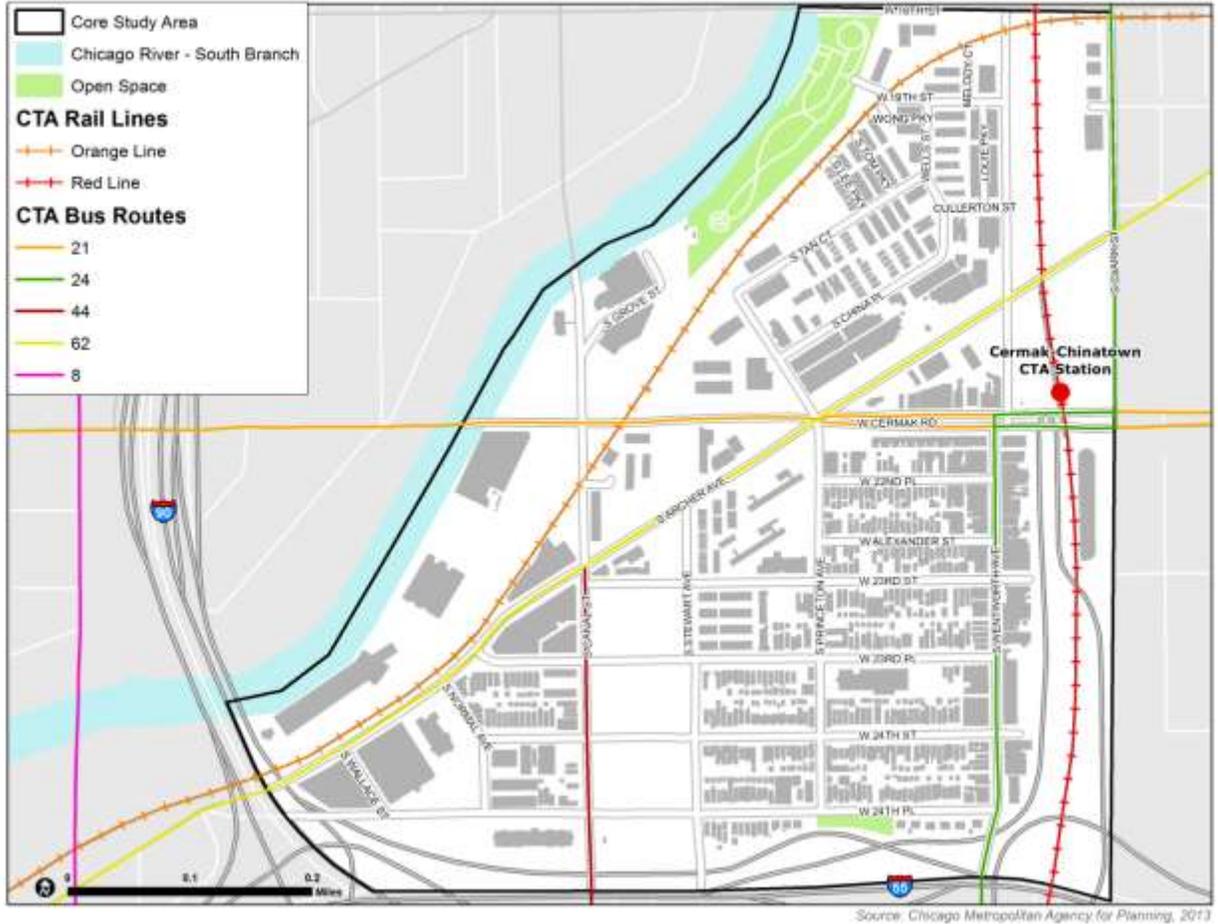
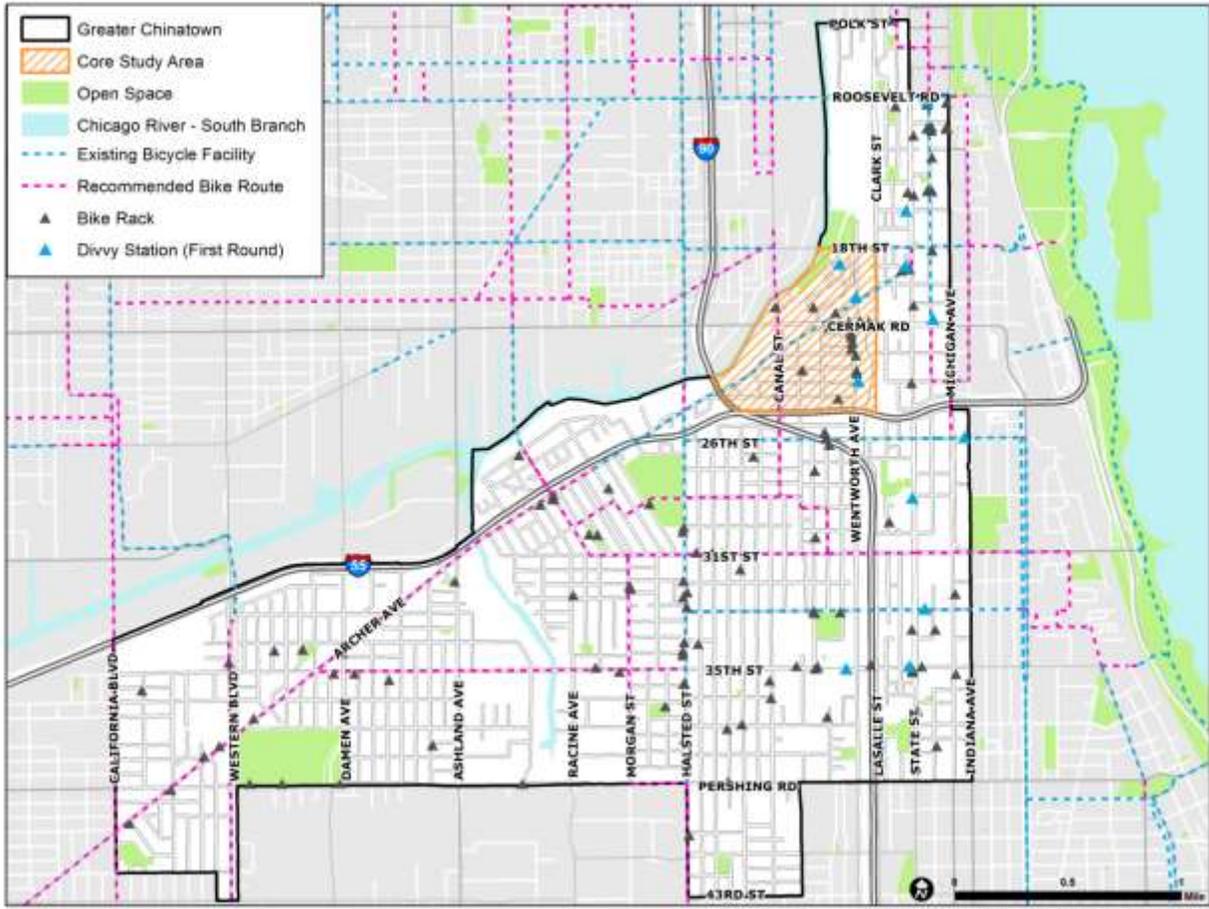


Figure 3.2.2. Bicycling infrastructure in Greater Chinatown.



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013

Figure 3.2.3. Key locations for strengthening the connection between Old and New Chinatown.

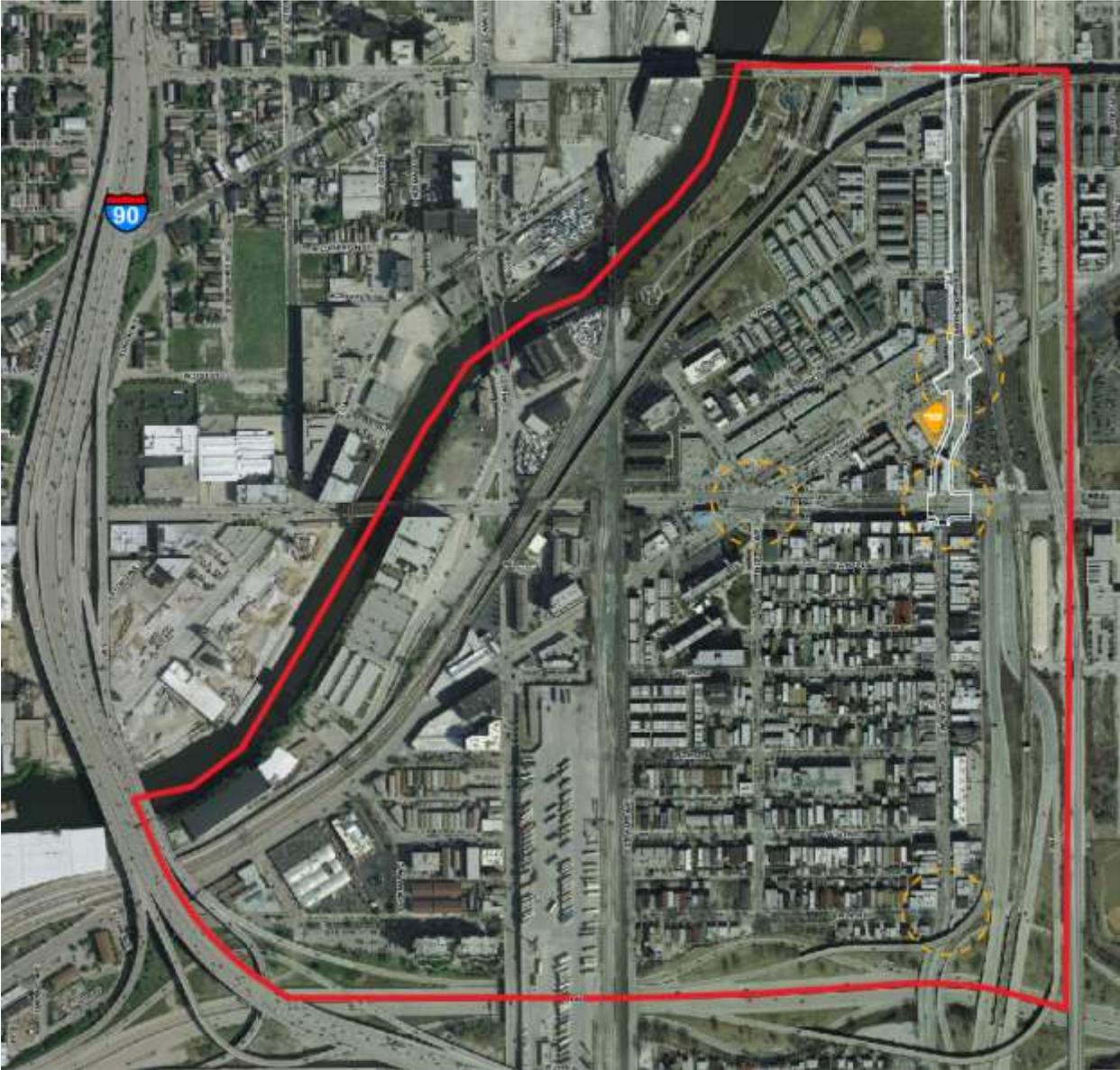


Figure 3.2.4. Intersection of Wentworth and Cermak.



Figure 3.2.5. Intersection of Wentworth and Archer.



Figure 3.2.6. Potential site of new mid-block pedestrian crossing near Wentworth and Archer.

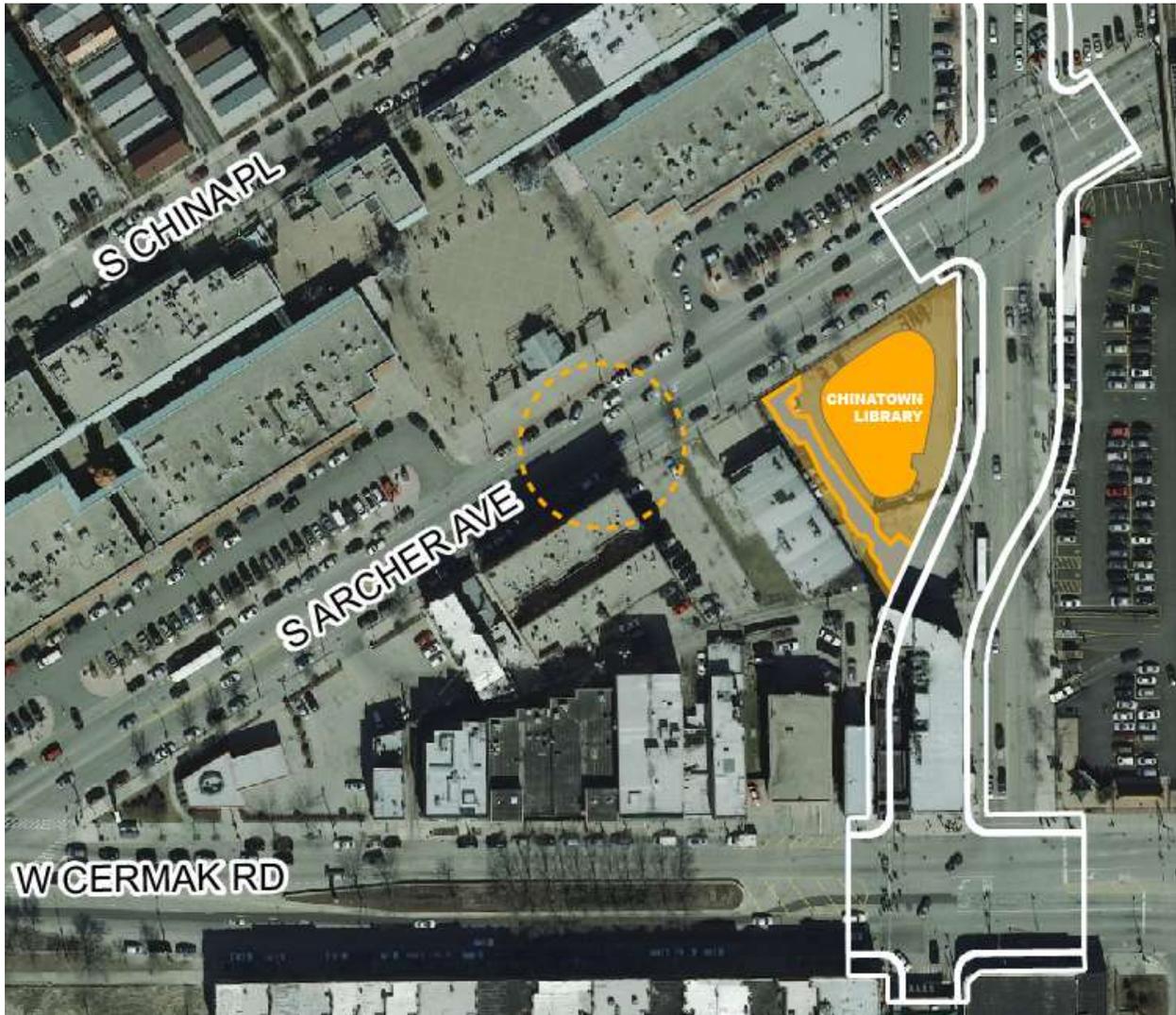


Figure 3.2.7. Intersection of Cermak, Archer, and Princeton.



Figure 3.2.8. Potential site for new parking, southern end of Wentworth.

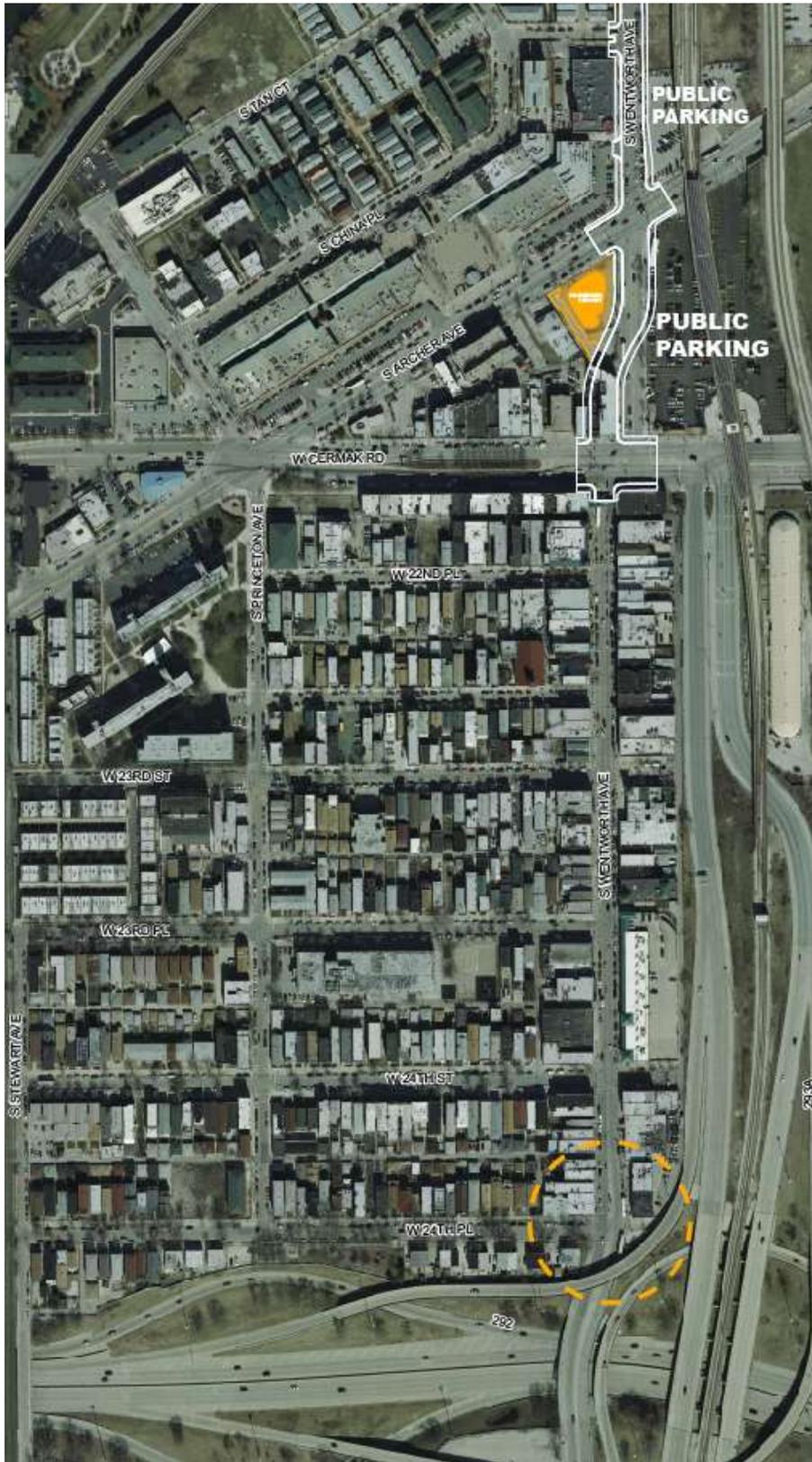


Figure 3.3.1. Residential areas in Chinatown's core.

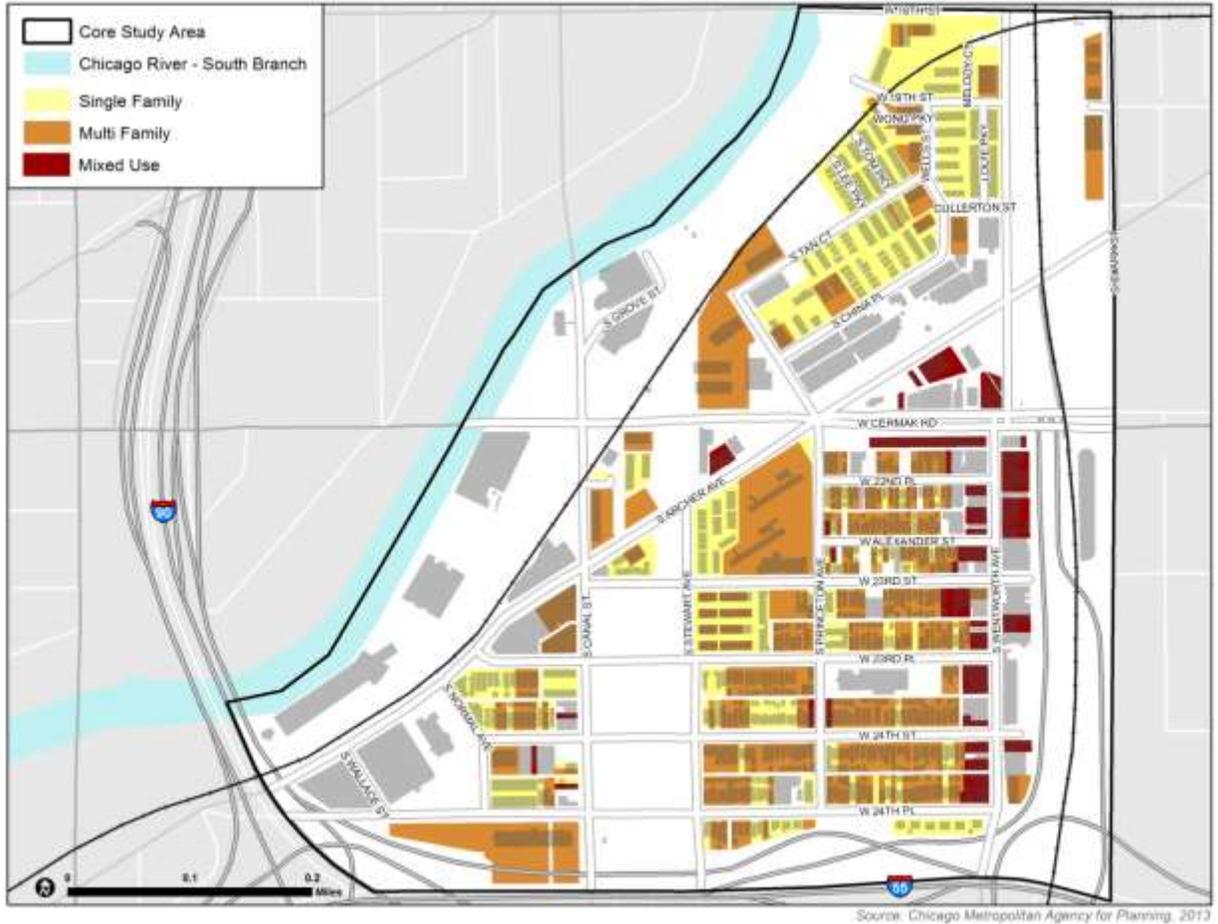


Figure 3.4.1. Commercial areas in Chinatown's core.

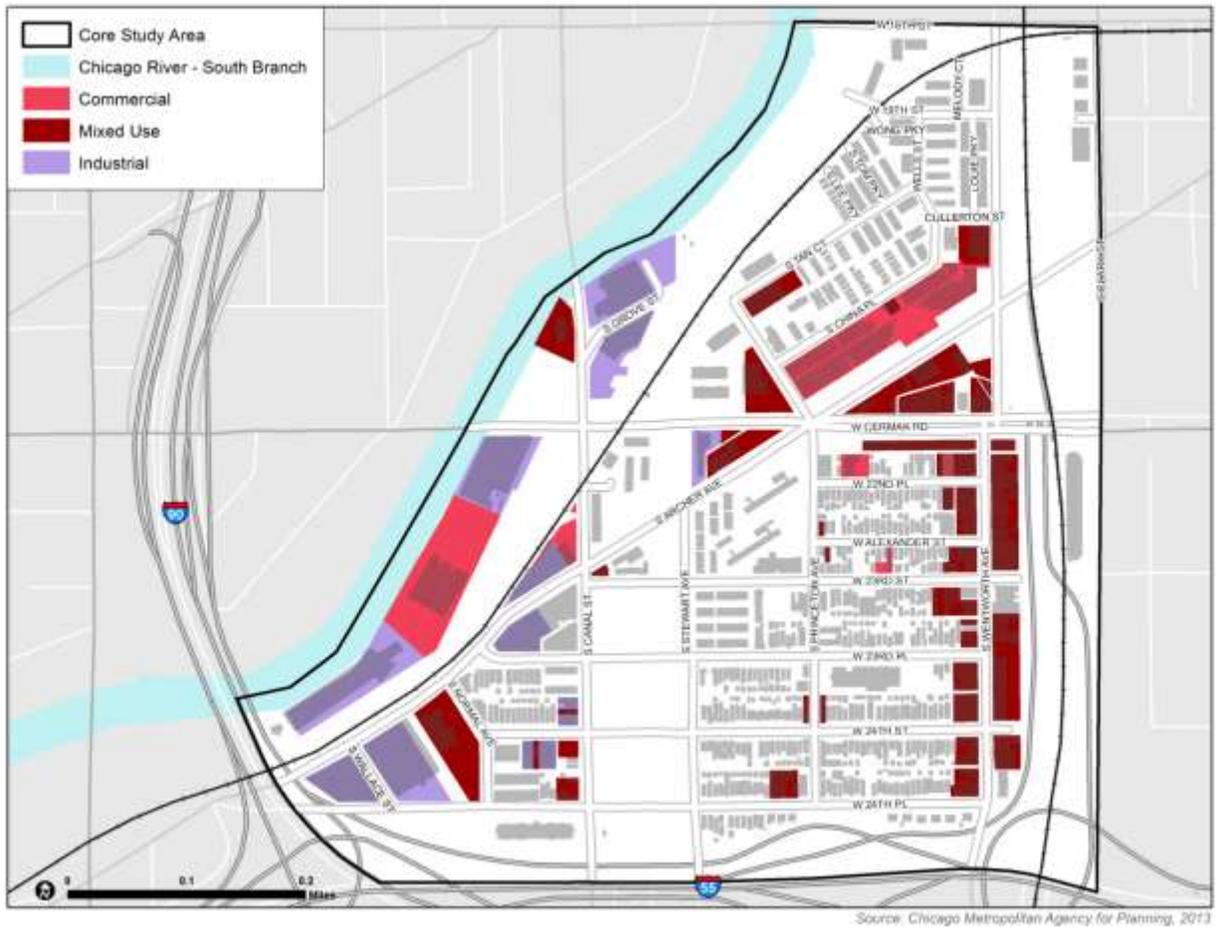


Figure 3.6.1. Open space areas in Chinatown's core.



Figure 3.7.1. Potential opportunities for future development in Chinatown's core.

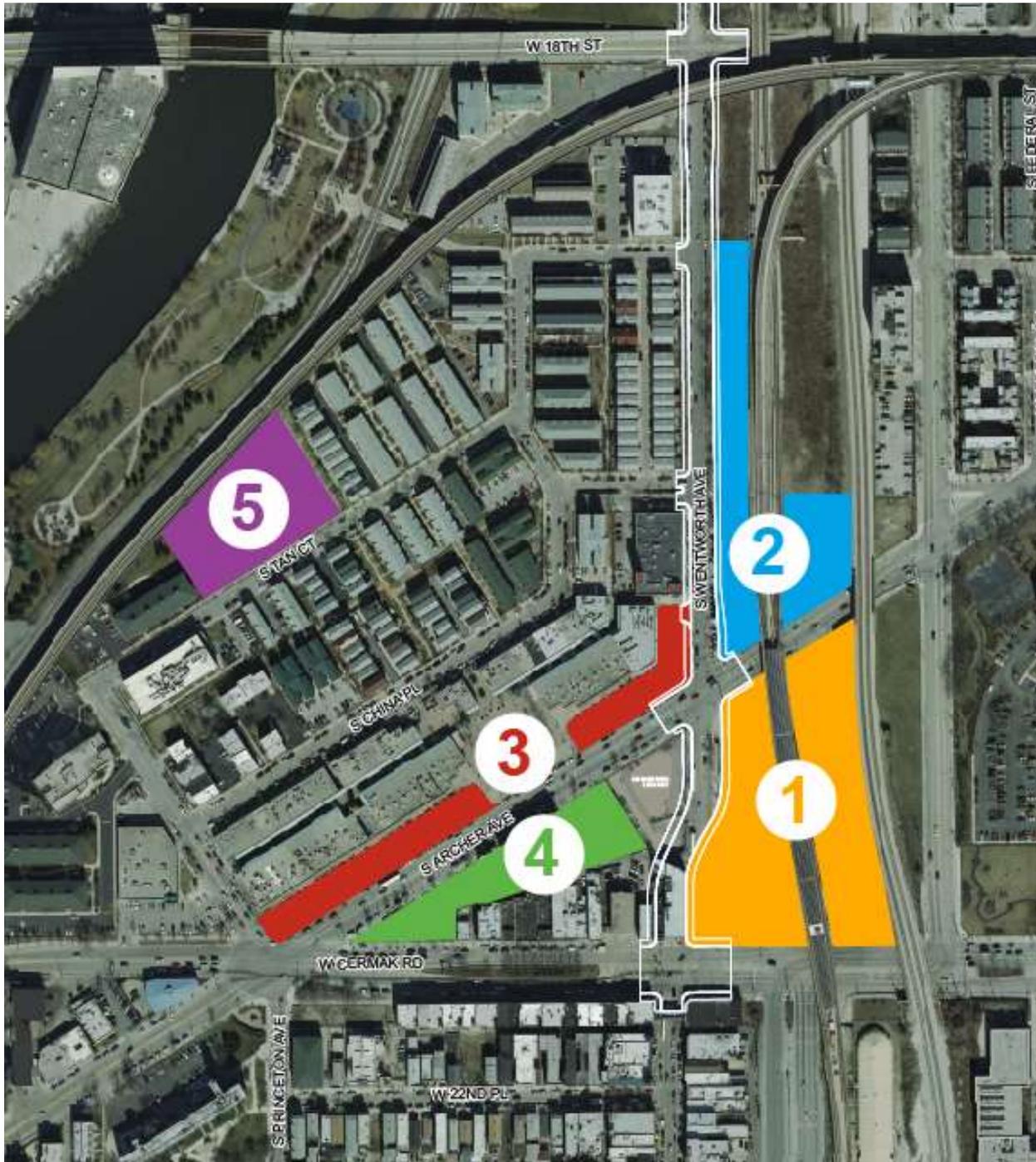


Figure 3.7.2. East side of Wentworth, between Cermak and Archer.

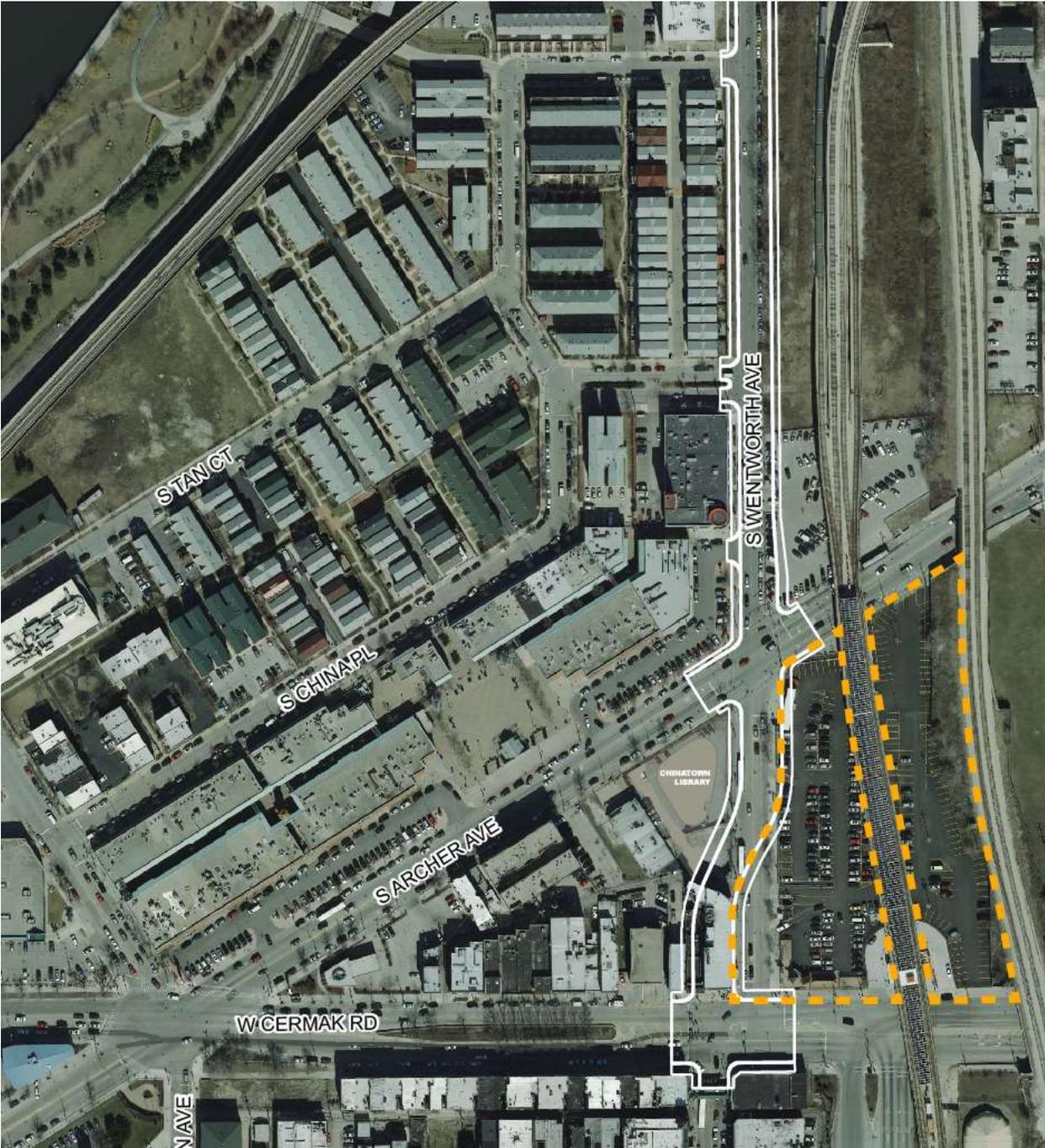


Figure 3.7.3. East side of Wentworth, north of Archer.

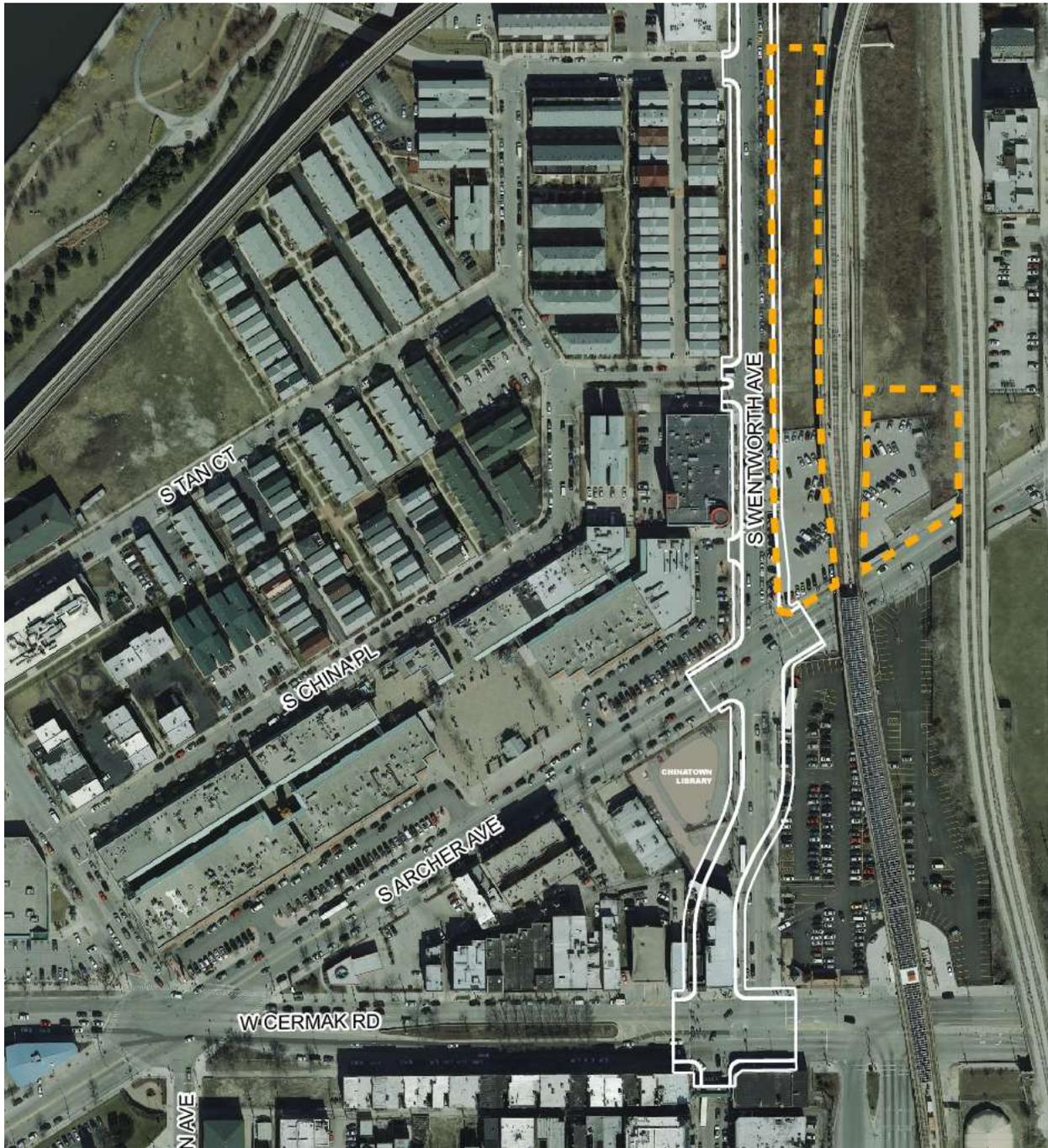


Figure 3.7.4. Northern side of Archer, between Wentworth and Cermak.

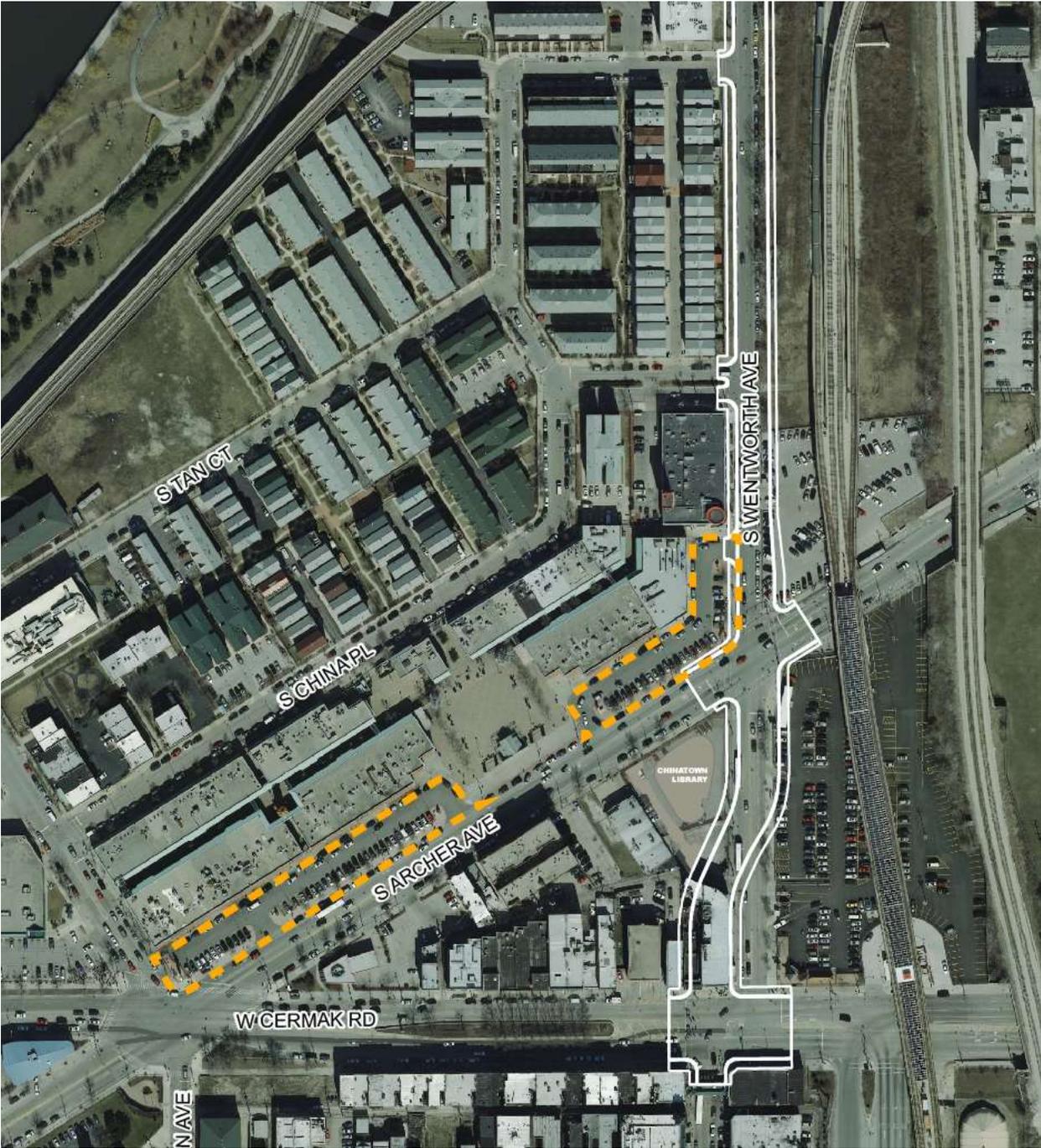


Figure 3.7.5. Southern side of Archer, between Wentworth and Cermak.

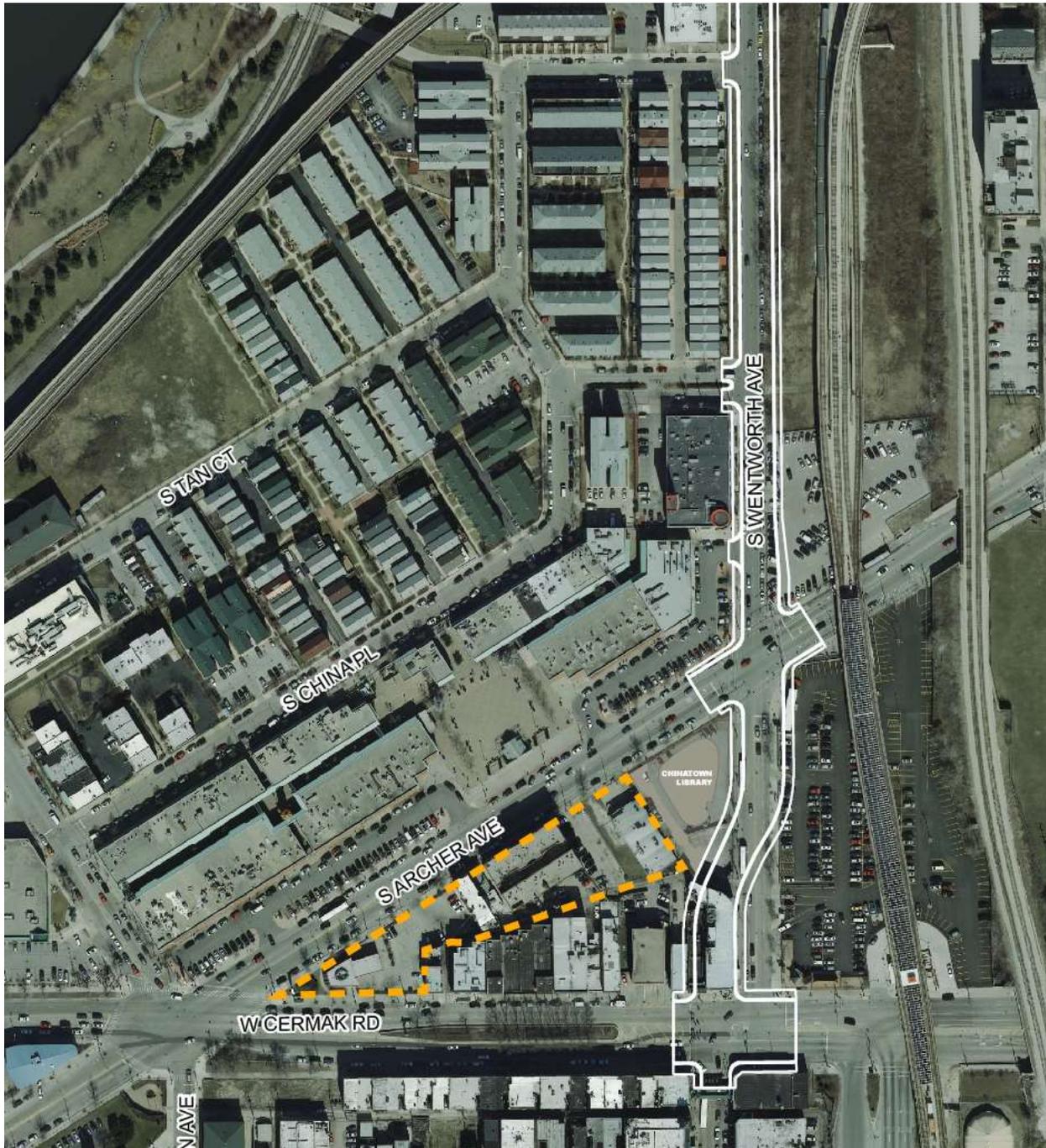


Figure 3.7.6. Undeveloped site on the northern side of Tan Court, between Princeton and Lee Parkway.

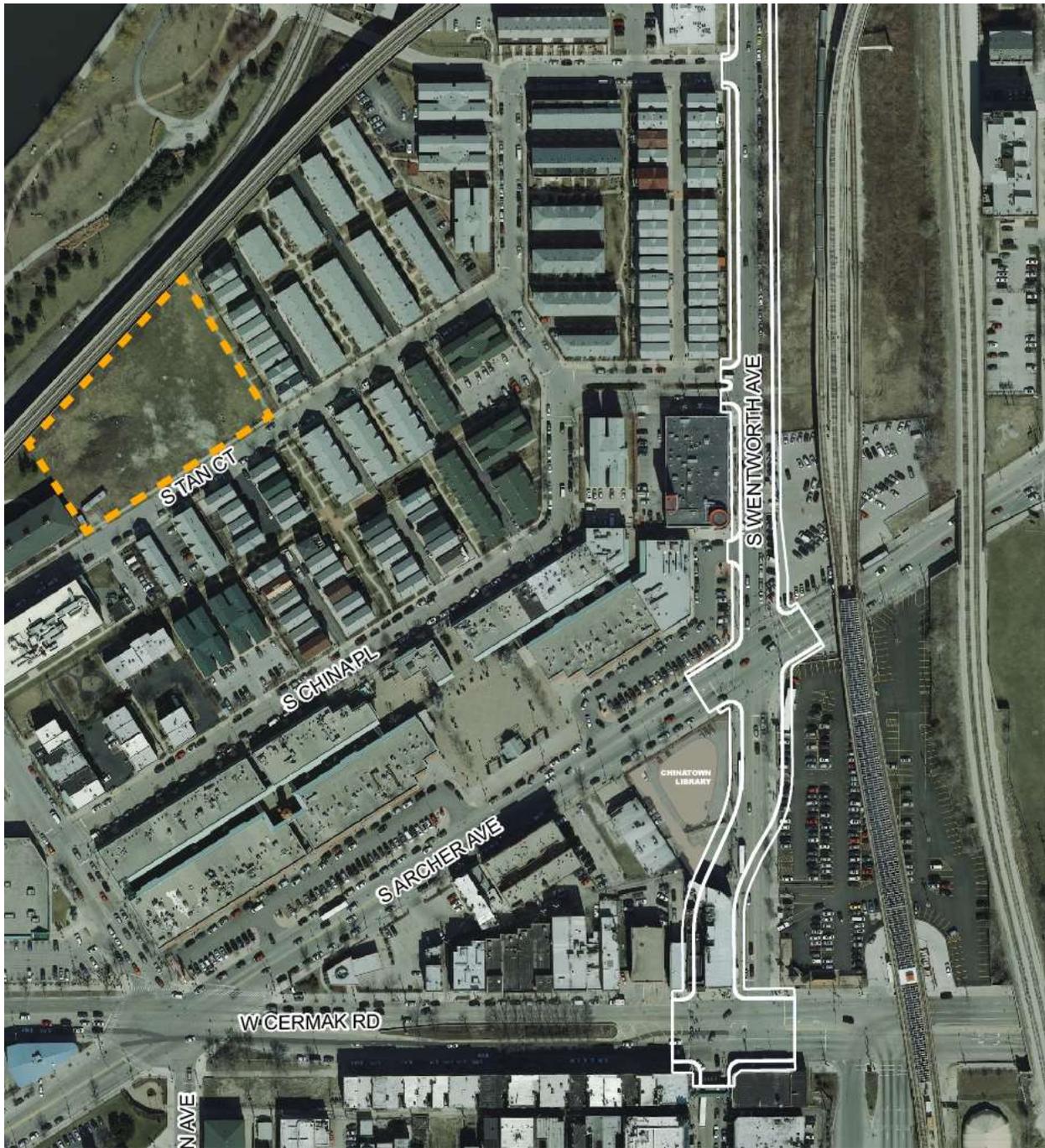


Figure 3.7.7. Potential development areas, adjacent to Chinatown's core.



Figure 3.7.8. Potential development area, north of Chinatown's core.

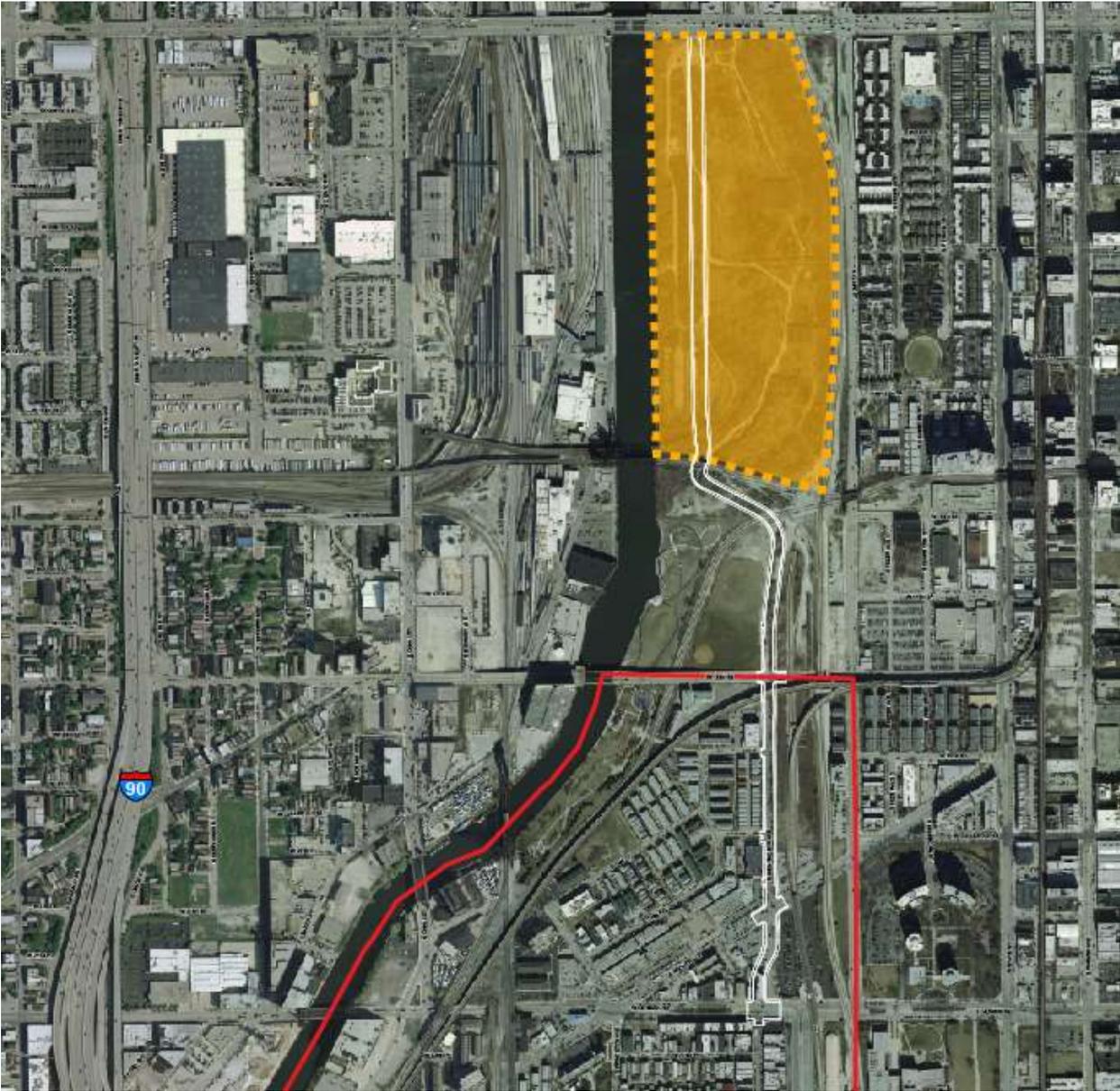
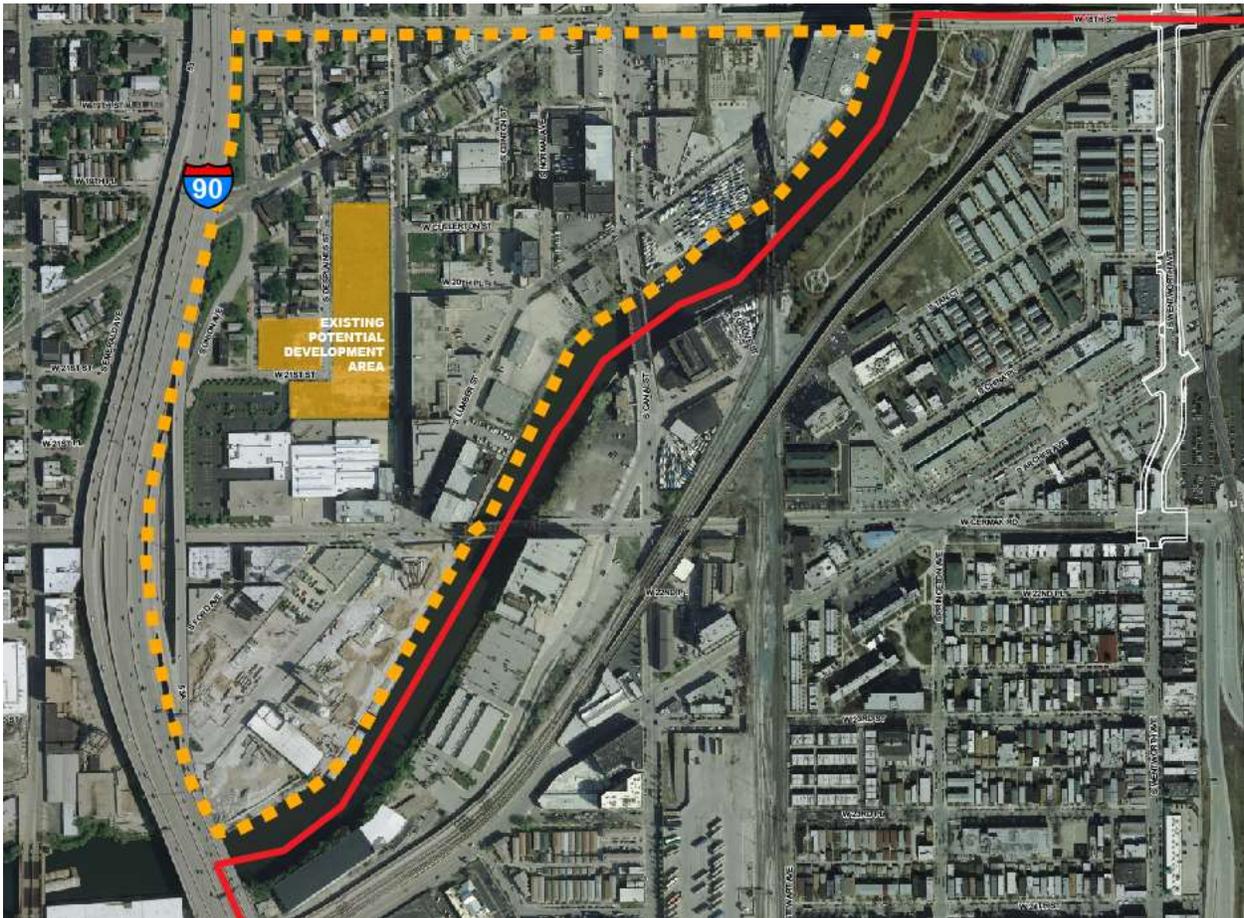


Figure 3.7.9. Planned and potential development area, east of Chinatown's core, with potential gap area (between planned development and Chinatown) highlighted.



Figure 3.7.10. Potential development area, west of Chinatown's core.



Appendix B: Existing Conditions Report (available under separate cover online)

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region's official comprehensive planning organization. Its GO TO 2040 planning campaign is helping the region's seven counties and 284 communities to implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality of life issues. See www.cmap.illinois.gov for more information.

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