

Application form:
Community Planning Program and
Local Technical Assistance Program

DEADLINE: Noon on Thursday, June 26, 2014

This application form is online at www.rtachicago.com/applications. You may submit the form by email to applications@rtachicago.com.

Upon receipt of application, you will receive an e-mail verifying that your application has been received.

1. Name of Applicant: Bridgeport Business Association

2. Main Contact for Application (please include name, phone number and email): Maureen Sullivan, President of the Bridgeport Business Association, 773-719-6655, maureen@bridgeportbusiness.org

3. Type of Applicant (please check any that apply):

Local government

____ Multijurisdictional group*
members of the group (including
organizations):

Please list the
government and nongovernmental

__X__ Nongovernmental organization*
government partner(s):

Name of local

____ Department of Planning and
Development, Bob
McKenna _____

*Applications submitted by multijurisdictional groups and nongovernmental organizations must include a letter indicating support from each relevant local government. See the FAQs for more information. Nongovernmental applicants are strongly encouraged to contact CMAP or the RTA prior to submitting their

application to discuss their project and the demonstration of local support.

4. Project Type (please check any that apply):

Please check all statements below that describe characteristics of your project. (This will help us determine whether your project is best handled by CMAP or RTA.)

My project involves preparation of a plan.

My project helps to implement a past plan.

My project links land use, transportation, and housing.

My project has direct relevance to public transit and supports the use of the existing transit system.

My project is not directly related to transportation or land use, but implements GO TO 2040 in other ways.

5. Project Location:

Please provide a brief description of the location of your project. You may include a map if that helps to describe location, but this is not required. If your project helps to implement a past plan, please include a link to that plan.

We are targeting S. Halsted Street between Archer and Pershing Road.

6. Project Description:

Please tell us what you would like to do in your community, and what assistance is needed. If you have more than one idea, please submit a separate application for each project. Please be specific, but also brief (less than two pages per project idea)—we simply want to have a basic understanding of what you want to do. CMAP and RTA staff will follow-up with you if we need any additional information to fully understand your proposed project.

The Bridgeport Business Association is interested in creating a vision plan for S. Halsted St. from Archer to Pershing Rd. This is the main commercial district that runs through Bridgeport. We currently have 42 empty storefronts, including the shuttered city owned Ramova Theater. This strip also includes empty lots at the SW corner of 31st and Halsted, 4-5 lots on 31st and Halsted across from the Police Department, 4 lots on the west side of Halsted St. at 36th St. and the NW and NE corners of Pershing and Halsted and other single lots.

We are concerned about the economic development future of our main commercial strip. At this moment, there isn't a plan and the strip isn't being developed because there isn't a solid plan to do so.

Our group has spoken with Abe Lentner, Urban Planning Adjunct Professor at UIC and owner of DevelopmentTopia consulting firm.

After meetings with Abe at UIC and in Bridgeport Abe submitted a proposal (see phase 2 of attached document) to help us create and implement a vision plan for Halsted St. During our discussions with Abe he suggested that we contact CMAP and LISC to ask for assistance with tools such as databases, planners and other assistance we need to allow us, the BBA to make this plan a reality. The BBA is a member-funded business networking group in Bridgeport. We are unable to fund the \$25,000 needed to do this essential work to turn around our commercial district without assistance.

Here is a great synopsis of the work we need to do from DevelopmentTopia's proposal which I have attached in its entirety.

The commercial corridors of the Bridgeport neighborhood of Chicago face challenges to compete for

investment, business and shoppers. These challenges include older commercial real estate, an

ambiguous identity, brand or niche for business development, aging infrastructure and high volume

roads. The Bridgeport commercial areas are also home to many significant assets, including a strong mix

of restaurants, unique businesses, historic architecture and a strong local consumer base.

The Bridgeport Business Association (BBA or organization), the sponsoring organization for this

economic development work, desires to establish a plan for the growth and redevelopment of the

Bridgeport commercial corridors, and Halsted in particular.

The BBA has numerous objectives for economic development in Bridgeport, including:

1. Establishing a vision for the commercial areas of Bridgeport

2. Identifying important assets and challenges that are most important for economic development

success

3. Building a sense of place and character in the commercial areas

4. Recruiting appropriate businesses

5. Consulting with important stakeholder groups in the development of a plan

6. Examining key development sites including large redevelopment parcels and the Ramova

Theater

7. Identifying tools, resources and programs that can assist the BBA in implementing the planning

ideas

8. Identifying metrics for measuring success

This proposal by DevelopmenTopia (the consultant), an economic development consulting firm based in

Chicago, is aimed at providing the BBA with the planning tools, momentum and direction needed to

promote appropriate investment and development in Bridgeport.

We like DevelopmentTopia's proposal, but are not sure that this is the correct way to approach this issue. We ask for the help of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to determine if this is right way to address the development of our main commercial district.

(Please include any additional information that is relevant, preferably by providing links to online documents.)



Economic Development Services Proposal



T. Abraham Lentner, President

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Scope of Work

Introduction

The commercial corridors of the Bridgeport neighborhood of Chicago face challenges to compete for investment, business and shoppers. These challenges include older commercial real estate, an ambiguous identity, brand or niche for business development, aging infrastructure and high volume roads. The Bridgeport commercial areas are also home to many significant assets, including a strong mix of restaurants, unique businesses, historic architecture and a strong local consumer base.

The Bridgeport Business Association (BBA or organization), the sponsoring organization for this economic development work, desires to establish a plan for the growth and redevelopment of the Bridgeport commercial corridors, and Halsted in particular. The BBA has numerous objectives for economic development in Bridgeport, including:

1. Establishing a vision for the commercial areas of Bridgeport
2. Identifying important assets and challenges that are most important for economic development success
3. Building a sense of place and character in the commercial areas
4. Recruiting appropriate businesses
5. Consulting with important stakeholder groups in the development of a plan
6. Examining key development sites including large redevelopment parcels and the Ramova Theater
7. Identifying tools, resources and programs that can assist the BBA in implementing the planning ideas
8. Identifying metrics for measuring success

This proposal by DevelopmentTopia (the consultant), an economic development consulting firm based in Chicago, is aimed at providing the BBA with the planning tools, momentum and direction needed to promote appropriate investment and development in Bridgeport. The proposal has two phases. Phase A works with a current business asset, the Bridgeport restaurants, to build a stronger competitive niche in the area's restaurant trade. Phase B looks at comprehensive and strategic planning for the full set of commercial corridors in Bridgeport.

Phase A: Restaurant Development in Bridgeport

The purpose of Phase A is to “get started by getting started”, i.e. develop a set of short and mid-range economic development objectives to strengthen the Bridgeport neighborhood's restaurant niche. Based on a cursory examination of Bridgeport's restaurant mix, it appears that Bridgeport has a strong cohort of well-reviewed restaurants. However, Bridgeport may be less competitive as a restaurant destination due to the high level of local competition with well-defined niches or brands (e.g. Chinatown, Pilsen, Randolph Street). To strengthen Bridgeport's competitiveness as a regional dining destination, and increase market share for diners, the following actions are proposed.

Immediate steps. Activities to be undertaken in the next 1 to 3 months:

1. **Refrigerator Magnet.** In order to gain market share for popular lunch-time delivery restaurants, the consultant will work with BBA volunteers to develop a refrigerator magnet. The magnet will feature popular participating delivery restaurants and it will be distributed to break rooms in the offices of major area employers.

2. **Yelp/Google Reviews.** Working with BBA volunteers, the consultant will assist the organization in developing reviews for every restaurant in Bridgeport on popular on-line business review sites.
3. **Restaurant Investment Collateral Material.** The consultant will prepare a one-sheet (2-sided) brochure identifying top restaurant business assets for BBA to promote the neighborhood to restaurant investors or for restaurant business retention.

Mid-Range Steps. Activities to be undertaken in 3 to 9 months:

1. **Focus-Group to determine current Bridgeport current dining “brand” or niche.** The consultant will organize a focus group of representative Bridgeport diners to identify what, if any, niche Bridgeport is identified with in the regional dining market place. The consultant will recruit participants with gift-cards or other incentives. The consultant will provide representative food samples during the focus group, show images of Bridgeport and competitor area restaurants and lead the focus group through discussion of what they think Bridgeport represents in terms of dining brand, if any.
2. **Work with restaurant owners and managers on brand enhancement.** Working with a team of restaurant owners, managers and chefs (the team to be recruited by BBA), the consultant will review the focus group results and brainstorm concepts for enhancing the “brand” of Bridgeport dining, in a credible way.
3. **Focus group brand enhancement concepts with representative customer groups.** The consultant will organize a follow-up focus group to discuss brand-enhancement concepts. The goal will be to identify branding strategies that are credible to consumers that can elevate the competitiveness of Bridgeport restaurants overall. The focus group will look at concept illustrations and (hopefully) sample dishes from participating restaurants. For example, the brand enhancement concept could be “a new-take on authentic Chicago dining” where Chicago classics like the Polish or deep dish are re-conceptualized with alternative or locally-sources organic ingredients or something similar.
4. **Execute brand enhancement strategy to build recognition of brand enhancement.** Working with the restaurant leadership team and BBA leadership, the consultant will assist in launching one sample brand enhancement strategy. One example, if “a new-take on authentic Chicago dining” is the brand enhancement concept, and then each participating restaurant develops a new special dish that matches the concept. It is announced that new dishes are in the works at the neighborhood level, but the details are “cloaked in secrecy” and will be announced at a special event where prominent locals and members of the press are invited to sample the new fare. Then a press campaign is launched to promote the new Bridgeport dishes and the participating restaurants.

Longer range steps. Activities to be undertaken in 9 to 18 months.

1. **Identify best real estate for restaurant recruitment.** The consultant and BBA team will inventory occupied and vacant restaurant space and identify those spaces that would offer the best opportunity to create a stronger restaurant cluster around the new brand strategy in Bridgeport.
2. **Work with owners, managers and chefs to develop suitable restaurant concepts to fill dining “gaps” in Bridgeport restaurant mix.** Working with the restaurant leadership team, the consultant and BBA will identify investors, managers and chefs from the local talent base that can launch a new restaurant to fill a critical gap in the restaurant mix to enhance the new brand. For example, a new take on Chicago-style Polish favorites could open in a key area to fill-out and enhance the brand.

3. **Work with restaurant owners and managers to identify critical issues impeding restaurant performance and develop and advocate for appropriate solutions to issues.** These issues may include things like:
 - Customer access to side-street parking during peak times
 - Local business access to Comiskey Park (aka US Cellular Field) visitors before and after games.
 - Corridor appearance

Phase B: Comprehensive, Strategic Corridor Redevelopment Planning

The goal of this phase of the project is to develop a comprehensive strategic development plan for Bridgeport's commercial corridors. The planning process will engage a stakeholder group (decided upon by BBA) as a steering committee for the planning process. The process will include three large-scale public meetings. The outcome of the plan will be a plan document that guides economic development and physical/infrastructural improvement programming.

Working with a steering committee of volunteers identified by the BBA, the consultant will meet monthly for the 12 to 14 months of the planning process to review data, identify critical issues, and brainstorm solutions. The consultant will develop and circulate meeting agendas and meeting packets in advance of monthly meetings, and generate minutes of each meeting.

Throughout the planning process, the consultant will generate content for a website using either the BBA site, or a newly generated wordpress blog. This website will contain information about meetings, links to on-line surveys, results from meetings and information about the work of the steering committee (as directed by the BBA).

Fact-finding (3 months)

The fact finding portion of the planning effort is aimed at answering two primary questions. (1) What role do Bridgeport's commercial areas serve in the larger area economy (e.g. convenience shopping, dining and entertainment, industrial employment, etc)? And (2) How well do the corridors perform their given role(s)?

1. **Business performance.** Using key metrics such as business mix, gross retail sales, consumer spending patterns and employment figures, the consultant will identify what role(s) the corridor serves and how well it performs in these rolls compared to other benchmark cities and neighborhoods.
2. **Real estate performance.** Through a fine-grained analysis of real estate characteristics and field assessments, the consultant will evaluate the characteristics and performance of the commercial real estate market in Bridgeport, again compared against key benchmarks. The BBA will communicate with business and property owners to ensure that they are apprised of the need for their participation and assistance with field assessments.
3. **Physical form, mapping, traffic flow, transit and parking.** The consultant will map the form, traffic patterns, and transit access and right-of-way configurations to evaluate the characteristics and performance of the urban form of the commercial areas.
4. **Review of policy setting.** Through a review of the zoning, parking, sign-standards and historic preservation guidelines, the consultant will evaluate how the current codes may be affecting commercial district performance.
5. **Public survey.** It is important to evaluate how area consumers actually shop and what changes may earn more of their shopping dollars. The consultant will design and post an on-line survey

on surveymonkey.com to gather consumer preferences. The BBA and other neighborhood organizations will lead the outreach efforts to ensure a good response to the survey.

6. **Detailed investigation of catalyst sites.** The stakeholder committee will identify up to 6 key sites for detailed investigation. These site should include the Ramova Theater, large vacant parcels or other large development sites that are likely to have the most significant impact on development in Bridgeport. The consultant will gather relevant information including:
 - Mapping of each site, showing structures, public right-of-way, utilities and other key factors
 - Identification of property ownership and transaction history
 - A cursory examination of environmental indicators that may raise remediation concerns for redevelopment
 - Identification of current zoning and site ingress/egress issues
 - Development of alternative concept plans showing how the sites compare to common types of contemporary development prototypes. This comparison will help identify challenges inhibiting redevelopment, such as site geometry, ingress/egress, parcel assembly and other issues.

Critical Issues (1 month)

The goal of this phase of the planning process is to answer one question: What are the most critical issues that need to be addressed to allow the Bridgeport Commercial Corridors to perform better?

1. **Identify and prioritize critical issues.** At the fourth or fifth meeting of the steering committee, the consultant will lead the committee through a summary of the fact-finding phase and brainstorm and prioritize “critical issues” those issues (challenges and assets) that are most important to the redevelopment of the corridor.
2. **Develop “principles” and vision statement for addressing issues.** The consultant will lead the committee through a discussion of what principles and vision should guide the solutions to the critical issues. A draft vision statement with appropriate principles will be circulated for comment after the meeting.
3. **Public Meeting.** Within a month of the critical issues steering committee meeting, the consultant will lead a BBA sponsored public meeting for soliciting public and stakeholder feedback on the fact-finding and critical issues phases of the planning process. The meeting format will be:
 - A general introduction by BBA and area leadership
 - An description of the meeting process by the consultant
 - A small-group “round-robin” format where meeting participants break into small groups lead by volunteer steering committee members who are serving as moderators. Each group will have a limited time to review a portion of the committee work before moving to the next table. Tables will include topics such as “streetscape conditions”, “business mix”, “walkability”, “vision”, etc.
 - The consultant will develop and print posters or boards to provide a visual tool for the volunteer facilitators to lead their discussions.
 - The consultant will develop a mechanism for structured feedback so that the comments and ideas of each small group can be captured for input into the planning process.
 - At the conclusion of the meeting, the steering committee volunteers will each report back to the large group common themes or ideas from the round-robin.

Solutions (3 months)

The goal of this phase of the process is to answer one question: What changes can be made to address the critical issues and allow the corridors to perform better?

Through a series of steering committee meetings the consultant will lead discussions to brainstorm, prioritize and refine strategies and recommendations for change.

1. **Business development.** The first meeting will examine business development and business recruitment planning, using the fact-finding and public meeting results. The consultant will develop and circulate ideas in advance of the meeting. The steering team will review, brainstorm, prioritize and refine the ideas to the strongest, most appropriate business development ideas.
2. **Physical form and catalyst projects.** The second meeting of this phase will examine urban form, development possibilities for the priority redevelopment sites, major place-making projects, and historic preservation. The consultant will develop and circulate ideas in advance of the meeting. The steering team will review, brainstorm, prioritize and refine the ideas to the strongest, most appropriate planning ideas.
3. **Infrastructure planning.** The third meeting of this phase will examine infrastructural issues, such as streetscape, right of way configurations, connection to transit and other physical assets. The consultant will develop and circulate ideas in advance of the meeting. The steering team will review, brainstorm, prioritize and refine the ideas to the strongest, most appropriate infrastructure planning ideas.
4. **Public meeting.** At the conclusion of this phase, the consultant will organize a public meeting with a format similar to the first public meeting. The public meeting will focus around solutions and recommendations to make the corridors stronger and more competitive. The BBA and other neighborhood organizations will be responsible for outreach regarding the public meeting.

Implementation Strategies (2 months)

The goal of this phase of the planning process is to answer one question: What resources are needed to make the identified changes in the corridors.

1. Working with the steering committee, the consultant will lead the team through the possible tools, resources and programs available to help implement the planning recommendations. The steering committee will provide feedback about the political, public relations and organizational capacity to establish or utilize the appropriate tools.
2. Based on the feedback from the steering committee, the consultant will develop the framework for any new tools required to implement the plan, and document and estimate the steps and magnitude of tools needed to carry out implementation.

Workplan Development, Goal Setting and Evaluation Metrics (2 months)

During the final phase of the planning process, the consultant and BBA will prepare to carry out the work identified in the planning document.

1. The consultant will summarize the planning process and planning ideas into a final plan document of approximately 25 to 45 pages. The consultant will send drafts of the plan to the steering committee and BBA leadership for review and comments prior to publication.
2. The consultant will develop some number of posters and collateral material to accompany the plan document.
3. The consultant will work with the BBA board and leadership to develop staff workplans, set goals, and identify dashboard metrics to evaluate progress toward specific outcomes.

4. At the conclusion of the planning process, the consultant will prepare materials for a “gallery-style” public meeting where members of the public are invited (by the BBA) to attend an open house to see the posters representing the final results of the planning process and discuss, informally, the planning ideas with members of the steering committee, BBA and area leadership.

Suite of Additional Economic Development Services

In addition to project-based work, the DevelopmentTopia team offers a suite of economic development support services to ensure the success of the Bridgeport’s economic development efforts. If requested, these services may include, but are not limited to:

1. Preparing marketing material to highlight redevelopment opportunities to appropriate investors.
2. Undertaking market analysis to determine appropriate industries and businesses to promote redevelopment opportunities.
3. Identifying ownership, property status, history, environmental and infrastructure concerns affecting redevelopment potential of select properties
4. Troubleshooting issues that impede development (stormwater, zoning, infrastructure, assembly)
5. Identifying most developable properties, drafting appropriate development plans
6. Marketing sites and buildings to developers, business reps and tenant reps for interest
7. Providing development review and support services to ensure successful completion of projects
8. Preparing recommendations for policy, special-use taxing districts, or ordinances that promote redevelopment opportunities
9. Outreach to key property owners, property managers, business managers, brokers, and others.
10. Developing e-newsletters with positive, credible messaging for local business stakeholders and potential investors.
11. Updating website with property availability, contact info, incentives and development news.
12. Keeping key databases about business in the community accurate and up-to-date, including:
 - LOIS
 - Co-Star & Loopnet
 - Yelp & Google business reviews
13. Representing the community at Chicago-area retail development forums, such as International Council of Shopping Center events.
14. Development support services for proposed private developments, including development review, pro forma estimations, fiscal and economic impact estimates and related services as needed.
15. Providing confidential reports on economic development progress for the organization.
16. Surveying citizens and leaders about shopping patterns & desired businesses and develop visible marketing plan around most desired businesses.
17. Developing a suite of dashboard metrics for leadership review that quantitatively define economic performance against key benchmarks (to measure progress in economic development and chart specific growth targets).
18. Organizing events for local business leaders that outline economic development targets, discuss major business related issues (such as road construction projects, business regulatory changes and so on), and review progress toward goals.

Fee Schedule

The organization shall be billed monthly according to the fee schedule below as phases are approved by the organization. The organization will reimburse the consultant for any approved expenses, fees or any third-party work incurred by DevelopmentTopia in pursuit of the organization's economic development goals.

Invoices itemizing time, expenses or other costs will be provided monthly with 60 days net terms. Late payments will be charged a 10% per month late fee.

Fee Schedule:

Phase A	Time and expenses, not to exceed \$8,000
Phase B	\$25,000, lump sum billed monthly.
Additional services	Billed as needed.

Time and expenses for additional services will be billed as follows:

Principal	\$125 per hour
Associate	\$80 per hour
Reimbursable Expenses	At cost with no overhead charge
Approved 3 rd Party Work	At cost plus 10% overhead fee

About DevelopmentTopia

DevelopmentTopia specializes in local, strategic economic development, including:

- Econometrics for local policy makers
- Nuanced commercial corridor analytics
- Action-oriented redevelopment planning
- Facilitating public-private partnerships
- Business recruitment and retention
- Place-making programs

DevelopmentTopia was founded in 2011 by T. Abraham Lentner. Previously, Abraham Lentner held the position of Economic Development Director for the Village of Richton Park, where he managed over 50,000 square feet of leasable retail space in two Village-owned shopping centers. Abraham led the Village's business retention and recruitment efforts during the Great Recession, efforts that resulted in a 25% decrease in commercial vacancy and a 13% increase in retail sales from 2008 to 2010. Abraham also teaches an economic development course at the University of Illinois at Chicago on the topic of commercial corridor revitalization. Abraham has a Masters in Urban Planning and Policy from UIC and he has authored or contributed to over a dozen plans and planning publications in the last several years.

DevelopmentTopia

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