Acknowledgements

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**Steering Committee**
- CW Chan, Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC)
- Bonnie Ho, Pui Tak School
- Debbie Liu, CBCAC
- Paul Luu, Chinese American Service League
- Mabel Menard, Chinese American Museum of Chicago (CAMOC)
- Annette Moy, Chinese Christian Union Church
- Mabel Moy, Chinatown Chamber of Commerce
- Soo Lon Moy, CAMOC
- Paul Poy, Chinatown Special Services Area
- Darryl Tom, Chinatown Parking Corporation
- Ernest Wong, site design group ltd.
- David Wu, Pui Tak Center

**Project Partners and Advisors**
- Xiaocheng Chen, CBCAC student volunteer
- Angela Lin, CBCAC
- Marlise Fratinardo, Chicago Transit Authority
- Brenda McGruder, Chicago Department of Transportation
- Cindy Roubik, Chicago Department of Planning and Development
- Jackson Chiu, Ward 25 Office
- Tony Shu, Chinatown Chamber of Commerce (outgoing)
- Ada Ting, State Representative Theresa Mah
- Yman Vien, Chinese Benevolent Association
- Bill Wong, Kai Ping Association

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Unless otherwise specified, all photos and maps are by CMAP staff.
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About the Parking Management Plan
As recommended in the 2014 Chinatown Community Vision Plan, the Chinatown Parking Management Plan looks to develop parking management strategies that encourage better utilization of Chinatown’s parking supply to support the neighborhood’s vibrant businesses, while improving safety and mobility for all who live and work in Chinatown. The cultural and commercial success of Chinatown draws residents, workers, and visitors alike to the neighborhood.

The Existing Conditions Report documents seven months of research, analysis, and outreach activities. It is an overview of the current conditions for parking and transportation, and will be used as a tool to provide direction for the recommendations in the final Parking Plan. Appropriate parking management strategies will make it easier for those visiting, living, or working in Chinatown to safely walk or bike, visit local businesses, and find parking.

Public Engagement
Early in the planning process, many people gave their input on parking in Chinatown. Engagement opportunities have included: surveys of people walking, surveying residents and students at the Pui Tak Center, and interviewing key stakeholders, including business owners, elected officials, and other institutional leaders.

The engagement process highlighted a number of recurring themes that include safety concerns, attitudes about car ownership and parking, and difficulty finding parking during mealtimes. Most drivers expressed frustration with the inability to find free parking or any parking during congested hours. Stakeholders mentioned the potential role of mobile apps in finding and paying for parking spaces that are more convenient. Many people, especially older residents, walk for most trips; there are also many using bicycles for transportation. Safety for those walking and biking in the neighborhood is a primary concern.
Along with stakeholder information, a series of parking counts were conducted at different times of day and days of the week to better understand where and when people park. As predicted, mealtimes are when parking is busiest. Some residential lots are consistently underutilized, while more central on-street parking fills up early in the day. Most free parking is always full.

Data collected, issues identified

There are only very limited programs to incentivize transit, walking and biking for employees in Chinatown. With its many destinations, including Ping Tom Park, Chinatown Square, and the Wentworth corridor, the most convenient parking fills up quickly and stays full while many options are restricted (residential lots) or underutilized (spaces west of the freight rail line, metered parking near Ping Tom Park).
Some additional observations about parking:

- The area south of Cermak and east of the freight rail yard has the most free on-street parking and the neighborhood’s only permit parking
- Weekend parking is the busiest; weekdays at lunch is also a high demand time for parking, especially near Chinatown Square and Wentworth
- The area west of the freight railyard has no residential permit parking, and very little metered parking
- Large neighborhood barriers, such as poorly lit underpasses and tunnels, make some of the parking supply much less desirable to residents and visitors – and encourages driving for short trips
- Drivers prefer to park in the southern public lot, closest to Cermak
- Some metered spaces are frequently underutilized
- Many private parking lots are consistently underutilized

The priority issues to be addressed in the Chinatown Parking Management Plan will build off of many recommendations found in the Vision Plan, and include:

- Balancing supply and demand at peak periods
- Establishing a parking benefit district to retain parking revenue locally
- Increasing shared parking arrangements to better utilize the existing supply
- Encouraging employees to take transit, bike or walk to work
- Making improvements to the comfort and safety of walking in the area
- Making improvements to the safety and quality of public transportation and amenities
- Evaluating residential permit programs; and
- Harnessing new technology and trends for the betterment of the area

Moving Forward

As a thriving, nationally recognized Chinese neighborhood, Chicago’s Chinatown attracts visitors from Chicago, the region, and other states. Its strong sense of community makes it ideal for residents and businesses alike. Many employees, visitors, and residents are battling for the most convenient free parking spaces, causing traffic congestion and unsafe driving conditions. Yet some parking is consistently underutilized. The strategies to be developed in the Parking Management Plan aim to improve parking utilization throughout the neighborhood, while also ensuring safety and quality of life for everyone in Chinatown.
Section 1
INTRODUCTION
In 2014, the Chinatown Community Vision Plan was adopted with the goal of providing a framework for future decision-making to support long-term goals of the neighborhood. During the planning process, many stakeholders identified parking challenges; one final recommendation was to undertake a parking study. Building off of the Vision Plan recommendations, the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) is partnering with CMAP’s Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program to address parking management.

The existing conditions report is a critical first step in any planning process – laying the groundwork from which recommendations will ultimately be made. To properly address current parking congestion issues in the Chinatown neighborhood, it is important to understand how local stakeholders perceive parking. Additionally, having thorough on-the-ground knowledge of the existing supply and parking occupancy rates, as well as general transportation information, will help inform the strategies that are ultimately developed as a result of this research.

This report details the findings of the research, data gathered, and interviews conducted over a six-month period. The Existing Conditions Report is organized in the following sections:

- Section 1: Introduction and project background
  - Goals of parking study
- Section 2: Community outreach
  - Steering committee
  - Stakeholder interviews
  - Intercept surveys
- Section 3: Parking findings
  - Supply
  - Occupancy
- Section 4: Summary of parking-related issues
  - Economic development
  - Parking requirements, land use, & zoning
  - Transportation
  - Natural environment
- Section 5: Looking forward
Parking congestion is an indication of a lively neighborhood, but too much congestion can negatively impact businesses and residents alike. To better understand and address the parking challenges in Chinatown, this plan seeks to identify parking management strategies that would be appropriate for the area and ways to improve overall mobility for residents, workers and visitors. The boundaries of the study area are essentially 18th Street on the north, the Stevenson Expressway on the south, Clark Street on the east, and the Chicago River on the west. This area represents the commercial core of the Chinatown neighborhood.

Prioritizing access to the area through multiple transportation options, as well as making parking less complicated and less congested, will serve everyone, including the shopper who wants to park his or her car for a quick errand, the person walking to meet friends, the visitor from out of town, or a resident coming home after a long day.

Why does Chinatown need a parking management study?
Figure 1. Study Area
How does parking affect the Chinatown neighborhood?

The Vision plan emphasizes the importance of walking, biking, and using transit to get into and around the neighborhood. This remains a priority, but there are still many people who depend on their cars, and there are some trips that are more difficult to make without a personal automobile. Many people who have strong connections to Chinatown live outside the core area and in surrounding suburbs. According to the Vision Plan, over 84 percent of people working in the core live outside of its boundaries. Many people who grew up in Chinatown have since moved away, but continue to visit regularly – usually by car.

The supply and management of parking influence the character of the area, how people decide to travel, and how much time they choose to spend in a location. It can impact the safety of an area, as well as the ability of businesses to appeal to their customers. Too little supply can make the area unattractive to potential businesses and customers; mismanaged supply keeps prime spaces full while nearby spaces remain vacant. Too much supply can increase the demand for parking, because more people decide to drive – even for short distances, resulting in increased traffic congestion. An oversupply of surface parking can negatively impact the built environment by creating gaps between buildings, creating large “dead zones” with little activity, and making walking and riding a bike unpleasant and unsafe.

If parking is not managed properly, those who need to drive end up wasting time driving in circles looking for a parking space, adding to neighborhood congestion. Poor management could also frustrate visitors who then decide to stop shopping or dining in the neighborhood. When parking is properly managed, a good rule of thumb is that one out of every seven parking spaces should be vacant, so that a driver can quickly locate a space when needed.

The neighborhood is densely populated with both homes and businesses. The popularity of the neighborhood’s restaurants, shopping, and nightlife brings even more people to the area, and conflicts arise between residents and visitors when neighborhood parking is strained. There are a variety of parking needs on residential streets; there are households with garages and some without; some residents choose to park their car on the street; at times residents have guests parking in the neighborhood. There are many people who take quick trips by car, when walking would only take a few minutes longer.

As communities grow, their parking needs change too, requiring different types of parking management. Addressing any parking problems should be part of a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system evaluation. Driving and parking make up just one facet of a community’s transportation infrastructure. In an area as well-served by transit as Chinatown, many people are able to live without cars. The area also has many people who get around by bicycle. Continuing to support the active transportation options helps to reduce the strain on parking, helps residents lead healthier lives, supports residents aging in place, and can be better for business who have more foot traffic.
Project process and next steps

Steps one and two involve a thorough analysis of the existing conditions within the community using information gathered through one-on-one stakeholder interviews, steering committee meetings, review of previous studies, and collection of maps and data. The results of these steps are presented in this report. Step three will focus on identifying appropriate strategies for parking management in Chinatown based on findings from this report and a public workshop. Steps four and five will combine efforts from previous phases to create the parking management plan containing policies, programs, and action steps recommended to assist Chinatown in achieving the future vision.

Figure 2. Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN.</th>
<th>JUL.</th>
<th>AUG.</th>
<th>SEP.</th>
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1. Project orientation  
2. Assess existing conditions  
3. Research and visioning  
4. Draft plan development  
5. Final plan and implementation
Section 2
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A primary goal of the Chinatown Parking Management Plan is to optimize community engagement throughout the planning and decision-making process. By engaging key stakeholders and populations that have been typically underrepresented or harder to reach in previous planning initiatives, a more detailed view of the existing challenges and opportunities can be developed for the plan.

To emphasize broad-based inclusion of the community, CMAP has worked with the staff and volunteers from the CBCAC, as well as elected officials, interviewed key community leaders, conducted intercept surveys, and surveyed students at local Citizenship classes and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the Pui Tak Center.

Key findings

Through input collected from stakeholders during the early outreach phases, the following points or themes were commonly discussed:

- Parking demand peaks during mealtimes, with midday on Sunday being the busiest time
- Many people with roots in the Chinatown community do not live there and are likely to drive
- New immigrants are less likely to own cars, but more people are coming to the US with sufficient wealth to purchase cars than in previous decades and it is creating a higher automobile ownership rate
- Similar to any neighborhood, many people avoid paying for parking unless there are no free options, which leads to a significant amount of traffic as drivers circle the block looking for a free parking space
- Walking is an important mode of transportation for many in the area, especially seniors
- Safety is a primary concern for many residents; some areas need better lighting
- It is important for residents to be able to find parking when they return from work
- There are no options for booking parking through online applications or paying a premium for convenient parking
- Large employers are more likely to provide a parking subsidy to their employees than a subsidy for transit, walking, or biking
- With the exception of groups of adolescents and teenagers, most people who are riding bicycles in the area use them for utilitarian trips
- There is a desire for more public resting space, benches, and adult exercise equipment in public areas (which is gaining in popularity in China)
- Ride-hailing companies such as Uber and Lyft have been good for Chinatown, where it had been difficult to hail a cab in years past, but designated drop-off/ pick-ups may be needed
- There is a desire for bringing back shuttle buses between Chinatown and McCormick Place, as well as new shuttles to the Loop and key destinations
- Double-parked vehicles are a nuisance for vehicular traffic and people riding bicycles
Steering Committee Meetings

The Steering Committee is tasked with providing assistance and guidance in the development of the plan, providing input on existing issues and opportunities based on their institutional roles, and reviewing plan documents. The first Steering Committee was held on August 2, 2018 at the Chinatown Library to introduce the project to the members and gather feedback regarding issues and concerns they would like to see addressed in the plan.

The Steering Committee is comprised of a wide variety of interests and perspectives, ranging from community business owners and organization leaders to elected officials. Meetings are public and open to the press. The invited Steering Committee members include:

- CW Chan/Debbie Liu, Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community
- Phyllis Cavallone, St. Therese School*
- Helen Choi, Chinatown Square Association*
- Marlise Fratinardo, Chicago Transit Authority
- Bonnie Ho, Pui Tak School
- Ivy Lam, Chinese American Citizens Alliance*
- Hong Liu, MAHA*
- Paul Luu, Chinese American Service League
- Brenda McGruder, Chicago Department of Transportation
- Mabel Menard, Chinese American Museum of Chicago (CAMOC)

“\textit{I would have driven if I knew how cheap the validated parking was!}”
- survey respondent

- Catherine Moy, Haines Elementary School*
- Helen Moy, Chinese American Civic Council*
- Mabel Moy, Chinatown Chamber of Commerce
- George Lee, St. Therese Church*
- Soo Lon Moy, CAMOC
- Paul Poy, Chinatown Special Services Area
- Cindy Roubik, Chicago Department of Planning and Development
- Tony Shu, Chinatown Chamber of Commerce (former)
- Jackson Chiu, Ward 25
- Darryl Tom, Chinatown Parking Corporation
- Ada Tong, State Representative Theresa Mah
- Yman Vien, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
- Ernest Wong, site design group ltd.
- David Wu, Pui Tak Center
- Johnny Zheng, Fujian Chamber of Commerce*

*Invited members who were unable to attend the first meeting
Key Person Interviews

In order to gain further insight into issues and opportunities that exist in Chinatown, CMAP staff conducted nine interviews with key stakeholders. These individuals represented a wide variety of interests and perspectives, and ranged from institutional leaders to business owners to residents. In addition to residents and stakeholders, conversations and interviews were conducted with the following organizations: CASL, Chinatown Chamber, Chinatown Parking Corporation, Pui Tak Center, CBCAC, and the Chinese American Museum of Chicago (CAMOC).

Collectively, these stakeholders highlighted many aspects of the Chinatown neighborhood that make it such a vital part of Chicago. Important factors include the people, businesses, restaurants, and an engaged community. Words frequently used to describe the area include: authentic, walkable, complex, and vibrant. Stakeholders also brought up needs and challenges that they hope the Parking Management Plan will address, ranging from parking availability to pedestrian safety. Many interviewees expressed concern for the lack of parking available in Chinatown on the weekends and at dinnertime. It is perceived that this poses a challenge to customers and visitors, discouraging people from coming to the area. Others highlighted the importance of parking availability for the people who live here rather than just the people who come to visit.

There was some discussion around changing attitudes towards driving that don’t reflect broader trends in the rest of Chicago. While many people are attracted to living in Chicago’s transit-accessible neighborhoods to drive less, that is not the case for all. Compared to decades past, a much larger percentage of recent immigrants coming to Chinatown have the financial means to purchase an automobile. Owning a car is more affordable in the US than it is in China, and there is an attachment of status that goes with driving that many immigrants aspire to achieve. Also, many Chinese families have moved to the suburbs and drive in on the weekends. Overall, many more people are driving and it is causing a lot of congestion.

Although various issues emerged from these interviews, a common theme was congested spaces on the weekends, and a favorable view of returning any additional parking revenue to the neighborhood. Some interviews cited a need for safer conditions for people walking and biking to support active and public transportation. Many community stakeholders saw an opportunity for “VIP parking,” which would allow people to choose between the convenience of a select number of spaces or lower cost parking that is slightly less convenient. An important aspect of this would be that any additional revenues be retained locally. Some were wary of the potential class issues that could result from such a system. Many employees park in the Chinatown parking lots and their employers provide discounted monthly parking, but do not provide any similar discounts on transit or incentives to ride bicycles or walk to work. The prevalence of subsidizing parking is surprising when the majority of Chinatown residents don’t own cars.

The complexity around the topic of gentrification has some hesitant to support extreme “makeovers.” An important lesson in streetscaping and transportation improvements can be found on Argyle Street on the north side, whose makeover improved walkability and beautified the area, which has many Vietnamese and southeast Asian residents and businesses. The construction process was difficult to weather, and while the beautification attracted more customers, this lead to an increase in rents. The southeast Asian population is now moving further from the area and primarily driving in to visit the grocery stores. Parking lots at the grocery stores are extremely full at many points in the day, while on-street metered parking is not. The potential impacts of any changes to the local community should be kept at the forefront of considerations.
With help from high school volunteers from CBCAC’s youth program, CMAP staff conducted intercept surveys with 36 people in Chinatown. These people included residents, visitors, and those that work in the neighborhood. Participants were engaged regardless of their relationship to the area. Surveys consisted of five questions: reason for being in Chinatown, how they got to Chinatown, how many blocks they were willing to walk to their destination when parking, if they paid for parking, and what influenced their choice to pay or not pay for parking.

Overall, most respondents (56%) came to Chinatown via a personal vehicle. The second most popular mode was walking (36%). These two modes were the most popular regardless of the respondent’s reason for being in Chinatown. The average number of blocks a respondent would walk from a parking spot to their destination was just over three blocks. Respondents also indicated they would pay for parking if it either ensured a space or was affordable.

After separating the surveys by relationship to Chinatown (resident, visitor, and worker), results changed. Residents opted to walk more than drive, although personal vehicle was the second most common mode. Those that work in Chinatown also preferred to walk, followed by taking the train or a personal vehicle. Visitors to Chinatown drove far more than the other two groups, followed by walking, then the train. Other information, such as a respondent’s willingness to pay for parking and how many blocks they were willing to walk, were similar across all groups.

In the comment section, most indicated some level of dissatisfaction with parking and transportation in Chinatown—usually due to difficulty finding a spot or traffic congestion. Suggestions to alleviate these issues included more free parking, less parking, a traffic study, and more buses. Adding more parking was the most frequently suggested comment. Chinatown has a wealth of transportation options, including the Red Line, multiple bus routes, Divvy stations, and a water taxi stop, in addition to highway access. Despite the many modes, those surveyed still preferred a personal vehicle, especially those who were visiting.

In early December, CMAP staff conducted workshops in conjunction with the Pui Tak Center, asking 74 students in ESL classes and Citizenship classes about their transportation preferences and habits. Sixty percent of students were between 35 and 64 years. Twenty-five percent were between 65 and 79, and fifteen percent were between 20 and 34.

About 25 percent of students drive their own car to class, 21 percent walk, seventeen percent ride CTA buses and nearly 17 percent ride the CTA train.

Figure 3. Workshop results: How do you travel in / around Chinatown?
While everyone prefers to park for free, over half of the respondents indicated that they are willing to pay for convenient parking and only one-third said that they only park in free spaces.

When it comes to barriers to walking or riding a bicycle, safety is the primary concern. When walking, people fear being the victim of a crime. For bicycling, people feel that the roads are unsafe. For those that do not ride CTA buses, 22 percent said that the bus doesn’t go where they need it to go. Fifteen percent said that it is too expensive, 15 percent are afraid of crime, and 10 percent said that they do not know how to ride the bus.

Over 45 percent said that it’s hard to find free parking, 35 percent said that it’s hard to find any parking (free or paid), 6 percent said it’s hard to find metered parking, and none of the 74 students agreed with the statement, “We do not have any parking challenges.” Full survey results are in the Appendix.
Section 3
PARKING FINDINGS
Current Parking Conditions

Chinatown is a vibrant neighborhood whose commercial core is tucked tightly between ribbons of highways and the river. The vibrancy comes from many places, but mostly from the people who live and work in the neighborhood. Chinatown attracts people from all over the region and the country; its draw brings traffic congestion and parking problems.

The existing parking supply serves a diverse set of needs, including parking for residents, businesses loading and unloading, people working in Chinatown and people visiting the neighborhood. Customer parking demand changes by time of day and time of year, but the parking supply does not, creating congestion during some times and underutilization at others. Some areas experience higher demand for parking, and weekends are the busiest time of the week.

Three of the goals of the Chinatown Vision Plan were to (1) Strengthen Chinatown as the center for Chinese culture and community and (2) Foster a lively, safe, clean, and vibrant community that provides a mix of retail, restaurants, services, and other amenities for both visitors and residents and (3) Improve transportation accessibility in and around Chinatown. The Vision Plan has a strong support for the local residents, as well as visitors. The biggest challenge seems to be balancing the parking supply—which is usually done with pricing – without making Chinatown unfriendly to the people who live here, grew up here, or rely on the goods and offerings of the neighborhood. Yet the current parking situation is frustrating to residents who experience the area’s regular congestion, confusing to visitors who are unable to easily locate parking spots, and can deter businesses from gaining potential consumers.

Key Findings

After a review of the parking data collected, the following key findings were identified:

- Many residential parking lots are underutilized, while free street parking is full most of the time.
- Most metered parking is empty in the early morning hours and fills up by around 11:00 am (when most restaurants open); this indicates that very few local residents are using the metered parking during off hours, when there is no charge.
- The demand for parking increases with the density of commercial and retail trade within the study area, causing some areas to be consistently full while others remain underutilized.
- One of the biggest draws to the area is the food, and parking tends to fill up around lunch and dinner.
- The long, dark underpasses are unfriendly to people walking and encourage some residents to drive for short trips.
- The spaces closest to the intersection of Cermak and Wentworth are the first to fill up, with free spaces filling before metered spaces, and the furthest (least convenient) filling up last.
The study area has over 3,600 parking spaces, with slightly more in parking lots than on-street. The approximate breakdown of the parking spaces surveyed within the study area is shown in Tables 1 and 2. Of the on-street supply, 60 percent is free, 26 percent of the spaces are metered, 12 percent are residential permit spaces and the remaining 2.4 percent are for business loading or customer standing zones. Of the off-street supply (parking lots), 43 percent are associated with residential developments, just under 40 percent are paid public spaces, over 15 percent are associated with commercial businesses, and 3 percent are associated with community uses such as schools, museums, and service organizations.

### Table 1. On-street Parking Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of parking</th>
<th>Spaces</th>
<th>% of Type Total (on-street/ off-street)</th>
<th>% of Total Supply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metered</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permit</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loading</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total on-street</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,654</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>46%</strong></td>
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### Table 2. Off-street Parking Inventory

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<th>Type of parking</th>
<th>Spaces</th>
<th>% of Type Total (on-street/ off-street)</th>
<th>% of Total Supply</th>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
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<td>Community</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
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<td><strong>Total on-street</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,977</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>54%</strong></td>
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Figure 4. Parking Supply

Chinatown

Off-street parking
- Commercial
- Community
- Public
- Residential

Study Area
- North Chinatown
- South Chinatown
- West Chinatown
- Full Area
- Buildings

On-street parking
- Standing
- Loading
- Free
- Metered
- Permit
- Accessible permit
- No parking

Source: CMAP, 2018.
Figure 5. Parking distribution by area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Commercial</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>
North Chinatown

With Chinatown Square and new residences north of Archer, this area has the highest proportion of newer development. The area is generally quiet during weekday mornings, and typically builds energy as the day and the week progress. The main draw is 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 for shopping, to see friends, and attend religious services. The two large public parking lots are owned by IDOT and leased to the Chinatown Parking Corporation. Revenues generated from parking fees ($2 for 3 hours with validation) go back to the community through the Chinatown Parking Corporation.

Also included in this section is Ping Tom Park, a 17-acre recreational park at the north end of the study area. There is a direct connection to downtown via water taxi during warmer months, which is primarily utilized by tourists. Some people take advantage of free parking near the park and apartment buildings and leave their cars while traveling to other parts of the city. Most of the apartments have one parking space included, but many apartments are shared by multiple people with cars. This area also has the CTA Cermak-Chinatown Red line station and the Chinatown Branch Public Library. This area is a key distributor of informal shuttles that transport service workers to the suburbs as well as Casino shuttles that transport residents and visitors to and from Casinos in northwest Indiana. Some of those workers and casino visitors may be driving into Chinatown for the shuttles.

This area has the most public parking, as well as the most parking overall, in Chinatown, with over 1,600 spaces. The large supply is mainly a result of the IDOT-owned lots and large residential parking lots.
Fig X. Average parking occupancy in North Chinatown
South Chinatown

The traditional heart of the community, Old Chinatown is defined by its dense commercial corridor along Wentworth, south of Cermak Road, which is especially bustling during weekday mornings when local residents gather for their daily errands and social traditions. The Pui Tak Center, Haines Elementary, St. Therese Chinese Catholic Church, and St. Therese School are in this area. Most of the area is residential and there are many streets with residential permit restrictions. There is a small 2-story parking garage between Wentworth and the highway, north of 24th Street. The Chinatown Vision Plan noted the south end of this corridor as having particularly difficult parking conditions, with congestion in the morning, when trucks make deliveries, parents drop children off at schools, and restaurant workers gather to await carpool vans.

This area has the most on-street parking spaces, the most free parking spaces, and the most residential permit spaces. It has the least amount of off-street parking due to the older nature of development. The one small parking garage allows public parking, but is slated to become a hotel with minimal parking. The newly-opened Jaslin Hotel on Cermak is also in this area, and has no parking.
Fig X. Average parking occupancy in South Chinatown

Average parking occupancy

- Under construction
- Standing
- Loading
- Free
- Metered
- Permit
- Accessible permit

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2018.
West Chinatown

The western edge of Chinatown is more industrial in nature, but also has residential properties, a grocery store, Connie’s Pizza, and a night club. The night club is a newer addition, but the small shopping strip on 24th Street has been around for longer. The area is largely cut off from the eastern side by a freight rail line that cuts through all of Chinatown along Stewart Avenue. The freight line has a facility above the roadways that spans the width of one block from 23rd Street south past 28th Street. While people can walk and bike under this facility, it is dark, not well maintained, and feels unsafe. This limits connectivity with the more vibrant parts of the neighborhood.

This area has the least amount of parking of the three sections, but has the most auto-oriented feeling due to the high amount of off-street commercial parking spaces and large residential parking lots. There is very little metered parking, and no residential permit parking.

Highways above 24th Place.

Passing underneath railyards is unpleasant for pedestrians to walk towards the core.
Fig X. Average parking occupancy in West Chinatown

Average parking occupancy

- Under construction
- Standing
- Loading
- Free
- Metered
- Permit
- Accessible permit

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2018.
The non-profit Chinatown Parking Corporation (CPC) leases land from IDOT to provide parking west of Wentworth, in two lots north and south of Archer. Parking revenue is returned to the community through grants to organizations. In addition to supporting local non-profit organizations, the Chinatown Parking Corporation spends money on private security, street cleaning, and landscaping maintenance. Local businesses can offer discounted parking through the validation program established by the Chamber of Commerce. The businesses pay $1 for each parking validation. There are a total of approximately 615 parking spaces in those lots.

The City of Chicago imposes a tax on parking lot and garage operators of 20 percent (weekend parking) or 22 percent (weekday parking) for any payments over $2 for a 24-hour period. To avoid this tax, the CPC keeps validated parking costs at $2, because an additional charge of $1 would only result in $0.40 more for the community.

A large number of local employers offer discounted monthly parking passes to their employees. An analysis of one week in July showed that on any given weekday, approximately 450 drivers with monthly parking passes enter the lots throughout the day. Some of these may include double counts, if the driver leaves and returns in the same day.

Figure 6. Arrival and departure times of monthly parkers in Chinatown public parking lots
For “transient parkers,” or those who pay a daily rate, arrivals happen slightly later and have a higher peak at dinnertime. There are also significantly more daily parkers than monthly parkers. During weekdays (from a sample summer month), there were between 530 and 870 daily parkers each day. On the weekends, the entries were over 1,900 with slightly more on Sunday. There is a clear link with lunch and dinner for both arrival and departure peaks.

Figure 7. Arrival and departure times of daily parkers in Chinatown public parking lots
In order to better understand parking behavior patterns within the study area, a walkshed was created around concentrations of “Points of Interest” (POI’s). POI’s consist of retail, service, and institutional locations that attract consumers to the area. Each of the larger pink dots represents 10 different types of POI’s within the study area (Figure 10). A blue walkshed of an eighth of a mile—about a 2 minute walk—was established around concentrations of POI’s. This distance was chosen since it is about how long most drivers are willing to walk from their car to their final destination; if the distance is past an eighth of a mile, the driver is more likely to circle the block for a more convenient space before parking. The yellow walkshed is one-quarter mile, or about a 5 minute walk. It is about a 10-minute walk from Connie’s Pizza / Park to Shop Supermarket on the western edge to Wentworth on the eastern edge, and a 16-minute walk to Ping Tom Memorial Park on the northern edge. A healthy adult could walk from Ping Tom Park south along Wentworth to 24th Place, west to Connie’s Pizza and return to Ping Tom Park within 45 minutes, about a two mile walk. The 2-minute walkshed is shown on the small occupancy maps comparing metered and free parking occupancy.
Observed parking occupancy rates

Methodology

To understand where people park in the study area, CMAP staff and volunteer assistants counted the number of parked cars on street segments at various times of day, on various days of the week. The subsequent maps display line segments color-coded by the percentage of parked cars observed during the studied times of day.

Car counts were conducted on streets and parking lots on weekdays hourly between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm, as well as 6:00 pm. Weekend parking counts occurred at 8:00 am, 10:00 am, 12:00 noon, 1:00 pm, 2:00 pm, 6:00 pm, and 7:00 pm. While parking occupancy varies from day to day, month to month, or seasonally, these counts help to give a better general understanding of where over- and under-utilized parking patterns are within the study area. Times were chosen to reflect peak loading, shopping, arrival, and departure times of residents, commuters, employees, and shoppers within the study area.

Weekday parking counts were kept separate from weekend counts to reflect the habits of weekday shoppers, residents, and employees; Sunday was also separated since the behavior of patrons on Saturday may differ from that of Sunday, attracting more families, restaurant patrons, and religious worshipers. Not all parking lots or street segments were collected at all of the times listed. Friday evenings have been noted as being very congested, but staff time did not allow for additional counts.

The target occupancy rate for parking is 85 percent, indicating a high level of activity without complete parking congestion. When parking is 85 percent full, there are many cars parked, but there are still one or two spaces available per block. When occupancy levels exceed 90 percent, the area would be considered to have “parking congestion,” in which drivers circle the block in search of parking, or queue up to take available spots. Occupancy below 80 percent represents underutilized parking. Ideally, streets in the study area would be in the range of 81-90 percent occupied, where a driver would be able to easily find a parking spot, but the spaces are still well-utilized.

### Table 3. Parking count times

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</table>
Figure 11. Average parking occupancy

![Map showing average parking occupancy in different areas of Chinatown, with color coding indicating occupancy levels.](image-url)
Average occupancy

While the target occupancy is 85 percent, an average occupancy of 85 percent does not necessarily indicate efficient utilization. Many streets in the study area experience 100 percent occupancy at peak periods, which is not ideal.

An average of all parking counts by type of parking shows that free parking spaces are, unsurprisingly, the most desired and highly utilized parking spaces. Most on-street parking has higher average occupancy rates than the off-street parking lots, with the exception of loading zones. The public parking lots are the most heavily used and regularly occupied off-street parking spaces. Permit parking has a relatively high average, with some streets averaging above 90 percent occupancy and others below 50 percent average occupancy.

Figure 12. Average occupancy by type of parking

Source: CMAP, 2018.
Weekday, early morning (8:00 am - 10:00 am)

Most people with cars parked in the area during this time are residents, employees, or short term customers. Chinatown experiences the lowest rates of parking occupancy at this time. Areas with the highest parking occupancy are the free residential streets within—or just outside of—the walkshed, such as W. 22nd Place, W. 23rd Street, W. 24th Street, and W. 24th Place in south Chinatown. Classes are already underway at the Pui Tak Center and spaces near there fill up quickly.

The free streets in the northern section such as Wells and Cullerton also have high occupancy early in the morning. Free parking under the Dan Ryan Expressway remains very underutilized as it is an unpleasant area to walk in and people may not feel safe leaving cars parked there for extended periods of time.

The full, free streets may have cars that belong to residents who don’t use them frequently, and they may also have people who are driving to the area for classes or work early in the day. Residential permit parking on 24th Street gets below 50 percent occupied at 9:00 AM, while 23rd Place permit parking remains above 80 percent occupied.
Figure 11. Free weekday morning parking occupancy

Figure 12. Metered weekday morning parking occupancy
Figure 1. Weekday morning parking occupancy

Weekday Occupancy
Morning (8 AM - 10 AM)

- Missing curb data
- Surface lots / no data
- Rail

Miles

0
0.25
Weekday, late morning (10:00 am - noon)

By late morning, parking is already becoming congested on many streets. Large lots for public and commercial parking, as well as smaller residential lots are less than half full. This is approaching the busiest time for weekday parking: lunch hour. The last parking spaces to get full are on-street metered parking spaces, with the exception of Wentworth whose metered spaces get full earlier due to the limited number of publicly available spaces in southern section of the study area. The free residential parking areas that were full early in the day remain full or close to capacity. The metered spaces begin to fill up, as more people are arriving to the neighborhood.

Figure 14. Free weekday late morning parking occupancy

Figure 15. Metered weekday late morning parking occupancy
Figure 16. Weekday morning parking occupancy

Weekday Occupancy
Late Morning (10 AM - 12 Noon)

Colors represent different occupancy levels:
- 0% - 10%
- 11% - 20%
- 21% - 30%
- 31% - 40%
- 41% - 50%
- 51% - 60%
- 61% - 70%
- 71% - 80%
- 81% - 90%
- 91% - 100%

- Missing curb data
- Surface lots / no data
- Rail

Miles

0

0.25
Weekday, midday (Noon - 2:00 pm)

Chinatown at lunchtime is the peak parking time on weekdays. While the public lot south of Archer fills to nearly 85 percent full, the lot to the north of Archer is still below 60 percent full. There may be a preference for the southern lot due to its more central location. Less convenient metered spaces are still underutilized, and free residential spaces are quite full. Residential permit streets see low occupancy.
Figure 19. Weekday midday parking occupancy

Weekday Occupancy
Midday (12 Noon - 2 PM)
Weekday, early afternoon (2:00 pm - 4:00 pm)

By the early afternoon, the metered spaces in the northern section of the study area begin to empty out. Metered spaces along Wentworth in South Chinatown remain quite full, especially the spaces closer to Cermak. The public parking lot south of Archer remains at a desirable occupancy level, with plenty of capacity in the lot to the north of Archer. The Park to Shop Grocery store (formerly Hong Kong Market) in the western part of the study area is quite busy with people looking for parking, some of whom park on the street in front of the store.

Figure 20. Free weekday early afternoon parking occupancy

Figure 21. Metered weekday early afternoon parking occupancy
Figure 22. Weekday early afternoon parking occupancy
Weekday, late afternoon (3:00 pm - 5:00 pm)

After the lunch rush and before the dinner rush, parking occupancy falls or remains low in the metered spaces, and remains high in the free spaces. Occupancy also drops in the public parking lot north of Archer. Employees who use the lots to park during the workday may be leaving during this time. Likewise, people returning home from work will be seeking out the free spaces near their home.

For this time period, there was missing data in some sections at 4:00 pm, so data from 3:00 pm is used. For the majority of the streets and parking lots, the data shown is from 4:00 pm.
Figure 25. Weekday afternoon parking occupancy
**Weekday, early evening (6:00 pm - 7:00 pm)**

By evening, the parking lot north of Archer empties out, but two of the three lots on the western side of the neighborhood see increased occupancy with people getting dinner and returning from work. The larger lot is home to Connie’s Pizza, and the southern lot belongs to a condominium complex. Metered parking on Wentworth in South Chinatown and at Chinatown Square remains highly occupied. Free parking in the residential portions of the neighborhood remain highly utilized as the work day ends. Parking under the Dan Ryan Expressway sees a slight increase, but remains low. Metered parking on Wentworth north of Cermak has very low occupancy.

**Figure 26. Free weekday early evening parking occupancy**

**Figure 27. Metered weekday early evening parking occupancy**
Figure 28. Weekday afternoon parking occupancy
Weekends

Parking demand on the weekends is higher than weekdays in Chinatown. Generally, in the early morning hours on both Saturday and Sunday, any paid parking is the last to fill up. At 8:00 am, most metered spaces are vacant. Wentworth is the exception to this because there are so few public parking spaces in the southern area; the metered spaces are more highly utilized. By 10:00 am, drivers start filling the northern metered spaces, starting with those closest to Chinatown Square.

Residential parking lots remain underutilized, possibly because some residents are driving short distances from their apartments to destinations in the study area. The Haines Elementary school parking lot and a commercial bank parking lot in the heart of the study area remain empty while spaces around them are full throughout the weekend. Free spaces on Archer Avenue west of Canal Street and on 24th Place under the Dan Ryan Expressway, as well as metered spaces on the north side of Archer between Wentworth and Clark Street are the most underutilized on-street parking in the study area. Connie’s Pizza parking lot is underutilized outside of dinner hours. Some people visiting the adjacent Park-to-Shop grocer use Connie’s parking lot when the grocery lot is full (as it often is on the weekends). The residential parking lot just south of 18th Street west of Wentworth was never observed to be more than half full. Maps on pages 44 and 45 show the lowest overall observed parking occupancy (Saturday, early morning) and the highest overall peak occupancy (Saturday early afternoon). Throughout the day, Sundays have slightly higher occupancy than Saturdays, but the peak observation was on a Saturday. Additional maps are available on the project website.
Empty metered parking early on a Saturday morning, usually full by 11:00 am.

Underutilized bank parking during peak Sunday dinner hours.

Double-parked truck, causing traffic congestion for cars circling the block for parking.

8:10 AM, Saturday

Chinatown Square parking, with cars waiting for drivers to leave a space.
Figure 29. Weekend low parking occupancy

Saturday Occupancy
Early morning (8 AM - 9 AM)
Figure 30. Weekend peak occupancy

Saturday Occupancy
Early afternoon (2 PM - 3 PM)
Section 4
PARKING-RELATED ISSUES
Economic development

Chinatown is facing strong development pressure within its boundaries and just outside of them. Parking is a key concern of local businesses and residents who are worried about increasing pressure on what seems to be an already limited supply of parking. A more varied mix of uses can help spread parking demand out through the day, while a concentration of uses (such as restaurants) puts enormous strain during peak hours. Financial incentives for employees can encourage them to shift from driving to other modes, freeing up space for customers. By looking at the existing business in the community, Chinatown can better understand the relationship between its current parking supply and demand, and determine the best path forward for accommodating future growth.

- Between the Chinese American Service League (CASL) and the many restaurants, Chinatown jobs are highly concentrated in Accommodation and Food Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance. These industries employ nearly 37.1 percent and 23 percent of all Chinatown workers, respectively.
- The Chinatown 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 nine.
- TIF funding has been instrumental in the development of some of Chinatown’s key retail and recreational amenities. TIF funding helped develop Chinatown Square retail plaza, Jade Garden Apartments and Archer Court Apartments, as well as the northern portion of Ping Tom Park and the new athletic field house.
- The ten most common business types in Chinatown’s core are restaurants (52), grocers-retail (21), gift shops (18), beauty salons (12), bakers-retail (11), banks (10), associations (10), travel agencies (9), “non-classifiable establishments” (7), and insurance offices (6).
- Chinatown’s core has approximately 2 million square feet of commercial space, with 63 percent (or 1.2 million square feet) of that being retail space.

- Industrial spaces have low vacancy (6.7 percent) and retail spaces have very low vacancy (0.3 percent), while its office spaces have a high vacancy rate of 22.7 percent.

The Chinatown Chamber of Commerce works with local businesses to help them grow and maintain their customer base. Parking is very important to the businesses in the area. The Chamber manages the two main public parking lots and offers a discounted price with validation. The low price is appealing to people who may take the CTA red line downtown or to Comiskey Field, after buying a bubble tea and getting validation.

With so many small businesses, it is difficult to communicate a clear employee parking strategy to the people working in Chinatown. As mentioned previously, many employers offer discounted parking passes to their employees and do not offer transit benefits or financial support for bicycling or walking to work. Employees who work on weekdays will use their monthly parking pass to drive and park in Chinatown on the weekends as well.

A concentration of restaurants means that parking problems are concentrated around lunch, dinner, and weekend dim sum. Outside of peak times, many parking spaces are underutilized.

Early morning view from a bakery on Wentworth.
Figure 31. Zoning and transit-served locations
Parking requirements have historically been used with the hope of easing parking demand with an increase in development activity. Unfortunately, requiring parking does not have that effect. It creates a scattered supply of private parking that cannot be shared between uses. In fact, many planners argue for an elimination in the use of parking requirements to avoid encouraging driving while discouraging other modes of transportation. Buffalo, NY became the first US city to eliminate all parking requirements city-wide in 2016. The City of Chicago has taken some small steps toward easing away from parking requirements by identifying “transit-served” locations where parking requirements can be lowered to zero for some uses.

Approximately half of the Chinatown study area falls into the “transit-served” designation, which allows for increased density and floor area ratio (FAR), and reduced parking requirements, depending on the use that will go in the area. A high density of mixed uses can be served by a lower density of parking because more destinations can be accessed by walking, and parking spaces can be shared between many locations. About half of the land area is zoned “Planned Development” or “Planned Manufacturing,” which allows developers to work with the City to determine details of what can get constructed where and the level of intensity and parking required.

The southern area of Chinatown is where the majority of residential parcels are located; a large portion of residential uses are in Planned development zones. The typical residential parking requirement in Chicago is 1 space per unit, but can be reduced to none in transit served locations if the developer adheres to set standards by the City’s Planning and Development Department. Residential parking in the study area was the most consistently underutilized, suggesting overly generous parking ratios. A study by the Center for Neighborhood technology found that most residential parking areas surveyed were consistently two-thirds full, even in the middle of the night when most people would be home.

For commercial and business zones (in dash-1 or dash-2), parking is typically not required for the first 4,000 square feet. For commercial and business (dash-3), there is none required for the first 10,000 square feet. Dash-1, dash-2, and dash-3 all require 2.5 spaces for each 1,000 square feet above the exemption. For commercial and business zones (dash-5), the typical parking requirement is “None for first 35,000 square feet or 2 x lot area, whichever is greater, then 1.33 spaces per 1,000 square feet.”

No additional off-street parking or loading spaces are required for rehabilitation or reuse of an official Chicago Landmark building. The On Leong Merchant’s Building, the site of the Pui Tak Center, is the only Landmark building in the study area. The City of Chicago Zoning Ordinance also designates “Pedestrian Streets,” covered in the Transportation section.
Transportation

At just two miles south of the Loop, Chinatown’s location – with respect to the metropolitan transportation network and relative to regional destinations – is an asset for the area. The local road network provides good connectivity within the neighborhood and to other neighborhoods. Frequent local transit – three Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus routes, the CTA Red line “L,” as well as nearby Green Line and Orange Line stations, Metra commuter lines, and the Chicago Water Taxi – provides residents and visitors with many travel options, in addition to car-sharing and Divvy bike share programs. The 2015 Chinatown Community Vision Plan provides a very thorough analysis of traffic, transit, and transportation. While some things have changed since the completion of the plan three years ago, the challenges and current conditions remain quite similar.

Key Findings

• Chinatown residents use a diverse mix of transportation modes to commute to work. The highest percentage of residents report driving alone (38.4 percent), followed by walking (22.5 percent), carpooling (18.7 percent), and public transit (11.5 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 97/100 and a high ratio of destinations and intersections/square mile, but many factors make the area unfriendly for pedestrians including traffic and limited sidewalk space.

• With a high volume of freight and local traffic, and heavy congestion at peak times, it is often difficult to walk, bike, and even drive through many parts of Chinatown, and a significant number of vehicular and pedestrian crashes occur each year.

• Freight and rail infrastructure defines the edges of the community and creates barriers. In addition to physical barriers, Chinatown’s core experiences significant freight via trucks due to the proximity of the Interstate and the Canal Street Intermodal Facility. Some streets carry over 2,000 trucks daily.

• Chinatown’s core has very limited bicycle paths and connections. Bicycle connectivity is likely to improve in the near-term as new bike lanes are planned for the neighborhood.

The sections of this report that follow are ordered according to CDOT’s hierarchy of accommodating modes: pedestrians first, then transit users, then bicyclists and then the private automobiles.
Pedestrian Environment

Walkability was cited by many as one of the most important factors in the health and vitality of the community. Elements of a walkable neighborhood include a central attraction, main street, or public space; buildings close to the street, and complete streets designed for safe travel for all modes—foot, bicycle, transit, and car. Housing density, access to amenities, stores, parks, and places of work are also important. Parking is also important to walkability, as it the need to manage the supply of parking.

In Chinatown, the local Special Services Area #73 (SSA) emphasizes the importance of walkability for an improved business district. The SSA is a local tax district that funds expanded services and programs through a localized property tax levy within contiguous areas. Walkable neighborhood design promotes the economic vitality of the area as most residents can meet all their basic needs within a 5-10 minute walk from their home, often cited as between one-quarter mile and one-half mile. Walkability is especially important to the senior population in Chinatown that wants to stay healthy and active. Physical improvements to the neighborhood can also encourage residents to walk. The Chinatown SSA focuses on improving the aesthetics of commercial corridors by providing services like sidewalk trash removal, landscaping, and lighting improvements.

The 5 “D’s”: Density, Diversity, Design, Destinations, and Distance to Transit

Much of Chinatown was built out before widespread use of the automobile and fulfills the requisite needs of the “D’s.” The building scale is oriented to the pedestrian, and the area has not lost much land to surface parking lots (compared to other neighborhoods). Obviously, this is not true of all streets in the study area; certain streets are oriented to the automobile, but as a whole, Chinatown fares well in design.

Diversity refers to how many different uses coexist in a place and how close together they are. If a section of the street is all nightclubs, it will be empty during the day and very crowded at night. Alternatively, if a café, nightclub, hardware store, and a grocer all occupy the same block; the streetscape will be lively throughout the day and into the night. A broad mix of businesses combined with a diverse array of housing options means that people can work close to where they live, and access many businesses on foot. Chinatown scores very high on walkability in this sense, but on a block-to-block scale, there are some areas where a particular use is heavily concentrated.

There is relatively high population density and plenty of destinations to visit in Chinatown. According to the 2010 Census, over 7,254 people live in the study area of about 0.44 square miles and approximately 2 million square feet of commercial space, with 63 percent (or 1.2 million square feet) of that being retail space. The area is very well-supported by transit, covered in more detail in the transit section. The entire study area falls within a quarter mile of a bus stop, and most of it falls within a half-mile of the CTA red line station. There are four functioning Divvy bike share stations, and several stations just outside of the study area.

The City of Chicago Zoning Ordinance can specifically designate a street as a “Pedestrian Street” if they have a high concentration of uses along streets with a right-of-way of 80 feet or less, have a continuous pattern of buildings with entrances and storefronts abutting the sidewalk, and have few vacancies. In the Chinatown study area, Wentworth Avenue (from Cermak Road to 24th Place) is a designated pedestrian street. This designation prohibits curb cuts or driveways for vehicles access to buildings, requires parking to be behind the building and accessed from the alley, and allows for no off-street parking requirement for non-residential uses under 10,000 sq. feet.
Safety

One factor diminishing walkability that came up repeatedly in the 2015 Chinatown Community Vision Plan was safety. An analysis of crashes between 2010 through 2016 showed that the most problematic locations for pedestrian crashes appear mid-block along Archer Avenue, between the six-point intersection and the intersection with Wentworth Avenue, as well as the intersection of Cermak Road, Wentworth Avenue, and Princeton Avenue. Wentworth Avenue had nine pedestrian crashes over this time period, with a high concentration at the intersection of Wentworth Avenue and Cermak Road. Two bicycle and two pedestrian crashes also occurred at the six-point intersection. This data corroborates the issues noted above regarding the complicated six-point intersection, the lack of mid-block crosswalks, as well as the congestion problems on Wentworth, between Cermak Road and 24th Street.

Between 2010 and 2016, there was one fatal crash and ten serious injury crashes in the study area. Of those eleven, nine occurred on Archer Avenue, which is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). This includes the fatal bicycle crash in 2012, two serious injury crashes at the intersection of Cermak Road, one mid-block between Cermak and Wentworth, and four at the intersection of Wentworth. One serious injury crash occurred on Wentworth just north of the intersection with Archer, and another closer to 19th Street. Serious injury crashes were most common on Saturdays. Other non-serious injury crashes are concentrated on Cermak Road, Canal Street, and 24th and 23rd Streets.

Since this parking study began, the Chicago Department of Transportation has installed a mid-block crossing on Archer Avenue between Cermak and Wentworth.

CDOT recently installed a mid-block crossing on Archer, which removed some parking spaces for increased pedestrian safety.
Transit

Chinatown has excellent transit coverage, served by a number of CTA bus routes and trains and Chicago Water Taxi. While it is not directly served by Metra trains, there are two Metra stations less than a mile to the east of the study area. Many employees use transit to get to work, even though very few employers offer transit benefits. Employers that provide monthly parking subsidies could spend the same money to incentivise other modes of transportation.

CTA Rail System

The CTA Red Line has 24-hour service and runs north-south through the study area with a stop at Cermak-Chinatown. The Cermak-Chinatown Station provides connections to CTA bus routes #21 Cermak and #24 Wentworth. The station is well-used and experienced an all-time high in annual ridership in 2014, with some decline since.

The study area is also served by nearby CTA Orange Line and Green Line stations; both stations are located less than half a mile from the core of the study area. The new Green Line station at Cermak-McCormick began operating in 2014, and since has experienced an annual ridership growth of 22 percent. The CTA Orange Line Halsted Station is located on the southwest edge of the study area and runs east west from Midway Airport to the Loop. Although ridership increased by 1,527 from 2013 to 2014, ridership numbers have been decreasing ever since. Between 2010 and 2017, the Orange Line station at Halsted experienced a 10.5 percent decrease in annual ridership.

All three stations are above ground and equipped with an elevator for wheelchair access.
Figure 33. Weekday Bus Ridership

Chinatown bus routes  Nearby routes  Weekday Bus Ridership

- Archer (#62)  #18  #1
- Cermak (#21)  #8  #192
- Wentworth (#24)  #29  #4
- Wallace/Racine (#44)  #3  #12

Source: IDOT, 2010-2016.
CTA Bus System
Three CTA bus routes directly serve the Chinatown study area. Route #21 Cermak runs along Cermak Avenue from McCormick Place Convention Center to North Riverside Park Mall. Route #24 Wentworth runs south from the Loop, along Clark Street north of Cermak Avenue and Wentworth Avenue or Wells Street south of Cermak Avenue, down to either 79th Street or 87th Street and Ravine Avenue.

Route #62 Archer runs south from Kinzie Street and State Street, along Archer Avenue all the way southwest until it intersects with Harlem Avenue. This route is especially important to Chinatown, given the large Chinese population located to the southwest of the Chinatown study area. For example, the Chinese population of the Bridgeport Community Area (immediately adjacent to Chinatown’s core to the southwest) is estimated at 11,095, 53% larger than that of Census Tract 8411 (which approximates the boundaries of our study area), which is estimated at 7,254. Of the study area routes, Route 62 Archer operate with “Night Owl” service, between downtown and Midway airport, with 30-minute headways, has the highest ridership.

Four additional CTA routes run just outside the study area’s boundaries: Route #4 Cottage Grove, Route #8 Halsted, Route #29 State, Route #44 Wallace-Racine. The nearest East-West CTA bus route to the south of the Route 21 Cermak bus is the Route #31 which travels along 31st Street. Of the nearby routes, Route #4 Cottage Grove operates night owl service, between Washington/State and 63rd Street, and has the highest ridership.

Metra Commuter Rail
Three Metra lines pass through the Chinatown study area: Rock Island District (RI) runs on an elevated track along Clark Street, South West Service (SWS) runs above Steward Street, and Heritage Corridor (HC) runs above Archer Avenue and South Grove Street and then merges onto the track above Steward Avenue. Amtrak service also shares tracks with the Metra HC line.

There are no Metra stations within the Chinatown study area, but the 18th Street Station and the McCormick Place Station on Metra’s Electric District line are both located less than a mile from the study area. With between 42 and 108 boardings, neither station has many riders on an average day. There is no parking at the station and most riders access the station by walking.

Water Taxi
The Chicago Water Taxi operates from March to December, offering transportation to Ping Tom Park in Chinatown via the South Branch of the Chicago River to stops nearby the Loop and Magnificent Mile. During the summer, the Water Taxi runs from 6:45 a.m. through 9:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday and on weekends from 10:00 a.m. through 8:30 p.m., and until 11:00 p.m. on Saturday.
Bicycling
Many people ride bikes for transportation in Chinatown. Recreational riding is more common among younger residents and tourists. Chinatown has a limited number of bicycle lanes and routes. Archer Avenue is the only street with a designated bicycle lane; however, heavy traffic on the street and road conditions make biking difficult. Although they have no official markings, quieter, local roads in Chinatown are often used by cyclists.

Biking conditions may change soon, as new bicycle infrastructure is slated for Chinatown. A new bicycle lane is planned for Canal Street, part of CDOT’s Streets for Cycling Plan 2020. The plan designates Canal Street as a “Crosstown Bike Route” with protected bike lane and Archer Avenue as a “Spoke Route,” one of Chicago’s most direct routes in and out of the downtown area for bicyclists, intended to be “reimagined over the next eight years to provide bicyclists with the safest, quickest and most comfortable accommodations possible.”

Since the 2015 Chinatown Community Vision Plan was written, four Divvy bike share stations have opened at Archer Avenue and Normal Avenue, Cermak Road between Wentworth Avenue and Clark Street, Wentworth Avenue and 24th Street, and at Ping Tom Memorial Park. Protected bike lanes have also been implemented near the study area along 18th Street from Canal Street to Clark Street, State Street from 26th Street to Cullerton Street (converting to a buffered bike lane from Cullerton Street to 18th Street), and Halsted Street from 26th Street to Lumber Street.

Roadways
Roads provide space for three vital functions within a community – mobility, commerce and civic life. The functional classification of a road describes the character of the road in terms of vehicular mobility and the level of service they are intended to provide.

Interstates
The southern border of Chinatown’s core is defined by two interstates: the Stevenson Expressway (I-55) and the Dan Ryan Expressway (I-94). These expressways are designed for high-speed, long-distance or interstate travel and have high traffic volume. Often, drivers exiting highways are desensitized to the high speeds and drive onto the local streets faster than is safe or legal. This may explain the concentration of crashes at Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue near the highway. While these expressways, along with their on/off ramps leading into the neighborhood, create a strong edge that is difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate, they also make Chinatown very accessible for car and truck traffic.

Principal arterials
The Chinatown study area has no principal arterials within its boundaries, however, there are a number of arterials just outside the study area, including State Street and Michigan Avenue. These roads are designed for higher speed travel than minor arterials and local roads and to accommodate longer distance trips.
Minor arterials
Chinatown only has one minor arterial: West Cermak Road. Cermak has two travel lanes in each direction. East of the intersection with Archer, the street accommodates a parking lane in addition to two travel lanes in each direction, and the two traffic directions are separated by a landscaped median.

Collectors
Chinatown has two collector roads, which distribute traffic from local streets to the arterials: South Archer Avenue and South Canal Street. Archer Avenue has one automobile travel lane as well as a bicycle lane in each direction, along with on-street parking. West of the railway tracks, Archer is a faster-moving thoroughfare, and while it maintains its bicycle lanes, it does not include on-street parking, instead providing two automobile travel lanes in each direction. Canal Street is a more automobile-oriented street than Archer, providing two automobile lanes as well as a parking lane in each direction.

Local roads
The remaining roads in the study area are local streets and provide access to private property with limited through traffic. The travel speeds and traffic volumes are low and mostly consist of one automobile lane and one parking lane in each direction. One exception is Wentworth Avenue, which while classified as a local road, experiences significant automobile traffic and functions in many ways like the collectors described above. CDOT is currently working on realigning Wentworth Avenue as part of its goal to connect the Cermak Road corridor to the Roosevelt Road corridor.

Commuting in Chinatown
Traveling to and from work is often the largest component of an individual’s travel behavior. According to 2015 data from the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) – a program of the Center for Economic Studies at the U.S. Census Bureau – nearly 3,552 people work in the study area. Only 13.8 percent of employed Chinatown residents both live and work in the study area; the remaining 86.2 percent work outside the neighborhood. Nevertheless, the great majority of Chinatown's labor force works close by – 79.8 percent of employed residents work within 10 miles from the study area, and 13 percent work 10 to 24 miles away.

Thirty-eight percent of Chinatown residents drive to work alone, and twenty-three use active transportation for their daily commute, with almost nineteen percent carpool, twelve percent take transit, and five percent work from home (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Commute mode share for Chinatown residents

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.
*Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value.
Freight and rail

The presence of rail infrastructure is very strong in Chinatown. Approximately, 139 trains (8 freight and 131 passenger trains) pass through Chinatown's study area on a daily basis – not counting the elevated CTA Orange Line and Red Line trains. In addition to the noise created by the trains, the railway tracks are very visible because of the viaducts upon which the elevated trains pass. The viaducts create a strong edge that help define the eastern border of Chinatown's study area, and create a separation between the part of the neighborhood that is west of Canal Street and that which is east of Stewart Avenue. Additionally, there are the various at-grade crossings. While most at-grade crossings are in areas set aside for transportation and utility uses, there is one at-grade crossing that cuts through the only pedestrian entrance to Ping Tom Park, somewhat restricting access to the space.

Freight also passes through Chinatown by way of trucks. Although the Chinatown study area does not have any designated truck routes, because it is within one mile of an interstate interchange, trucks can travel on any street in the area. Due to the proximity of the interstate exchange and the presence of the Canal Street Intermodal Facility, several streets in the core carry significant truck traffic: Archer Avenue, Cermak Road, and Wentworth Avenue.

On Cermak Road, over 2,000 trucks pass between Princeton Avenue and Wentworth Avenue and over 850 pass between Princeton Avenue and Canal Street. Between Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue, Archer Avenue sees approximately 980 trucks daily. Between Canal Street and 23rd place, Archer has 375 trucks daily.

Sixty-seven percent of all freight in the Chicago region is transported by truck, and the movement of trucks in Chinatown is vital to the City's local businesses and industries. Nevertheless, these roads are also highly used by pedestrians and cyclists, and thus the heavy truck traffic poses safety concerns.
Natural environment

Water resources
Chinatown is located less than a mile west of Lake Michigan, and the neighborhood sits on the eastern edge of the South Branch of the Chicago River. Industrial and commercial activities along the South Branch of the Chicago River have contributed to significant pollution runoff, which has resulted in waterbody impairment for fish consumption and indigenous aquatic life. Historically, animal waste from the nearby meatpacking industry has contributed to the river’s environmental degradation. Today, stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflows (CSO’s) are the main source of pollution.

Transportation related structures, such as surface parking lots, contribute to flooding and runoff pollution, as they are made of impervious surfaces that do not allow rainfall to infiltrate the ground. Unlike permeable surfaces, impervious surfaces cause stormwater to collect pollutants like heavy metals and grease, and transport them into sewer systems and nearby bodies of water. Moreover, during heavy rain events, the City’s wastewater system often gets overwhelmed and CSO waste is discharged directly into the Chicago River.

Permeable surfaces, such as parks, absorb stormwater and allow it to slowly filter into the ground, which prevents run off pollution and urban flooding. Conservation and expansion of permeable surfaces is an important element of preventing neighborhood flooding and stormwater runoff pollution in Chinatown’s water resources.

Open Space
Currently, very little of Chinatown’s core is dedicated to parks and other types of open space. The two parks located within the neighborhood are Ping Tom Park, along the Chicago River at the northwestern edge of Chinatown, and Sun Yat Sen Park at the neighborhood’s southern border. These two parks constitute approximately 17.9 acres of open space, the majority (98%) of which are located in Ping Tom Park. This works out to just over 2.5 acres per 1,000 Chinatown residents, well below the recommended 4 acres per 1,000 residents in the region’s dense urban areas.

The concentration of residential and commercial development, industrial areas, and land reserved for transportation purposes within Chinatown’s core places greater emphasis on the value of the community’s natural environment. Chinatown currently has limited areas set aside for open space, and many pockets of undeveloped land are dedicated to surface parking lots. More land dedicated to parking means that less of the neighborhood’s land use can be used for natural areas, which provide many benefits including reduction in stormwater runoff and improved air quality. Finding creative ways to incorporate green space into the neighborhood fabric could increase access to natural areas without setting aside large amounts of land for open space. Streets and parking lots can become extensions of the neighborhood’s open space network through small-scale strategies like pocket parks. These flexible spaces can serve the function of traditional parks in Chinatown’s dense built environment.
Section 5
LOOKING FORWARD
The Chinatown neighborhood has many qualities that make it an important part of Chicago: a strong residential community, as well as a desirable destination for many. The density of people and attractions makes parking a hot commodity. The transit coverage for the area is excellent, but service, quality and safety shortfalls make transit less competitive to the private automobile. Riding a bicycle is a utilitarian mode of transportation for many, but dangerous conditions prevent others from riding bikes for transportation. A general fear of crime prevents many people from walking and taking transit.

When a driver cannot find a parking space close to her destination, the obvious conclusion is that there is not enough parking. She may not even know that there are available parking spaces a short walk from her destination. Without understanding the complexities of parking and its role in the transportation system, people often say, “Just build more parking!” At $30,000 per space for a simple above ground structure, excluding land costs, parking garages are expensive and rarely pay for themselves. Building additional parking without properly managing the existing supply can induce driving and increase parking demand, leading to shortages even after having built a garage. For example, Chinatown is a quick red line trip from downtown or Comiskey Field, making the area a desirable location for people to drive in from nearby areas to leave their car in a free parking spot. Additional parking could attract more commuters or White Sox fans. Conversely, managing the existing supply can be a cost effective way to reduce demand or increase attractiveness of underutilized spaces.

“We have one of the best Chinatowns - definitely the best in the midwest. People travel here from all over.”

-Interviewee
One interviewee expressed the frustrations with trying to find parking when coming in from the suburbs. Businesses don't want to lose customers from other communities, but providing parking is never free and in a dense, transit-rich neighborhood like Chinatown, more free parking leads directly to more traffic congestion without guaranteeing available parking spaces for these driving customers. There are people who come to the area via public transportation or on bicycles who would drive if they knew they could find free parking. And there are some who are taking short trips by car because they know that they can find parking, if they search long enough or pay.

As the parking survey has shown, parking occupancy is highest on Saturday and Sundays, during peak restaurant hours. While the parking meter deal has left a bitter taste in everyone's mouth, it has a silver lining. It created turnover and parking availability in areas that would otherwise be completely congested. Business owners in Chinatown were among the first to clamor for reinstating parking meters on Sundays—their busiest day—after Mayor Emmanuel negotiated free Sunday parking.

Unfortunately, the metered parking is not distributed evenly throughout the study area and prices do not reflect local variations in demand, so there are areas with excess parking capacity and times when parking is still congested.
The priority issues to be addressed in the Chinatown Parking Management Plan build off of many recommendations found in the Vision Plan, and are as follows:

- Balance parking supply and demand with particular attention to when and where Chinatown is most congested.
- Evaluate the potential for parking benefit districts to allow local residents to see financial reward and infrastructure improvements as a result of priced parking in their neighborhood.
- Increase shared parking arrangements to better utilize the existing supply.
- Provide employees with transportation benefits that encourage taking transit, biking, or walking to work.
- Make improvements to the comfort and safety of walking in the area, particularly for at least one of the streets below the railyard.
- Make improvements to the safety and quality of public transportation and amenities, to increase the attractiveness of transit as an alternative to driving.
- Evaluate residential permit programs and ways to make them most beneficial for the area.
- Develop apps and new technology to allow for better use of residential parking lots.

Land in Chinatown is a valuable commodity that is in limited supply. Providing parking in surface lots uses a great deal of land, and the area is facing development pressure. A focus on benefiting the Chinatown community should be central to any recommendations proposed. Small shifts in the habits of regular visitors and residents can mean big improvements in safety and congestion for everyone. Additionally, freeing up parking spaces in the most congested areas would relieve the frustration of “cruising for a spot.” Many of the residents in Chinatown do not even own cars and suffer the reduced air quality from congested streets, as well as poor safety for walking and riding a bicycle. Drivers of affluent means are an increasing proportion of the visitors and residents of Chinatown. Everyone wants to park free, but to a driver, there's not much difference between a free parking space that's not available and a parking space that's too expensive; they can’t have either one. For a local community, there is a huge difference between the two. Free and under-priced parking increases traffic congestion and air pollution, and it reduces the safety of people walking and biking as drivers are distracted in their search for a space. Market-priced parking has the potential to generate money to pay for public services. If those services and that revenue can stay within Chinatown, there is a way to benefit drivers and non-drivers alike to make a stronger Chinatown community.
Appendix

Survey results
Pui Tak Citizenship and ESL Classes (n=74)

What is your age?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 or younger</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 34</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 49</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 64</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 - 79</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and over</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides classes, why do you primarily come to Chinatown?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery shopping</td>
<td>40.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live here</td>
<td>27.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>18.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail shopping</td>
<td>10.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services (doctor / family)</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting friends / family</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend religious services</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other / none</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix

**Do you think people in Chinatown would use a bilingual cell phone app to:**

- Rent out their unused parking spaces
- Find cheap parking
- Find out how many parking spaces are available in the public parking lot
- All of these
- None of these

**What do you see as the biggest barrier to walking in Chinatown?**

- Fear of crime
- Dark streets
- Poor sidewalk condition
- Crossing busy streets is dangerous
- Crowded sidewalks, nowhere to rest
- Unfamiliar with the area
- Other

**If you don’t ride a bicycle, what is the primary reason for NOT riding?**

- Unsafe roads, no bike lanes
- I'm not interested in biking
- Other
- I ride a bicycle
- I don’t know how to ride a bike, but I would like to have one
- I don’t know how to ride a bike, but I’m interested

**If you don’t ride the bus, what is the primary reason for NOT riding?**

- It doesn’t go where I need it to go
- I ride the bus
- It’s too expensive
- Fear of crime
- I don’t know how to ride it / I don’t know where it goes
- It doesn't run when I need it
- Other
Mapping comments
Steering Committee and advisors meeting