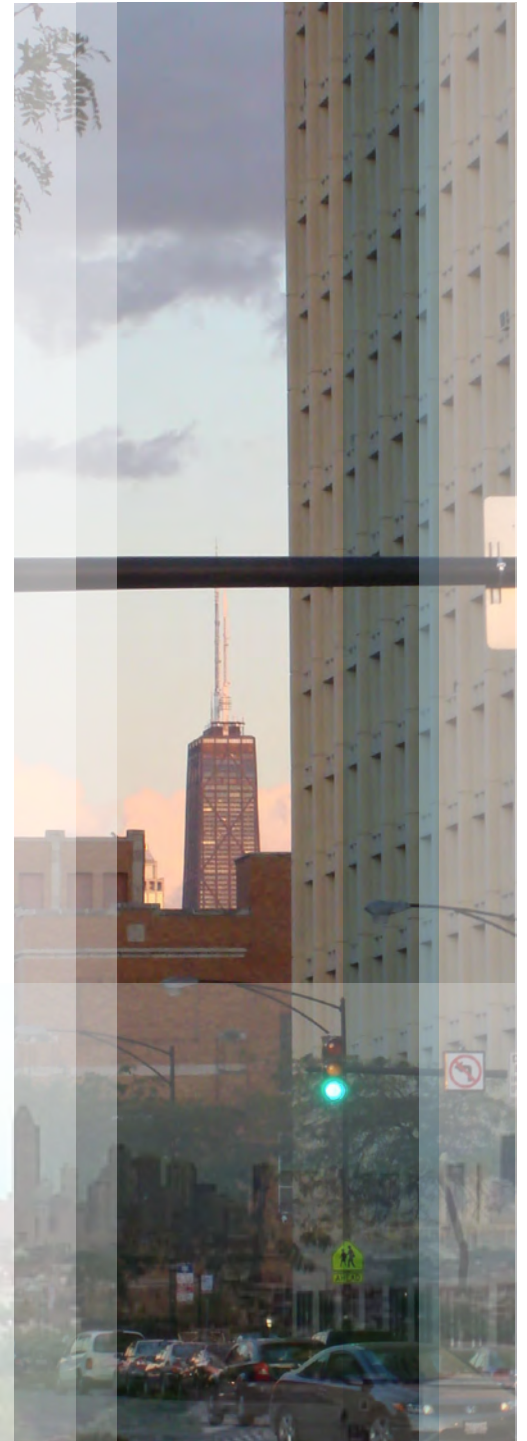




WPB
draft **Master Plan**
for the **Wicker Park Bucktown SSA**

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August . 08



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Individuals are listed in the Appendix.*



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Executive Summary

Wicker Park and Bucktown are two neighborhoods in a City of neighborhoods, two neighborhoods long home to an eclectic mix of Eastern European and Latino immigrants and a thriving underground culture fueled by local artists, musicians, writers, and other creators. Located northwest of Chicago’s Loop and on the left shoulder of Goose Island, Wicker Park and Bucktown now find themselves in the midst of rapid change and the center of much attention. The area’s independent spirit, bohemian vibe, artistic self-expression, and collection of fiercely local restaurants and boutiques, coupled with its proximity to downtown and three Blue Line “L” stations, have piqued mainstream interests, drawing hordes of investors and developers, an influx of new 20-something residents, new commercial competition from national retailers, and waves of suburbanites and tourists who come to shop and dine.

With soaring real estate prices and shifting demographics, the Wicker Park and Bucktown neighborhoods are becoming more transient, less diverse, and far more affluent. Wicker Park and Bucktown’s commercial corridors – the social spaces and opportunities for unparalleled “street ballet” along Milwaukee, Division, North, Western, Damen, and Ashland – are at risk of losing their beloved “grittiness” and their “edge.” Sensing an inevitable and irreversible slip away from the varied urban collage and intersection of sub-cultures that defines the area today, members of the Wicker Park and Bucktown communities proclaim,

["we are unique, or at least we perceive ourselves as unique. We want to keep it that way."]

Unique among Chicago’s Special Service Areas (SSA) for its size and eclecticism, the Wicker Park Bucktown (WPB) SSA’s district

[13 miles of sidewalk, 1,399 parcels, 734 businesses, about 30 institutions, and roughly 2,750 dwelling units]

encompasses a vibrant yet varied, mixed use urban area home to a diverse mix of people and a rare combination of nightlife, culture, family, and art. The SSA’s challenges are to:

1. Preserve, encourage, and enhance the qualities of Wicker Park and Bucktown that make the neighborhoods and their corridors distinctly *Wicker Park* and *Bucktown*; and to
2. Balance the needs and desires of all residents, visitors, and businesses in the allocation and expenditure of their tax dollars.

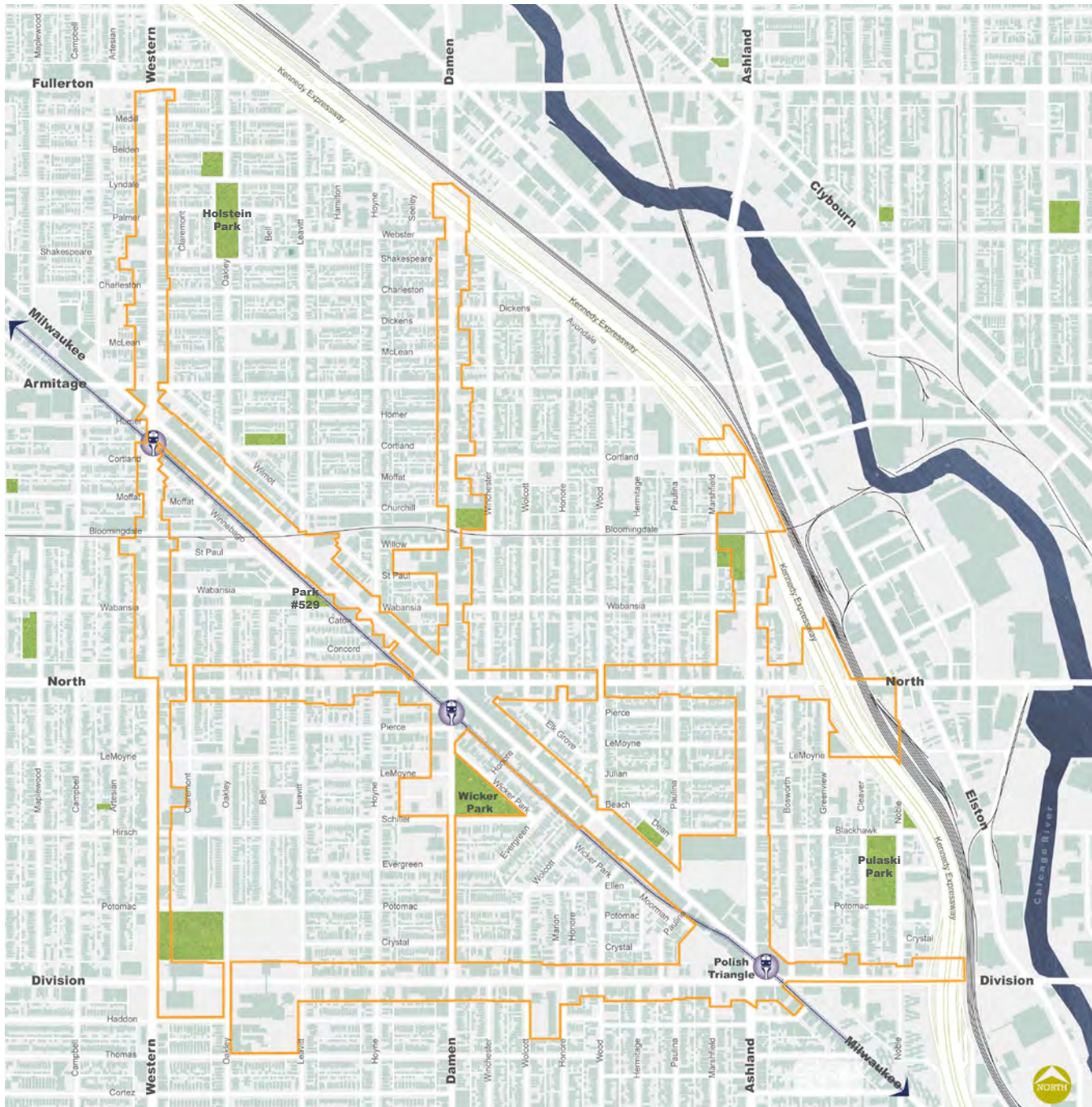
WPB’s decision to undertake this plan for Wicker Park and Bucktown’s commercial corridors is part of an effort to address the community’s shifting identity head-on. It is a plan intended to balance the good that comes from increased prosperity along the corridors and within the neighborhoods with the strong desire to preserve local attitude and diversity and reinforce local arts, ecology, heritage, affordability, and values:



WPB SSA Logo

[drive less, bike more, buy local, go green, inhabit the sidewalks, indulge in urban eye candy, honor the past, welcome a progressive future, and do so as a unified community.]

The planning process is an opportunity to develop a collective vision for the future of Wicker Park and Bucktown’s commercial corridors, a chance to bring together the active, but often uninvolved constituency of neighbors, business owners, artists, institutions, investors, and visitors who enjoy and identify with the culture and social life along Western, Damen, Ashland, North, Division, and Milwaukee to think about the effects of change, and how best to integrate old with new.



The boundaries of the WPB SSA encompass portions of Milwaukee, Division, North, Western, Damen, and Ashland as they course through Chicago's Wicker Park and Bucktown neighborhoods.

More specifically, the SSA's service district encompasses:

- **Milwaukee** from Division to Western
- The south side of **Division** from Western to Milwaukee
- The north side of **Division** from Western to the Kennedy Expressway
- **North** from Western to the Kennedy Expressway
- The east side of **Western** from Division to Fullerton
- The west side of **Western** from North to Fullerton
- **Damen** from Schiller to the Kennedy Expressway
- **Ashland** from Division to the Kennedy Expressway

Though focused on WPB's commercial corridors, this plan recognizes the relationships that exist between the corridors, the residential areas of Wicker Park and Bucktown, and the surrounding neighborhoods and retail destinations. The plan therefore embraces a larger view that places WPB and its commercial corridors in context.

Figure 1. WPB Study Area

Goals and Vision

The overriding objective of the plan is to be consistent with the values, visions, and priorities of WPB community members, and thus, the creation of the plan required public input, which the WPB community offered readily. WPB Community Members participated in the Wicker Park and Bucktown Neighborhoods Master Plan planning process by attending small focus groups, participating in SSA Planning Committee meetings, offering

[candid, poetic, and passionate]

comments during interviews, and engaging in a series of WPB Open Houses hosted over the course of three Saturdays in a vacant storefront on North Milwaukee Avenue. These community members played an integral role in informing the analysis, enriching our understanding of the place with a wealth of information, anecdotes and memories, questions and challenges. Their visions for WPB’s future and their ideas about how to achieve that future informed this plan’s recommendations, and their energy and sustained interest will be required to help implement the plan. The community’s words punctuate this report, adding local flavor and style and making the WPB Master Plan distinctly Wicker Park and Bucktown.

Together, their words comprise a collective vision for Wicker Park Bucktown – a common vision for the six commercial corridors that comprise WPB and the surrounding residential communities...

Vision for the Area

... a vision of WPB as:

- **walkable, of course, but equally bikeable (if not more so)**
a connected urban neighborhood where cars take a back seat to those traveling on foot, bicycle, or transit; where elaborate and personalized, clean and safe sidewalks are populated by interesting people and shops, rewarding those moving at slower speeds
- **fiercely independent in artistic expression, business ownership, and resident activism**
a distinctive and colorful neighborhood where creativity and expression are a part of each moment and view, where the shops are locally owned, and where the residents are empowered as proactive participants in the area’s growth and redevelopment
- **experimental and pioneering**
a progressive, informed, and open minded neighborhood willing to embrace and pilot new solutions to tough urban problems like affordability and traffic, transit and dysfunctional public space to achieve an equitable and sustainable future
- **diverse and eclectic yet collaborative and committed**
a true community of neighbors and partners rather than strangers living and working in close proximity

Indeed, in many ways WPB is already an amazing and beloved urban neighborhood, grounded by rich history, made gritty by use, and kept that way out of respect for an edgy aesthetic and an appreciation for urban living. Regarding these characteristics, the vision for the future is to turn up the volume, to protect, preserve, and enhance the qualities of WPB so cherished by local residents and businesses, visitors and tourists alike.



Area-Wide Recommendations

A series of area-wide recommendations were developed in response to this overall vision for WPB. Highlights of the area-wide recommendations are presented below, organized into seven categories that provide structure to the recommendations section of this report. As certain recommendations under each category apply only to particular corridors, locations, or parcels with WPB's district, this list does not encompass the full scope of the plan's recommendations. An overview of the corridor-specific recommendations is presented on the following pages.

1 Spruce Up the Place to improve the cleanliness and appearance of WPB's streetscapes without sterilizing them.

Key area-wide recommendations include:

- Undertake an annual pressure washing of corridor sidewalks (Recommendation 1.1)
- Adopt eco-friendly street cleaning and landscaping practices (Recommendation 1.2)
- Market the SSA's snow removal service (Recommendation 1.3)
- Introduce additional trash cans; have local artists design these trash cans (Recommendation 1.4)

2 Keep an Eye on Things to increase public safety along WPB's corridors.

Key area-wide recommendations include:

- Lobby for bicycle police presence (Recommendation 2.1)

3 Spread the Word to generate buzz, intrigue, and excitement about the area and the people, businesses, and organizations that make the area unique.

Key area-wide recommendations include:

- Develop a directory and annual calendar for arts, small businesses, and services, and put it online (Recommendation 3.3)
- Advertise to reach tourist shoppers (Recommendation 3.5)
- Create a granting arm of the SSA, the WPB FUNd (Recommendation 3.6)

4 Promote Local Arts to maintain WPB's creative identity and help artists remain in the community and active in the community.

Key area-wide recommendations include:

- Collect and track arts housing and workspace data (Recommendation 4.1)
- Support arts programs in the local schools and celebrate new spaces for arts instruction and incubator studios (Recommendation 4.5)
- Create an interactive on-line map of arts resources (Recommendation 4.6)
- Create a sign rebate program using artists as designers (Recommendation 4.10)
- Merge streetscape design with local arts talent (Recommendation 4.14)

5 Guide Development to manage change by embracing a proactive role in shaping WPB's unfolding future.

Key area-wide recommendations include:

- Adopt an official SSA stance on density (Recommendation 5.1)
- Promote Low Impact Development and green building techniques in all new construction and rehabilitation projects (Recommendation 5.2)
- Actively recruit retail to fill niches (Recommendation 5.4)

6 Greenify to become a more environmentally sound and ecologically sensitive community not only in ideas and ideals but in practice and on the ground.

Key area-wide recommendations include:

- Develop a complementary and comprehensive recycling program (Recommendation 6.1)
- Offer incentives for the green basics; help businesses run greener (Recommendation 6.2)
- Integrate stormwater management best practices into streetscape design (Recommendation 6.3)
- Green the alleys (Recommendation 6.4)
- Improve the urban forest (Recommendation 6.5)
- Make the Bloomingdale Trail gateways focal points of WPB (Recommendation 6.7)

7 Make Connections to foster multi-modal mobility and circulation along WPB's corridors.

Key area-wide recommendations include:

- Encourage sidewalk repair and maintenance (Recommendation 7.6)
- Advocate for bicycle improvements (Recommendation 7.12)
- Launch a Bike Wicker Park Bucktown! program (Recommendation 7.16)
- Design and install bicycle signage (Recommendation 7.17)
- Provide bicycle parking at festivals (Recommendation 7.18)
- Provide bus tracker information at bus stops and business locations (Recommendation 7.27)
- Launch a shopper benefit program that rewards transit users (Recommendation 7.35)
- Encourage transit pass provision and car sharing for new developments (Recommendation 7.36)
- Improve dangerous intersections (Recommendations 7.51, 7.52, 7.53, and 7.54)



Seven hats, or organizing themes, provide a framework for the recommendations.



Figure3. Rendering of Proposed Improvements to Bike Lanes and Signage

Vision and Recommendations for each Corridor

And while a common vision for Wicker Park Bucktown is important and necessary for guiding area-wide recommendations, the physical and market conditions along the WPB SSA's six commercial corridors are varied, the urban dynamics unique enough to call for a more tailored and specific vision for each corridor.

Milwaukee Avenue is a gritty collage, bravely navigated by an army of cyclists. The vision for this tight and individualistic diagonal corridor, which bisects Wicker Park Bucktown from southeast to northwest is about character and theater – augmenting the quirky charm and unique cluttered streetscape, carving out new public spaces where locals and visitors alike can indulge in unparalleled people watching, and humanizing the intersections so that all *walks* of life can coexist.

Key recommendations specific to Milwaukee Avenue include:

- Introduce pedestrian scale lighting (Recommendation 2.2)
- Lobby for red light cameras to increase safety (Recommendation 2.3)
- Commission new, multi-lingual WPB signage for installation at the six-point intersection and Polish Triangle (Recommendations 3.1 and 7.1)
- Foster a new arts district by converting vacant ground floor retail space into live/work space for artists (Recommendation 4.3)
- Enhance the Flat Iron as WPB's arts hub (Recommendation 4.12)
- Adopt an official SSA stance on density that encourages artists' live/work space in vacant commercial spaces west of Damen and denser transit-oriented development near the CTA "L" Damen stop and the Bloomingdale Trail access point at Leavitt (Recommendation 5.1)



- In the long-term, consider redeveloping the Kmart / Jewel and Aldi sites for a more urban design at Milwaukee and Ashland and Milwaukee and Leavitt, respectively (Recommendation 5.3)
- Reinforce the retail district (Recommendation 5.5)
- Reuse the Northwest Tower building as a green hotel (Recommendation 5.9)
- Provide access to the Bloomingdale Trail (Recommendation 6.7)
- Make Mauteen Court happen (Recommendation 6.8)
- Reclaim excess space on overbuilt streets for outdoor public living rooms adjacent to Milwaukee (Recommendation 6.9)
- Reinvent the Polish Triangle (Recommendations 6.10 and 7.52)
- Add new signage and additional crosswalks; upgrade existing facilities (Recommendation 7.2)
- Convert parking space to café seating (Recommendation 7.11)
- Add bike shelters to WPB's streetscape (Recommendation 7.22)
- Reclaim parking spaces for bicycle parking (Recommendation 7.23)
- Claim space for bike boxes at intersections (Recommendations 7.24)
- Provide bike lane channelization through intersections (Recommendations 7.25)
- Add more metered parking; increase the price of parking to encourage more turn-over (Recommendation 7.37)
- Improve the six-point intersection (Recommendation 5.51)
- Improve the intersection of Milwaukee, Wolcott, and Wood (Recommendation 5.54)



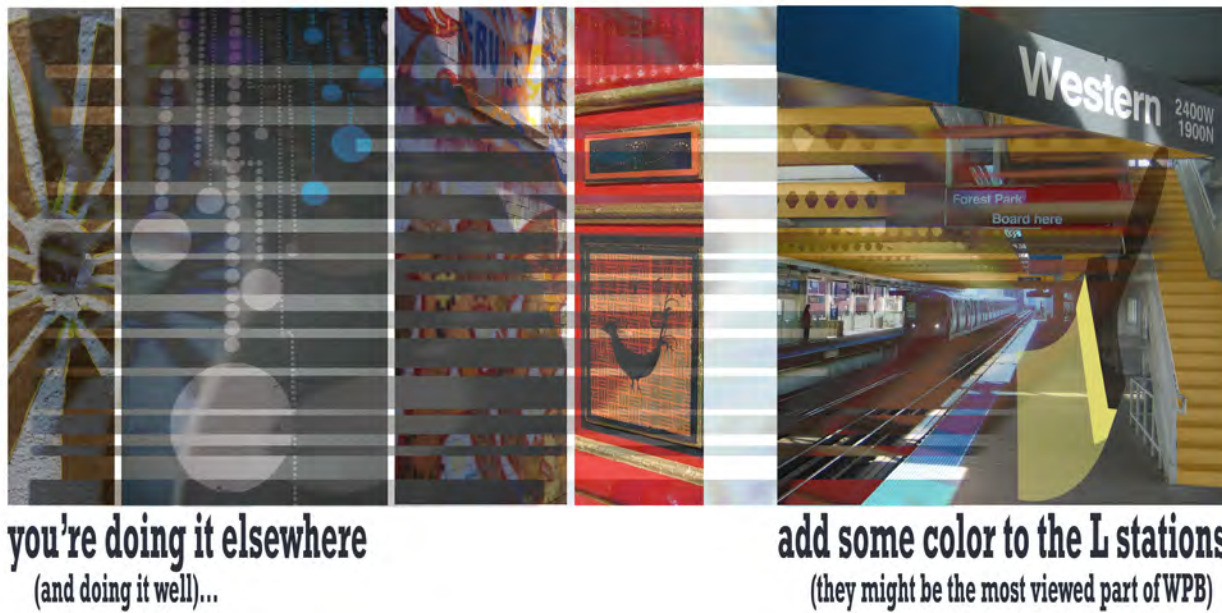
Figures 4a. and b. Photo of Existing Conditions and Rendering of Proposed Urban Living Room

Damen Avenue is the most intimate of WPB's streets. Home to a wide array of boutique retail and local shops, it provides a central spine for strolling. Damen Avenue is also the connective tissue between Wicker Park (the park), Churchill Park, and what will be the Bloomingdale Trail. Its parks serve the community; its retail draws the world. The vision for Damen Avenue is about an intimate scale and a slower pace.

Key recommendations specific to Damen Avenue include:

- Commission new, multi-lingual WPB signage for installation at the six-point intersection and at the proposed Bloomingdale Trail access point (Recommendations 3.1 and 7.1)
- Introduce new public art at the CTA "L" station (Recommendation 4.13)
- Adopt an official SSA stance on density that encourages denser transit-oriented development near the CTA stop and the Bloomingdale Trail access point (Recommendation 5.1)

- Reinforce the retail district (Recommendation 5.5)
- Provide access to the Bloomingdale Trail (Recommendation 6.7)
- Add new signage and additional crosswalks; upgrade existing facilities (Recommendation 7.2)
- Reclaim pedestrian space and slow traffic with bump-outs, striping, and by removing excess asphalt (Recommendation 7.3)
- Extend the Pedestrian Street designation for Damen (Recommendation 7.9)
- Convert parking space to café seating (Recommendation 7.11)
- Add bike shelters to WPB's streetscape (Recommendation 7.22)
- Develop a graphic identity and character for the CTA "L" station (Recommendation 7.31)
- Promote the CTA "L" station as a place (Recommendation 7.32)
- Add more metered parking; increase the price of parking to encourage more turn-over (Recommendation 7.37)
- Improve the six-point intersection (Recommendation 7.51)



you're doing it elsewhere
(and doing it well)...

add some color to the L stations
(they might be the most viewed part of WPB)



brighten your daily commute



give passersby something to look at



help visitors recognize that this is WPB

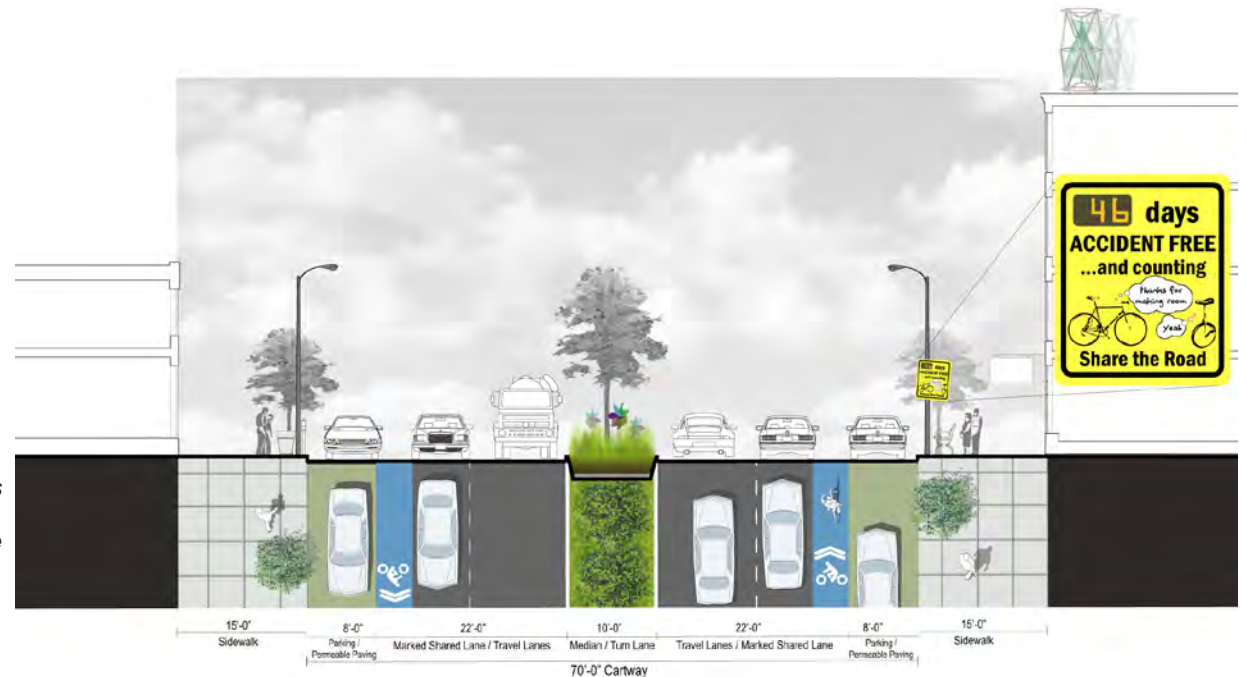
Figure 5. Diagram depicting the need to add some color to the "L" stations to develop their graphic identities.

Ashland Avenue is a wide and auto-dominated corridor marking WPB's eastern edge. The vision for this thoroughfare is about motion and movement because – sometimes – it is okay to design for the car; it is about contrasting speed with stillness and finding time to pause, reconsider the everyday landscape, and revisit the landscape treatments and retail opportunities in this corner of WPB.

Key recommendations specific to Ashland Avenue include:

- Introduce pedestrian scale lighting (Recommendation 2.2)
- Lobby for red light cameras to increase safety (Recommendation 2.3)
- Commission new, multi-lingual WPB signage for installation under the Kennedy, at the Metra Station, and at the Polish Triangle (Recommendations 3.1 and 7.1)
- Foster a new arts district by converting vacant ground floor retail space into live/work space for artists (Recommendation 4.3)
- Introduce new public art in the median like kinetic sculpture to emphasize movement along the corridor and signage tailored to the car that invites drivers to reconsider urban roadway “islands” (Recommendation 4.13)
- Adopt an official SSA stance on density that encourages artists' live/work space in vacant commercial spaces (Recommendation 5.1)
- In the long-term, consider redeveloping the Kmart/ Jewel site for a more urban design at Milwaukee and Ashland (Recommendation 5.3)
- Reinforce the retail district (Recommendation 5.5)
- Make Ashland Avenue a green boulevard by better managing stormwater in the median (Recommendation 6.6)
- Provide access to the Bloomingdale Trail (Recommendation 6.7)
- Reinvent the Polish Triangle (Recommendations 6.10 and 7.52)
- Install pedestrian HAWK signals to facilitate easier road crossings (Recommendation 7.4)
- Create safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycles programs under the Kennedy Expressway (Recommendation 7.8)
- Launch a design review initiative to cut down on auto-centric site design (Recommendation 7.10)
- Introduce new bicycle lanes and bicycle advocacy signage (Recommendation 7.20)
- Improve the Clybourn Metra Station area (Recommendation 7.33)
- Add more metered parking; increase the price of parking to encourage more turn-over (Recommendation 7.37)

Figure 6. Section of Ashland's Proposed Improvements introduce marked shared lanes and bicycle safety signage. Convert the median's concrete planter into an at-grade bioswale planted with native grasses. Integrate kinetic art installations in the median.



Western Avenue marks the western edge of Wicker Park and Bucktown, serving as a dividing line between WPB and the Logan Square and Humboldt Park neighborhoods to the west. Unclaimed by any adjacent neighborhood and dominated instead by a steady stream of cars and trucks, the corridor's identity wavers between that of a highway and that of a neighborhood street. The vision for Western Avenue is about bridging four neighborhoods by reprogramming the street – about reclaiming space that is taken for granted and giving neighbors and passers by a reason and a desire to inhabit the sidewalks.

Key recommendations specific to Western Avenue include:

- Introduce pedestrian scale lighting (Recommendation 2.2)
- Lobby for red light cameras to increase safety (Recommendation 2.3)
- Commission new, multi-lingual WPB signage for installation at the intersection of Western and Division and at the proposed Bloomingdale Trail access point (Recommendations 3.1 and 7.1)
- Foster a new arts district by converting vacant ground floor retail space into live/work space for artists (Recommendation 4.3)
- Introduce new public art at the intersection of Western and Division and at the CTA “L” stop (Recommendation 4.13)
- Adopt an official SSA stance on density that encourages artists' live/work space in vacant commercial spaces and denser transit-oriented development near the CTA “L” stop and the Bloomingdale Trail access point (Recommendation 5.1)
- Make Western Avenue a green boulevard by better managing stormwater in the median, narrowing the road width, and adding plantings (Recommendation 6.6)
- Provide access to the Bloomingdale Trail (Recommendation 6.7)
- Install pedestrian HAWK signals to facilitate easier road crossings (Recommendation 7.4)
- Launch a design review initiative to cut down on auto-centric site design (Recommendation 7.10)
- Introduce new bicycle lanes and bicycle advocacy signage (Recommendation 7.20)
- Implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (Recommendation 7.30)
- Develop a graphic identity and character for the CTA “L” station (Recommendation 7.31)
- Promote the CTA “L” station as a place (Recommendation 7.32)



Figures 7a. and b. Renderings of Proposed Improvements for Western Avenue

North Avenue is a major east-west corridor, choked with traffic, but urban in spite of itself, lined by mixed use structures and compact but active sidewalks. The vision for North Avenue is about rebalancing and bookending – about creating a more balanced street by slowing vehicular speeds and recovering small pieces of the automobile environment for use by pedestrians and cyclists, about extending the commercial energy and vibe concentrated near the six-point intersection to welcome people from West(ern) to the Kennedy.

Key recommendations specific to North Avenue include:

- Lobby for red light cameras to increase safety (Recommendation 2.3)
- Commission new, multi-lingual WPB signage for installation under the Kennedy and at the six-point intersection (Recommendations 3.1 and 7.1)
- Foster a new arts district by converting vacant ground floor retail space into live/work space for artists (Recommendation 4.3)
- Support arts programs in the local schools and celebrate new spaces for arts instruction and creation, like St. Paul's (Recommendation 4.5)
- Introduce new public art under the Kennedy (Recommendation 4.13)
- Adopt an official SSA stance on density that encourages artists' live/work space in vacant commercial spaces (Recommendation 5.1)
- Reinforce the retail district by extending the existing commercial vibe from the center out to Western and Ashland (Recommendation 5.5)
- Add new signage and additional crosswalks; upgrade existing facilities (Recommendation 7.2)
- Reclaim pedestrian space and slow traffic with bump-outs, striping, and by removing excess asphalt (Recommendation 7.3)
- Create safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycles programs under the Kennedy Expressway (Recommendation 7.8)
- Extend the Pedestrian Street designation (Recommendation 7.9)
- Reclaim parking spaces for bicycle parking (Recommendation 7.23)
- Claim space for bike boxes at intersections (Recommendations 7.24)
- Add more metered parking; increase the price of parking to encourage more turn-over (Recommendation 7.37)
- Remove the rush hour parking restrictions (Recommendation 7.38)
- Improve the six-point intersection (Recommendation 7.51)



Figure 8. Conceptual Rendering of Proposed On-Street Bicycle Parking

Division Street, with its sizable sidewalks, is as broad as the range of uses that it hosts. It serves all walks of life – the people who inhabit the residences, frequent the local shops and bars, dine on the sidewalks, attend the schools, work or seek care at the hospital, lounge in the parks, or even bathe in the Russian and Turkish baths. The vision for Division Street is about continuity and surface – about extending the aesthetics and vibe of the street by extending the locals-only entrepreneurial district eastward and westward from Damen Avenue and maximizing the potential of the streetscape by making full use of the sidewalks and institutional edges.

Key recommendations specific to Division Street include:

- Introduce pedestrian scale lighting (Recommendation 2.2)
- Lobby for red light cameras to increase safety (Recommendation 2.3)
- Commission new, multi-lingual WPB signage for installation at the intersection of Western and Division, at the Polish Triangle, and under the Kennedy (Recommendations 3.1 and 7.1)
- Introduce new public art under the Kennedy, at the CTA Division stop, and at Western Avenue (Recommendation 4.13)
- Adopt an official SSA stance on density that encourages denser transit-oriented development near the CTA Division Street stop (Recommendation 5.1)
- In the long-term, consider redeveloping the Kmart/ Jewel site and underutilized parcels along Division close to the Polish Triangle for a more urban design at Milwaukee and Ashland (Recommendation 5.3)
- Reinforce the retail district with a Local-Only zone (Recommendation 5.5)
- Integrate stormwater management practices into streetscape design along the edges of the major institutions along Division (Recommendation 6.3)
- Maintain the pedestrian environment by enforcing sidewalk usage and encouraging tree pit maintenance and guerilla gardening (Recommendation 6.5)
- Reinvent the Polish Triangle (Recommendations 6.10 and 7.52)
- Install pedestrian HAWK signals to facilitate easier road crossings (Recommendation 7.4)
- Create safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycles programs under the Kennedy Expressway (Recommendation 7.8)
- Add bike shelters to WPB’s streetscape (Recommendation 7.22)
- Develop a graphic identity and character for the CTA “L” station (Recommendation 7.31)
- Promote the CTA “L” station as a place (Recommendation 7.32)
- Add more metered parking; increase the price of parking to encourage more turn-over (Recommendation 7.37)
- Improve the intersection of Division, Honore, and Marion (Recommendation 7.51)



surface parking designed to manage stormwater

structured parking with green roof

4 - 10 story mixed use structures: ground floor commercial, residential above



Figures 9a. and b. Existing and Proposed Conceptual Site Plan for Division between Paulina and Ashland.

