



# Bridgeport (35th/Halsted) Developer Discussion Panel



## Summary Report

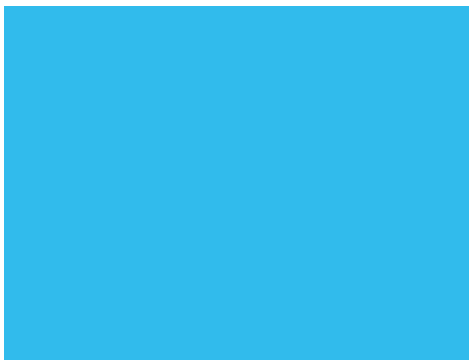
September 2019



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning



**Urban Land Institute**  
Chicago



# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Background .....	1
Key Recommendations .....	3
Short-term opportunities and actions.....	4
Long-term opportunities and actions .....	4
Next Steps .....	5

## **Funding Acknowledgment**

This project was supported through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, which is funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and the Chicago Community Trust. CMAP would like to thank these funders for their support for this project.

# Introduction

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) developed and now guides the implementation of [ON TO 2050](#), metropolitan Chicago's current comprehensive regional plan. Adopted on October 10, 2018, ON TO 2050 establishes coordinated strategies that will help the region's 284 communities prosper by addressing transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality of life issues. The plan includes a range of policy recommendations designed around three core principles: inclusive growth, resilience, and prioritized investment. These principles, as well the plan's topical recommendations, informed the agency's work in Bridgeport and Canaryville and guided the discussion summarized in this document.

CMAP's Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program directs resources to communities pursuing planning work helps implement ON TO 2050. Since launching this program in 2011, CMAP has initiated more than 200 projects with local governments, nonprofits, and intergovernmental organizations to address local issues at the intersection of transportation, land use, and housing, including the natural environment, economic growth, and community development. For the majority of the projects, CMAP conducts the technical work but coordinates closely with community representatives to ensure that the project reflects local concerns and priorities. After a plan is adopted, CMAP remains involved, as capacity allows, to monitor and encourage progress on the implementation actions specified in the plan.

As part of these implementation efforts, CMAP collaborated with the [Urban Land Institute](#) (ULI) in Chicago to provide guidance and advice to communities that have completed LTA projects on ways to attract investment and strengthen developer connections.

# Background

In 2018, 11<sup>th</sup> District Cook County Commissioner John P. Daley and 11<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman Patrick D. Thompson sought technical assistance from CMAP to develop a neighborhood plan that would address a number of local issues, including strengthening economic development, assisting local businesses, housing, transportation, and parks and open space. In February 2019, CMAP completed a [Priorities Plan](#) for the Bridgeport and Canaryville neighborhoods, and immediately provided assistance implementing the Plan recommendations by convening a Housing Panel discussion in collaboration with the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, and Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC). The analysis and recommendations from this discussion were presented to the Commissioner and Alderman in September 2019.

The CMAP/ULI developer discussion panel, which took place on July 16, 2019, focused on attracting new retail and commercial investment at the 35<sup>th</sup> Street and Halsted intersection and along the nearby Halsted corridor, and how the Ward and District could support existing businesses, preserve the historic architecture along the corridor, and activate underutilized parcels. The panel provided feedback and guidance to the Commissioner's and Alderman's



office, representatives from the Chicago Department, and CMAP staff on ways to attract investment at the 35<sup>th</sup> Street and Halsted intersection, and along the Halsted corridor southbound to 36<sup>th</sup> Street. This report summarizes the panel's key recommendations and suggested strategies in the near and long terms.

## **Developer Panel Participants**

- Paul Alessandro, Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture
- Jason Koehn, Albion
- Tyler Quast, Blue Star Properties
- Swasti Shah, ULI Chicago

## **City of Chicago and Cook County Participants**

### *11<sup>th</sup> District Cook County*

- Commissioner John P. Daley, 11<sup>th</sup> District Cook County
- Anthony Scalise, Chief of Staff for 11<sup>th</sup> District Cook County Commissioner John P. Daley

### *11<sup>th</sup> Ward*

- Alderman Patrick D. Thompson, 11<sup>th</sup> Ward
- Kelly Fitzpatrick, Service Coordinator for 11<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman Patrick D. Thompson

### *Chicago Bureau of Planning, Historic Preservation & Sustainability*

- Gerardo Garcia, Coordinating Planner, Planning & Design, Chicago Bureau of Planning, Historic Preservation & Sustainability
- Todd Wyatt, Coordinating Planner, Bureau of Planning, Historic Preservation & Sustainability



Figure 1. Focus Area for ULI Developer Panel (approximate)



Following an initial discussion of the Commissioner's and Alderman's vision for the focus area based on resident feedback, the panel toured the Halsted corridor and spent quite a bit of time at the corner of 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted understanding the existing conditions, and identifying development opportunities. The panel then organized their thoughts and recommendations into primary recommendations, short-term opportunities and actions, and long-term opportunities and action. These recommendations are outlined below.

## Primary Recommendations

The panel strongly recommended that the Alderman's office and Commissioner's office first focus their development efforts at the intersection of 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted and the immediate vicinity, including the first few blocks of Halsted to the south of the intersection. 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted is the intersection of "Main Street and Main Street," "the center of gravity" for the neighborhood, "the place to go all in" and "create the best you can."

This central area also presents the best opportunities to focus development density, which would benefit existing businesses as well as create additional population density that would help attract additional businesses to the corridor. Defining clear boundaries for this focus area along Halsted and marketing it as appropriate for higher-density development would set the stage, expectations, and illustrate to developers that this type of investment is welcome. Assessing the existing stock of housing and identifying redevelopment opportunities (vacant parcels, vacant buildings, and otherwise) is the first step to understanding where new development can be located within the focus area.

The Alderman's office and Commissioner's office should work with developers to solicit specific businesses to invest and locate in this focus area as part of a new development or along the corridor in vacant space. The panel recommends the Offices work with existing businesses in the neighborhood—and in adjacent neighborhoods such as Chinatown—to see if any businesses are interested in expanding, relocating, or opening new locations in this focus area around 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted. It is important to also actively pursue and market the area to appropriate, successful businesses that are located in other neighborhoods—not wait for them to come present investment ideas in the focus area. As one developer panelist put it, "Those broker signs in the window don't work."

There was broad agreement among the panel that the businesses will not come to the focus area without more density—in other words, more residents in close vicinity. Community outreach for the Bridgeport and Canaryville Priorities Plan revealed broad agreement that the character of traditional, smaller-scale residential side streets in the neighborhood should not change, but a wide spectrum of residents and other stakeholders indicated an openness to larger scale, multi-family housing, if it was located in busy commercial areas such as 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted.



## Short-term opportunities and actions

### *Improving the condition of the corridor*

There was clear agreement among the panelists that the first step is to improve the condition and appearance of the corridor. This is needed to improve the corridor's appeal to the many people who pass through the corridor (especially after White Sox games) as well as attract the interest of potential developers and other businesses.

In addition to fixing/improving sidewalks and cleaning/improving parkways and planters, they asserted that it is essential to clean up the vacant lots located along the corridor, and work with current owners of vacant parcels and storefronts to allow food trucks, temporary parks, gathering spaces, art installations, and similar "pop-up" programming. Efforts such as this would create a buzz of activity in the area, and help define this area of Bridgeport as the area where redevelopment efforts are focused.

They also recommended creating a program for façade improvement and replacement of awnings and signage, as well as offering grants for the beautification of vacant storefronts (through window coverings, murals, etc.). These can be effective ways to improve aesthetics, demonstrate neighborhood investment, and activate the corridor. Staff from the Chicago Department of Planning and Development attending the panel offered to provide information on best practices, examples of successful programs implemented in other parts of the City, and guidance to available resources from the City and other community partners to implement these programs.

### *Chamber of Commerce*

Local chambers of commerce are key to attracting investment, engaging, and supporting existing businesses, but the panelists asserted that the "South Loop Chamber of Commerce" is a confusing name for Bridgeport's chamber of commerce and that the Chamber needs to change its name to one that clearly indicates their focus on Bridgeport.

They strongly recommended creating a position that would focus solely on economic development in the neighborhood, which would establish a "delegate liaison" with whom developers and potential businesses can work directly and establish a close relationship, including getting initial feedback on possible investments they are considering or exploring other possibilities in the neighborhood (starting with the corridor near 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted). This delegate liaison could work as part of the chamber or, alternatively, out of a newly-created Community Development Corporation or Special Service Area (please see discussion of these options below).

### *Connection to the White Sox*

In addition to improving the visual appeal of the area around 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted, the panelists recommended more consideration of what White Sox fans—before and, especially, *after* the game—are looking for in the immediate area around the ballpark. Businesses such as brewpubs near 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted would be a natural destination for fans who want to wait for the ballpark



traffic to clear before heading home themselves. Assisting this effort, the Alderman's office and businesses in the community should connect with the White Sox organization to explore opportunities for better coordinating activities, perhaps starting with practical things such as lengthening the closing times of ballpark parking lots, and allowing westbound traffic towards 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted. Allowing more traffic towards the Halsted corridor would help activate a larger area around 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted and draw the east-west traffic to the corridor.

## Long-term opportunities and actions

### *Need for more residents within the corridor*

As mentioned earlier, the panelists were unanimous in their agreement that if the corridor near 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted is to thrive, more residents need to live in the vicinity. Increasing residential density along the corridor near 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted would be the most appropriate action to attract new residents, add population density along the corridor to support existing businesses, and attract new businesses. As construction and labor costs rise, density is attractive to developers in order to feasibly finance new construction.

The panelists recommended that the Alderman's office consider allowing 7-10 story mixed-use rental residential in the vicinity of the intersection of 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted, and work with the community to identify other locations along Halsted where this would be most appropriate and welcomed. Locating higher density development only along the corridor would not disrupt the existing housing stock along the surrounding side streets (and would therefore be in agreement with the feedback received from residents and other stakeholders during the development of the Bridgeport and Canaryville Priorities Plan). The panelists thought that high-quality apartments that are smaller and affordable would be attractive to younger renters who would value the proximity to downtown Chicago. The panelists also contended that this would provide an opportunity for younger renters to "test drive" the neighborhood, ultimately becoming interested in Bridgeport's attractive single family homes—which would be good for home values (for existing residents).

As a first step, the panelists observed a need to make some careful adjustments to the zoning code for properties located at the corner of 35<sup>th</sup> and Halsted and along the corridor in the immediate vicinity to the north and south. This would allow for the restoration and adaptive reuse of valued buildings, as well as the creation of appropriate higher density development where vacant lots exist today. Doing so would signal to the development community that the neighborhood is ready for investment at this specific location.

Outside of the area designated for higher-density residential, allowing lower-density uses such as new townhomes/rowhomes and walk-up 2-and-3-flats on vacant parcels would also add vitality to the neighborhood, and further add to investment in the vicinity, but on a less dense scale.





### *Additional options for economic development*

In addition to the neighborhood chamber of commerce, the neighborhood may benefit from the creation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC), a non-profit organization created to provide programs, services, and community engagement activities that promote and support community and economic development. The Chicago Department of Planning and Development, as well as CMAP, can provide resources, best practices, and additional information on how these organizations are formed, funded, and operate if the Bridgeport neighborhood is interested in creating this type of organization. CDCs require resident support, participation, and input, and can be quite impactful with the appropriate resources (staff capacity and funding).

Similarly, creating a [Special Service Area \(SSA\)](#) or Business Improvement District along Halsted Street would allocate a new funding stream for streetscape improvements, support programs for existing businesses, economic development efforts, and marketing efforts. SSAs do create an additional tax burden, so it is paramount that the Alderman's and Commissioner's offices work with the local business community to fully discuss and explore this option in order to illustrate the value and benefits. Two of the panelists suggested that Andersonville [SSA #22](#) would be a great example to follow. The Alderman's office should work with the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to apply for an SSA if this is deemed appropriate for the neighborhood.

