

# AUBURN GRESHAM 79TH STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

Adopted by the Chicago Plan Commission  
**April 17, 2025**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## THANKS TO THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED

A special thank you goes to everyone who participated in the planning process for the Auburn Gresham 79th Street Corridor Plan. This plan was made possible by the contributions and insights of the residents, business owners, property owners, developers, representatives from various groups and organizations in Auburn Gresham, local and regional transportation agencies, Alderman Moore's office (17th Ward), Alderman Hall's office (6th Ward), and the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development.

### PLANNING TEAM



Ware Realty Group

### Project Funding

**The Auburn Gresham 79th Street Corridor Plan was funded by the Regional Transportation Authority's Community Planning Program.**

For more information about this program, visit:  
[www.rtachicago.org/cp](http://www.rtachicago.org/cp)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
EXISTING CONDITIONS .....	7
VISION AND GOALS .....	13
LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK .....	19
URBAN DESIGN IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK .....	37
TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK .....	55
CHARACTER AREAS .....	65
IMPLEMENTATION .....	83







# INTRODUCTION





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 79th Street Corridor Plan provides a framework for the continued revitalization of the historic 79th Street corridor in Chicago's Auburn Gresham neighborhood. The Plan lays the groundwork for a more vibrant, walkable, and thriving commercial corridor. It highlights existing assets, identifies targets for catalytic development, and outlines opportunities to create a more walkable, thriving commercial corridor. Strategies have been identified to strengthen access to neighborhood amenities, healthy food, community spaces, and job opportunities for all residents. Community goals and objectives to revitalize the corridor have been made clear and formalized into an actionable plan based on ideas from meetings with community organizations, residents, businesses, and community leaders.

With high traffic counts, access to CTA Route #79 bus which ranks as a top-three route for ridership in the CTA system, and access to the new Auburn Gresham Metra station, the 79th Street corridor has great potential to become a stronger commercial and civic hub for the Auburn Gresham community.

### WHERE IS THE PLANNING AREA?

Located on Chicago's South Side in the heart of Auburn Gresham, the study area generally consists of the blocks fronting 79th Street between Vincennes Avenue and Ashland Avenue, and fronting Halsted Street from 77th Street and 83rd Street.

### WHAT DOES THE CORRIDOR LOOK LIKE TODAY?

This corridor has a rich history with engaged residents that make it a historic and invaluable part of Chicago's tapestry of neighborhoods. Today, the area is framed by architecturally significant buildings and is generally built-out, but it does struggle with multiple parcels that are vacant or blighted. It is supported by businesses that are attempting to thrive, and home to residents that are invested in its success.

### HOW WAS THE STUDY STARTED?

The plan was initiated in 2022 by the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD), with support from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). It was developed through close cooperation between these two organizations, as well as Metra, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation (GAGDC) leadership, Auburn Gresham residents, and a variety of organizations that will lead improvement efforts.

### KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This effort has been informed and influenced by multiple ongoing planning and development initiatives. Recent development activity along the 79th Street corridor includes RFPs and targeted investments of \$43 million for the Auburn Gresham Apartments (affordable housing and mixed-use development on two sites), the new \$18 million Healthy Lifestyle Hub developed by the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation, and the **new Auburn Park Metra station at 79th Street and Lowe Avenue** (which is still under construction as of January, 2024). The \$35 million train station will be serviced by the Rock Island Metra line going north to the Loop and south to the southwest suburbs. The station creates an opportunity to catalyze additional investment in development along the corridor - further reinvigorating the community. Additionally, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) has a streetscape project programmed on 79th Street. There is also a CREATE project programmed for the viaduct near the new Auburn Park Metra station.





## GOAL OF THE PLAN

The plan positions 79th Street to become a more vibrant and inclusive hub for the Auburn Gresham community, emphasizing the neighborhood's rich history and diversity. The revitalization of the corridor will focus on enhancements that not only encourage economic growth but also prioritize the well-being and needs of residents. The vision for 79th Street includes a welcoming atmosphere characterized by thriving local businesses, inviting public spaces, and a lively arts and culture scene. The plan is committed to maintaining a walkable environment, promoting active transportation, and providing accessible amenities reflects a dedication to serving the diverse needs of the community.

Through collaborative efforts, innovative approaches, and targeted investments, 79th Street aims to become a model of equitable development. This transformation envisions a space where both residents and visitors can live, work, shop, and connect in a safe and dynamic environment, fostering a sense of community and contributing to the overall well-being of the Auburn Gresham neighborhood.

## HOW WILL THIS GOAL BE ACHIEVED?

The plan recommends increasing density in and around the corridor with an abundance of living and working spaces that foster a strong sense of community

### TRANSPORTATION

The plan views transit as a catalyst for ongoing community development. It not only supports the use of transit, but supports transit-oriented development. In addition to emphasizing transit, future development focuses on walkability by strategically positioning new housing and commercial uses near transit points. Streetscape improvements lead by CDOT's 79th Street Streetscape Project have begun engaging the community around pedestrian safety, neighborhood branding, and plaza creation along 79th street. By utilizing these approaches, the plan views transit as a pathway toward prosperity.

### HOUSING

The plan is also committed to robust and attainable housing, aiming to both stabilize the market while improving the quality of life for residents. From a housing perspective, vacant lots are seen as opportunities for

purposeful transformation through developments that contribute to the well-being of all residents.

### ACTIVE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

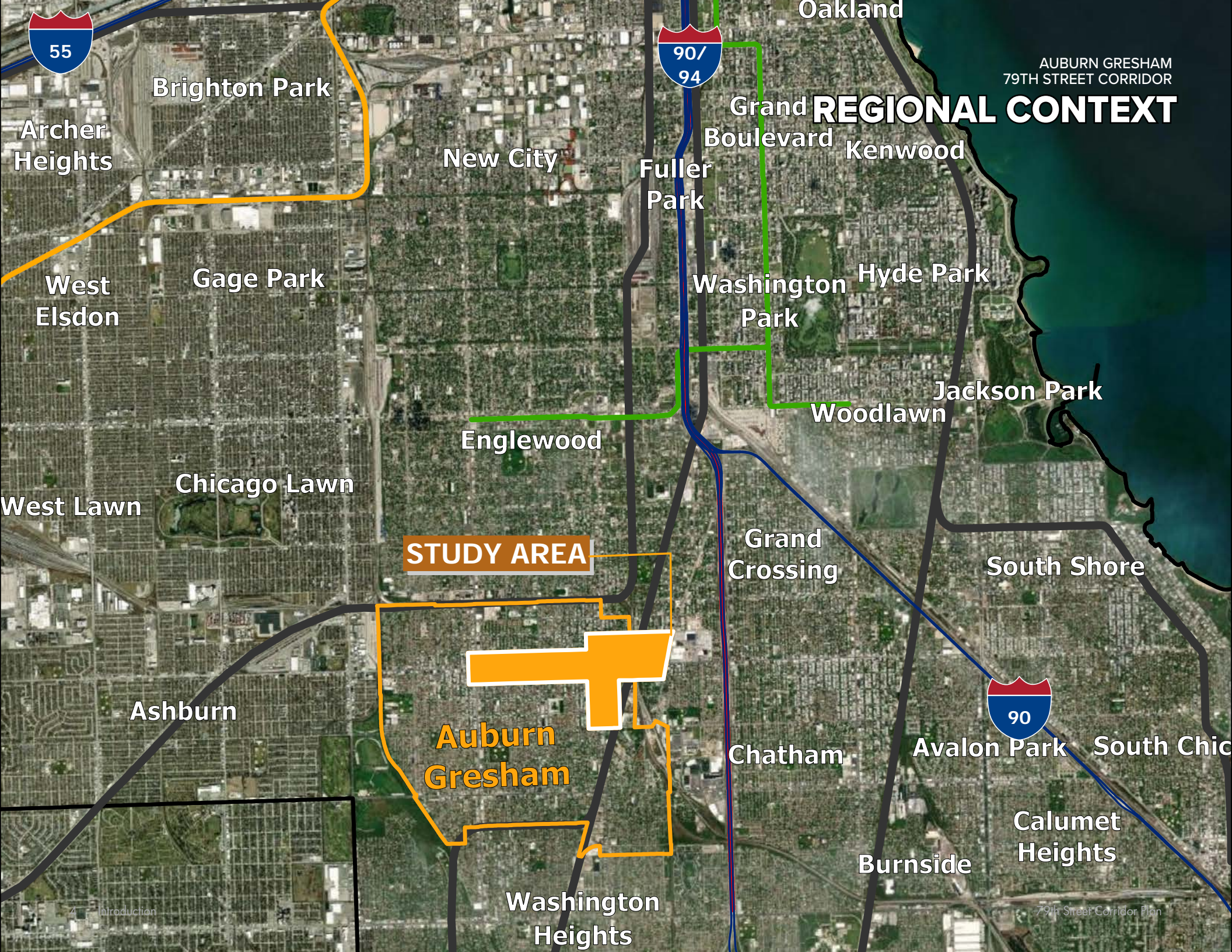
The plan emphasizes active commercial uses, with the goal of strengthening the overall environment by building new retail spaces, nurturing existing businesses, and enticing entrepreneurs to locate in Auburn Gresham.

Notably, the plan does not increase the overall retail footprint in the area. Market conditions may change in the future and more commercial uses may eventually be desired, however based on the current trajectory of the neighborhood, a reorganization of commercial uses is recommended to maximize commercial activity in key areas.

### URBAN DESIGN

Strong urban design is a central tenet of the plan. Emphasis is placed on improving the physical environment in pursuit of improved safety, a cleaner environment, stronger economic development, increased social interaction, and a more livable environment. In combination, these goals are intended to propel the community toward a future marked by growth, connectivity, and an elevated quality of life for all.





AUBURN GRESHAM  
79TH STREET CORRIDOR

# REGIONAL CONTEXT

STUDY AREA

Auburn  
Gresham



AUBURN GRESHAM  
79TH STREET CORRIDOR  
**STUDY AREA**





## ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The plan is composed of the following chapters:

### INTRODUCTION

Provides an overview of the entire plan.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Gives a high-level explanation of the state of the neighborhood today.

### VISION AND GOALS

Defines a vision for the future of the corridor and describes the specific objectives of the plan in detail.

## LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Describes the future land uses in the corridor and covers specific key considerations in detail.

## URBAN DESIGN IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Explains several “tools” for public realm improvement and where they should be used.

## TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

Provides a toolbox of strategies that can be implemented throughout the corridor including suggested locations and implementations.

## CHARACTER AREAS

Summarizes land use, urban design, and transportation recommendations being applied to specific areas of the study area.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Concludes the plan with a guide on making the plan a reality and an explanation of how to use the document in the future, a description of key partners going forward.





## PLANNING PROCESS

The Planning Process was undertaken over the course of approximately 18-months.

### **TASK 1: PROJECT INITIATION**

Meetings and workshops were conducted with key RTA and City staff, elected officials, and a steering committee prior to undertaking other community outreach activities. These meetings ensured all stakeholders were aligned and set the stage for a productive and exciting planning process.

### **TASK 2: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & EXISTING CONDITIONS**

A combination of in-person workshops, an online survey, and in-person survey collection was used to engage the community and identify key issues and opportunities present in the corridor. Data regarding key issues were also inventoried and assessed to provide a snapshot of existing conditions along the corridor in 2023.

### **TASK 3: VISION FOR THE CORRIDOR**

After hosting the community visioning workshop, a vision statement and supporting series of goals and objectives were developed and reviewed with the steering committee. The vision was then used as a foundation for plan recommendations.

### **TASK 4: DRAFT DOCUMENT & REVIEW**

Based on the previous tasks in the planning process, the draft version of the Auburn Gresham 79th Corridor Plan was prepared and presented to the project Leadership Group, GAGDC, and the public.





## APPROVED METRA STATION DESIGN





The Visioning Workshop

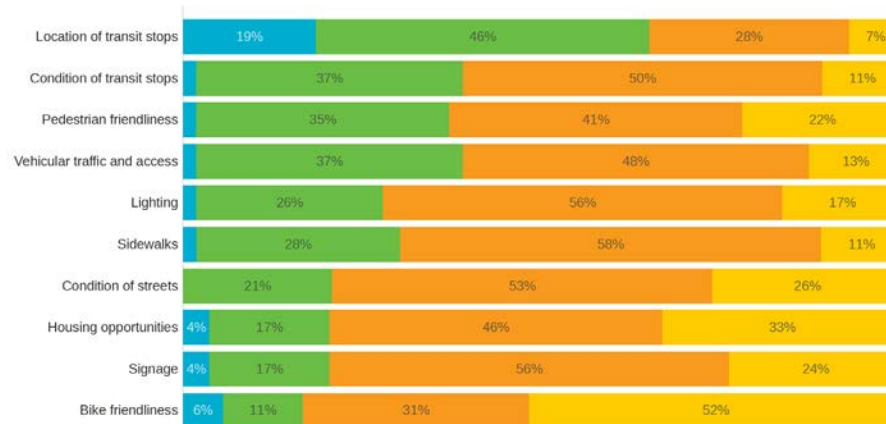
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To effectively guide the future of the 79th Street corridor in the study area, the plan is the product of a community-driven planning process that includes engagement with residents, business owners, local officials, the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation, and other key stakeholders.

## STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee was formed to provide technical advice and serve as a community sounding board throughout the planning process. steering committee members included representatives from DPD, RTA, Metra, CTA, and GAGDC as well as several local residents and area business owner/operators. The steering committee met a total of five times over the duration of the planning process, providing input on key issues, working draft plan content, and the draft 79th Street Corridor Plan document.

Q10 - Please rate the quality of each of the following aspects of the condition a...  
56 Responses



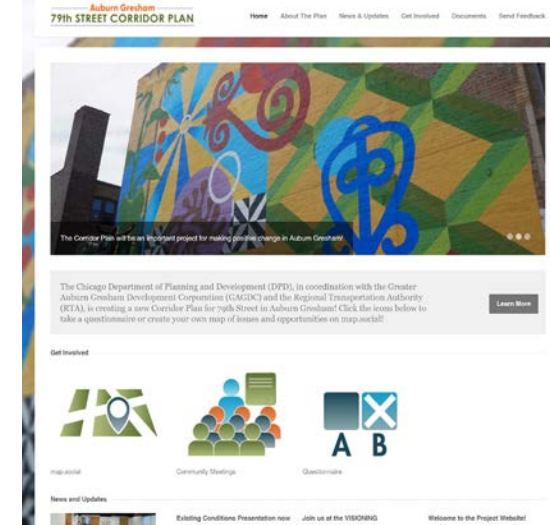
Example result from the community survey

## PROJECT WEBSITE

A project website was created to serve as a “one stop shop” for plan-related news and information. The site includes project news and announcements, meeting information, and draft plan documents. The project website was also used to host online engagement tools including a survey and an online mapping tool, Map. social.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

In addition to in-person events, a community survey was deployed to gather detailed feedback from residents and business community members in Auburn Gresham. In addition to hosting the survey online and promoting the project website, a combination of door-to-door and on-street canvassing resulted in over 100 survey responses from community members.



The Project Website

## VISIONING WORKSHOP

On April 25th, 2023, a community-wide Visioning Workshop was held at the Auburn Gresham Healthy Lifestyle Hub located at 839 W 79th Street. The event was hosted by the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation and the project team to gain input from community members on their vision for the 79th Street Corridor. Community members were invited to draw on maps and write suggestions for the Corridor, regarding topics such as urban design, economic vitality, and organization. Each group was provided a workbook packet that included guidelines for discussion along with a large map of the corridor plan study area.

## OPEN HOUSE

On February 7th, 2024, a community Open House was held at the Auburn Gresham Healthy Lifestyle Hub. The event was hosted by the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation and the project team to share the findings and recommendation of the study with community members and receive feedback on the 79th Street Corridor. Community members were invited to explore posters outlining key findings and share feedback, verbally, on comment cards, and online.





# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## OVERVIEW

Existing conditions were analyzed to build a baseline understanding of the 79th Street Corridor and the Auburn Gresham community. The following section summarizes existing demographics, land use, zoning, and the overall assets/challenges of the study area.

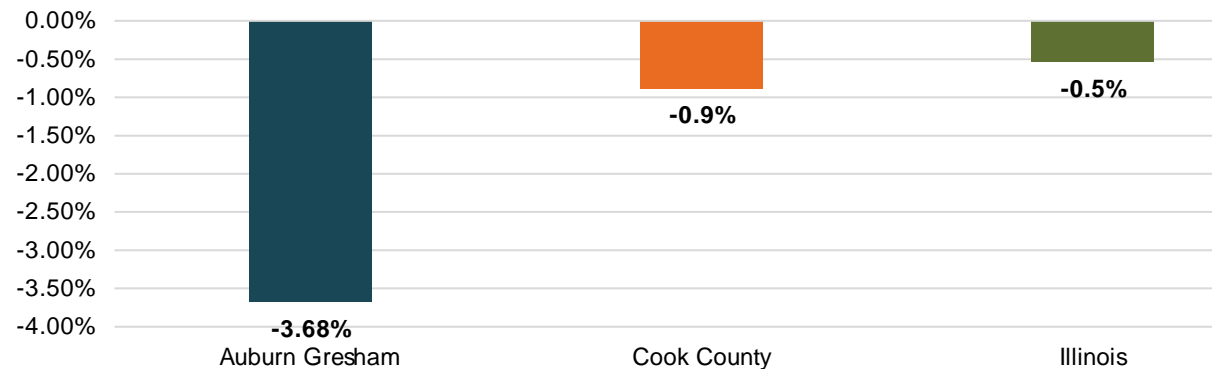
## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

In total, 48,039 live in Auburn Gresham per the American Community Survey (2017-2021 five-year estimates). Auburn Gresham's population decreased by 3.7% between 2000 and 2021, as the County and State by slightly less. However, the City of Chicago grew by 1.9% over the same period.

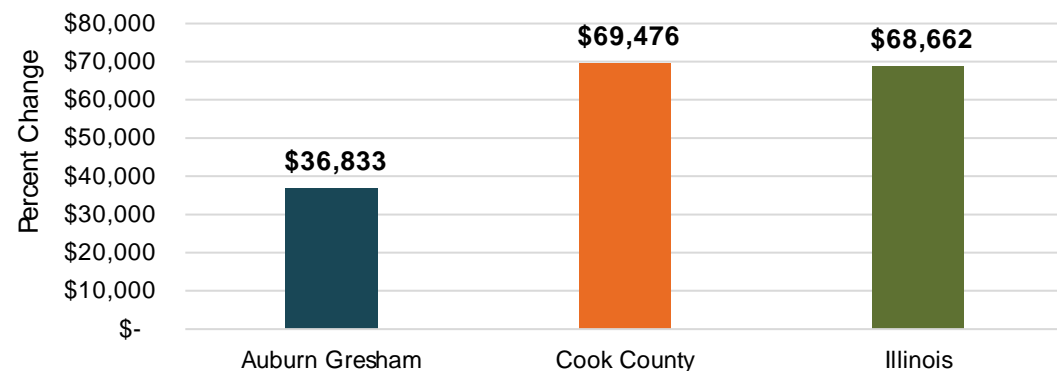
The Auburn Gresham community is 94.2% Black (non-Hispanic) with a median age of 38.0 years compared to 35.1 years for the City of Chicago as whole.

Auburn Gresham's median household income is \$36,633 which is 42.6% lower than in the City of Chicago (\$65,781). Approximately 45% of all households in Auburn Gresham are cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. With housing making up such a large portion of a household's income, it can be a challenge to pay for other necessities like transportation or food.

### Population Change 2000 - 2021



### Median Household Income 2021





## TRANSPORTATION

79th Street is a multimodal corridor with extensive bus service, connections to CTA rail, and a new Metra station under construction. As a multimodal corridor, 79th Street not only carries both people and goods traveling east-west from the City's western border to the Lakefront, but more importantly, plays a critical role in the City's transit network. As one of the highest ridership routes in the CTA system, Route #79 travels the length of 79th Street, providing key connections to north-south routes and the CTA 79th Street Red Line station. A baseline of existing conditions was provided through the CDOT 79th Street Streetscape Project which completed a thorough analysis of existing traffic, transit, and parking conditions to identify pedestrian safety and streetscape improvements. Highlights of the transportation network conditions are provided below with more detailed information summarized in **Section 6 – Transportation Framework**.

## ROADWAY CONDITIONS & SAFETY

79th Street generally provides one lane in each direction with adjacent on-street parking on both sides. High-visibility crosswalks are provided at all intersections along this corridor, along with curb extensions at selected intersections. Documented in the CDOT Streetscape Project, the corridor study area experiences traffic volumes of up to 20,000 vehicles per day, increasing from east to west. Speeds in excess of the posted speed limit are common along the corridor and a high volume of trucks travel through the corridor. The highest number of crashes at 79th Street intersections occurred at Ashland Avenue (24,000 vehicles per day), Racine Avenue (8,200 vehicles per day), and Halsted Street (16,000 vehicles per day), with 20% of crashes resulting from left-turning vehicles. Of the 689 crashes during the period of 2018-2020, 46 have involved pedestrians. Areas where curb lanes are not heavily used have resulted in occurrences of drivers using parking lanes for passing lanes, queue jumping at intersections, and more aggressive driving.

## NEW METRA STATION

A new Auburn Park Metra station on the Rock Island Line is currently under construction, promising to significantly enhance transportation accessibility and employment opportunities across the region. This development is not only a boon for the neighborhood but also a catalyst for economic growth while contributing to the overall well-being of the community. Positioned on the south side of 79th Street, just east of Lowe Avenue, the fully accessible station includes features such as an 84-space parking lot with capability for electric vehicle parking, kiss-and-ride drop-off area, covered bicycle parking, and landscaped islands. In collaboration with Metra, CDOT is coordinating improvements to the public way to ensure multi-modal access to the station, accommodating pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

## BICYCLE ENVIRONMENT

Currently, the 79th Street corridor lacks dedicated bike infrastructure, and CDOT's plans do not designate it as a proposed east-west bike route. However, nearby streets offer various on-street bike facilities that enhance cycling options in the area including Loomis Avenue, Halsted Street, and Vincennes Avenue.

## PARKING

The corridor study area generally includes unmetered parking spaces along 79th Street with peak hour parking restrictions west of Racine Avenue. Weekday parking is restricted during the A.M. peak period on the north side of the street (westbound) and during the P.M. peak period along the south side of the street (eastbound). Peak parking restrictions also exit the east and west approaches of the 79th Street and Halsted Street intersection. Parking in this area of the corridor is somewhat unique because it is a dynamic multimodal thoroughfare, boasting extensive bus services, connections to the CTA rail system, and the ongoing construction of a new Metra station, reducing parking demand compared to areas of the City with less access to transit.

## EXISTING LAND USE

Understanding how existing development is configured today is essential to addressing important issues within the study area and guiding how the corridor will evolve moving forward. Currently, 79th Street primarily consists of commercial, mixed-use, and public/semi-public uses. A mix of multifamily, and single-family housing is located within the surrounding blocks of the corridor. Every parcel within the study area was considered and categorized into one of nine land use categories.

### RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY

This category represents traditional single-family homes with one dwelling unit.

### MULTIFAMILY

This category represents traditional apartment buildings ranging from a classic Chicago two-flats, townhomes, 3-flats and six flats to larger apartment buildings with 10 or more dwelling units.

### MIXED-USE

This category represents buildings with more than one use on a lot. Typically, this comes in the form of a commercial building on a main street with apartments on the upper levels.

### COMMERCIAL

This category represents buildings that are only for commercial uses such as retail stores, restaurants, grocery stores, and other business uses.

### PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC

This category represents buildings that are meant to serve the public or are owned by the government. Public/semi-public uses within the corridor include churches, service providers, and Leo High School.

### PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

This category represents green space that people can use for recreation and relaxation. Renaissance Park and Auburn Park are the only green spaces within the study area.

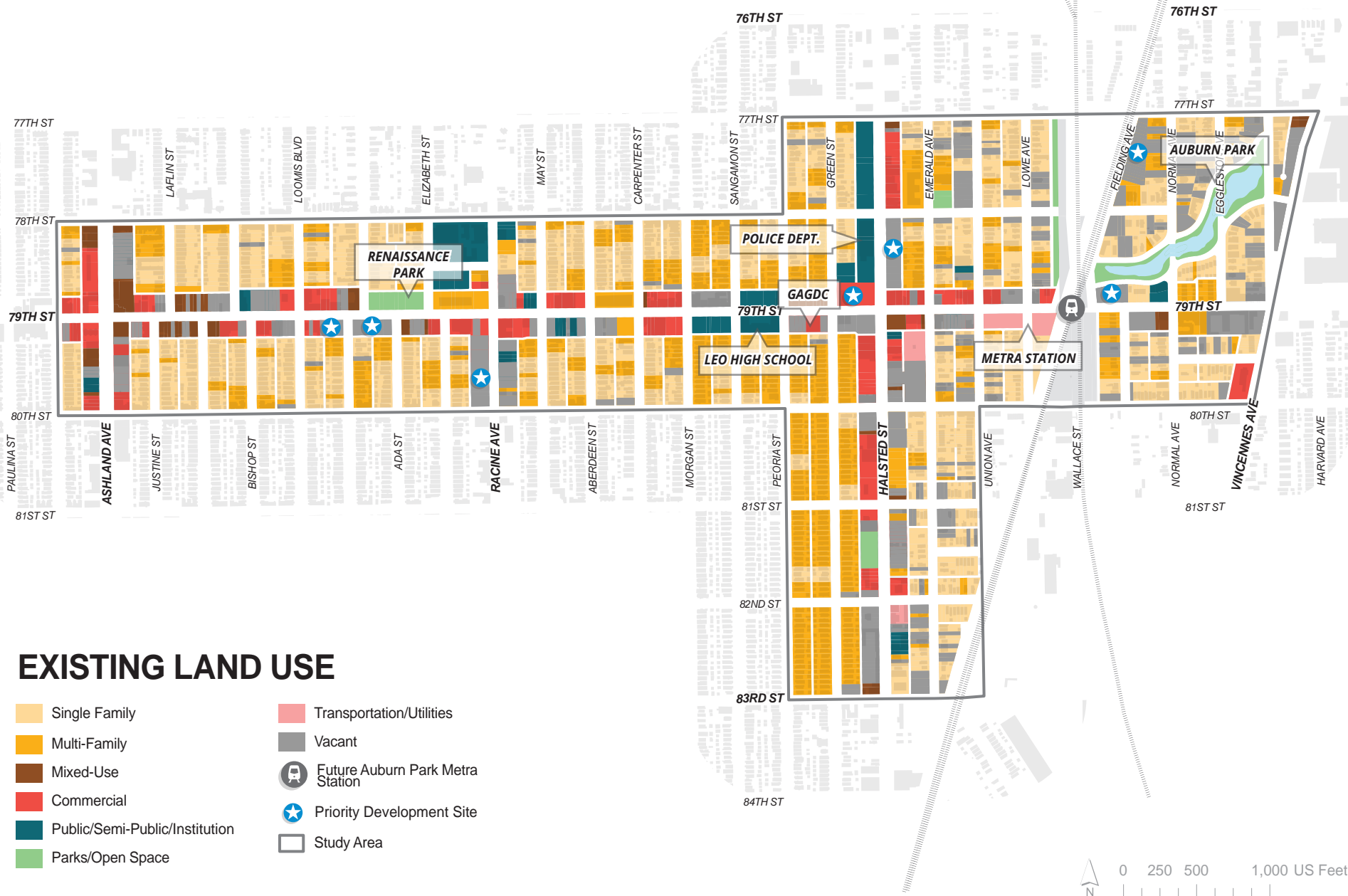
### TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

This category represents parcels that are occupied by utilities and or transportation uses such as the Metra station.

### VACANT

This category represents vacant parcels without a building. Vacant lots are dispersed throughout the study area and are redevelopment opportunities.





# CURRENT ZONING

The zoning in the study area is largely aligned with the existing land uses. 79th is primarily lined by parcels zoned for commercial uses. While the surrounding Auburn Gresham neighborhood is comprised of parcels zoned for residential uses.

## NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPPING DISTRICT

(B1-1, -2, and -3) - Intended to support a broad range of small-scale retail and service uses oriented to pedestrians.

## NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED-USE DISTRICT

(B2-3) - Intended to stimulate development along under-developed streets by providing a greater range of development options including commercial and residential uses.

## COMMUNITY SHOPPING DISTRICT

(B3-1, -2, and -3) - Intended to support a wide range of retail and service uses, often as shopping centers or larger buildings with most customers arriving by car.

## NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

(C1-1, and -2) - Intended to accommodate a very broad range of small-scale, business, service and commercial uses.

## MOTOR VEHICLE-RELATED COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

(C2-1, -2) - Intended to accommodate a very broad range of business, service and commercial uses. Most customers will arrive by car.

## RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-UNIT DISTRICT

(RS-3) - Intended to accommodate the development of detached houses on individual lots.

## RESIDENTIAL TWO-FLAT, TOWNHOUSE AND MULTI-UNIT DISTRICT

(RT-4) - Intended to accommodate detached houses, two-flats, townhouses and low-density, multi-unit residential buildings.

## RESIDENTIAL MULTI-UNIT DISTRICT

(RM-4.5, -5 and -6) - Intended to accommodate moderate-to high-density, multi-unit residential buildings

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARK, MINI PARK OR PLAYLOT

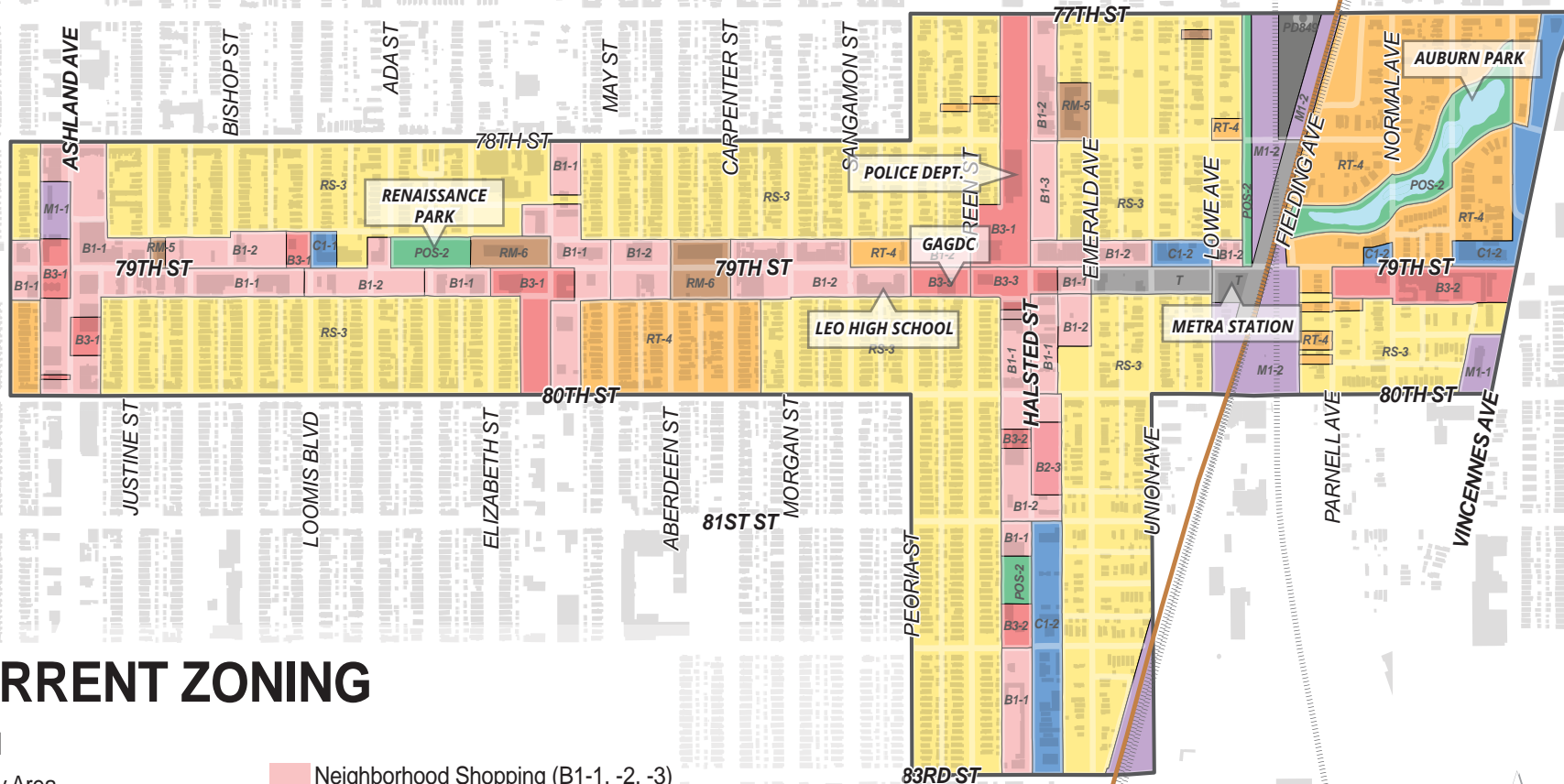
(POS-1, and -2) - Intended to preserve, protect and enhance lands set aside for public open space, parks and beaches.

## LIMITED MANUFACTURING/ BUSINESS PARK DISTRICT

(M1-1, and -2) - Intended to accommodate manufacturing, warehousing, wholesale and industrial uses outside the Central Area.

## PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

(PD 849) Intended to support single or multi building planned developments. This PD includes ~65 housing units in 34 buildings as well as a YMCA community center.



# CURRENT ZONING

## Legend

- Study Area
- Metra Rock Island District Line
- Railroad
- Residential Single-Unit (RS-3)
- Residential Two-Flat Townhouse and Multi-Unit (RT-4)
- Residential multi-Unit (RM-4.5, -5, -6)
- Transportation (T)
- Neighborhood Shopping (B1-1, -2, -3)
- Neighborhood Mixed-Use (B2-3)
- Community Shopping (B3-1, -2, -3)
- Neighborhood Commercial (C1-2)
- Neighborhood Park, Mini Park, or Playlot (POS-1, -2)
- Limited Manufacturing/Business Park (M1-1, -2)
- Planned Development (PD 849)

# VACANT LOTS AND BUILDINGS

Within Auburn Gresham, there is a significant number of vacant lots. Currently, 8.2% of the study area, or around 19.5 acres in total, is vacant land. Vacant lots can bring about many negative consequences, such as creating gaps in the streetscape and detracting from the community character.



## CITY OWNED PROPERTY

There are city-owned properties dispersed throughout the study area, most of which are vacant lots. Twenty-one acres, or around 11%, of the study area is City-owned. These properties can be leveraged for higher quality development or public gathering spaces that can act as a catalyst for additional private improvements and development along the Corridor.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There is significant potential for new investment and infill within the study area.
- The plan should prioritize vacant lots for redevelopment and activation.
- There are opportunities for future partnerships between the City, GAGDC, residents, property owners, the development community.
- For the near term, interim uses should be considered for opportunities to provide public amenities and gathering spaces to complement nearby businesses.
- The plan should explore strategies to increase commercial and residential options in the study area that are affordable, safe, and attractive to people of all backgrounds, ages, and income levels.

## City Owned Property

-  City Owned Parcel Locations
-  Vacant Lots







## VISION AND GOALS



## OVERVIEW

The 79<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Plan's vision and goals represent the wants, needs, and desires of the Auburn Gresham community. Together, they establish the framework for recommendations included within the plan and describe the direction of future improvements and initiatives. The vision and goals are based on the community engagement conducted during the planning process as well as the findings from previous research efforts.

The **Vision** is a narrative that links an overarching set of ideals to guide future development, investments, and place-making improvements along the Corridor. It affirms the community's strengths, desires, and abilities to depict what the community can achieve through this plan. The narrative is ambitious in nature, as well as aspirational. It depicts the community's collective desires and serves as the foundation for the plan's goals and recommendations.

The **Goals** describe desired results toward which planning efforts should be directed. They are broad and long-range. They represent an ambition to be sought and require the culmination of many smaller actions to be achieved.

## VISION

*79th Street will continue to grow into a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving hub for the Auburn Gresham community that celebrates the rich history and diversity of the neighborhood. The Corridor will have a revitalized streetscape that fosters economic growth and prioritizes the well-being and needs of residents. 79th Street will become an even more welcoming destination with bustling local businesses, inviting public spaces, and a vibrant arts and culture scene. The Corridor will continue to be walkable, promote active transportation, and provide accessible amenities and services that cater to the diverse needs of the community. Through collaboration, innovation, and targeted investment, 79th Street will evolve into a model of equitable development, where residents and visitors alike can live, work, shop, and connect in a safe and active environment.*





## GOALS

1. *Increase density along the West 79th Street Corridor and surrounding areas, creating more places for people to live, shop, and work in the area.*
2. *Facilitate walkability, and new housing near transit.*
3. *Stabilize and strengthen the local housing market with high quality, affordable housing.*
4. *Improve the quality of life.*
5. *Replace vacant lots with viable commercial, residential or open space uses that improve conditions for residents, pedestrians, and motorists traveling through the Corridor.*
6. *Strengthen the overall retail environment.*
7. *Support existing businesses along the Corridor.*
8. *Attract and retain new retail.*
9. *Support the use of and access to transit services in Auburn Gresham.*
10. *Improve pedestrian safety along the corridor.*
11. *Make the Community more transit-focused, and multi-modal along the West 79th Street Corridor and surrounding areas.*







04

# LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

# OVERVIEW

The following framework provides guidance for the type of land use and development that should be supported and incorporated within different parts of the corridor. It aims to establish a pedestrian-oriented and thriving environment that offers a variety of businesses, attainable housing, supportive facilities, and ample green space. Recommendations are built on the feedback from the Auburn Gresham community, existing conditions, and redevelopment opportunities that would make the most of community assets.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Encourage equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD).** The new Metra Station located at 79th Street and Lowe Avenue, is a significant investment in the Auburn Gresham community. The station and the commuter traffic it will generate should be used to anchor mixed-use and multifamily development. There are also opportunities to support TOD based on the extensive bus service in the study area, particularly with routes #79 (79th Street), #8 (Halsted Street), and #9 (Ashland Avenue). These bus routes have some of the highest ridership in the CTA system. In 2023, Route #79 is currently the third busiest line in the CTA bus network and runs along the corridor 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Ashland, Route #9, also offers 24/7 service. Additionally, Route #44 provides service along Racine Avenue.
- **Promote reinvestment in established neighborhoods.** Auburn Gresham has a healthy housing stock that should continue to be invested in and looked after. Although additional housing is desired, Auburn Gresham should look to rehabilitate the housing that currently exists.
- **Locate townhome and multi-family development in targeted areas.** While Auburn Gresham has quality single-family neighborhoods, new mixed-use and multifamily housing development should be encouraged along the corridor to increase support for local businesses and leverage the new Metra station as an asset.
- **Concentrate commercial activity.** There are several blocks or intersections within the corridor with a healthy mix of businesses and quality commercial building stock. These areas should be the focus of future commercial and mixed-use development and place-making initiatives, with redevelopment of vacant and underperforming commercial properties.
- **Support renovation and adaptive reuse.** In addition to attracting new development, Auburn Gresham's existing building stock represents an opportunity for investment. Community development should include efforts to fill vacancies in existing commercial properties and reposition older buildings for new uses.
- **Support temporary place-making initiatives.** Short-term projects like pop courts, parklets, and public art installations should be encouraged to activate vacant sites throughout the corridor, and provide amenities to residents and businesses until long-term redevelopment occurs.
- **Shared parking.** Shared parking is an important tool to alleviate parking demand. Auburn Gresham should look to shared parking options to minimize the need for surface parking on the corridor.



## LAND USE DESCRIPTIONS

The Land Use Framework defines the desired land use and development pattern for the entire 79th Street Corridor Plan study area. All parcels within and around the corridor are assigned one of nine future land use designations, each defining preferred use, character, and intensity of development.

### RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY

- Single-family homes are the most prominent land use in Auburn Gresham.
- New development along 79th Street and Halsted Street should taper in intensity and feature design elements that respect adjacent neighborhood character.
- The 79th Street Study area falls within the ADU (Auxiliary Dwelling Unit) South Zone which permits the conversion of basements or attics into dwelling units in properties that are at least 20 years old and the addition of coach houses to properties with t 1-4 units. ADUs should be facilitated and encouraged for stable single family buildings to support multi-generational families and create new income streams for existing home owners.

### MULTIFAMILY ( 2-6 FLATS AND TOWNHOMES)

- Found throughout Auburn Gresham, townhomes and 2-6 flats, are housing units that share walls with at least one adjacent unit and have a dedicated entrance.
- Townhome and 2-6-flat housing can help provide a transition between more intense areas of the corridor and surrounding single-family areas.
- New townhome and 2-6 flat development should be encouraged to provide additional renter and home-ownership opportunities and increase economic vibrancy.

### MULTIFAMILY ( +6 UNITS)

- Multifamily housing consists of residential development that accommodate a multiple households within a single structure or development.
- Encourage multifamily development along 79th Street and Halsted Street on blocks surrounding desired commercial centers. This will require transitioning some older commercial properties with higher vacancies into multifamily to ensure that other targeted commercial areas can remain healthy.
- Promote flexible design that enables multifamily buildings to accommodate ground floor retail and restaurants in the future, should demand for commercial development expands beyond targeted commercial centers.





## COMMERCIAL

- Commercial development along 79th and Halsted should be concentrated around key intersections, taking advantage of high traffic counts and visibility.
- Vacant or underutilized lots adjacent occupied commercial properties should be prioritized for commercial infill development to create cohesive neighborhood business districts.
- Quality existing commercial buildings should be renovated to contribute to an attractive and safe business environment.

## MIXED-USE

- Mixed-use buildings are two or more stories tall and include a combination of commercial or office uses on the groundfloor (and sometimes second story) and residential uses on the upper floors.
- Mixed-use development locates uses with different, but complementary hours of activity in the same area. This synergy fosters a dynamic urban environment where people live, work, and shop in the same area, fostering a sense of community and an active street life.
- Mixed-use development should be prioritized in high traffic locations with an emphasis on access to transit including the intersection of 79th Street and Halsted Street, near the new Metra Station, and near the intersection of 79th Street and Ashland Avenue.

## SHARED PARKING

- Shared parking areas provide parking for multiple buildings, businesses, or residential developments, allowing for more efficient use of land and the use of parking spaces.
- Shared parking should be encouraged as a tool to alleviate parking demand while minimizing the need for surface parking on the corridor.
- The community may look to owners of existing surface lots to investigate the feasibility of creating shared parking lots.

## PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC

- This category represents buildings that are meant to serve the public or are owned by the government. Public/semi-public uses within the corridor include churches, service providers, and Leo High School.

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

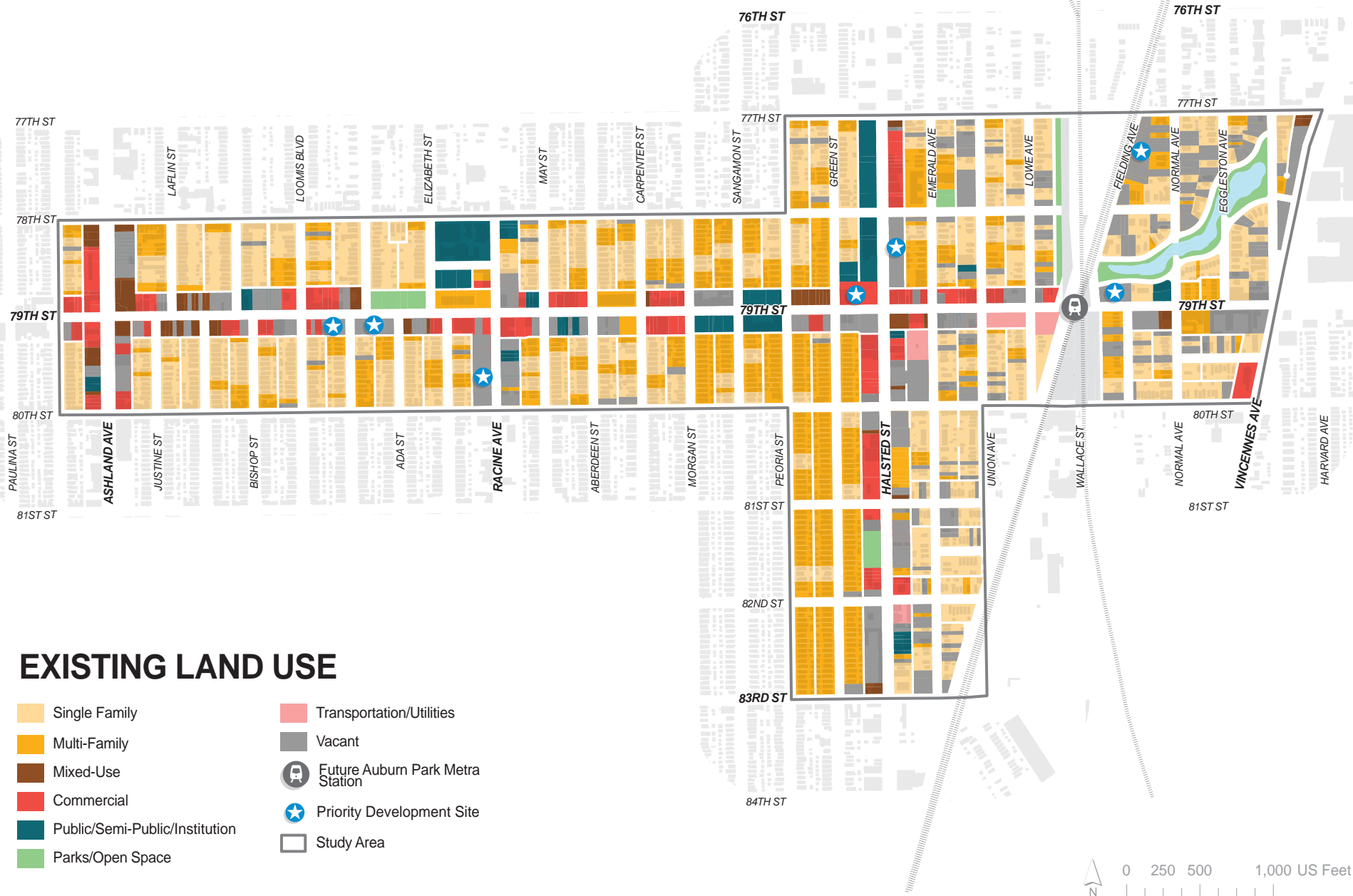
- This category represents green space that people can use for recreation and relaxation. Renaissance Park and Auburn Park are the only green spaces within the study area.

## TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

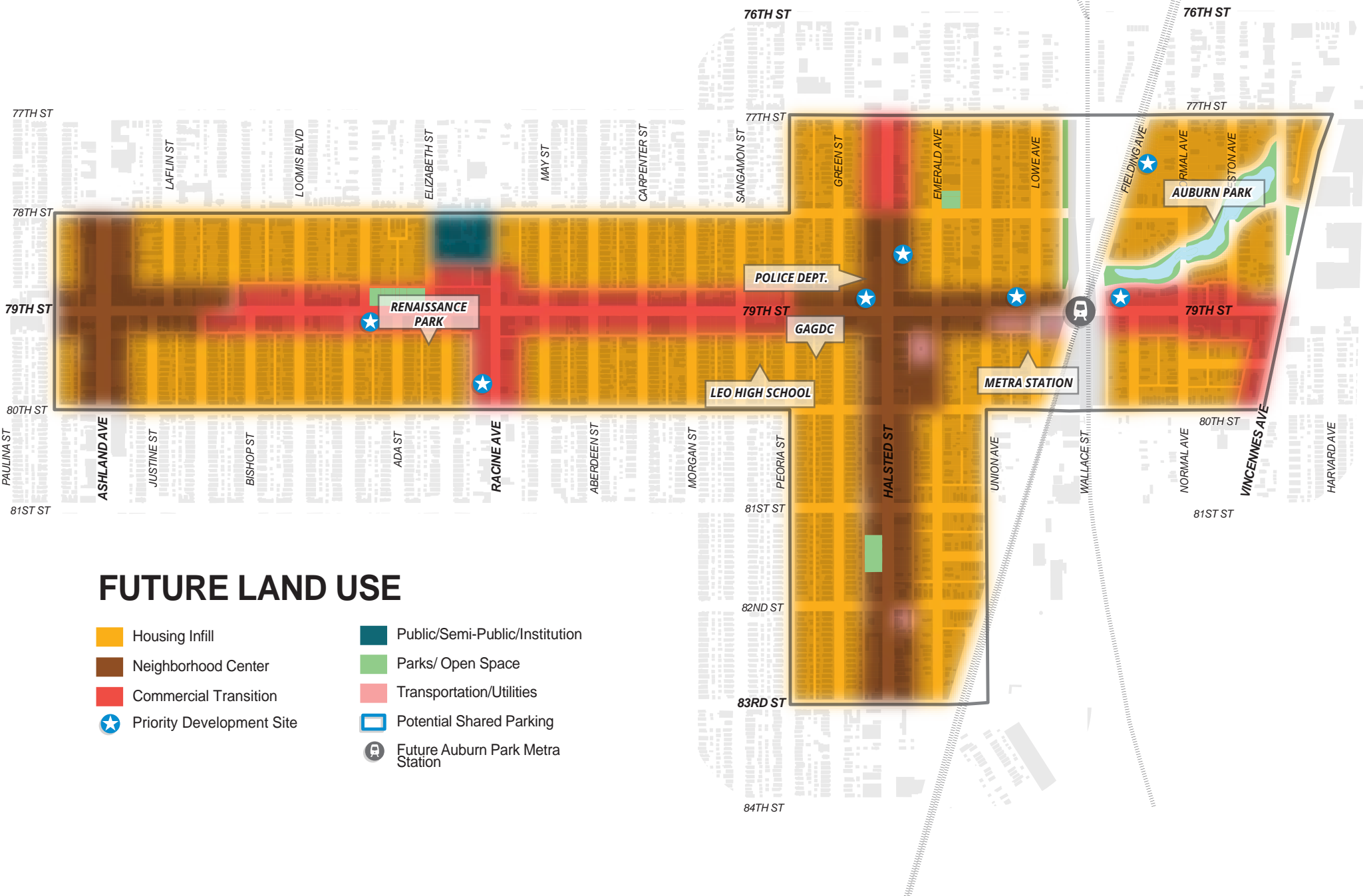
- This category consists of parcels that are occupied by utilities and or transportation uses such as the new Metra station.

## Land Use and Zoning Recommendations

DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDED PRIMARY USES	RECOMMENDED DENSITY	RECOMMENDED ZONING
<b>HOUSING INFILL</b>			
Area where increasing housing along the corridor is prioritized with new housing units through renovations, and new construction on vacant land	<p>Housing at the ground floor and upper stories.</p> <p>2-6 flat and townhome developments aligned with historic neighborhood fabric.</p> <p>Facilitate ADU additions to existing bungalows and single family homes.</p>	<p>2-3 FAR</p> <p>Higher pedestrian activity areas and key intersections: 3 FAR</p> <p>Mid-block and lower pedestrian activity areas: 2 FAR</p> <p>ADU area</p>	<p><b>Primary:</b></p> <p>RT-4</p> <p>(FYI: RS-3 effectively prohibits 2 flats on standard city lot)</p> <p><b>Secondary:</b></p> <p>RS-3, RT-3.5</p>
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER</b>			
Concentrate mixed-use activity near transit stations to increase ridership and attract more investment and opportunities	<p>Active ground floors, including commercial and service uses</p> <p>Pedestrian- and transit-oriented development</p> <p>Housing, including affordable housing, above the ground floor</p>	<p>3-5 FAR</p> <p>Highest density of corridor</p>	<p><b>Primary:</b></p> <p>B2-3</p> <p><b>Secondary:</b></p> <p>B3-3</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL TRANSITION</b>			
Refresh ground floor storefronts and support new construction on vacant land for retail, services, offices, and other commercial uses.	<p>Commercial and office uses, including those that may necessitate some auto access</p> <p>Near higher pedestrian intersections, some small neighborhood-serving commercial uses (coffee shop, salon, laundry, etc.) at ground floors</p> <p>Some housing at and above the ground floor.</p>	<p>2-3 FAR</p> <p>Higher pedestrian areas and key intersections: 3 - 5 FAR</p> <p>Mid-block and lower pedestrian activity areas: 2 - 3 FAR</p>	<p><b>Primary:</b></p> <p>B2-3</p>







## LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following Land Use Recommendations provide important factors and influences to consider for the revitalization of the corridor. These recommendations provide a lens through which future development and reinvestment should be guided to ensure the community grows in an equitable and attractive manner that builds on existing community and its assets.

## IMPLEMENT TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Since 2013, the City of Chicago's zoning ordinance has included parking and density incentives that encourage compact, mixed-use transit-oriented development (TOD) near CTA and Metra rail stations, and along high-traffic CTA bus routes. TOD can provide additional community benefits such as increased transit ridership and more walkable communities, both of which reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, while also promoting public health and adding to the City's tax base. The new Metra station at 79th Street and Lowe Avenue represents a significant investment in the Auburn Gresham community, and should be leveraged to serve as a catalyst to spur development and opportunity within the neighborhood.

## EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (ETOD)

Equitable TOD is development that enables all people regardless of income, race, ethnicity, age, gender, immigration status or disability to experience the benefits of dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development near transit hubs. ETOD elevates and prioritizes investments and policies that close the socioeconomic gaps between neighborhoods that are predominately people of color and those that are majority white. Within the corridor, ETOD can help generate wealth for Black and Brown residents, and ensure that Auburn Gresham remains affordable and accessible to current residents.

Several strategies should be encouraged as part of new multifamily and mixed-use development to ensure that TOD within the study area is equitable. These include:

- Locate mobility hubs to increase access to transit and micro-mobility options such as bike-share, e-bikes, and e-scooters.
- Requiring mixed income development featuring a blend of market-rate and affordable units.
- Prioritizing leasing commercial space to locally-owned businesses.
- Integrating public amenities into development to benefit the larger community.



## INVEST IN PUBLIC/ STAKEHOLDER- OWNED PROPERTIES

There are 21-acres of land owned by the City along the corridor representing approximately 11% of the study area. Most City-owned properties are vacant lots. These properties can be leveraged to facilitate high quality development or host public improvements that can act as a catalyst for additional private investment and development along the corridor.

## COOK COUNTY LAND BANK AUTHORITY

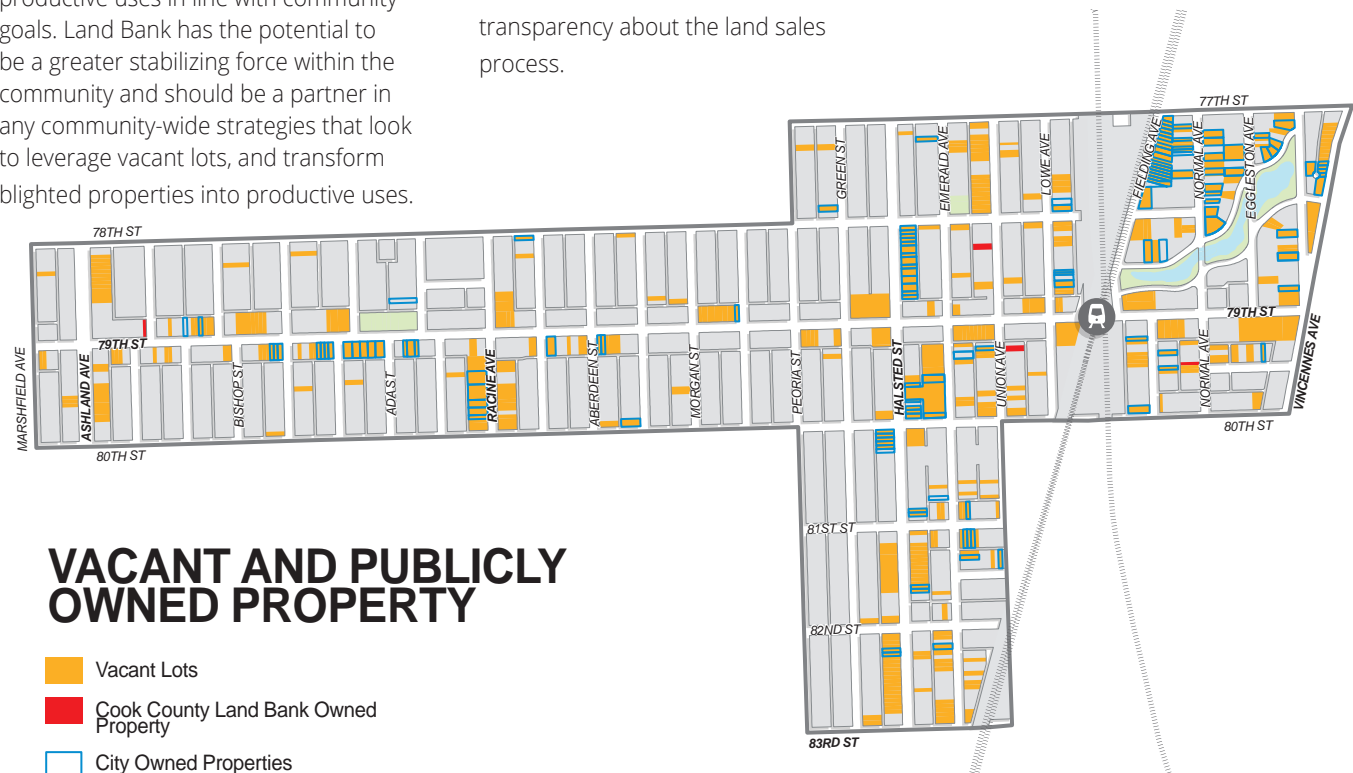
The Cook County Land Bank is a unit of Cook County government that acquires, holds, and transfers interest in real property to facilitate the redevelopment or reuse of vacant, abandoned, foreclosed, or tax-delinquent properties. It plays an important role in renewing and stabilizing neighborhoods that face disinvestment and blight, helping transfer abandoned and vacant properties into productive uses in line with community goals. Land Bank has the potential to be a greater stabilizing force within the community and should be a partner in any community-wide strategies that look to leverage vacant lots, and transform blighted properties into productive uses.

## CHIBLOCK BUILDER

ChiBlockBuilder is the City of Chicago's application portal to encourage the purchase and redevelopment of City-owned vacant land in partnership with community stakeholders.

Led by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD), ChiBlockBuilder streamlines the purchase of City-owned properties across the South and West Sides and increases transparency about the land sales process.

The ChiBlockBuilder website features an interactive online map to provide potential buyers with important information about City-owned vacant land such as environmental clearances, zoning, square footage, and market value.



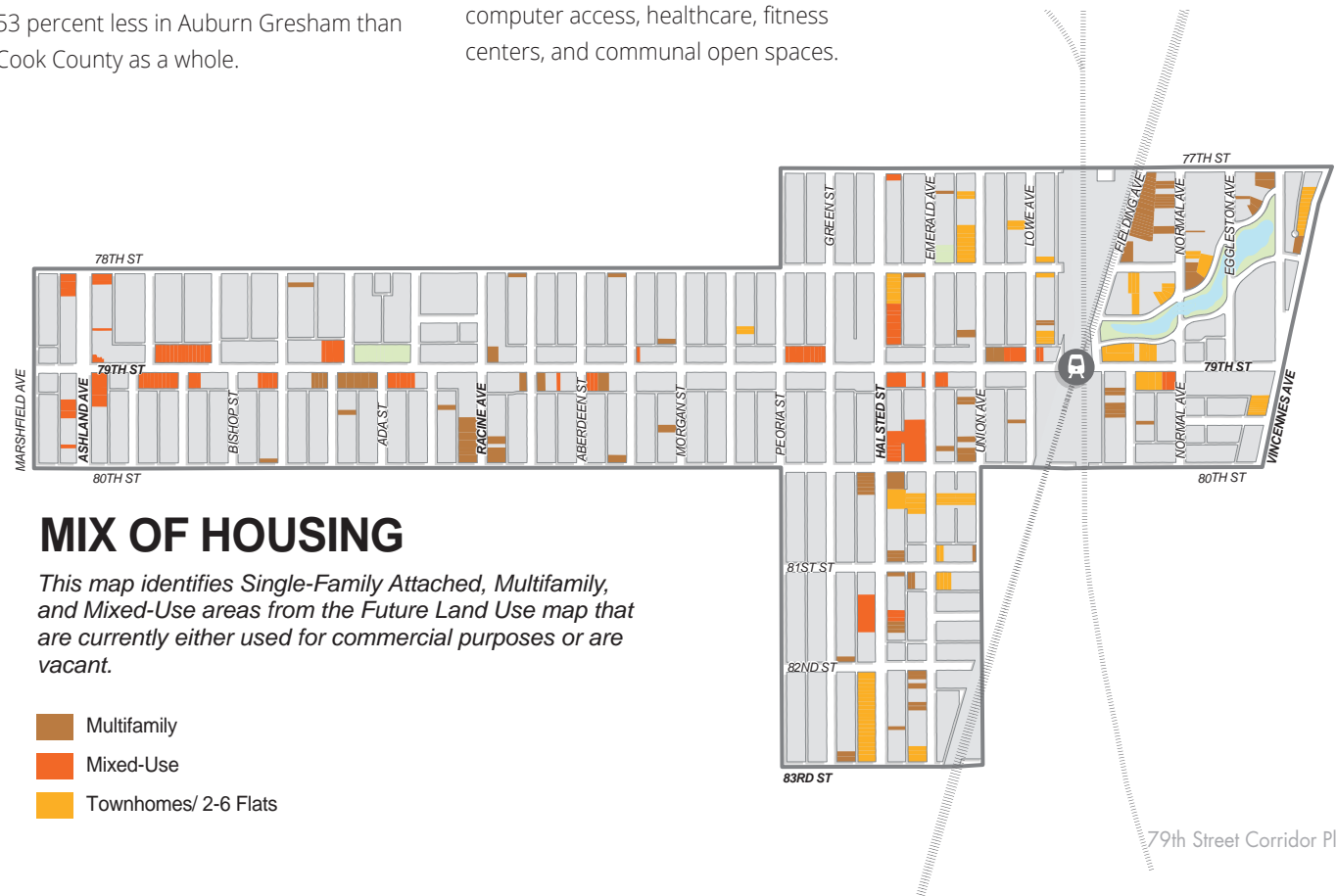
## ENCOURAGE A MIX OF HOUSING

There is a strong need to increase housing choices and attainability for all income groups, stages of life, and backgrounds. Throughout the public engagement process, the need for greater housing choices for middle- and lower-income residents was expressed. This will help ensure Auburn Gresham continues to be welcoming to all and existing residents can remain in the neighborhood they call home. Smaller unit sizes and rentals are critical for providing housing options for residents who may not be able to afford to own a single-family home at their current stage of life or who wish to downsize. Higher density, smaller unit housing types will play an important role in addressing this need, increasing housing equity, inclusivity, and livability in Auburn Gresham.

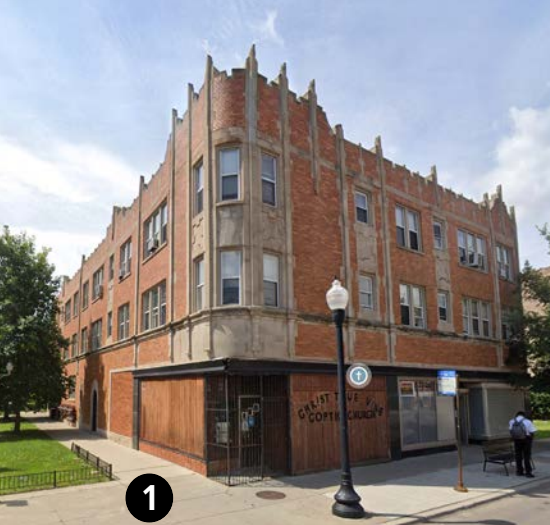
## ENSURE AFFORDABILITY

The need for affordable housing options was a key issue identified by community members during the public engagement process. Auburn Gresham has a significantly higher population of low-income households compared to the Chicago region, with 34 percent of households making less than \$25,000 per year. The average disposable income is 53 percent less in Auburn Gresham than Cook County as a whole.

Strong collaboration with the City of Chicago, private developers, affordable housing agencies, and community organizations and leaders will be crucial in identifying new opportunities for affordable housing projects and neighborhood reinvestment. New mixed-use housing developments should incorporate resources that will benefit residents, like job training and placement, computer access, healthcare, fitness centers, and communal open spaces.







## REINVEST IN EXISTING STOREFRONTS

While there is a long-term desire to attract new development to the 79th Street and Halsted Street corridors, there are several existing commercial buildings that could be improved to host businesses in the near future. Reinvestment in existing storefronts can provide for near-term success in encouraging an active street life and positive business environment.

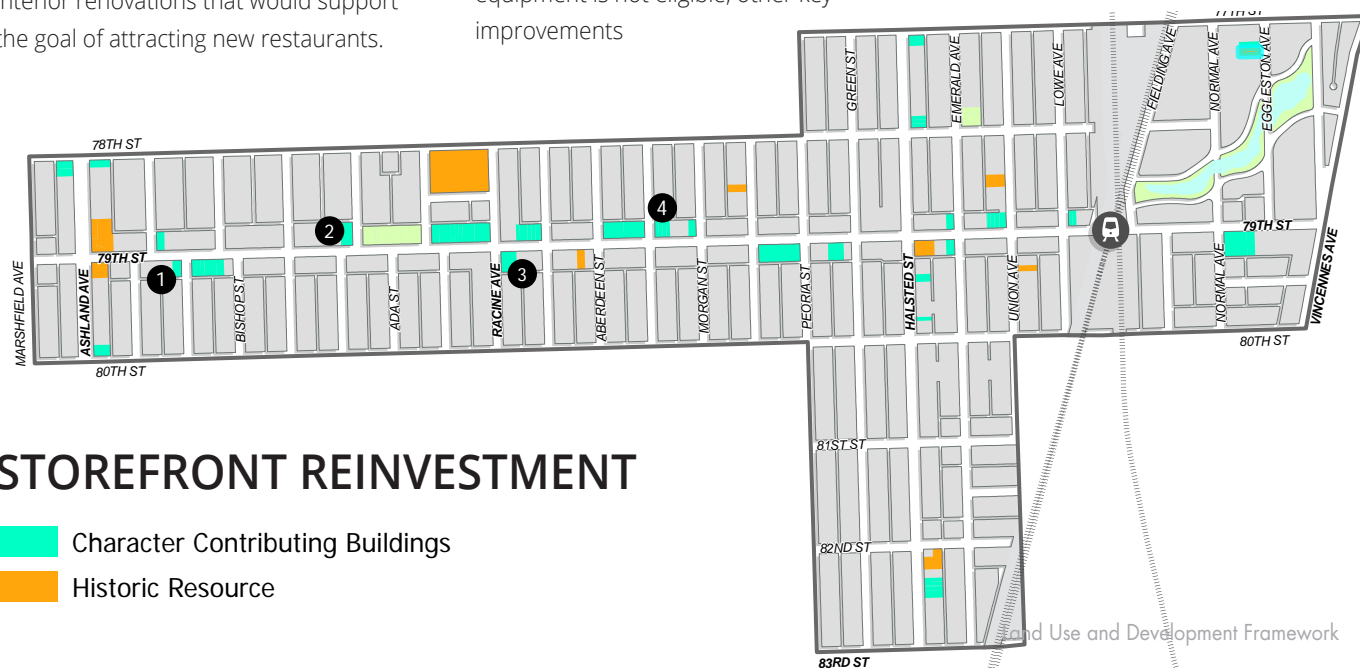
Areas where numerous existing commercial and mixed-use buildings are concentrated next to one another, such as between Carpenter Street and Morgan Street, are ripe for reinvestment and hold potential to host new and expanding businesses. Reinvestment in existing storefronts will play an important role in improving the overall appearance and health of the corridor, and in building the momentum needed to attract new investment to fill vacant lots.

## BUILD OUT GRANTS

There is a desire in the community for additional sit-down restaurants, however the costs of renovating a building to accommodate a kitchen can be cost prohibitive. While facade improvements grants are often limited to exterior improvements, consideration should be given to identifying funding to assist with interior renovations that would support the goal of attracting new restaurants.

For properties located within the 79th Street Corridor TIF District (which covers most of the planning area), the City of Chicago's Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) can provide funding for a variety of permanent building improvements that could be used to offset costs associated with starting a new restaurant in the corridor. While kitchen equipment is not eligible, other key improvements

such as electrical and plumbing system upgrades, mechanical/heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), and interior remodeling are eligible. GAGDC and community partners should encourage the use of the SBIF program and evaluate other complementary incentive programs to attract private investment and expand local retail and dining options.





## FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

The facades of storefronts up and down 79th Street and Halsted Street are influential in providing a comfortable, inviting, and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Several businesses contribute positively to the pedestrian experience with high-quality brick and stone materials, large windows, and attractive lighting and signage. However, several buildings could benefit from facade improvements that would make them more attractive and marketable to potential tenants. Common issues to be addressed with facade improvements include:

- Replacing block glass and wood paneling with larger display windows
- Adding lighting to highlight building entrances and architectural features
- Replacing permanent security bars and cages with hidden or internalized security shutters

- Replacing or removing worn awnings and signage
- Restoring original brick and masonry walls and exposing previously covered historic elements such as windows and bays

The Facade Enhancement Program sponsored by the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation (GAGDC) is designed to encourage investment and development within the SSA 32 business district by offering free architectural services and grants up to \$3,000. The grants may be used for exterior improvements such as signage, awnings, doors, exterior lighting, and building masonry.

## LIVE-WORK SPACE

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced a large percentage of the professional population to work from home, renewed value has been placed in the ability to comfortably live and work in the same space. The development of live-work buildings should be considered for targeted areas of the 79th Street and Halsted Street corridors. A live-work building consists of residential tenant space on an upper story or rear of a building, while preserving the storefront for workspace and sales. Well-designed live-work buildings can be an attractive arrangement for residents in need of specialized work areas (like an art studio, maker space, or retail area), who also want to minimize their commute. For building owners, renovations can be an opportunity to attract new tenants looking for contemporary amenities.

By providing a flexible mix of residential units and commercial units, property owners can attract a wider range of potential tenants. Similarly, if market demands shift, property owners can reposition their buildings to maximize storefront space or expand residential uses to the ground floor. Similar to a mixed-use building, live-work buildings are also active both during the day and at night, helping to enliven an area and increase safety.

Live-work building types are desirable in transitional areas between commercial centers and residential areas along 79th Street. Live-work spaces should generally be designed in a similar fashion to commercial storefronts, with the workspace functioning as the active use visible from the street.



## ADDRESS COMMERCIAL NEEDS

A key goal of the 79th Street Corridor Plan is to foster a thriving, active retail environment with high levels of foot traffic and a strong sense of place. The 79th Street and Halsted Street corridors are home to several locally-owned businesses that are a major asset to the community that should continue to be supported while attracting new businesses.

### LOCAL COMMUNITY NEEDS

During public engagement, many community members voiced the desire to expand on local businesses and attract a variety of new shopping, dining, and entertainment options to the area. Residents have stated their desire for more local options to not only for dining and entertainment, but to meet routine daily needs. Retail options that residents would like to see include a pharmacy, community bank, butcher shop, gym, hair salon, cleaners, bookstore, sit-down restaurants, and a wine shop.

## SUPPORTIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

In addition to providing quality spaces, either in new development or renovated properties, it is important that public investments and programs help foster a supportive business environment. Public-private investments in beautifying 79th Street and Halsted Street should foster a safe and attractive place to do business and spend time. Incentives available for economic development, businesses, startups, and property maintenance should continue to be inventoried and promoted. Mainstreet America is a non-profit organization that has been involved in the planning process and can be a resource to small businesses. The organization works toward preservation-based economic development in neighborhood commercial districts

The Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation also serves as the local Neighborhood Business Development Center and can assist with:

- Technical Assistance
- Referral to Financial Resources
- Networking Opportunities
- Community and Regional Marketing Initiatives
- City Incentive Programs like the Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF), Tax Increment Financing (TIF), TIF Works and Streamlined TIF

## FOCUSING ON COMMERCIAL NODES

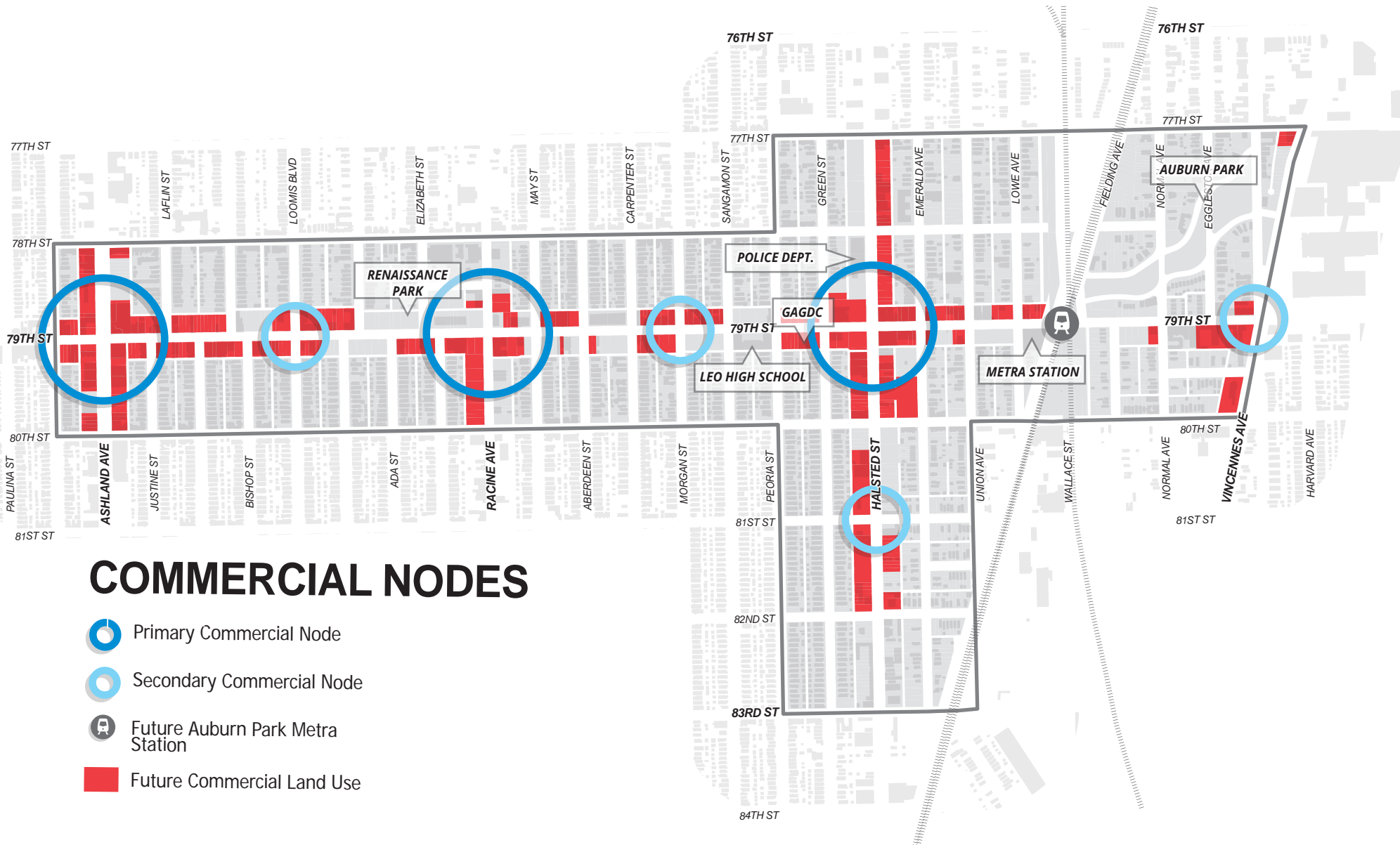
The commercial land use plan has been designed to create a more vibrant local business by emphasizing nodal development. This means that businesses are encouraged to locate around key intersections to take advantage of passing traffic and create large and small activity centers, rather than scattering businesses randomly through the corridor.

### Primary Commercial Nodes

As illustrated on the Commercial Nodes map, primary nodes along the corridor include the intersections of 79th and Ashland, Racine, and Halsted. These major intersections anchor the corridor and will be catalysts for future commercial and residential development.

### Secondary Commercial Nodes

Secondary nodes (also illustrated on the Commercial Nodes map) are less-active but still important neighborhood crossroads that will play a part in the long-term improvement of the corridor. These include the intersections of 79th and Loomis, Morgan and Vincennes, as well as the intersection of Halsted and 81st.



## INCREASE ACCESS TO LOCAL HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS

With the closure of the Auburn Gresham Save A Lot in 2022, it has become even more difficult to access fresh, nutritious foods within the neighborhood. Healthy, nutrient dense food is crucial for supporting good physical health, healthy lifestyles, and community wellness. Residents within Auburn Gresham should be able to conveniently walk to a grocer to buy affordable fresh foods without having to drive outside of the community. This is particularly important for households without a car, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens who are unable to drive. While the Save A Lot grocery store is set to reopen early 2024, the neighborhood should prioritize its ongoing efforts to attract a new full-service grocer located within previously existing grocery locations.

Pending the results of a feasibility study, the City of Chicago is considering the launch of a new strategy to create City-owned grocery stores in historically disinvested South and West Side communities. The 79th Street corridor could be a potential target for such a strategy and further coordination is needed as the idea evolves.



### GAGDC Healthy Lifestyle Hub

In March 2021, the Chicago Development Fund provided \$11 million in New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) allocation to GAGDC Support Corporation to fund the renovation of a once prominent commercial building that stood vacant for 20 years. This resulted in the Healthy Lifestyle Hub, a neighborhood destination for medical care, healthy food, banking, legal aid, and educational resources. Anchoring the Hub is the UI Health Mile Square Primary and Immediate Care Center, which fills a gap in available care by providing adult and pediatric primary care, women's health care, pregnancy and prenatal care, behavioral health and substance use disorder care, HIV care, dental care, and preventative care. The Hub houses a UIC Neighborhood Center which, with the Chicago Bears Community Room and Teaching Kitchen, provides resources for healthy eating as well as academic resources, and workshops for small businesses and local entrepreneurs.



## IMPLEMENT NEW DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Development guidelines are recommendations meant to guide future physical development within the Study Area.

### ENGAGE THE STREET

Future development should treat 79th Street as its “front door.” Primary entrances, outdoor dining areas, and balconies should be located along 79th Street and Halsted Street. High levels of transparency should be encouraged through the use of windows and doors and blank walls should be minimized. Promoting interaction between building and primary streets will foster a welcoming and safe environment for residents, business patrons, and visitors, and encourage social interaction. Within residential areas, front porches, patio areas, or balconies should be encouraged in new development to create semi-public space for interactions with neighbors.

### INTEGRATE PUBLIC AMENITIES

Public amenities, such as parklets and small plazas, should be integrated within commercial and residential uses to provide opportunities for community gathering and interaction. When residents are in close proximity to neighborhood amenities, there is increased activity near local business and increased sense of safety. The best opportunities to create new public amenity areas include key intersections within mixed-use areas, and areas adjacent to public greenspaces such as Renaissance Park and Auburn Park.

### MAINTAIN A RHYTHM

Facades should follow a general, but consistent rhythm where each building is unique, but follows a set of guidelines that brings visual consistency and draws in pedestrians. A consistent streetwall along 79th Street will provide a level of visual interest along a block and desirable sense of enclosure and helps foster a comfortable, inviting, and pedestrian friendly atmosphere. To ensure a consistent sense of enclosure within a given block, new buildings should be set back a similar distance to adjacent existing buildings with a bias toward the smallest distance when located between two structures with different setbacks.

### PARK ONCE

Parking should be well-signed and easily accessed, but not dominate the visual landscape of the corridor. To the extent possible 79th Street and Halsted Street frontage should be reserved for buildings and people, and off-street parking should be located to the rear or interior of the block or off of side streets. Clear signage should direct visitors to parking and landscaping should be used to soften parking edges and break up paved areas. Cross-access and parking areas that can be shared by multiple users (residents, employees, visitors) are key to providing a “park once” environment that supports street life.

### NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Neighborhood Design Guidelines provide specific recommendations to enhance the planning, review, and impact of development along the City's commercial corridors. The Neighborhood Design Guidelines are intended to be used for all public and private projects located along Chicago's commercial corridors. The guidelines are organized across six categories:

- Sustainability
- Program
- Site Design
- Public Realm
- Massing
- Facade

Additionally, its guiding principles are equity and inclusion, innovation, sense of place, sustainability, and communication.

## LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

In the community's pursuit of reinvestment and renewal, a collaborative strategy is needed that encompasses the City of Chicago, property owners, and local community members. Realizing the community's long-term vision for the corridor will require new development to tap into several incentives and programs that exist to help address market gaps. This will be especially true over the near future as the community seeks to attract new development and build momentum for additional private investment.

Programs exist to assist in a variety of ways from reducing the costs of housing, to helping fund the infrastructure and amenities needed to support new development and benefit existing quality of life. Others are designed to help local businesses grow, or to preserve and improve local building stock. Programs like the Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO) and the Multi-Family TIF Purchase-Rehab Program show the City's dedication to making sure everyone has a fair shot at a decent home. Such programs help ensure that everyday residents have access to homes that are not just affordable, but are part of thriving communities.

The following section defines several programs available to assist with implementing the 79th Street Corridor Plan land use and development recommendations.

NOTE: The following recommendations provide a general guideline regarding the applicability of various incentive programs. The specific eligibility and applicability of each program can vary based on detailed project parameters and other factors. Developers and property owners should consult directly with the relevant City departments and program administrators to determine the best fit for their projects.

### COMMUNITY RECOVERY GRANT (CRG):

**What is it?** A program that offers funding to support local commercial, mixed-use, and light manufacturing development.

**What is it used for?** To provide additional opportunities for the City to invest in catalytic local development, expanding upon DPD's existing investments and support.

**How does it work?** By providing grant funding for capital improvement projects, it strengthens local business corridors and enhances neighborhood vitality.

#### Who can use it?

- **Developers:** Open to community developers, business owners and entrepreneurs, and property owners. Site control is preferred, but not required.
- **Residents:** Residential-only development is not eligible, but mixed-use projects are eligible.

#### Where can it be used?

- Grant funding can be used for pre-development, construction, or renovation costs for permanent capital improvement projects.

### LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS (LIHTC):

**What is it?** A federal program that offers tax incentives.

**What is it used for?** To motivate private investors to invest in the creation and renovation of affordable rental housing.

**How does it work?** By providing tax breaks, it makes it financially appealing for private sectors to invest in affordable housing projects.

#### Who can use it?

- **Developers:** Can apply for these tax credits when planning to develop or rehabilitate affordable housing projects. Once approved, they receive tax incentives that make the project financially viable.
- **Residents:** Cannot directly apply for LIHTC, but they benefit by having increased access to affordable rental housing developed or rehabilitated using these credits.

#### Where can it be used?

- Developers of multifamily housing can apply for tax credits to develop or rehabilitate affordable rental housing.

### **TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF):**

**What is it?** A tool for community redevelopment in Chicago.

**What is it used for?** To use future tax gains to fund current community improvements.

**How does it work?** When a TIF district is created, a “base amount” is set from property taxes. Any growth in property tax above this base can be used for eligible projects within that district.

#### **Who can use it?**

- **Developers:** Can apply for TIF funds when planning projects within a TIF district. The funds can be used to finance improvements that will increase property values and, consequently, future tax revenues.
- **Residents:** While they do not directly apply for TIF, they benefit from improved community infrastructure and potentially increased property values.

#### **Where can it be used?**

- All study area properties fronting 79th Street, and properties fronting Halsted Street north of 81st Street, are located within the 79th Street Corridor TIF District. The TIF will expire in 2034.

### **AFFORDABLE REQUIREMENTS ORDINANCE (ARO):**

**What is it?** A policy to boost the availability of affordable housing.

**What is it used for?** To ensure developers, who get city financial aid or build on city land, allocate a portion of their residential units at affordable prices.

**How does it work?** Developers are mandated to provide a set percentage of their units at affordable rates.

#### **Who can use it?**

- **Developers:** When receiving city financial assistance or building on city-owned land, they must ensure a certain percentage of their residential units are priced affordably.
- **Residents:** Can access these affordable units, ensuring that a portion of new housing in the city remains within their financial reach.

#### **Where can it be used?**

- Developers of mixed-use projects that receive city financial assistance or build on city-owned land might need to allocate a portion of their residential units at affordable prices.

### **MULTI-FAMILY TIF PURCHASE-REHAB PROGRAM:**

**What is it?** A program for multi-family rental properties located in TIF districts.

**What is it used for?** To assist with the purchase and/or renovation of these properties.

**How does it work?** Funds are allocated to help with the acquisition and rehabilitation of properties within TIF districts.

#### **Who can use it?**

- **Developers:** Can apply for funds to help purchase and/or rehabilitate multi-family rental properties within TIF districts.
- **Residents:** Benefit from the rehabilitation of older properties, leading to improved living conditions and potentially stabilized rents.

#### **Where can it be used?**

- This program is specifically designed to assist with the purchase and/or renovation of multifamily rental properties.



### **NEIGHBORHOOD OPPORTUNITY FUND (NOF):**

**What is it?** A fund primarily for commercial and cultural projects.

**What is it used for?** To support projects in specific community areas of Chicago.

**Who can benefit?** Some mixed-use residential developments might qualify.

**How does it work?** Grants are awarded to eligible projects in the South, Southwest, and West Side community areas.

#### **Who can use it?**

- **Developers:** Can apply for NOF grants when planning commercial, cultural, or mixed-use projects in eligible community areas.
- **Residents:** While the primary focus is on commercial and cultural projects, residents in mixed-use developments might benefit from improved amenities and community revitalization.

#### **Where can it be used?**

- While primarily for commercial and cultural projects, some mixed-use residential developments might qualify for this program, especially if they are in the South, Southwest, and West Side community areas.
- Given the dual nature of live/work housing (residential and commercial), they might qualify for NOF grants, especially if they contribute to the commercial and cultural vitality of eligible community areas.
- All properties in the study area are located within the NOF program's Build Community Wealth eligibility area.

### **CHICAGO COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (CCLT):**

**What is it?** A trust to make homes more affordable.

**What is it used for?** To lower the cost of land ownership, ensure long-term housing affordability, and protect the public's investment in affordable homes.

**How does it work?** By removing the cost of land from the housing equation, homes become more affordable, and the trust ensures they remain that way for future buyers.

#### **Who can use it?**

- **Developers:** Can work with CCLT to develop affordable housing on trust-owned land, reducing the overall cost of the project.
- **Residents:** Can purchase homes at a more affordable rate since the cost of land is excluded. They also benefit from long-term affordability guarantees when reselling.

#### **Where can it be used?**

- Single-family homes and 2-3 flat residential can benefit from the affordability provisions of the CCLT. This includes residential areas east of the railroad viaduct; Northern and southern ends of Halsted Street, 7801 – 7847 South Halsted catalyst site

### **TROUBLED BUILDINGS INITIATIVE (TBI):**

**What is it?** An initiative to address problematic privately-owned properties in Chicago.

**What is it used for?** To stabilize these properties, ensure safety, and prevent current residents from being displaced.

**How does it work?** The DOH collaborates with community service providers and other partners to address and improve distressed properties.

**Developers:** Can collaborate with the city to rehabilitate distressed properties, potentially accessing support and resources.

**Residents:** Benefit from the stabilization and improvement of distressed properties, ensuring safer living conditions and preventing displacement.

#### **Where can it be used?**

- Distressed existing multifamily properties can be stabilized with this program.



05

## URBAN DESIGN IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK



## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how development can create a welcoming, comfortable and identifiable public realm focusing on three main areas.

### STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

- Enhance the public streetscape to foster a sense of civic pride through a comfortable and pleasing pedestrian experience to increase walkability.
- Continue the work that CDOT has started along 79th street and extending furnishing and paving treatments through the main corridors of the study area. (Addressed in Chapter 6 - Transportation Framework)

### BRANDING AND IDENTITY

- Create a welcoming and identifiable entry into the community through vertical identifiers.
- Extend the branding and identity treatment that GACDC and CDOT have started along 79th through the main corridors of the Special Service Area boundaries.

### VACANT LOT ACTIVATION

- Identify opportunities for greening and programming initiatives to activate the vacant lots.
- Create opportunities for all people to gather and interact through diverse programs.

## PROPOSED CDOT STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

This project aims to provide safe, walkable, and attractive streets that foster community and economic growth. This effort will support the City's initiative to re-activate neighborhood cores that have historically served as focal points for pedestrian activity, shopping, services, transportation, public spaces and quality-of-life amenities for local residents.

The streetscape improvements will be implemented in 2 sections. The first section is along 79th Street, Sangamon Avenue to Fielding Avenue, and Halsted Street, 78th Street to 80th Street. The second section is along 79th Street, Paulina Street to Sangamon Street.

The following improvements are from the Auburn Gresham Community Meeting held on 4/25/2023 and are subject to change as the plan develops and responds to community input.

### 1 CURB EXTENSIONS

- 37% average crash reduction factor
- Shorter pedestrian crossing distances
- Better visibility between motorists and pedestrians
- Eliminate illegal parking in the corner clearance zone
- Discourage passing on the right
- Reduce turning speeds around corners
- More sidewalk space at intersections

#### WHERE:

- Throughout project area where applicable

### 2 PEDESTRIAN REFUGE ISLANDS

- 46% average crash reduction factor
- Reduce driver speeds and increase yielding behavior
- Easier to find gaps in traffic and reduce pedestrian delay

#### WHERE:

- Leo High School (79th St at Sangamon and Peoria)
- New Auburn Park Metra Station (79th St at Lowe)
- Throughout project area where applicable



## Section 2

## Section 1



3

### PROTECTED BIKE LANES

- 56% reduction in crashes / 71% decrease in injury crashes
- Reduce pedestrian crashes
- Reduce “dooring” crashes
- Lower traffic speeds

#### WHERE:

- Halsted St and throughout the project area, where applicable

4

### TRANSIT TREATMENTS

- Bus Priority Zone: Maintain and refresh red lanes from Green to Emerald
- Bus Bulbs: Reduce delays, decrease travel times, improve service reliability

#### WHERE:

- New Auburn Park Metra Station (79th St at Lowe) and throughout the project area, where applicable

5

### DESIGN UPGRADES

- New granite sidewalk medallions and Lightpole Banners with Community Identifiers
- Additional trees and pavers in parkways
- Coordination with DCASE around public art
- Site furniture and potential seating areas

#### WHERE:

- Throughout the project area, where applicable





## EXTENDED PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

For the public way that falls within the Auburn Gresham Neighborhood, (west of the Railway) extension of the material palette proposed within the CDOT streetscape development will help create a consistent, branded pedestrian experience through the Halsted and Ashland corridor.

- Shade trees to provide vertical landscape and shading opportunities.
- Paver fields within the furnishing zone to provide texture and color.
- Seating options for moments of reprieve
- Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
- Branded Trash receptacles and sidewalk medallions.
- Light pole Identifiers to extend the branding further into the neighborhood

For the streetscape that falls within Chatham (southeast of the railway) and Grand Crossing (northeast of the railway) the streetscape enhancements should include traditional non-branded amenities such as:

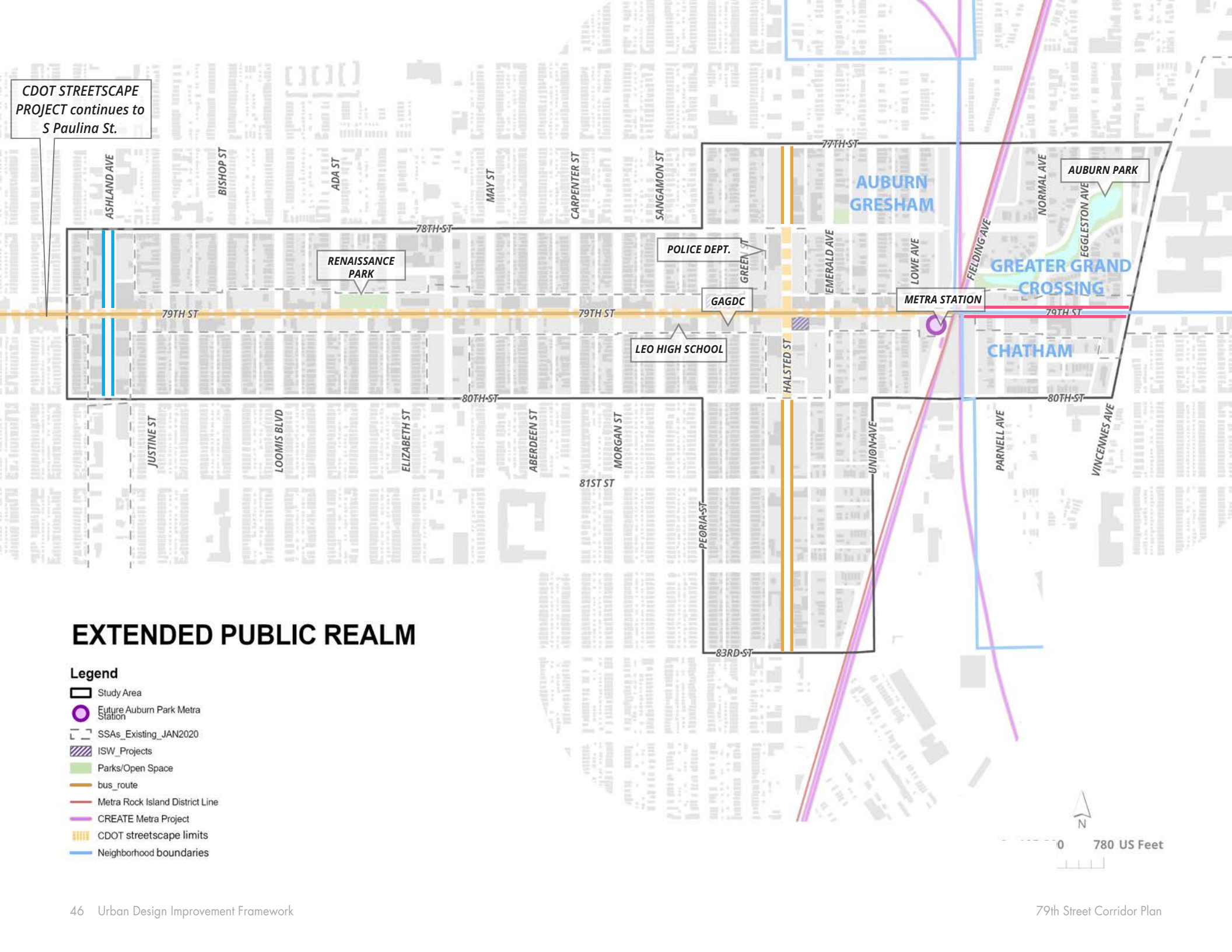
- Shade trees to provide vertical landscape and shading opportunities.
- Paver fields within the furnishing zone to provide texture and color.
- Benches for moments of reprieve
- Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
- Trash receptacles

For the streetscape that falls outside of the SSA, traditional streetscape amenities can be considered to enhance the pedestrian comfort.

- Benches at bus stops
- Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
- Trash receptacles

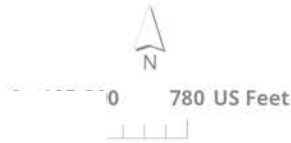


CDOT STREETSCAPE  
PROJECT continues to  
S Paulina St.



# EXTENDED PUBLIC REALM

- Legend**
- Study Area
  - Future Auburn Park Metra Station
  - SSAs\_Existing\_JAN2020
  - ISW\_Projects
  - Parks/Open Space
  - bus\_route
  - Metra Rock Island District Line
  - CREATE Metra Project
  - CDOT streetscape limits
  - Neighborhood boundaries







## BRANDING AND IDENTITY

Community identifiers are sculptural elements within a streetscape that seek to bring a unique identity to a neighborhood commercial area. This character can be drawn from many different sources: cultural ethnicity, architectural styles or elements, special cultural or historic institutions, or the general historical background of a neighborhood.

Since these elements can be expensive and are unique to each community, separate funding must be identified in order for community identifiers to be included in a streetscape project.

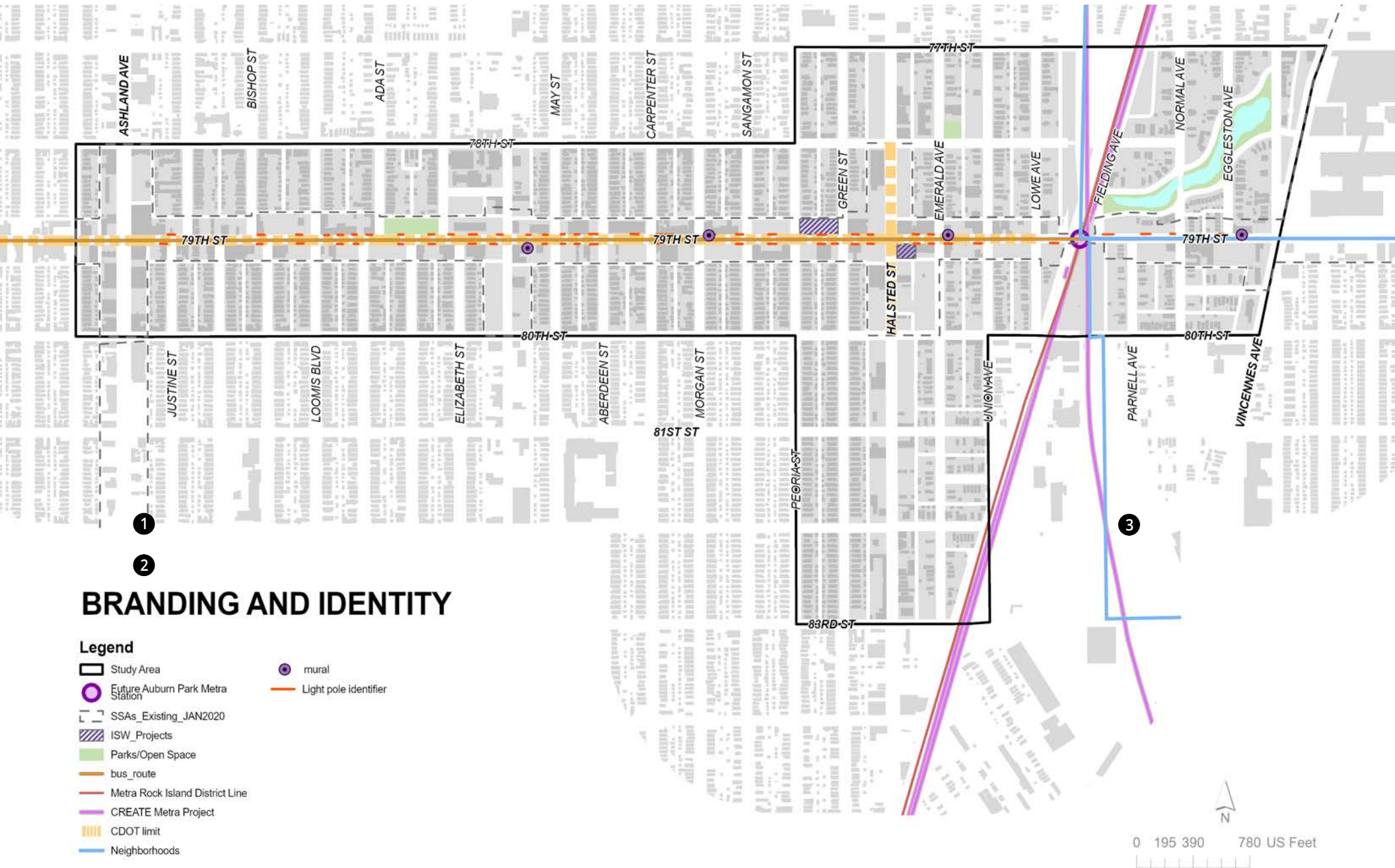
**“Gateways” and Area Markers:** An area marker or gateway is generally a large sculptural element placed either at the end of a streetscape or along a streetscape. These elements serve the purpose of marking the entranceways and throughways into the commercial/retail district.

Notably, the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) aims to support artists and cultural organizations, invest in the creative economy, and expand access and participation in the arts throughout Chicago's 77 neighborhoods.

**Public Art:** Public art is another way that communities can distinguish themselves in the streetscape. The Percent for Art Ordinance and its amendments stipulate that a percentage of construction and renovation costs for municipal buildings be set aside for the acquisition of artwork for use in conjunction with the buildings. At least half of the commissions are to be awarded to Chicago area artists.

**Mural:** Murals can provide several benefits as streetscape elements, contributing to the cultural, aesthetic, and social aspects of a community. The Mural Registry catalogs Chicago's long and rich tradition of murals and other street art and includes a growing list of completed murals created on private and public property. DCASE (Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events) will regularly update the registry and support public art initiatives, including murals, through various grants and programs.

The images above show the examples of gateway in Old Town, Blues District implemented through CDOT, and the mural at 49th and Ashland Viaduct curated through DCASE. Several gateway opportunities are identified within our study area to the right.



# VACANT LOT ACTIVATION

Between the 9 vacant lots along 79th street there are 4.15 acres of opportunity for community activation and advocacy. Within this chapter we have inventoried the vacant lots providing an analysis of their existing constraints, favorable features and adjacent connections. Within the community engagement with the neighborhood stakeholders and community residents, the request for the following programmatic spaces was requested:

## **DOG PARK**

A space for a dog friendly area was requested within multiple engagement sessions and the need was confirmed after a neighborhood open space assessment found no dog parks with 15 minute walking distance.

## **EVENT SPACES**

The functionality of the existing event space at the Renaissance Park was discussed and determined the existing space is undersized for the events held by GAGDC.

## **ACTIVE RECREATION**

While playgrounds were found to be unnecessary along 79th street, many vacant lots offer the potential for active recreation to be introduced. Basketball courts, asphalt game striping, pickle ball courts offer a more cost efficient program to temporarily activate these lots.

## **ART GARDEN**

Introduction of artistic murals and sculptures offer a great way to support local talent and enhance neighborhood identity.

## **PLAYGROUND**

While a playground was requested within community engagement, through the neighborhood open space assessment, 7 playgrounds were found within a 15 minute walking distance. While the playgrounds were present, they are outdated and lack the diverse equipment found in modern designs. It would be a better use of resources to advocate for redevelopment of the existing playgrounds in lieu of adding a new park to the system.

## **COMMUNITY GARDENS**

The benefits of community gardens enhance the sense of civic pride and provide opportunities for interpersonal relationship building.

Neighborspace is a nonprofit organization that can help with the responsibilities of activation; such as providing basic insurance, access to water, and access to a support network.

# VACANT LOT ACTIVATION IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

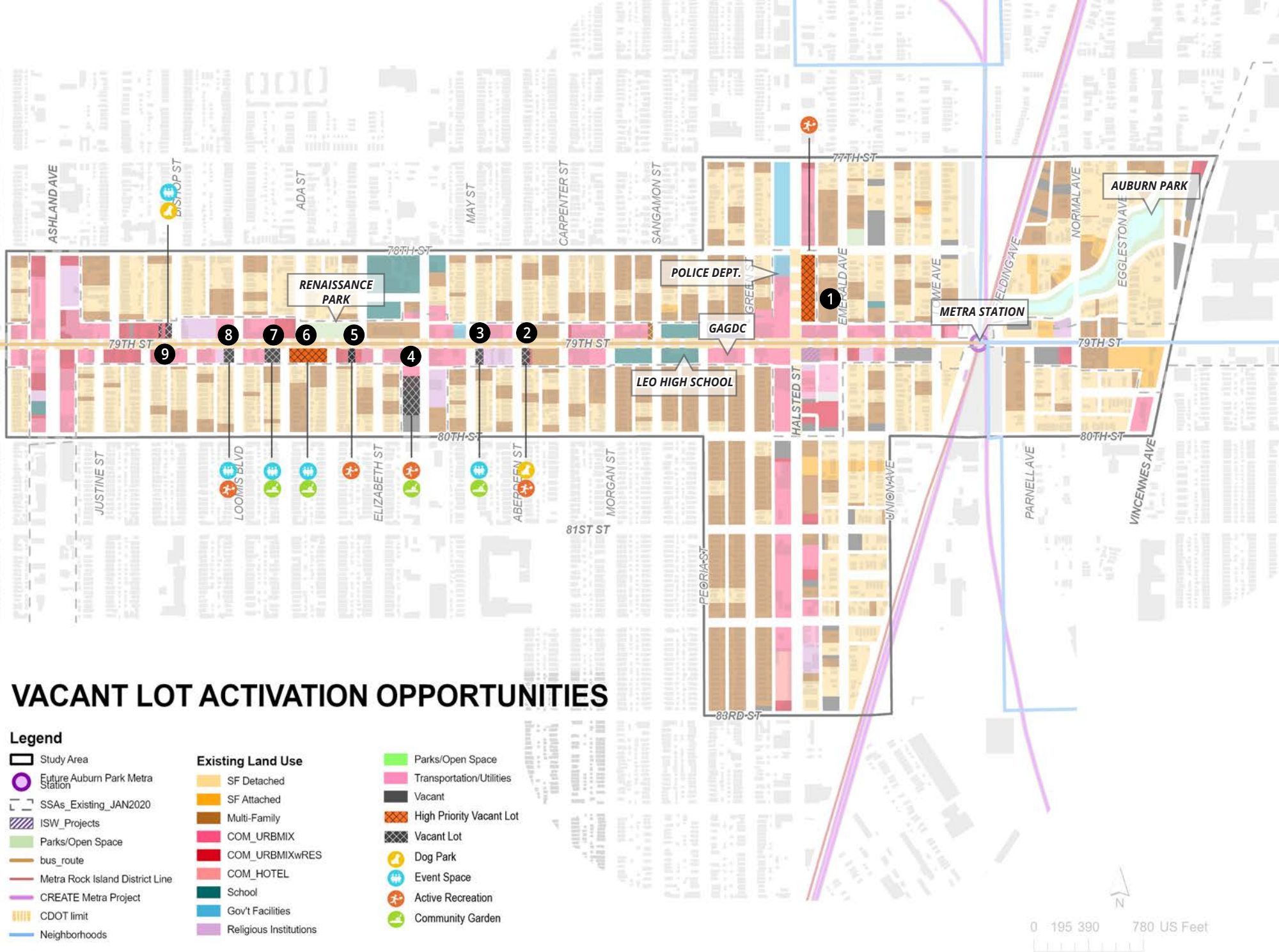
There are key factors to consider when determining a communities capacity to activate a vacant lot, available funding, long term maintenance ability and physical space available all play important roles in what is proposed. While this plan addresses the physical space characteristics, it will be up to local community groups to determine available funding and maintenance ability. The city will also look to the activator to provide the following:












- Signed maintenance agreement
- Proof of insurance.
- Aldermanic Approval
- Approval of intended use

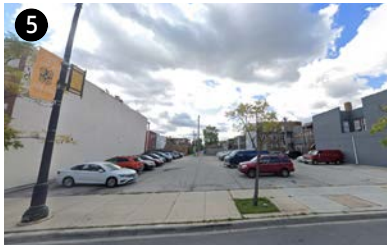













# VACANT LOT ACTIVATION OPPORTUNITIES INVENTORY

On the following pages is an assessment of key vacant lots along with potential programming recommendations that meet the constraints of each site. Case studies for each of the program types are provided with recommended materials and design needs.





				
ADDRESS	7801 - 7847 S Halsted St	1059 W 79th St	1125 W 79th St	7934 - 7956 S Racine Ave
AREA	1.15 acre	0.15 acre	0.17 acre	1.1 acre
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large amount of developable area</li> <li>• Sit on the major road halsted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corner lot directly adjacent to senior apartment close to a bus stop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing lawn surface</li> <li>• Corner lot at 79th St and May St</li> <li>• Can be co-developed with adjacent vacant lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large amount of developable area</li> <li>• Existing lawn surface</li> <li>• Sit on the major road - Racine Ave</li> </ul>
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barren lawn surface for temporary parking</li> <li>• Large amount of investment for short-term activation strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of shade or existing landscape</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large amount of investment for short-term activation strategies</li> </ul>
DOG PARK				
EVENT SPACE				
ACTIVE RECREATION				
COMMUNITY GARDEN				

				
1247 W 79th St	1301 - 1323 W 79th St	1335 - 1343 W 79th St	1401 - 1405 W 79th St	1448 - 1458 W 79th St
0.11 acre	0.6 acre	0.26 acre	0.2 acre	0.41 acre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjacent to Renaissance Park</li> <li>• 1 blank wall canvases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjacent to Renaissance Park</li> <li>• Existing lawn surface</li> <li>• Can be co-developed with adjacent vacant lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjacent to Renaissance Park</li> <li>• Existing lawn surface</li> <li>• Can be co-developed with adjacent vacant lot</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contains existing building, hardscape and softscape</li> <li>• Located in a dense residential area with characteristic buildings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing parking lot in-between two buildings</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barren lawn surface for temporary parking</li> </ul>	
				
				
				
				



## DOG PARK

Based on inventory of existing land use, there is a noticeable absence of a dog park within a 15-minute walking radius of the study area. The nearest dog park, the '50 Acre Park Dog Park,' is located 2.9 miles away and operates on a membership-based model. The study area predominantly comprises residential land uses, especially along 79th St, west of Halsted St. The construction of the Auburn Park Metra station is underway, promising a significant increase in foot traffic. As the Auburn Gresham area continues to grow, attracting more residents, the demand for dog parks in this locality is expected to rise. In evaluating vacant lots, we've identified criteria for suitable dog park locations:

- Dense Residential Uses: A lot situated in a densely populated residential area is more likely to draw local residents and dog owners.
- Surface Material: Vacant lots with predominantly hardscape surfaces offer the advantage of easy transformation into dog-friendly spaces, which can include surfaces such as pea gravel, concrete, or artificial lawn.
- Optimal Size: Lots ranging in size from 0.1 to 0.5 acre present a favorable opportunity for the development of a dog park.





The preceding page features 'Jackson Bark,' an exemplary case of adaptive reuse. Established in 2014, it transformed four abandoned tennis courts into one of the city's most popular and unique dog parks. Jackson Bark boasts a diverse range of structures and agility course obstacles, including teeter-totters, tunnels, hoops, A-frame ramps, tire hills, and more.

The images on the right from 'Skinner Bark Park' showcase various surface applications and programs for dog play. This park features concrete paths for leisurely strolls, open areas for games of catch, as well as grass and gravel surfaces. Although there is no small section for pups, all dogs of any size get to play and run around together here. During the summer months, the park provides kiddie pools filled with water to help pups cool off.





## EVENT SPACE

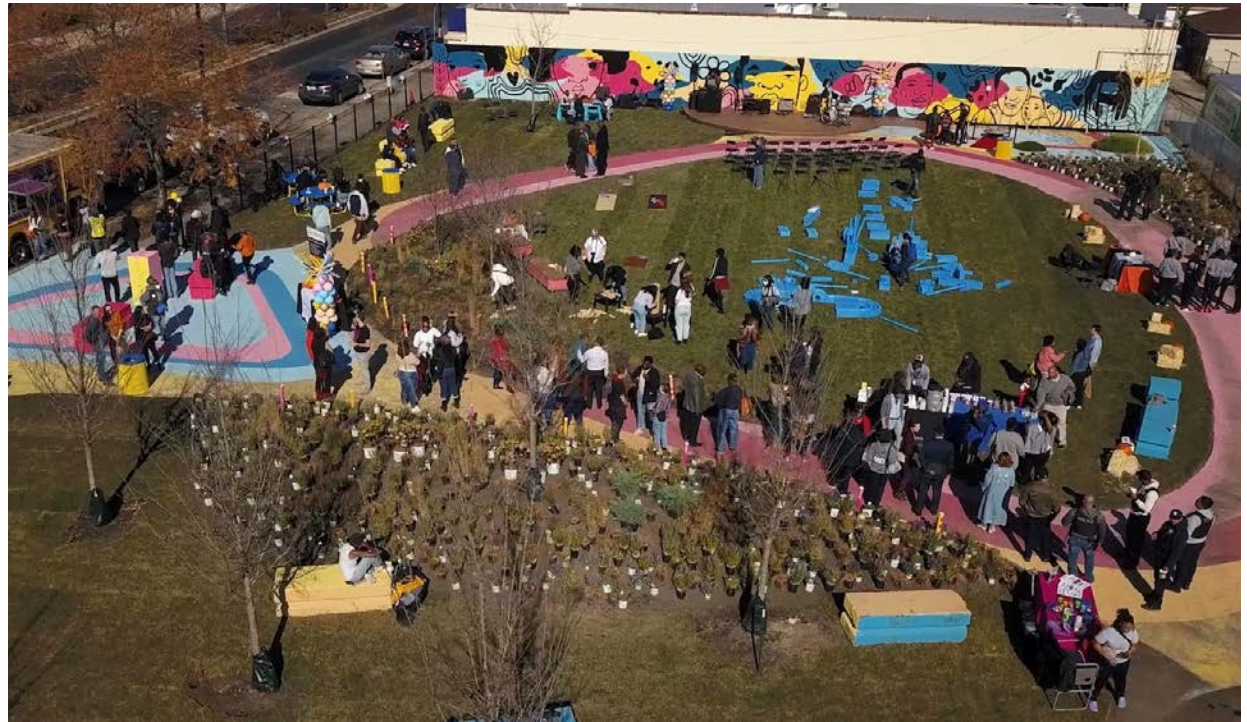
Upon a thorough evaluation of available vacant lots, we have identified specific criteria for suitability as a event space location:

- **Strategic Location in Dense Mixed-Use Areas:**

Vacant lots situated within densely populated commercial and residential areas offer great opportunities for event space. The proximity to a substantial population ensures that the recreation space will have a built-in user base, encouraging community engagement and utilization.

- **Surface Material:** Event spaces can effectively utilize either softscape or hardscape surfaces. The choice of surface material should align with the specific goals and duration of the events. Softscape surfaces, such as well-maintained lawns, offer flexibility for hosting a wide variety of activities and can be particularly suitable for temporary, pop-up, or short-term events. In contrast, hardscape surfaces provide accessibility for all visitors, ensuring that the event space is inclusive and accommodating to diverse audiences.

POP Heights, located in Roseland Neighborhood, is a transformative urban space that encompasses a substantial site, featuring six distinct activity zones. These zones include a shaded area for relaxation, a versatile basketball court, a custom-painted court designed to accommodate farmer's markets and food trucks, a playful playground, a community mural-centered stage, and a connecting ribbon pathway that transitions from a morning walking path to an afternoon roller-skating track.



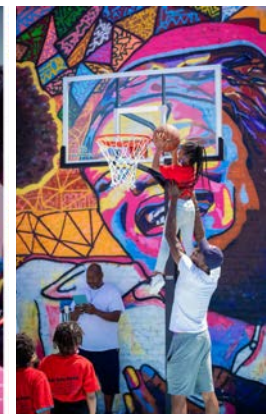
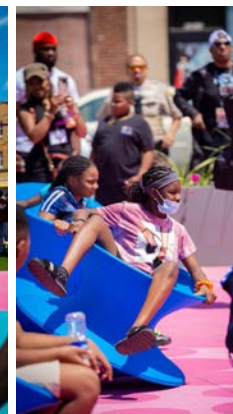


## ACTIVE RECREATION

In evaluating vacant lots, we've identified criteria for suitable active recreation locations:

- **Strategic Location in Dense Mixed-Use Areas:** Vacant lots situated within densely populated commercial and residential areas offer great opportunities for active recreation. The proximity to a substantial population ensures that the recreation space will have a built-in user base, encouraging community engagement and utilization.
- **Surface Material:** Vacant lots that predominantly consist of hardscape surfaces are prime candidates for activation into active recreation spaces. The existing hard surfaces can be repurposed and transformed to accommodate various recreational activities, such as sports courts, playgrounds, or fitness areas.

The precedent on the right illustrates POPCourts, the transformation of a vacant lot in the Austin Neighborhood into a dynamic space for various activities, community gatherings, and commerce. This project encompasses 0.46 acres and includes amenities such as a basketball court, dedicated event space, a food court, picnic areas with shaded seating, street furniture, and opportunities for public art installations.







# TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK



# OVERVIEW

The following framework provides context and guidance for transportation recommendations that should be supported by stakeholders in the corridor. The framework offers a toolbox of strategies for several transportation topic areas. These toolbox items can be implemented throughout the corridor, building upon and in conjunction with other projects and planning efforts currently underway. This section generally describes these strategies and provides details on suggested locations and implementation, presented as a toolbox of options for the corridor.

The proposed toolbox items aim to complement work efforts underway by CDOT, Metra, and the CTA, to improve the safety, comfort, and connectivity of people traveling to or through the corridor by walking, taking transit, biking, or auto. Many of these strategies and concepts can be applied across the corridor as other projects are implemented, particularly the CDOT streetscape project, Metra's new Auburn Park station on the Rock Island Line, and the CTA Better Streets for Buses project.

**The 79th Street Corridor Plan vision statement emphasizes the nexus between mobility and overall quality of life:**

*"The corridor will continue to be walkable, promote active transportation, and provide accessible amenities and services that cater to the diverse needs for the community."*

Many of the project goals that support this vision are directed towards a multimodal environment. They seek to facilitate walkability and new housing near transit. Improve the quality of life. Support the use of and access to transit services in Auburn Gresham. And, make the Community more transit-focused, and multi-modal. Goals addressing a walkable, connected, accessible, and safe corridor were supported through community input received during the planning process. The Vision and goals are also in alignment with CDOT's work in the corridor to develop a unified, safe, walkable, and attractive street with particular focus on pedestrian safety.

# OVERALL CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a safe, comfortable, and accessible corridor requires balancing multi-modal needs while prioritizing the needs of pedestrians and transit riders. Improved streetscape and public realm elements, transit priority infrastructure and amenities, and safety features support a variety of travel options that is essential for a vibrant and connected community.

Strategies addressing the following themes are included as part of the Transportation Framework:

- Implementation of CDOT Streetscape Project, enhancing pedestrian access and safety
- Transit elements that prioritize transit access and safety, and reduces vehicular conflicts
- Bicycle connections to existing bike facilities and the new Auburn Park Metra station
- Mobility Hubs at select locations along the corridor to expand travel choices and connections
- Options and opportunities for parking accommodations
- For each of these themes, a summary of key project findings is included as a foundation for the identification of Toolbox options.

## ROLE OF 79TH STREET IN THE CITY TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

79th Street is a minor arterial street under the jurisdiction of the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT). This multimodal corridor helps move both people and goods efficiently as part of the regional transportation network traveling east-west from the City's western border to the Lakefront. It plays an important role in the City's transit network as a high volume east-west connector route.

As one of the highest ridership routes in the CTA system, Route #79 travels the length of 79th Street, providing key connections to north-south routes and the CTA 79th Street Red Line station.

## PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE, AND TRANSIT TREATMENTS

### Pedestrian Refuge Islands

- 46% average crash reduction factor
- Reduce driver speeds and increase yielding behavior
- Easier to find gaps in traffic and reduce pedestrian delay

#### Where:

- Leo High School (79th St at Sangamon and Peoria)
- New Auburn Park Metra Station (79th St at Lowe)



### Protected Bike Lanes

- 56% reduction in all crashes
- 71% decrease in injury crashes
- Reduce pedestrian crashes
- Reduce "dooring" crashes
- Lower traffic speeds

#### Where:

- Halsted St



### Curb Extensions

- 37% average crash reduction factor
- Shorter pedestrian crossing distances
- Better visibility between motorists and pedestrians
- Eliminate illegal parking in the corner clearance zone
- Discourage passing on the right
- Reduce turning speeds around corners
- More sidewalk space at intersections

#### Where:

- Throughout project area



### Transit Treatments

- **Bus Priority Zone:** Maintain and refresh red lanes from Green to Emerald
- **Bus Bulbs:** Reduce delays, decrease travel times, improve service reliability

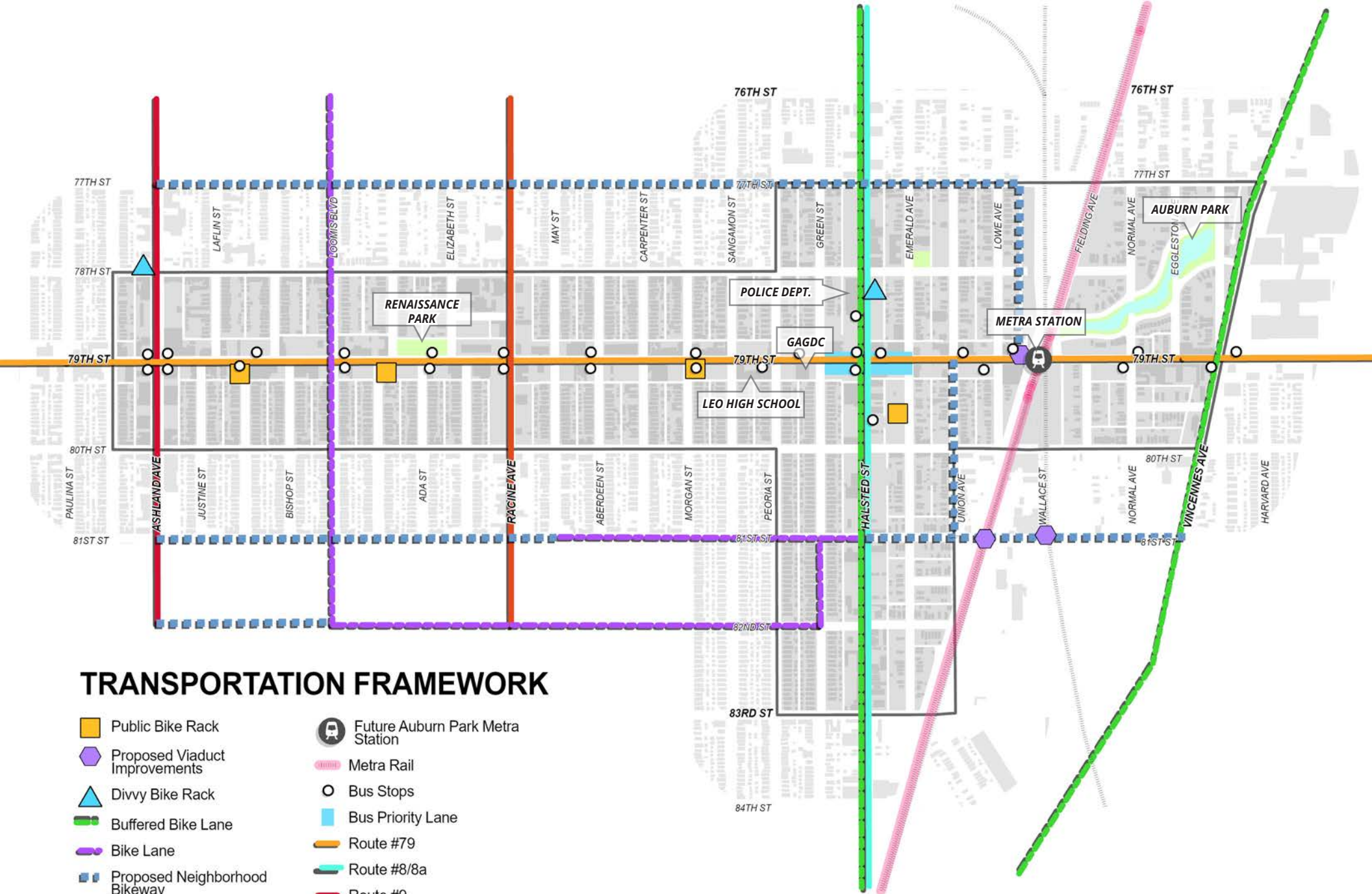
#### Where:

- New Auburn Park Metra Station (79th St at Lowe)



**SECTION 1 LIMITS:** 79th St, Sangamon to Fielding and Halsted St, 78th St to 80th St.





# TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

- Public Bike Rack
- Proposed Viaduct Improvements
- Divvy Bike Rack
- Buffered Bike Lane
- Bike Lane
- Proposed Neighborhood Bikeway
- Future Auburn Park Metra Station
- Metra Rail
- Bus Stops
- Bus Priority Lane
- Route #79
- Route #8/8a
- Route #9
- Route #44







## STREETSCAPE/ PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

As part of the City of Chicago's investment in the Auburn Gresham community, CDOT undertook a 79th Street Streetscape Project identifying treatments to address pedestrian safety and streetscape elements. They analyzed existing traffic, transit, and parking conditions, which documented corridor conditions. This analysis highlighted several critical aspects of the corridor, including the prevalence of vehicles exceeding the speed limit, a substantial volume of truck traffic, and a notable concentration of traffic accidents at key intersections such as Ashland Avenue, Racine Avenue, and Halsted Street. Notably, a significant proportion of these accidents result from left-turning vehicles, underscoring the need for safety improvements.

Furthermore, the corridor sees high levels of transit usage, reinforcing the importance of improving connectivity, accessibility, and safety for pedestrians. The 79th Street Corridor Plan aligns with CDOT's broader recommendations, which, when combined with additional corridor study findings, are expected to contribute positively to pedestrian well-being and connectivity throughout the corridor. In addition, CDOT's efforts to develop pedestrian safety strategies for use citywide will further enhance the safety and accessibility of the 79th Street corridor.

## TOOLBOX STRATEGIES

- Support Implementation of CDOT streetscape plan recommendations:
  - Pedestrian refuge islands: 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Sangamon Street (Leo High School); 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Lowe Avenue (new Auburn Park Metra station)
  - Curb extensions: throughout corridor
  - Bus bulbs around 79th Street and Lowe Ave
  - Transit treatments: 79th Street and Lowe Avenue (new Auburn Park Metra station)
- If applicable, add left turn traffic calming: 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Ashland Avenue; 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Racine Avenue.

*Note: These visions are for illustrative purposes only, and would require additional study, community engagement, cooperation with property owners, funding allocation, design, and engineering before future improvements could be implemented.*



## CTA BUS NETWORK

Transit service is a vital component of the City of Chicago's comprehensive mobility strategy, particularly in its commitment to achieving equity and sustainability objectives. The 79th Street corridor builds on these goals with CTA Route #79, which is consistently within the top three routes citywide. Additionally, CTA Routes #8 (Halsted Street) and #9 (Ashland Avenue), also are high ridership routes in the CTA system. The strategic placement of the CTA turnaround and transfer hub on Halsted Street just south of 79th Street facilitates seamless connections between Routes #79, #8, and #8A, with an average of nearly 400 daily transfers recorded in fall 2022.

In comparison to the rest of the corridor, the highest average weekday activity in terms of boardings and alighting occurs at key locations along the route, which further highlights the corridor's importance. This includes stops at Ashland Avenue, Justine Street, Racine Avenue, Aberdeen Street, Halsted Street, and Lowe Avenue.

Notably, Route #79 serves as a critical link to major north-south transit routes such as Western Avenue, Ashland Avenue, Halsted Street, King Drive, Cottage Grove Avenue, and the CTA Red Line. In an effort to improve transit efficiency, the implementation of a Bus Priority Zone (BPZ) on 79th Street, spanning from Green Street to Emerald Avenue (both east and west of Halsted Street), was completed in 2019 as part of a joint project by CTA and CDOT and funded under the RTA's Community Planning Program. Elements of this Bus Priority Zone and others on 79th Street are intended to further enhance the functionality and accessibility of the 79th Street corridor for public transportation, and at this location include a red rush-hour-only bus lane, with overhead "bus only" signs and signal timing optimization.

## TOOLBOX STRATEGIES

Design and management of the public right-of-way (ROW) can directly impact the quality, reliability, and comfort of bus service.

- Work with CTA and CDOT to identify and implement options from the Better Streets for Buses toolbox, a toolbox of street treatments to make buses faster, more reliable, more comfortable to wait for and easier to access. The toolbox includes treatments like enhanced bus stops, dedicated bus lanes, and improved traffic signals that CTA and CDOT may consider for future bus priority improvements.
- Add bus bulbs: 79th Street & Lowe Avenue (new Auburn Metra station); and potential other locations based on traffic study and CDOT analysis.
- Upgrade bus stops and the CTA bus turnaround with accessible pedestrian elements such as shelters, audible signals and tactile bus stop signs.





## METRA

A new Auburn Park Metra station along the Rock Island line is currently in the construction phase, promising to significantly enhance transportation accessibility and employment opportunities across the region. This development is not only a boon for the neighborhood but also a catalyst for economic growth while contributing to the overall well-being of the community. Positioned on the south side of 79th Street, just east of Lowe Avenue, the fully accessible station boasts several impressive features. These include an 84-space parking lot complete with electric vehicle charging stations, a convenient “kiss-and-ride” drop-off area, sheltered bicycle parking, and thoughtfully landscaped islands. A staircase and two elevators will seamlessly connect street-level access to the 480-foot-long platform, which will be equipped with a canopy and two shelters to provide comfort and protection for commuters.

In collaboration with Metra, CDOT is coordinating improvements to the public way to ensure multi-modal access to the station, accommodating pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Proposed enhancements involve a new bus bulb on 79th Street, allowing CTA buses to stop directly in front of the station, increasing convenience for public transit users. Additionally, Lowe Avenue will be vacated at the alley, leading to the creation of a new cul-de-sac. The station will offer park-and-ride access exclusively via Union Avenue, further bolstering the ease and efficiency of transportation options for the community.

## TOOLBOX STRATEGIES

- Add pedestrian refuge island: 79th Street and Lowe Avenue.
- Add bus bulbs: 79th Street and Lowe Avenue; and possible other locations based on traffic studies and CDOT analysis.
- Expand bicycle connections: Neighborhood bike connections from both north and south of 79th Street.
- Establish Mobility Hubs: Regional mobility hub to include Metra station on south side of 79th Street and north side redevelopment opportunity.
- 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project, led by CREATE: Improve viaducts with sidewalk repair, new lighting, fencing, and accessibility features.





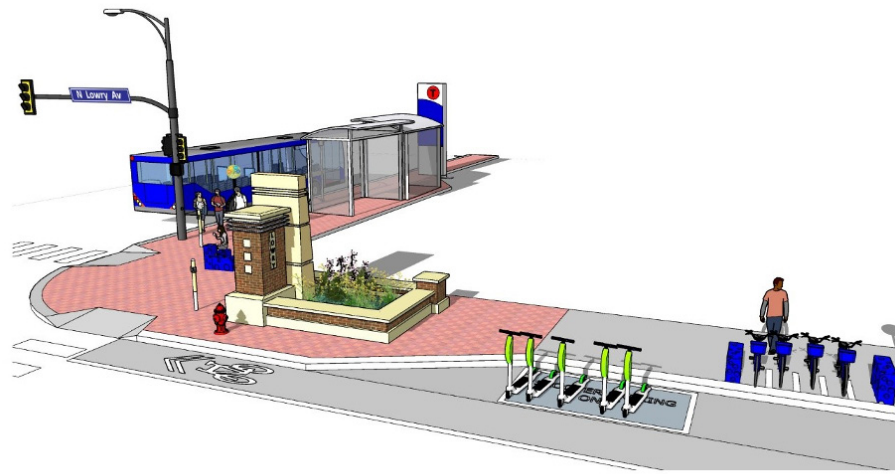
## BICYCLE NETWORK

Currently, the 79th Street corridor lacks dedicated bike infrastructure, and CDOT's plans do not designate it as a proposed east-west bike route. The high level of bus traffic and the narrow width of the road and right of way does not allow for a dedicated bike lane along 79th street. However, nearby streets offer various on-street bike facilities that enhance cycling options in the area. For instance, Loomis Avenue features an on-street bike lane to the south of 77th Street and a protected bike lane to the north of 76th Street. Halsted Street provides buffered and protected bike lanes, while Vincennes Avenue boasts protected bike lanes. Additionally, 82nd Street offers an on-street bike lane from Damen-Ashland to Green, and 81st Street features an on-street bike lane from Racine to Halsted.

CDOT's 2023 Cycling Strategy, which guides the planning and implementation of the city's bike network, emphasizes the creation of connected Neighborhood Bike Networks to better serve local bike trips in neighborhoods currently undeserved by the existing bike network. These networks are essential in providing connections to dedicated facilities like protected bike lanes and trails, thus improving overall cycling accessibility in the city.

## TOOLBOX STRATEGIES

- Identify low-stress neighborhood greenway routes. Neighborhood greenways prioritize bikes on low-volume and low-speed side streets. Typically designed as well-marked routes on residential streets with pavement markings and other treatments, like curb bump-outs and contraflow lanes with green paint. Opportunities for low-stress bikeways would include roadways that enhance circulation within the corridor, connect to other bike facilities, and provide access to transit services, including the new Metra station. Potential routes include: 77th Street, 81st Street, Union Avenue, Lowe Avenue, and Carpenter Street.
- Expand Bike/scooter share locations: 79th Street and Sangamon Street (Leo High School); proposed mobility hub locations



## MULTI-MODAL OPPORTUNITIES: MOBILITY HUBS

Multi-modal transportation will be critical to the future of 79th Street. The CTA #79 route is a crucial element of Chicago's transit network, functioning as a high-volume transit corridor with consistently high ridership figures within the CTA system. This route plays a pivotal role by connecting to major north-south transit routes, including the CTA Red Line, thereby facilitating the movement of residents across the city. The ongoing construction of the Auburn Park Metra station on the Rock Island line is another significant development that promises to enhance regional transportation accessibility and employment opportunities, aligning with broader project goals.

One of the strategies aimed at fostering an accessible, safe, and interconnected community is the establishment of mobility hubs at strategic locations along the corridor.

These hubs serve as pivotal points for multimodal transportation solutions, enabling seamless transitions between various travel modes, including buses, trains, bikes, scooters, paratransit services, and ridesharing, all within one convenient location. The development of these hubs is adaptable, with characteristics ranging from size and scale to included amenities, tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of the community and travelers. These hubs can encompass a wide array of services, from providing information and wayfinding assistance to offering bike parking, repair stations, fare payment facilities, Wi-Fi services, community spaces, and even electric vehicle parking. Furthermore, they can serve as more than just transit points, evolving into vibrant community gathering places that foster connections with local programs and activities. Several local examples illustrate the integration of mobility hubs into Chicago's transportation landscape, such as at CTA and Metra stations, in partnership with Equitcity's "Go Hub," proposed as part of the CTA Red Line Extension stations, and through initiatives like Auburn-Gresham's City of Chicago grant for the Gresham Hub, showcasing the city's commitment to enhancing transit connectivity and accessibility.

### TOOLBOX STRATEGIES:

- Regional mobility hub: 79th Street & Lowe Avenue to include Metra station on south side of 79th Street and the redevelopment opportunity on the north side of 79th Street.
- Neighborhood mobility hub: 79th Street & Ada Street to complement proposed pop court.
- Bus Mobility Hub: Halsted CTA bus turnaround; 79th Street between Loomis Avenue & Racine Avenue near St. Sabina & Renaissance Park.

# PARKING

Parking and shared parking have been identified by the community as a key issue to be discussed in the plan. Parking in this area of the corridor is somewhat unique because it is a dynamic multimodal thoroughfare, boasting extensive bus services, connections to the CTA rail system, and the ongoing construction of a new Metra station, reducing parking demand compared to areas of the City with less access to transit. Equitable transit-oriented developments (ETOD) in this context aim to reduce dependency on automobiles while promoting the use of public transit and active transportation modes. Striking the right balance between parking provisions and non-auto travel options is key to maximizing the positive impacts and benefits for the community. This approach involves not only addressing parking needs but also investing in the expansion and enhancement of alternative transportation options, safe infrastructure, and streetscape amenities like improved lighting and signage. In 2019 and again in 2021, CDOT conducted a study of parking occupancy counts, revealing that parking was lightly used, though community input highlights parking as a legitimate concern in the area, underscoring the complexity of managing transportation resources effectively while considering community needs.

## TOOLBOX STRATEGIES

- **On-Street Parking:** Remove peak period parking restrictions, providing benefits including:
  - Delineates a single travel lane in each direction
  - Reduces aggressive driving by narrowing roadway
  - Provides availability of on-street parking at all times
- Consider opportunities for increasing angled parking between 79th Street and alleys north and south of 79th Street.
- **Curb-Use Consideration:** Further study curb use near key development sites and destinations to explore parking management techniques such as:
  - Varied time limits for greater flexibility and increased turnover
  - Specific drop off zones such as at Leo High School and the Healthy Lifestyle Hub
  - Parking pricing
  - Consideration of a community parking benefit district
- **Off-Street parking option:**
  - Expand and/or link parking in rear of buildings
- **“Pop-up” Parking lots:** Repurpose vacant lots as short-term placeholders. These lots could also include mobility hub elements such as bike and micromobility sharing, bike parking, or EV charging spaces.
- **Shared Parking Opportunities:** Shared parking should be encouraged as a tool to alleviate parking demand while minimizing the need for surface parking on the corridor.
  - Currently, Metra-owned lots do not allow for

parking after hours for legal reasons. If more security resources become available in the future, the use of Metra parking during off-peak commuter hours and on weekends should be considered. This would compliment restaurants and entertainment uses. The City and Metra would need to analyze parking needs and usage to determine days and hours.

- The community may look to owners of existing private surface lots to investigate the feasibility of creating shared parking lots. Such as churches, banks, businesses with excess or underutilized parking.

- **Use of vacant sites for off-street parking:**

Strategically identify locations where vacant lots could be converted to parking to meet community needs. This will require addressing ownership, development of lot, maintenance, and management.

- **Neighborhood Parking Considerations:** On-going monitoring of potential parking encroachment into adjacent residential areas particularly near:

- Healthy Lifestyle Hub
- Leo High School
- Catalyst site/mobility hub across from new Metra station

- If development-related parking impinging into adjacent neighborhoods becomes an issue, consider implementing residential parking restrictions such as, time period restrictions or designated parking zones. Coordination with the Alderman will be necessary, as residential parking zone designation requires Aldermanic approval.

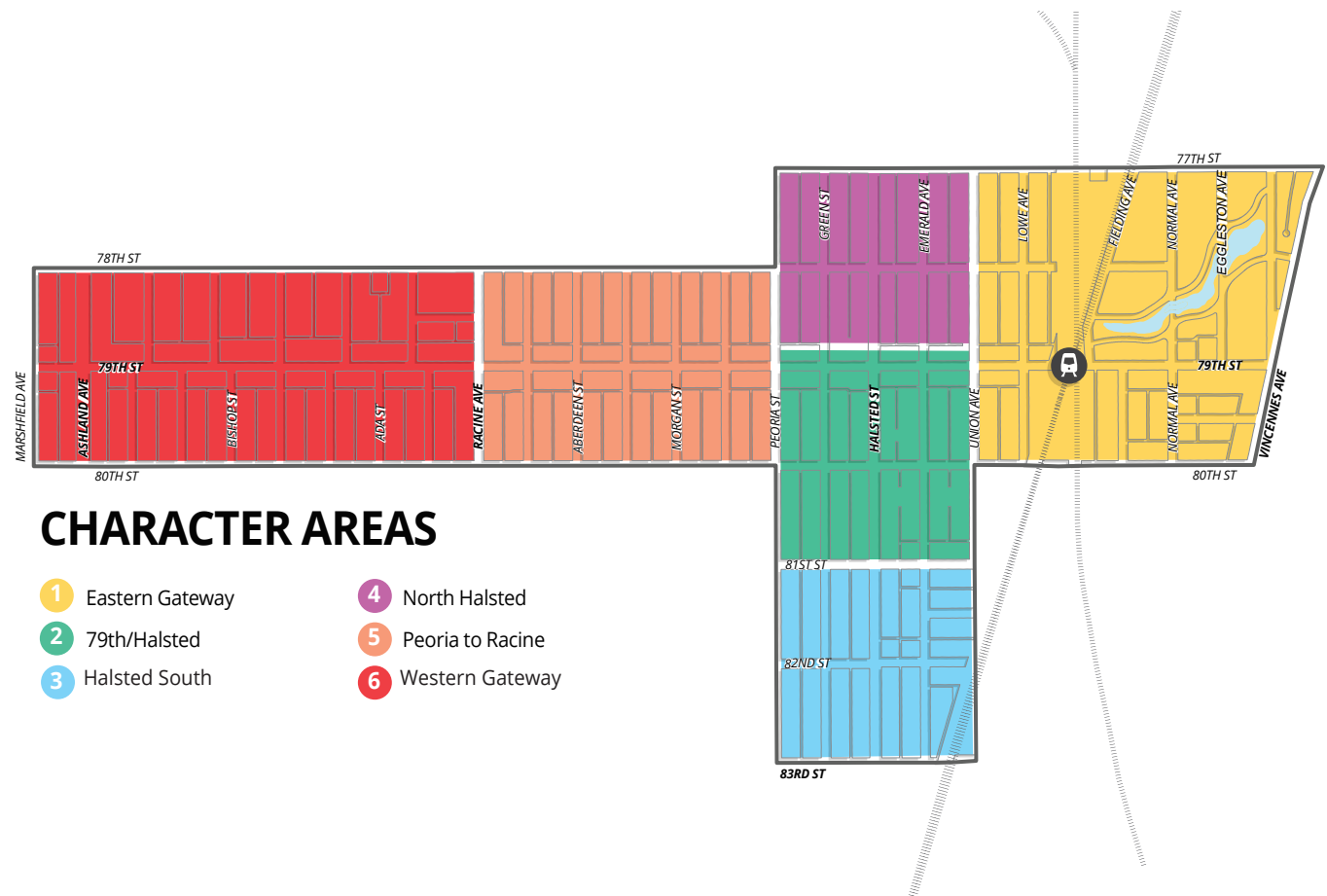




# CHARACTER AREAS

# INTRODUCING 79TH STREET

The recommendations of the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Plan have been organized around **six geographic areas** to provide a more focused look at key initiatives within their unique contexts. Their boundaries were created based on land use, development opportunities, built form, physical boundaries, character, and other factors. While they are all considered part of corridor plan's study area, each functional character area is unique with different issues and opportunities. Each presents an overview of the area and key recommendations, including relevant improvements from the Public Realm Improvement Toolbox.



## CHARACTER AREAS

- 1 Eastern Gateway
- 2 79th/Halsted
- 3 Halsted South
- 4 North Halsted
- 5 Peoria to Racine
- 6 Western Gateway



## OVERALL PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The improvements identified in this section generally apply to the entire corridor study area:

- Implementation of CDOT Streetscape elements, enhancing pedestrian access and safety
- Transit elements that prioritize transit access and safety, and reduces vehicular conflicts
- Bicycle connections to existing bike facilities and the new Auburn Park Metra station.
- Mobility Hubs at select locations along the corridor to expand travel choices and connections
- Options and opportunities for parking accommodations.
- Curb extensions throughout corridor
- Upgrade bus stops with accessible pedestrian elements such as shelters, audible signals and tactile bus stop signs.
- Bicycle connections: Neighborhood bike connections from both north and south of 79th Street.
- Work with CTA and CDOT to identify and implement options from the Better Streets for Buses toolbox, a toolbox of street treatments to make buses faster, more reliable, more comfortable to wait for and easier to access. The toolbox includes treatments like enhanced bus stops, dedicated bus lanes, and improved traffic signals that CTA and CDOT may consider for future bus priority improvements.
- Identify low-stress neighborhood greenway routes. Neighborhood greenways prioritize bikes on low-volume and low-speed side streets. Typically designed as well-marked routes on residential streets with pavement markings and other treatments, like curb bump-outs and contraflow lanes with green paint.

*Note: These visions are for illustrative purposes only, and would require additional study, community engagement, cooperation with property owners, funding allocation, design, and engineering before future improvements could be implemented.*

## CATALYST SITE CONCEPTS

Catalyst sites are vacant and/or underutilized parcels where redevelopment could have a significant positive effect on the study area. The proposed catalyst site concepts included in this section illustrate the redevelopment and repositioning of two key sites.

### CONCEPT AS A GUIDELINE

The catalyst sites identified in this section could be redeveloped in a variety of ways, and the proposed catalyst site concepts are intended to serve only as a guideline and an illustration of a desired redevelopment scenario. They illustrate development potential with a mix of uses that is supported by the community's vision. Future development proposals should be considered on their own merit.



## CHARACTER AREA #1

# EASTERN GATEWAY

**Introducing 79th street's identity as an inclusive commercial neighborhood with big aspirations at the heart of Auburn Gresham.**

This Character Area is the eastern entrance to the study area and is comprised of existing housing, the Metra tracks overpass, Auburn Park and several undeveloped parcels that could be suitable for new residential uses. The area currently features moderate levels of activity with a fast-moving traffic on 79th Street. There are also several residential streets adjacent to 79th Street in the area with single family and 2-6 flat housing. As the eastern gateway to the 79th Street corridor, it presents an opportunity to make a strong statement about the corridor's identity and aspirations. The plan recognizes the significance of this area as a key gateway to the corridor and aims to leverage its potential for the benefit of the community.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Gateway Significance.** Serving as the eastern gateway to the 79th Street corridor, this area holds special importance as it forms the initial impression for visitors and residents alike. It presents an opportunity to make a strong statement about the corridor's identity and aspirations.

**Maintain Commercial.** The intersection of 79th and Vincennes should be maintained as a commercial node at the intersection of Vincennes Avenue. This intersection is envisioned as a focal point for retail, services, and community engagement, contributing to the economic vitality of the corridor. No major changes are envisioned for the commercial buildings in this area, but the community should consider upzoning the properties at the northwest and southwest corners of 79th and Vincennes to a B1, B2, or B3 district to encourage more street-facing pedestrian-oriented uses.

**Address Housing.** The plan recommends the development of single-family attached housing along 79th Street east of Parnell Avenue. This approach promotes housing diversity while utilizing available land efficiently. Single-family attached homes should seamlessly blend with surrounding single-family homes and not exceed 2 stories in height. This set of parcels are currently zoned B3-2. This means, multifamily housing would require a special use approval. Therefore, the community would have to obtain this approval or rezone the property. In alignment with the existing mixed-use building on the south side of 79th Street, east of Normal Avenue, the plan encourages the creation of new multi-family and mixed-use housing options. Multifamily buildings in this area should be designed to fit in with the surrounding single-family character. Unlike multifamily buildings to the west, buildings in this area should contain 2-6 units and be 2-3 stories in height. Zoning changes or special use permits will be required to accommodate attached homes in this space.

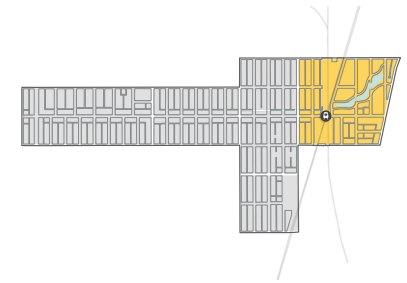
**eTOD.** "Equitable Transit Oriented Development" should be supported at the corner of 79<sup>th</sup> Street and South Lowe Avenue. This form of development places an emphasis on healthy, walkable, communities where residents have quality access to jobs, healthy food and other resources. 3-4 story buildings are encouraged with a dedicated plaza space for congregating, relaxing and outdoor dining. Development this close to the Metra station will more easily connect future residents to jobs and resources throughout the City. These Parcels are currently zoned B1-2 which will accommodate proposed uses within a 50 foot height requirement. This would likely be sufficient for any proposed developments, but the community may seek more height if additional housing is desired.

### Other Land Uses:

Transportation and Utilities

Parks and Open Space

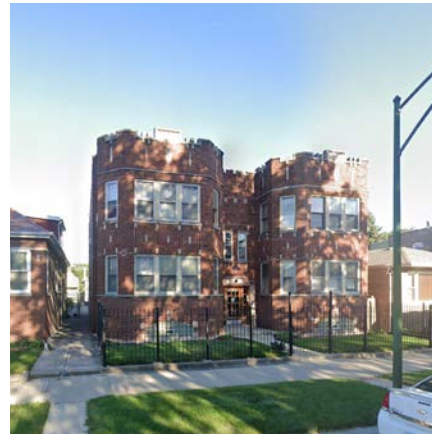
◆ Key Development Site to Improve Corridor



## FUTURE LAND USE



## DESIRED CHARACTER



## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Transit treatments: 79th Street and Lowe Avenue
2. Bus boarding islands: 79<sup>th</sup> Street & Lowe Avenue (new Auburn Metra station)
3. Pedestrian refuge island: 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Lowe Avenue.
4. Mobility Hub: Regional mobility hub to include Metra station on south side of 79th Street and north side redevelopment opportunity
5. Shade trees to provide vertical landscape and shading opportunities.
6. Paver fields within the furnishing zone to provide texture and color.
7. Traditional Victor Stanley Benches for moments of reprieve
8. Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
9. Trash receptacles
10. Gateway elements
11. Trails
12. Vacant Lot Activation

## CHARACTER AREA #2 79<sup>TH</sup>/HALSTED

**A dynamic mixed use intersection promising high visibility and growing activity for the area.**

This area is directly south of the intersection of 79th and Halsted. It is a high traffic active area with residential streets, commercial businesses, and developable land. New development should take advantage of opportunities for investment in vacant residential parcels and promote multiple housing types. The community should also seek to revitalize existing commercial sites with the goal of fostering an active and vital neighborhood commercial area.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Mixed-Use Focus.** At the intersection of 79th Street and Halsted Street, the mixed-use development and infill projects should be prioritized. This strategic approach aims to create dynamic and active spaces that accommodate a blend of residential and commercial uses. Buildings should be designed to contribute to the neighborhood business district character with height that tapers upward from nearby residential uses. 3-6 story buildings should be supported to accommodate multiple uses. The parcels surrounding the business district area zoned B3, meaning they will be able to accommodate mixed use development with commercial on the groundfloor and residential above.

### Revitalize Commercial Parcels.

The plan supports the continued revitalization of commercial sites, including the Save-a-Lot site, to increase vibrancy of the Area. Buildings in the southern portion of this area should be of a similar scale to nearby housing with 1-2 story buildings offering a variety of uses.

### Encourage more Housing Diversity.

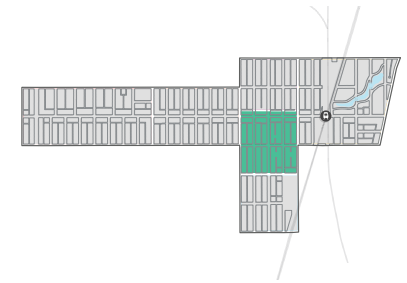
To enrich the character of the area and provide more housing options, the plan encourages the development of single-family attached and multi-family housing on vacant parcels along Halsted south of 79th Street. Housing in this area should be designed to complement existing single family and 2-4 flat buildings. Zoning changes or special use permits will be required to accommodate attached homes in this space.

### Other Land Uses:

Transportation and Utilities

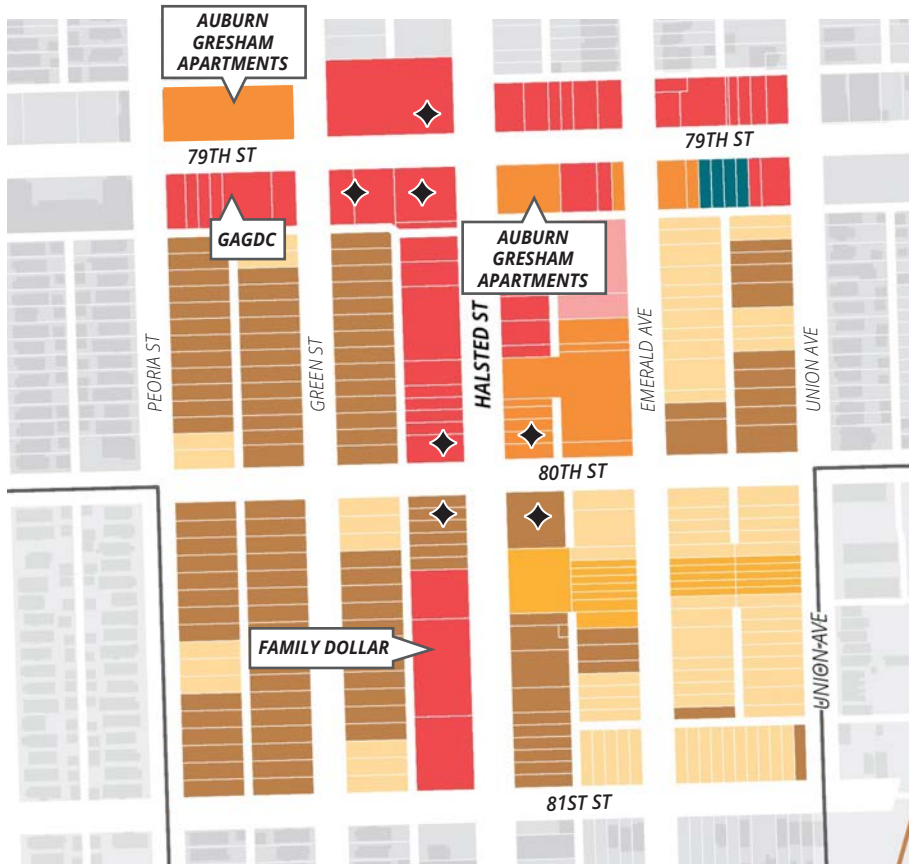
Public/Semi-Public

◆ Key Development Site to Improve Corridor

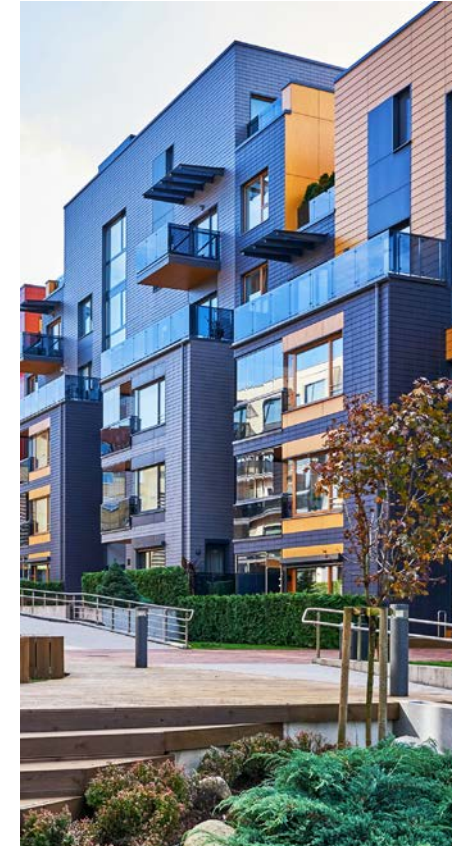




## FUTURE LAND USE



## DESIRED CHARACTER



## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Shade trees to provide vertical landscape and shading opportunities.
2. Paver fields within the furnishing zone to provide texture and color.
3. Traditional Victor Stanley Benches for moments of reprieve
4. Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
5. Trash receptacles
6. Vacant Lot Activation

## CHARACTER AREA #3

# HALSTED NORTH

**A crossroads of vehicular commerce and neighborhood amenities complements the surrounding neighborhoods and activity centers..**

Located at the northern end of the plan study area, the Halsted North Character Area is most defined by the Chicago Police Station on Halsted, and the large vacant lot directly across the street. Traffic on this stretch of Halsted generally has fast moving traffic, and while sidewalks are wide, the built environment is not very friendly to pedestrians. The community should prioritize the maintenance of vital community assets such as the police station, sustain existing commercial activities, and promote the development of residential options that are cohesive with the character of the surrounding neighborhoods

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Strategic Property Maintenance.

The plan recognizes the significance of the police station property and surrounding parking lots, emphasizing their importance as vital community assets. It aims to maintain these properties and ensure they continue to serve their essential functions.

**Support for Commercial Uses.** On the vacant east side of Halsted, north of 78<sup>th</sup>, the plan places emphasis on supporting and sustaining existing commercial uses. This approach acknowledges the value of these businesses and their contribution to community. Their character should be maintained.

**Residential Diversity.** To enrich the residential fabric of the Character Area, the plan encourages the development of single-family attached homes on the vacant parcels on the east side of Halsted extending southward from 78<sup>th</sup>. This housing type is intended to complement the adjacent neighborhoods to the east. New developments should be 1-2 stories in height and emphasize moderate density. Density should be tapered down from 79<sup>th</sup> street. Such a residential development would require a special use permit, or more likely, a zoning change. The parcels are currently zoned B1-3 and could be rezoned to RT (Residential Two-Flat, Townhouse and Multi-Unit).

**Mixed Use Development.** The plan supports the development of new 3-5 story mixed use buildings east of the police station with commercial on the ground floor and residential uses above. This type of development would be permitted under the lots' current zoning of B1-3.

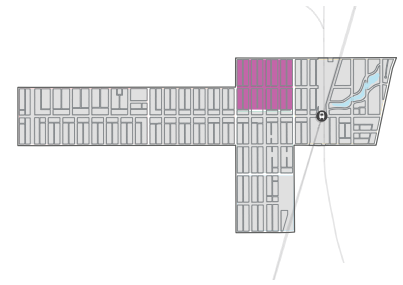
**Multifamily Development.** A 4-6 unit multifamily development is supported north of the mixed use buildings. This type of development would also require a special use permit or rezoning as in the residential diversity section to the left.

### Other Land Uses:

Public/Semi-Public

Parks and Open Space

◆ Key Development Site to Improve Corridor



## FUTURE LAND USE



## DESIRED CHARACTER



## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Separated bike lanes on Halsted (existing)
2. Shade trees to provide vertical landscape and shading opportunities.
3. Paver fields within the furnishing zone to provide texture and color.
4. Traditional Victor Stanley Benches for moments of reprieve
5. Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
6. Branded Trash receptacles
7. Light pole Identifiers to extend the branding further into the neighborhood
8. Vacant Lot Activation



## 79TH/HALSTED

# CATALYST SITE: 632 W 79TH

### A gateway to the Auburn Gresham community.

The goal of this development concept is to maximize a new mid-rise mixed-use building alongside pedestrian focused public spaces and mobility hub improvements. Public pedestrian plaza space is located between commercial uses offering areas for outdoor dining, entertainment, and events. A mobility hub is situated along 79th Street to provide easy access and visibility. The mobility hub will serve as a focal point in the transportation network integrating different modes of transportation such as a bicycle station/storage or bus stop/layover zone. Other development opportunities including urban street trees, vegetation planters, and seating would expand place-making efforts. Overall, the development concept aims to build on the future Metra station project and provide residents and visitors with greater access to the Auburn Gresham neighborhood through ETOD. If a vertically stacked mixed-use development is not feasible as a result of market conditions, developers may consider horizontally stacked mixed-use development.

#### Land Use

- Commercial
- Residential

#### Site Callouts

- 1 Mixed-use Development
- 2 Outdoor Dining Space
- 3 Public Plaza
- 4 Mobility Hub Improvements
- 5 Future METRA Parking
- 6 Future METRA Station



**NOTE:** This catalyst site consists of private vacant and/or private underutilized parcels where redevelopment could have a significant positive effect on the surrounding area. The concept is for illustrative purposes only and is indicative of desired intensity of development and mix of uses supported by the 79th Street Corridor Plan.

## HALSTED NORTH

# CATALYST SITE: 7801-7847 S HALSTED

### An opportunity to expand residential opportunities in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood.

To complement the existing housing stock in the community and transition between commercial and residential areas, the development concept incorporates a mix of housing options including townhomes, mid-rise multifamily buildings, and mid-rise mixed-use buildings. Access to the alley is maintained at the rear of the site with covered parking structures along the north half and an internal parking lot serving the mixed-use building. Public pedestrian plazas with vegetation cut through the site and provide access to the alley and afford residents' urban green space.

#### Land Use

- Commercial
- Residential



#### Site Callouts

- 1 Townhome Development
- 2 Multifamily Development
- 3 Mixed-use Development
- 4 Alley Access Parking in Rear
- 5 Open Space Plaza
- 6 Open Space Plaza
- 7 Corridor Vegetation Improvements

*NOTE: This catalyst site consists of public vacant and/or public underutilized parcels where redevelopment could have a significant positive effect on the surrounding area. The concept is for illustrative purposes only and is indicative of desired intensity of development and mix of uses supported by the 79th Street Corridor Plan.*

## CHARACTER AREA #3

# HALSTED SOUTH

**A stable and locally oriented neighborhood area that balances quality residential neighborhoods with successful local businesses.**

Located at the southern end of the plan study area, this area is characterized by local commercial uses fronting Halsted Street and stable residential neighborhoods east and west of the Halsted frontage. By introducing complementary housing types, mixed-use opportunities, and residential infill, the plan seeks to enhance the overall quality of life in this part of the corridor while respecting the existing character of the neighboring areas.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Complementary Housing.** On the west side of Halsted, the plan promotes the development of single-family attached housing. This housing type is designed to complement the existing high-quality multifamily and single-family residential neighborhoods situated to the west of the Character Area. 1-2 story homes are encouraged. The area is currently zoned B1-1 and should be rezoned RT (Residential Two-Flat, Townhouse and Multi-Unit).

**Residential Infill.** To enhance the fabric of the Character Area, the plan encourages the infill development of vacant residential sites to the east. These new developments should align with the character of the surrounding single-family homes, to create a cohesive residential neighborhood. While existing zoning of RS-3 would permit infill by single-family housing, re-zoning to RT-4 would encourage a greater diversity of housing types and create more opportunities for home ownership, rental, and affordability.

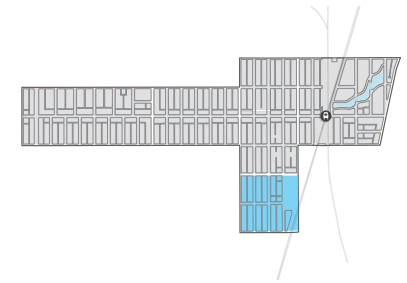
### Other Land Uses:

Transportation and Utilities

Public/Semi-Public

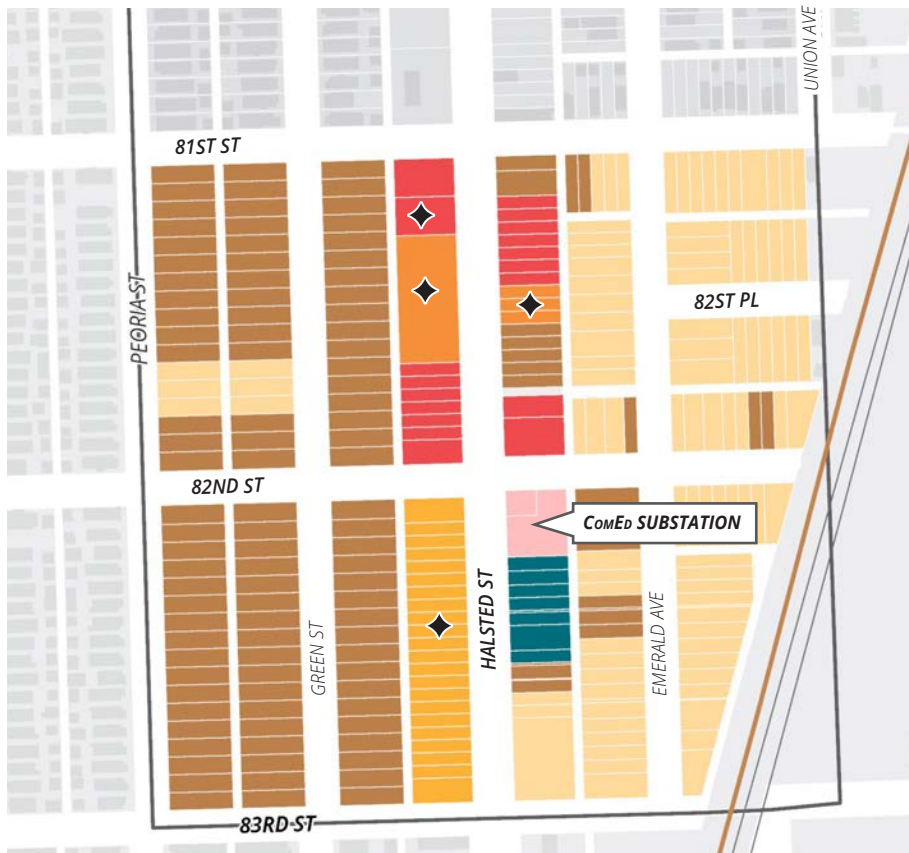
Mixed-Use

◆ Key Development Site to Improve Corridor

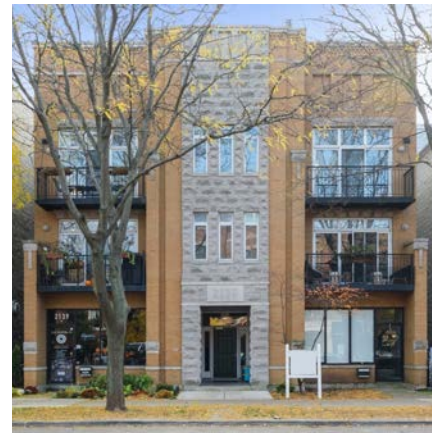




## FUTURE LAND USE



## DESIRED CHARACTER



## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Shade trees to provide vertical landscape and shading opportunities.
2. Paver fields within the furnishing zone to provide texture and color.
3. Traditional Victor Stanley Benches for moments of reprieve
4. Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
5. Branded Trash receptacles
6. Light pole Identifiers to extend the branding further into the neighborhood
7. Vacant Lot Activation


## CHARACTER AREA #5


# PEORIA TO RACINE


**A distinctive historic character shared with commerce and institutions. The area will maintain existing businesses and institutions, promote building rehabilitation, and investigate innovative parking solutions.**

This Character Area is centrally located in the Study Area and defined by the institutional/service user fronting 79<sup>th</sup>, including Leo High School and the Senior Suites of Auburn Gresham. These strategies should contribute to the long-term sustainability and vibrancy of this important section of the corridor.






## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

 **Building Rehabilitation.** The plan places a strong emphasis on supporting the rehabilitation of aging buildings within the Character Area. By investing in the restoration and modernization of these structures, the plan aims to maintain the architectural heritage of the area while ensuring they continue to serve their intended purposes effectively.

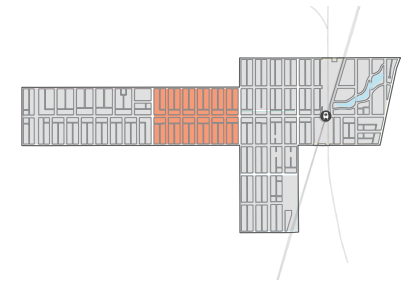
 **Shared Parking.** The community should continue to explore the feasibility of shared parking arrangements on the larger parking lots within the Character Area. Such an initiative would optimize the use of available parking spaces, enhance accessibility, and reduce the demand for new parking infrastructure.

 **Business and Institutional Maintenance.** A primary objective for this Character Area is to maintain the existing businesses and institutional uses that contribute to its vitality. This approach recognizes the importance of these establishments to the local economy and community.

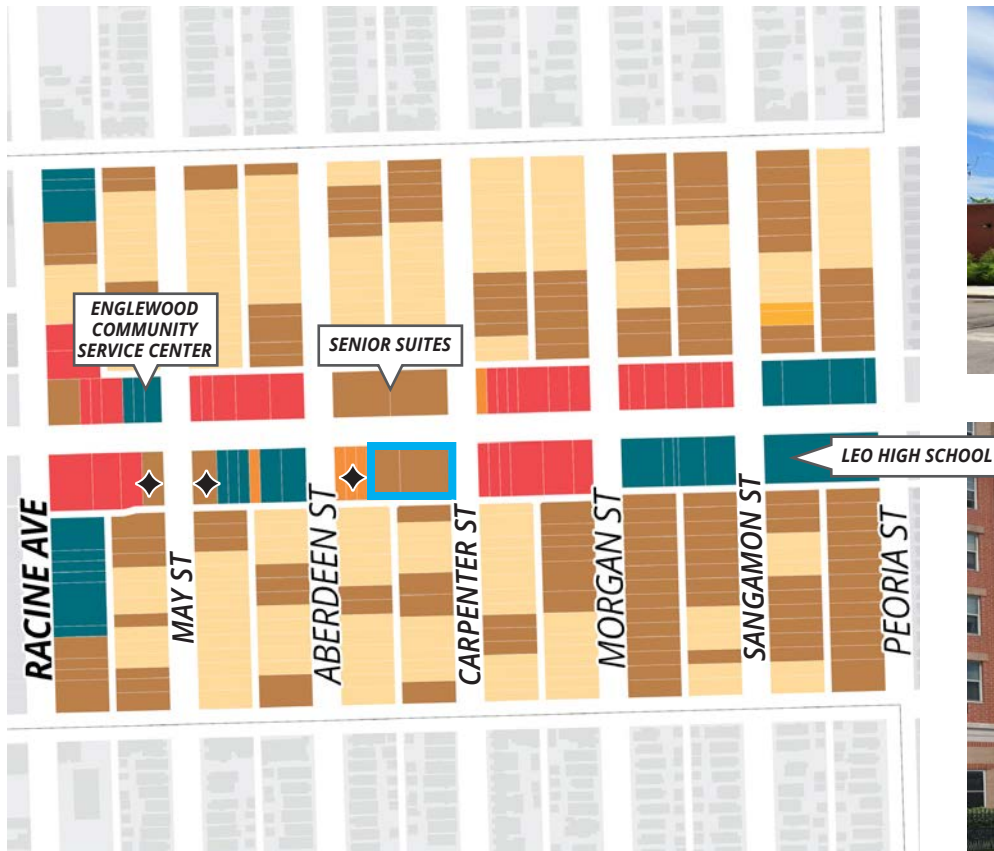
### Other Land Uses:

-  Single-Family
-  Multifamily (2-6 Flats, Townhomes)
-  Multifamily
-  Mixed-Use
-  Public/Semi-Public

 Key Development Site to Improve Corridor



## FUTURE LAND USE



## DESIRED CHARACTER



## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Pedestrian refuge islands: 79th Street and Sangamon Street (Leo High School))
2. Expand Bike/scooter share locations: 79th Street and Sangamon Street (Leo High School)
3. Vacant Lot Activation



## CHARACTER AREA #6 WESTERN GATEWAY

**A healthy mix of uses that caters to anything residents may be looking for.**

This Character Area is the western gateway to the corridor study area and is bookended by Racine to the East and Ashland Avenue to the West. To the west, the busy 79th and Ashland intersection is the gateway to the corridor.

Surrounded by residential neighborhoods, this stretch of 79th is characterized by 2-3 story mixed use building, vacant lots, and is centered around Renaissance Park, which is a pleasant and peaceful green space in the neighborhood. There are multiple open spaces in this area of the corridor that are well suited for new development in the form of programmed open spaces or new commercial/residential uses. Multifamily development could positively contribute to the housing character in this neighborhood and help the neighborhood meet the growing demand for housing.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Renaissance Park Preservation.

A goal of the plan is to maintain the beauty and functionality of Renaissance Park. The Character Area aims to encourage the development of commercial and residential uses that harmonize with the park's attractive green space, promoting a sense of cohesion and community.

★ **Pop Court Opportunity.** In the short term, the plan supports the construction of a City of Chicago Pop Court on one of the parcels located south of 79th Street, either to the east or west of Ada Street. This initiative can add recreational amenities and community engagement opportunities to the Character Area.

### Multifamily Development Opportunity.

The vacant parcels in the central portion of the Character Area south of Renaissance Park could be suitable for multifamily housing development. This approach diversifies housing options and aligns with the broader goal of creating a well-balanced and inclusive community. 3-4 Story multifamily buildings would be desirable to complement surrounding uses. These vacant parcels are currently zoned B1-2 and would need to be rezoned to a residential district such as RT or RM depending on the scale of the development that is ultimately agreed upon.

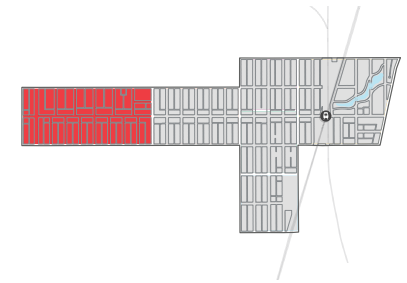
**Vacant Parcel Development.** The plan recognizes the potential of the vacant parcel along 79th Street and encourages thoughtful development that complements the Character Area's identity and the corridor's overall vision. Either residential or commercial would be suitable, but commercial is preferred as long as it is economically viable. Almost this entire stretch of 79th is zoned B1, which would accommodate mixed-use commercial/residential developments. A special use permit would be required if a fully-residential development was proposed on 79th in this character area.

### Other Land Uses:

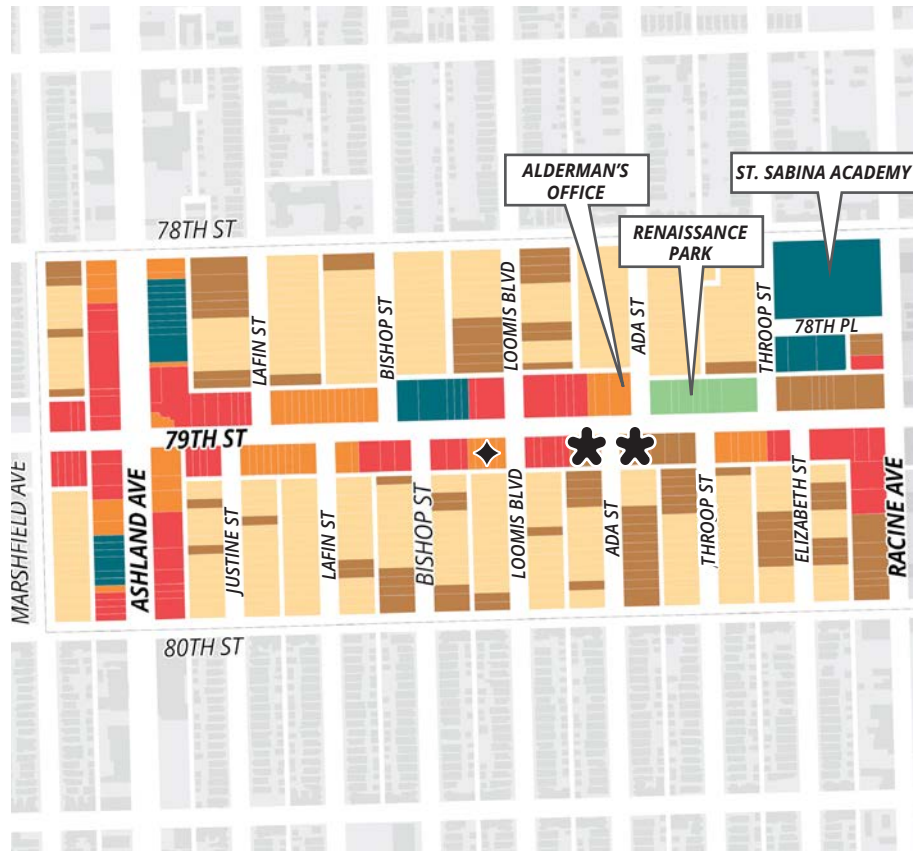
Single-Family

Public/Semi-Public

◆ Key Development Site to Improve Corridor



## FUTURE LAND USE



## DESIRED CHARACTER

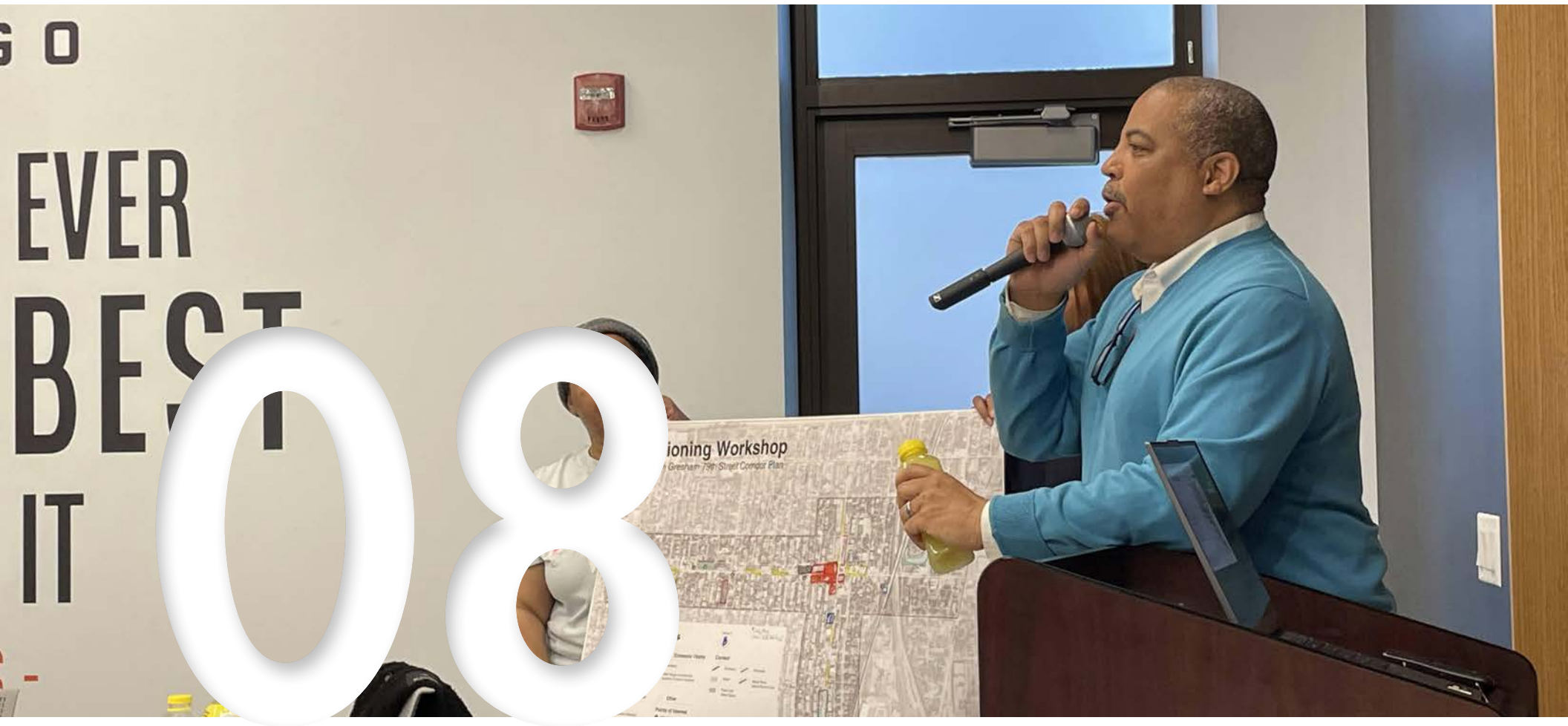


## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Left turn traffic calming: 79th Street and Ashland Avenue; 79th Street and Racine Avenue.
2. Neighborhood Mobility Hub: 79<sup>th</sup> Street & Ada Street to complement proposed pop court
3. Bus Mobility Hub: Halsted CTA bus turnaround; 79th Street between Loomis Avenue & Racine Avenue near St. Sabina & Renaissance Park.
4. Curb Extensions: 79<sup>th</sup> and Elizabeth
5. Shade trees to provide vertical landscape and shading opportunities.
6. Paver fields within the furnishing zone to provide texture and color.
7. Traditional Victor Stanley Benches for moments of reprieve
8. Bike racks to provide clear bike parking opportunities
9. Branded Trash receptacles
10. Light pole Identifiers to extend the branding further into the neighborhood
11. Gateway elements
12. Pocket Park/Plaza
13. Kiosk/Wayfinding
14. Vacant Lot Activation







## IMPLEMENTATION



## INTRODUCTION

The plan provides policies and recommendations the City should undertake over the next 15 to 20 years to support the vision and goals for the Auburn Gresham 79<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Plan. To ensure implementation is successful, close coordination and participation of important stakeholder organizations will be necessary. These will include the Greater Auburn Gresham development Corporation (GAGDC), the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD), the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), and Metra. Most importantly, the cooperation and buy-in of residents will be critical to the ultimate success of the effort.

This chapter outlines best practices on how to utilize the plan as well as potential funding sources to consider. The chapter concludes with an Implementation Action Matrix, which identifies specific plan recommendations, potential partners for those recommendations, and associated time-frames.

## HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The 79<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Plan should be used as an official policy guide for planning and development decisions made by GAGDC and DPD, as well as stakeholders interested in working or building in Auburn Gresham. The plan should act as a primary reference in evaluating projects and planning initiatives, reviewing development proposals, and prioritizing expenditures in and around the study area. Referencing the plan will ensure future planning efforts align with the corridor's long-term vision and goals. Government policy makers and developers should also be encouraged to utilize the corridor plan when considering new projects, and programming within their parameters. To promote regular use of the plan, GAGDC should:

- Make the plan document available online and offer hard copies in community spaces for public access.
- Utilize the plan when considering new public and private development to ensure future (re) developments on the corridor align with the community's vision and recommendations.
- Use this plan as a reference document to coordinate with the City and potential developers about future and possible (re)development opportunities along 79<sup>th</sup> Street in the study area.

## REVIEWING AND UPDATING THE PLAN

The corridor plan is not a static document and must be able to evolve and change over time. For example, if new issues arise that are beyond the plan's current scope or conditions significantly change in Auburn Gresham, the plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

GAGDC should undertake reviews and update of the plan when possible, ideally every 5 years or less. GAGDC should work to maintain a list of potential changes so when the time comes to update the plan, a framework is already in place. GAGDC should also coordinate any plan updates with local policymakers including the Alderman's and Mayor's offices if applicable. Regular examination of the plan will help ensure that the recommendations remain relevant to community needs and aspirations.





## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between the public and private sectors are critical to plan implementation. Depending on the nature of a project, stakeholders in either sector may take the lead, but mutual cooperation for the betterment of all parties (and the public) is critical. Many of the action items in the corridor plan require public entities to reach out to stakeholders in order to initiate change. Utilizing appropriate funding sources and following the timeline, appropriate groups can work together to tangibly improve this historic and culturally rich neighborhood.

## FUNDING SOURCES

There are several potential funding sources that GAGDC can pursue to support the implementation of the corridor plan. It is important to note that funding sources are subject to change over time. As such, GAGDC should continue to research and monitor grants, funding agencies, and programs to identify deadlines, funding specifications, and new opportunities as they become available.

## ACTION MATRIX

The Action Matrix presents a complete list of all actionable recommendations made within the 79th Street Corridor Plan. The matrix includes a key action, time estimate, potential partnerships, and potential funding sources. The Action Matrix should be used to evaluate GAGDC and DPD's progress based on completed actions.

### KEY ACTION

Key actions include projects and strategies that should be prioritized to lay the foundation for long-term plan implementation. For example, a key action may include a public realm improvement.

### TIME ESTIMATE

Time estimates indicate, in years, how long it would take to complete a specific action. Descriptions of each time-frame are detailed below:

- **Short:** Less than three years.
- **Medium:** three to five years.
- **Long:** Greater than five years.

## PRIORITY LEVEL

The Priority level of each task was assigned with consideration for cost and importance. Each is indicated with one of the following:

- **High:** Critical to the plan
- **Medium:** Important to the plan
- **Low:** Desirable, but not necessary to the plan

## POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Implementation requires a coordinated effort between relevant stakeholders. In many cases, GAGDC should assume the leadership role in taking action on the 79th Street Corridor Plan but it will need to maintain partnerships and facilitate regular communication and cooperation with the various local groups. Existing partnerships that should be maintained to work collaboratively toward mutual interests and create an organized approach to implementation. When forging new partnerships, key groups such as the City and other, regional, and state governing bodies, local community organizations, school districts and other taxing districts, local business communities, and other groups with a vested interest in Auburn Gresham should be included.



Pg #	Key Action	Time Estimate	Priority Level	Partner(s)
<b>Land Use and Development</b>				
22	Implement transit-oriented development (TOD) near the new Metra station at 79th Street and Lowe Avenue.	Long-Term	High Priority	Metra, CTA, DPD, RTA, CDOT
22	Locate mobility hubs to increase access to transit and micro-mobility options such as bike-share, e-bikes, and e-scooters	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	Metra, CTA, RTA, Divvy
22	Require mixed income development featuring a blend of market-rate and affordable units.	Long-Term	High Priority	GAGDC, DPD
22	Prioritize leasing commercial space to locally owned businesses.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC
22	Integrate public amenities into development to benefit the larger community.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	DPD
24	Work with the Cook County Land Bank Authority and ChiBlock Builder to facilitate high quality development on current vacant city-owned parcels.	Ongoing, Long-Term	Medium Priority	Cook County Land Bank Authority, GAGDC, DPD
25	Encourage a mix of housing across the corridor to provide housing for residents in all income groups, stages of life, and backgrounds.	Ongoing, Long-Term	High Priority	GAGDC, DPD, Chicago Housing Authority
25	Work with the City of Chicago, private developers, affordable housing agencies, and community organizations to develop new affordable housing.	Ongoing, Long-Term	High Priority	GAGDC, DPD, Chicago Housing Authority
25	Ensure new mixed-use housing incorporates resources that will benefit residents, such as job training or computer access.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	DPD, GAGDC
26	Reinvest in existing storefronts along the 79th Street and Halsted Street Corridors to encourage active street life and a positive business environment.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC
26	Utilize build-out grants and other funding sources to help convert existing commercial uses into sit-down restaurants	Long-Term	Low Priority	GAGDC

Pg #	Key Action	Time Estimate	Priority Level	Partner(s)
27	Continue to utilize the Facade Enhancement Program to help local businesses improve and maintain their building facades.	Ongoing, Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC
27	Encourage live-work buildings in targeted areas of the 79th Street and Halsted Street corridors.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
28	Encourage new retail options that meet local community needs.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC
28	Implement streetscape improvements on 79th Street and Halsted Street to foster a safe and attractive place to do business and spend time.	Medium-Term	High Priority	DPD, CDOT
28	Continue utilizing the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation to provide technical assistance and support to local existing and future businesses	Ongoing, Short-Term	High Priority	GAGDC
30	Encourage the development of a grocery store within Auburn Gresham	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
31	Ensure the entrances of future buildings front 79th Street and Halsted Street.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
31	Ensure future development along 79th Street and Halsted Street form a continuous street wall.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
31	Parking entrances should be located behind buildings fronting 79th Street and Halsted Street.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
31	Utilize clear signage, cross access, and landscaping to encourage "park once" commercial corridors.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD

Pg #	Key Action	Time Estimate	Priority Level	Partner(s)
<b>Urban Design</b>				
36	Enhance the public streetscape to foster a sense of civic pride through a comfortable and pleasing pedestrian experience to increase walkability.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT, DPD
36	Continue the work that CDOT started along 79th Street and extend furnishings and paving treatments through the main corridors of the study area.	Ongoing, Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT, DPD
40	Create a welcoming and identifiable entry into the community through vertical identifiers installed at the intersection of 79th Street and South Ashland Avenue and on 79th Street below the Railway bridge. Feasibility to be determined with additional study and design.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, CDOT
36	Extend the branding and identity treatment that GAGDC and CDOT have started along 79th Street through the main corridors of the study area.	Ongoing, Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, CDOT
36	Identify opportunities for greening and programming initiatives to activate vacant lots in the study area.	Short-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC
36	Create opportunities for all people to gather and interact through diverse programs.	Short-Term	Low Priority	GAGDC, Chicago Park District
<b>Transportation</b>				
57	Install pedestrian refuge islands to enhance pedestrian safety in front of Leo Park High School and at the New Auburn Park Metra Station.	Medium-Term	High Priority	CDOT
57	Install protected bike lanes along Halsted Street.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT
57	Install curb extensions throughout the project area.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT
57	Install bus priority lanes and bus bulbs along 79th Street near the new Auburn Park Metra Station.	Medium-Term	High Priority	CDOT
57	Install left turn traffic calming infrastructure at the intersections of 79th Street and Ashland Avenue and 79th Street and Racine Avenue.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT
58	Work with CTA and CDOT to identify and implement options from the Better Streets for Buses toolbox to make buses faster, more reliable, and easier to access.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT, CTA,
60	Identify low-stress neighborhood greenway routes that can be used to create a low-stress bike boulevard network.	Short-Term	Low Priority	CDOT
60	Identify neighborhood bike access routes to the new Auburn Park Metra Station.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT
60	Install a new bike/scooter share location at 79th Street in front of Leo Park High School.	Medium-Term	Low Priority	CDOT, Diwy, CTA, RTA
61	Install multi-modal mobility hubs at the new Auburn Park Metra Station site, the intersection of 79th Street and Ada Street, and on 79th Street between Loomis Avenue and Racine Avenue.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT, Diwy, CTA, RTA
62	Identify and explore options to better manage on-street and off-street parking along 79th Street.	Short-Term	Low Priority	CDOT, GAGDC, RTA



Pg #	Key Action	Time Estimate	Priority Level	Partner(s)
<b>Eastern Gateway Character Area</b>				
66	Explore traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps and additional stops signs, to slow high traffic speeds through residential neighborhoods.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT
66	Consider upzoning properties at the intersection of 79th Street and Vincennes Avenue to encourage more street-facing pedestrian-oriented commercial uses.	Short-Term	Medium Priority	CDOT
66	Encourage the development of single-family attached housing on vacant lots in residential neighborhoods east of Parnell Avenue that seamlessly blends in with surrounding single-family homes.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
66	Encourage the development of multifamily and mixed-use housing along 79th Street east of the Railway bridge.	Long-Term	High Priority	GAGDC, DPD
66	Support transit-oriented development at the corner of 79th Street and South Lowe Avenue.	Long-Term	High Priority	CDOT, CTA, DPD
<b>79th/Halsted Character Area</b>				
68	Prioritize mixed-use development and infill projects at the intersection of 79th Street and Halsted Street	Long-Term	High Priority	DPD
68	Prioritize the continued revitalization of commercial sites within the character area.	Medium-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC
68	Encourage the development of single-family attached and multifamily housing on vacant parcels along Halsted Street south of 79th Street.	Long-Term	High Priority	GAGDC, DPD
<b>Halsted North Character Area</b>				
70	Maintain and support the functions of the police station at Halsted Street and 78th Street.	Ongoing	Low Priority	CPD
70	Maintain and support existing commercial uses along Halsted Street.	Ongoing	Medium Priority	GAGDC
70	Encourage the development of single-family attached homes on the vacant parcels on the east side of Halsted Street.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
70	Encourage the development of a mixed-use building on the vacant lots on Halsted Street east of the police station.	Long-Term	High Priority	GAGDC, DPD
70	Encourage the development of multifamily buildings on vacant lots on Halsted Street east of the police station and north of the proposed mixed-use building.	Long-Term	High Priority	GAGDC, DPD

Pg #	Key Action	Time Estimate	Priority Level	Partner(s)
Halsted South Character Area				
74	Encourage the development of single-family attached housing on vacant lots on the west side of Halsted Street.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	DPD, GAGDC
74	Encourage infill development of single-family homes, townhomes, and 2-6 flats on vacant lots to the east of Halsted Street.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	DPD, GAGDC
Peoria to Racine Character Area				
76	Maintain the architectural heritage of the area by restoring and modernizing existing structures in the character area.	Ongoing, Medium-Term	Low Priority	GAGDC
76	Explore shared parking arrangements on larger parking lots to optimize the use of available parking.	Short-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC
76	Maintain existing businesses and institutional uses within the character area.	Ongoing	Low Priority	GAGDC
Western Gateway Character Area				
78	Maintain the current character of Renaissance Park.	Ongoing	Medium Priority	Chicago Parks Department
78	Encourage future commercial and residential uses that harmonize with the character of Renaissance Park.	Long-Term	Medium Priority	GAGDC, DPD
78	Work with the City of Chicago to implement pop-up recreational spaces in the character area.	Short-Term	Low Priority	GAGDC
78	Encourage the development of multifamily buildings on vacant parcels in the central portion of the character area.	Long-Term	High Priority	DPD, GAGDC
78	Encourage the development of residential or commercial buildings on vacant parcels along 79th Street.	Long-Term	High Priority	DPD, GAGDC

## CONCLUSION

With thoughtful implementation and unwavering commitment, this plan will lay the groundwork for a brighter future for 79th and the entire Auburn Gresham neighborhood, ensuring its continued prosperity and vibrancy over the coming decades. This plan charts a course toward a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient community that embraces innovation while honoring its unique character. This plan is not simply a document. Its success depends on the active participation of appointed officials, staff, business owners and operators, and all members of the community. Through ongoing dialogue and collaboration, this plan will evolve as a living document alongside the changing needs of the corridor



*Open House February 7, 2024*