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Coastal Zone Information Center

# Chicago 21

## A Plan for the Central Area Communities: A Summary

**September, 1973**

COASTAL ZONE INFORMATION CENTER
JUN 14 1977

In the years since World War II, American metropolitan areas have grown at an accelerated rate. They have increased in population and expanded in area, but the phenomenon of this development has been the centrifugal pattern of growth. Suburbanization, largely a concept at the turn of the century, has become a dominant force in the process of urban expansion. But peripheral growth is not without its consequences; diffusion of population and economic resources have drained the vitality of center cities.

Unlike the cores of many other cities, the Chicago Central Communities have continued to prosper and grow. As a result, a strong foundation already exists from which to launch Chicago 21.

The Central Area, more aptly called the Central Communities, is defined for this Plan as the area bounded on the north by North Avenue, on the west by Ashland Avenue, on the south by the Stevenson Expressway and on the east by Lake Michigan.

Two functional assumptions of the proposed Plan are that the Chicago Central Business District should continue as the dominant focus of commerce and culture for the entire Metropolitan Area and that the Central Communities should serve as the transportation hub, the seat of government, office and business center, cultural and entertainment center and central market place.

The structure of the Central Communities in the 21st Century should be determined by present and future transportation networks. Residence, work, recreation, goods and services should be brought closer together.

Significant areas of vacant land can be developed under new concepts of city living. Existing neighborhoods can be stabilized and strengthened.

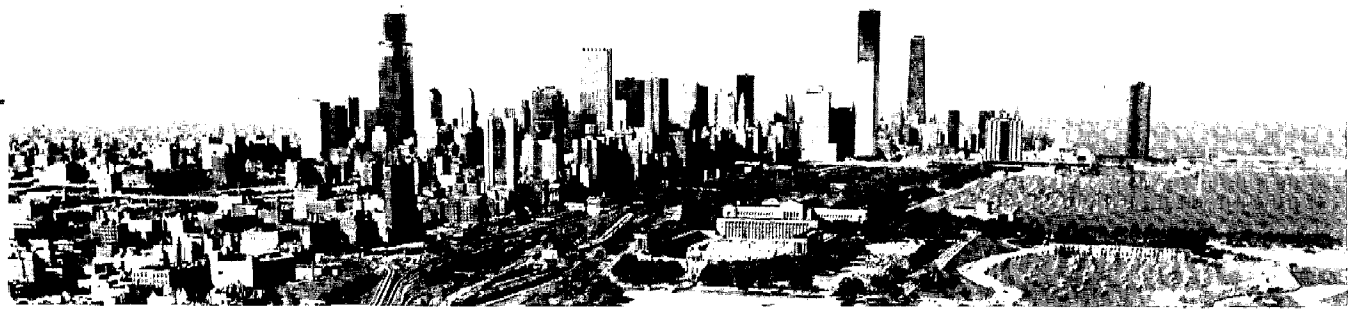
The full potential of Lakefront and River amenities is still to be realized.

The proposed Plan is a comprehensive summary of conclusions and recommendations for the future development of the Central Communities Area.

The recommendations in this report are ideas and suggestions for consideration. They do not represent a final plan for the Central Communities, nor do they cover all issues. Periodically each planning framework will be reviewed and adjusted or amended to accommodate changing needs and objectives.

Just as the present has been determined by past decisions and actions, the future of the Central Communities will be determined by decisions and actions today.

The Plan seeks to define a special form of human urban settlement. It seeks to restore the historic role of the center city and to preserve what is unique about Chicago. This Plan is therefore a vision of the Central Communities in the 21st Century.



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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY OF CHICAGO

RICHARD J. DALEY
MAYOR

In a very real sense the City's historic Central Area is its heart . . . the governmental, cultural and entertainment focus of the entire metropolitan area. It has diverse neighborhoods housing 165,000 people and the city's principal shopping facilities. Its vitality has helped to shape Chicago and the surrounding region, and its continuing vigor is of immense importance to all the people of the Midwest. Because of this it has been subject to intensive planning from both the public and private sectors since the city's earliest days.

In 1909 the Commercial Club of Chicago sponsored Burnham's now world famous *Plan of Chicago,* the first effort at comprehensive city planning in the United States. Burnham's dream gave great emphasis to the central area and gave the city a dramatic lakefront park with its museums and splendid Michigan Avenue facade. Again, in 1958, a Central Area Plan was produced that has shaped the modern face of the city's central area. Because of it, we now have the Civic Center, the federal buildings, the magnificent Circle Campus and new residential developments.

The importance of the city's central area lies in its continuing ability to play a major role in providing business leadership, employment, recreational and cultural facilities, a major shopping area, and residential opportunities.

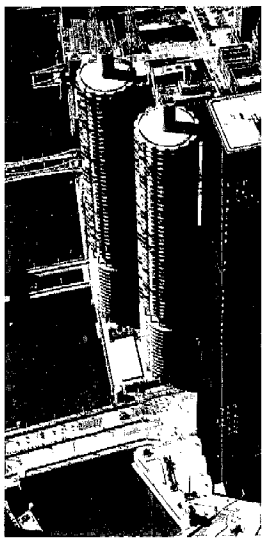
What we do here affects not only Chicago but the entire metropolitan area of 7,500,000 persons.

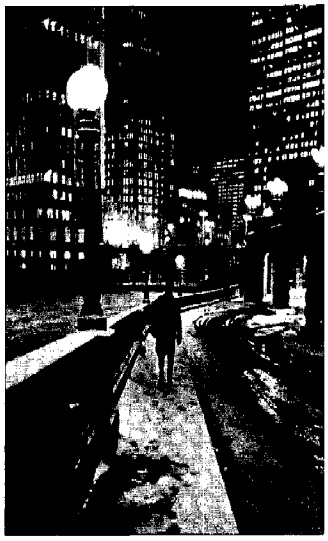
Over the last fifteen years the Central Communities, and particularly the Central Business District and the near north and near west sides, have experienced a redevelopment unprecedented since the reconstruction that followed the fire of 1871.

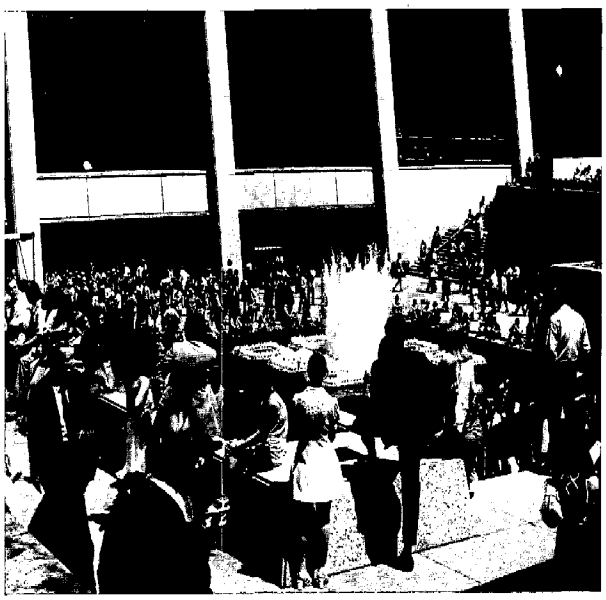
Today this area is about to enter a time of even greater development. With the availability of the nearby railroad yards, the emphasis on air-rights construction, the ability to create whole new residential communities, and the recent Lakefront Plan, the bright future of the central area and its surrounding communities depends only upon the strength of our commitment — public and private.

The purpose of this Plan is to guide the Central Area's development in such a way as to realize its full economic, recreational, and residential potential for the benefit of the people of Chicago and the Metropolitan area. It deserves the full support of all those it is intended to serve.

Richard J. Daley
Mayor







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# Introduction

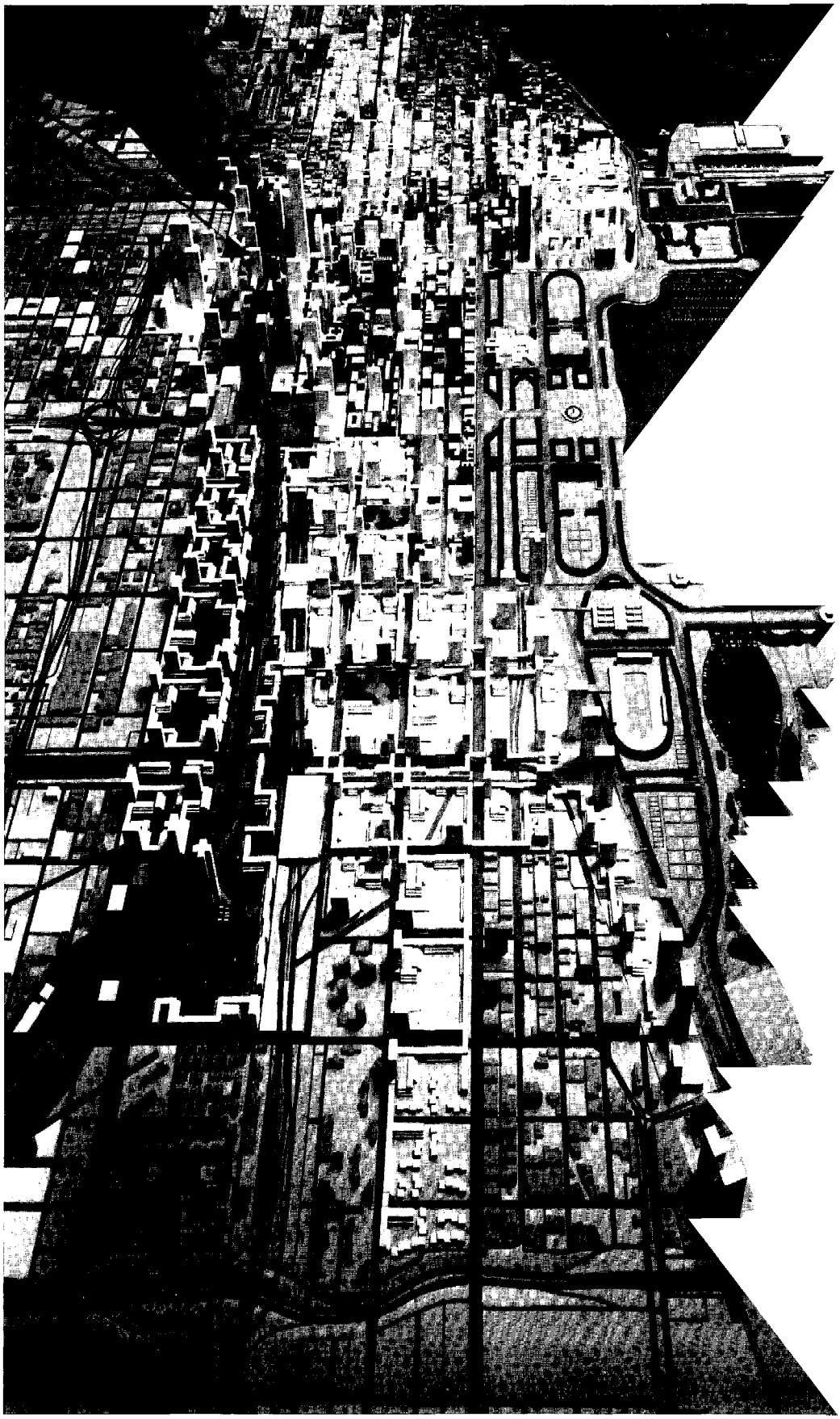
**Form of the Future Concept**

The vision for the future is of tightly knit communities in the heart of the City with widely diverse options for the use of leisure time and with plentiful close-in open space.

Future urban form should be more heterogeneous and complex. The life support systems of the City will thus become increasingly efficient in their use of resources and in their distribution of services and benefits to people.

The accessibility network should be used as a spine for future development. Building intensity should vary directly with the accessibility of any given sites. High density nodes or clusters of nodes should develop in the north and south segments of the network. The west segment should be developed at more moderate levels of density. In the northwest and southwest corners of the planning area, low intensity zones are recommended.

One of the chief characteristics of Chicago is its strong and positive response to pressures for change. It has proven many times that it has the capacity not only for vision but for action. The clearest evidence of this dynamic character can be seen in the City's response to crucial past events. Many cities have plans, but few have been as effective as Chicago in implementing their visions.



Copies of this Summary (at no cost) and the complete Chicago 21 Plan (cost: $8.50) are available from the Chicago Department of Development and Planning, Room 1000, City Hall, Chicago, Illinois, 60602. Reference copies of the complete Plan are available for use at the Chicago Public Library and the Municipal Reference Library.

Consultants:

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
Architects, Planners and Engineers
Real Estate Research Corporation
Alan M. Voorhees and Associates, Inc.

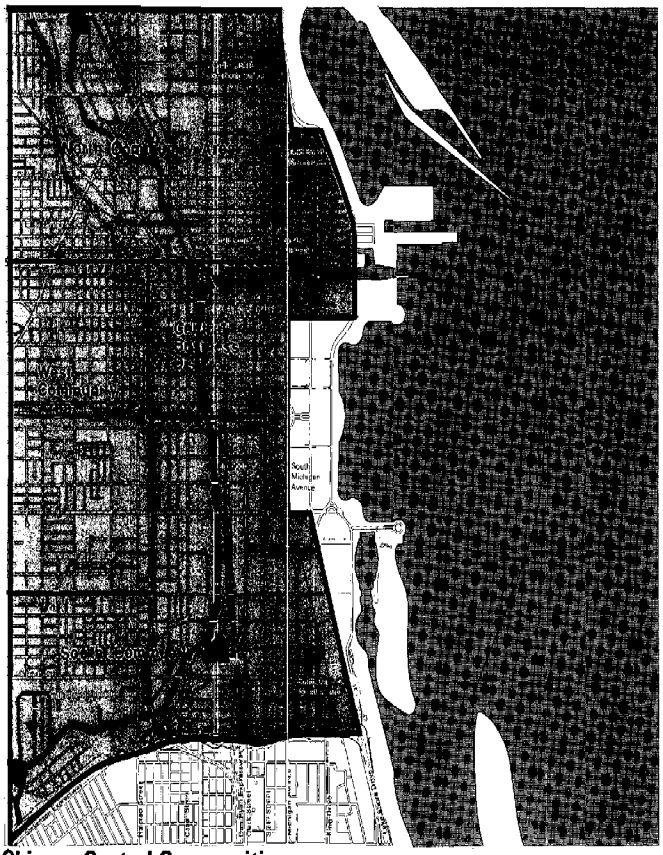
## Communities

The vigor of a community finds expression in civic pride and identity. A key indicator of this vigor is the degree of participation in civic processes. But for people to care, for people to participate, they must be made to feel secure in their community. They must also have confidence in its future development and unfolding opportunities.

To be satisfied with their communities, residents must enjoy the widest possible range of opportunities for housing, employment, recreation and education. In the Central Communities today few areas offer these advantages.

The neighborhoods that now exist in the Central Communities are relatively small, isolated by barriers of various sorts and quite different in character from one another. Most are deficient in one or more of the elements essential to a good community.
However, significant opportunities exist to reinforce or reconstitute these areas.

The Central Communities must be revitalized to again become desirable both for living and for working. They must be efficient, economic and secure, and they must also provide maximum opportunity for human fulfillment.



**Chicago Central Communities**

### South Loop New Town

The South Loop New Town will be the most concentrated and dramatic development. It will offer a wide range of lifestyle alternatives.

Proximity to Lake Michigan and the Chicago River provides the opportunity for creating a variety of water-oriented amenities. These amenities will in turn be complemented by a well-developed system of open space designed to accommodate both active and passive users. Major public park spaces will be a feature of this open space system.

Six or seven levels of terrace apartments would rise above ground level, stepping back so that the roof of one dwelling becomes the yard or patio of the one above. Within the terraced building space there would be levels for parking and building services.

The focus for each block should be an elementary school, community facility or convenience shops. Each would help lend individual character to its complex.

The South Loop New Town will be developed in phases, reflecting both the capacity of the market and the character of the development.

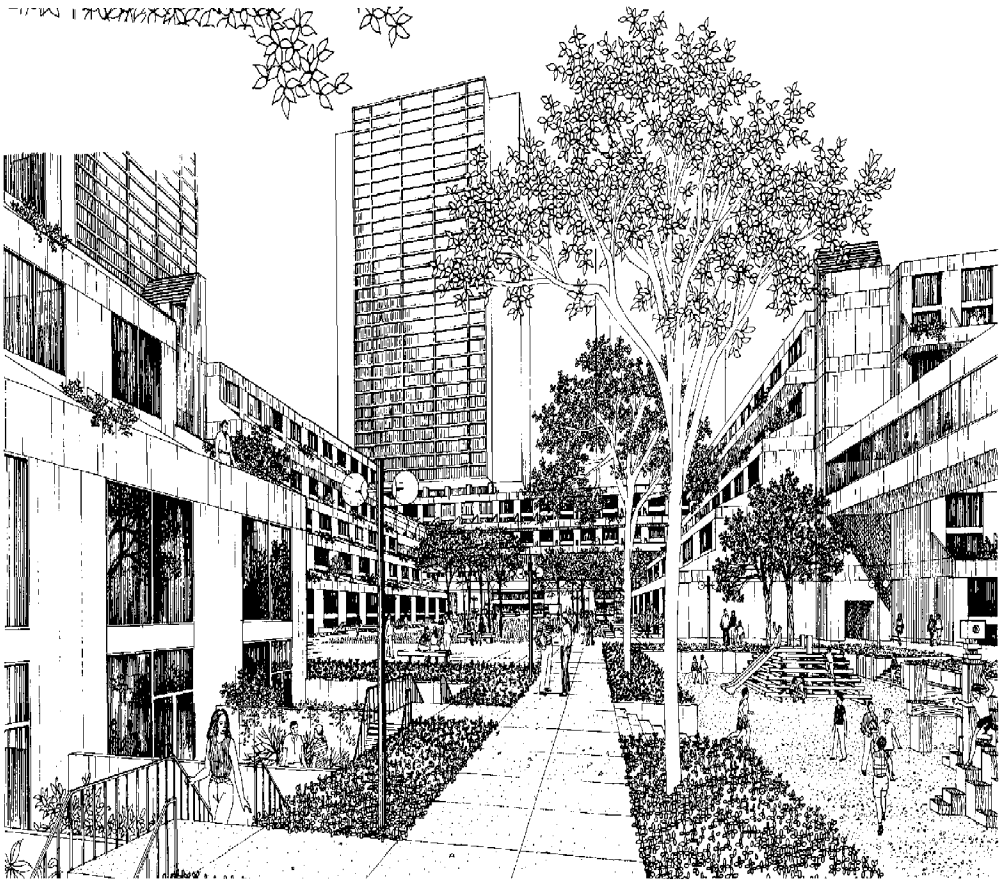
Pilsen

The proposed Plan for this community emphasizes continued renewal of the existing residential environment through rehabilitation and infill housing.

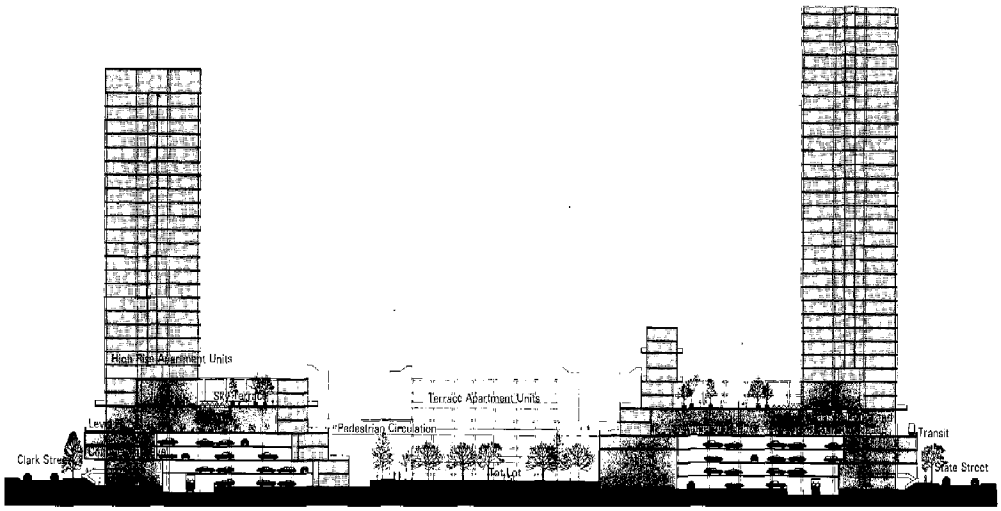
Community facilities—schools and other public buildings—should be rehabilitated and expanded where appropriate.

Chinatown

Expansion of Chinatown should occur north across Cermak Road, be primarily residential in character and be oriented toward the Chicago River. A new boat basin could also be created to provide water-oriented recreation for residents and non-residents alike.



**Typical Block, Exterior View South Loop New Town**




**Typical Block, Section South Loop New Town**

**Future Communities**

Substantial new residential communities will reinforce the existing mixture of uses. These communities should contain primarily family-oriented housing at moderate development densities.

**Plan recommendations are as follows:**

Gold Coast-Streeterville
Strengthen the area through transportation improvements, and expansion of open space. Coordinate the expanding Northwestern Memorial Hospital center with appropriate adjacent development.

Ogden Slip
Establish a planning framework which provides for a predominantly residential development of this large area and relates it to the River, the Lakefront, and the transportation system.

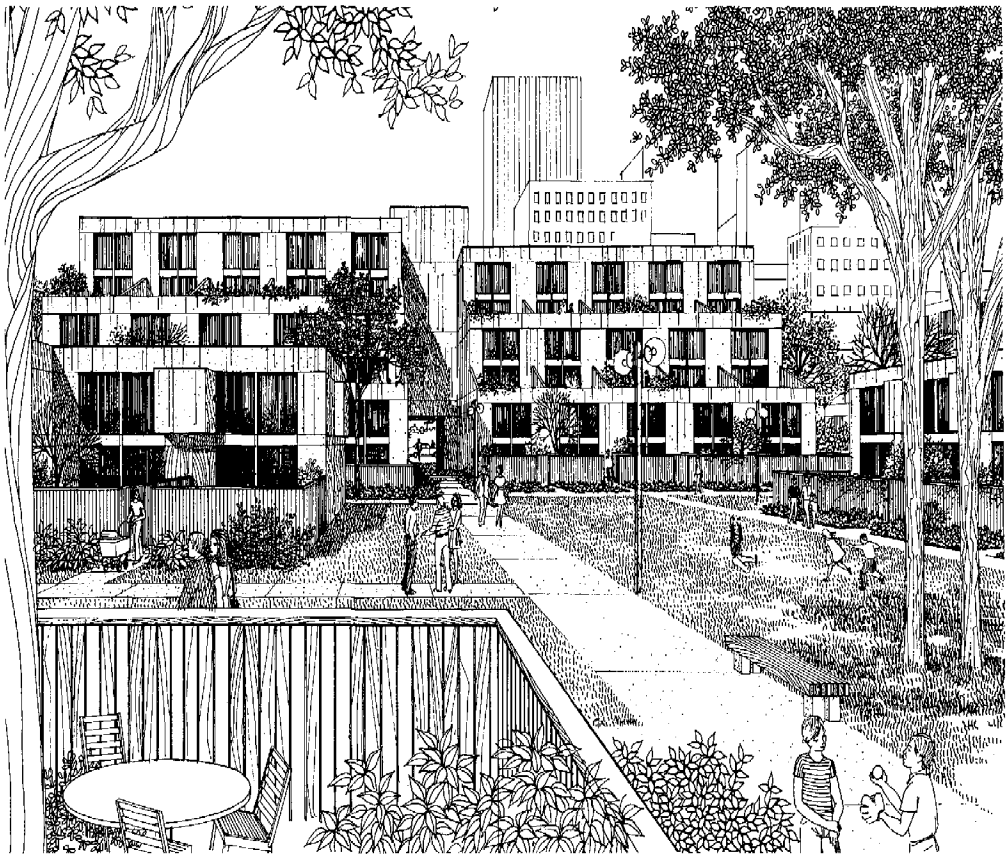
Cabrini-Green
Foster a new sense of community through a broad range of improved social and public services paired with self-help and new home ownership programs.

Chicago-Orleans
Develop new residential neighborhoods in the Chicago-Orleans and Evergreen-Sedgwick areas. Replace existing elevated tracks with a new subway and other related development.

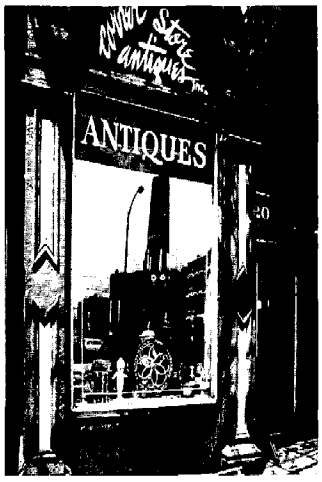
North Branch Industrial Area
Strengthen and improve this concentration of industry.

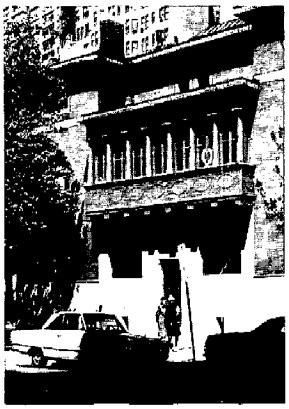
North Loop Opportunity Area
Accommodate development supporting intensified Central Business District activity.

East Humboldt Park
Provide the framework for revitalization of this neighborhood.



**Typical Block Interior View, Chicago-Orleans**



### Future Communities

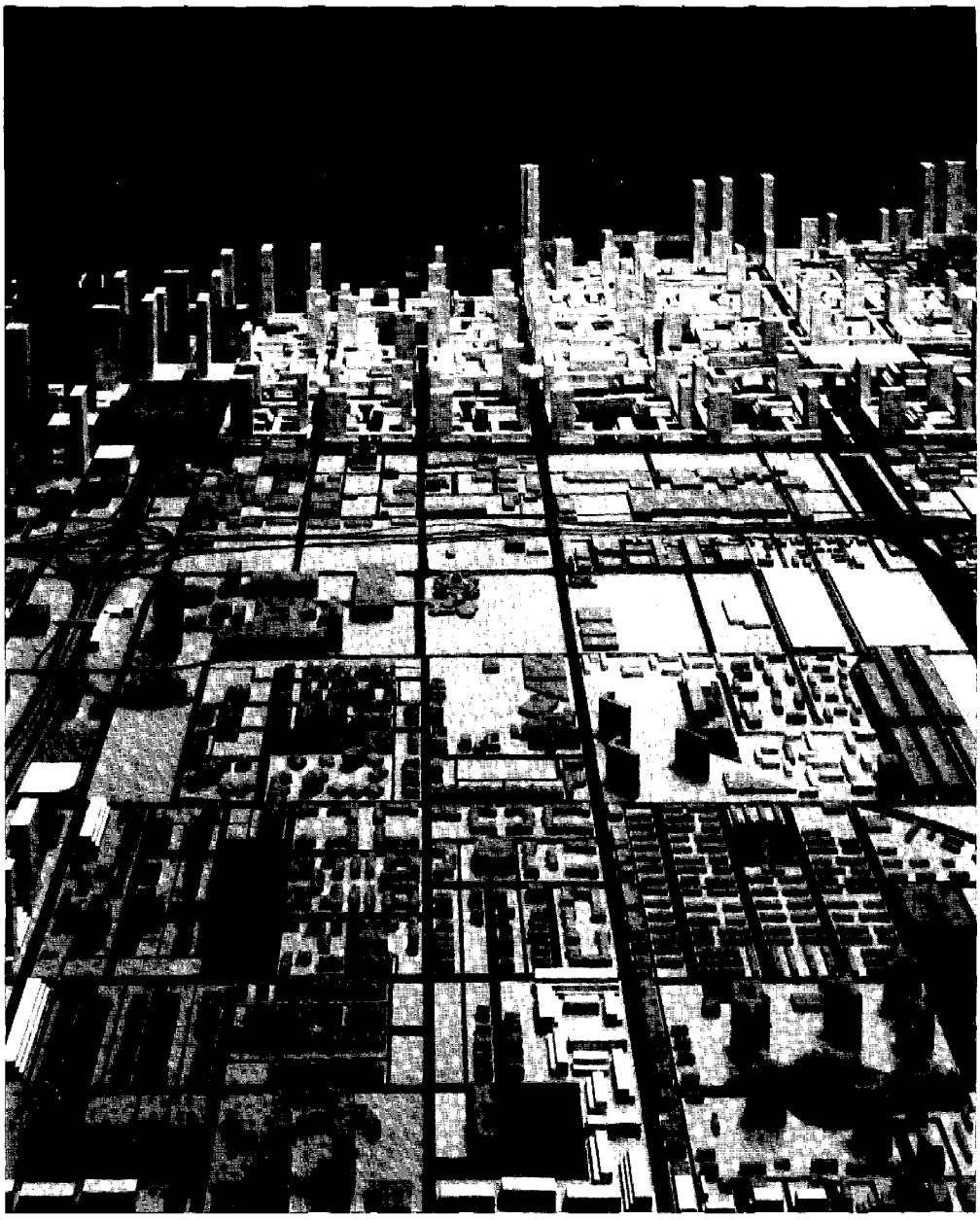
New development should add residential, commercial, industrial and CBD support uses to the West Community Area. Examples include the new high-density housing proposed adjacent to the Eisenhower Transportation Corridor, industrial and support facilities and infill housing in the West Central Area and the new Maxwell Street shopping center.

### Plan recommendations are as follows:

Near West Side
Complete urban renewal rehabilitation programs, construct new infill housing, and improve public service programs, especially the educational system. Balance and coordinate the growth of the neighborhood with the adjacent University and Medical Center.

West Central
Concentrate industry, construct the Police Academy and undertake the development of new housing. These efforts should be coordinated with the expansion plans of the University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus and the completion of proposed urban renewal projects.

Roosevelt-Blue Island
Construct new commercial, residential and industrial developments, and improve conditions in the public housing projects through expanding services and programs. Proposed urban renewal projects should be completed.

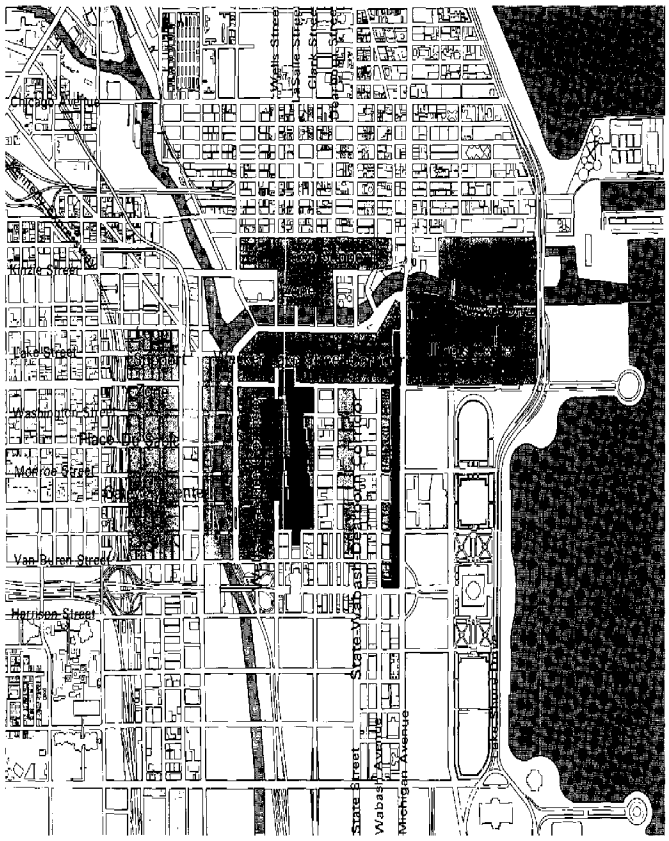


### Diversity
A variety of new activities, integrated with concentrations of residential, commercial, entertainment and office uses would help to restore a sense of community by making the CBD more lively, interesting and responsive to human needs.

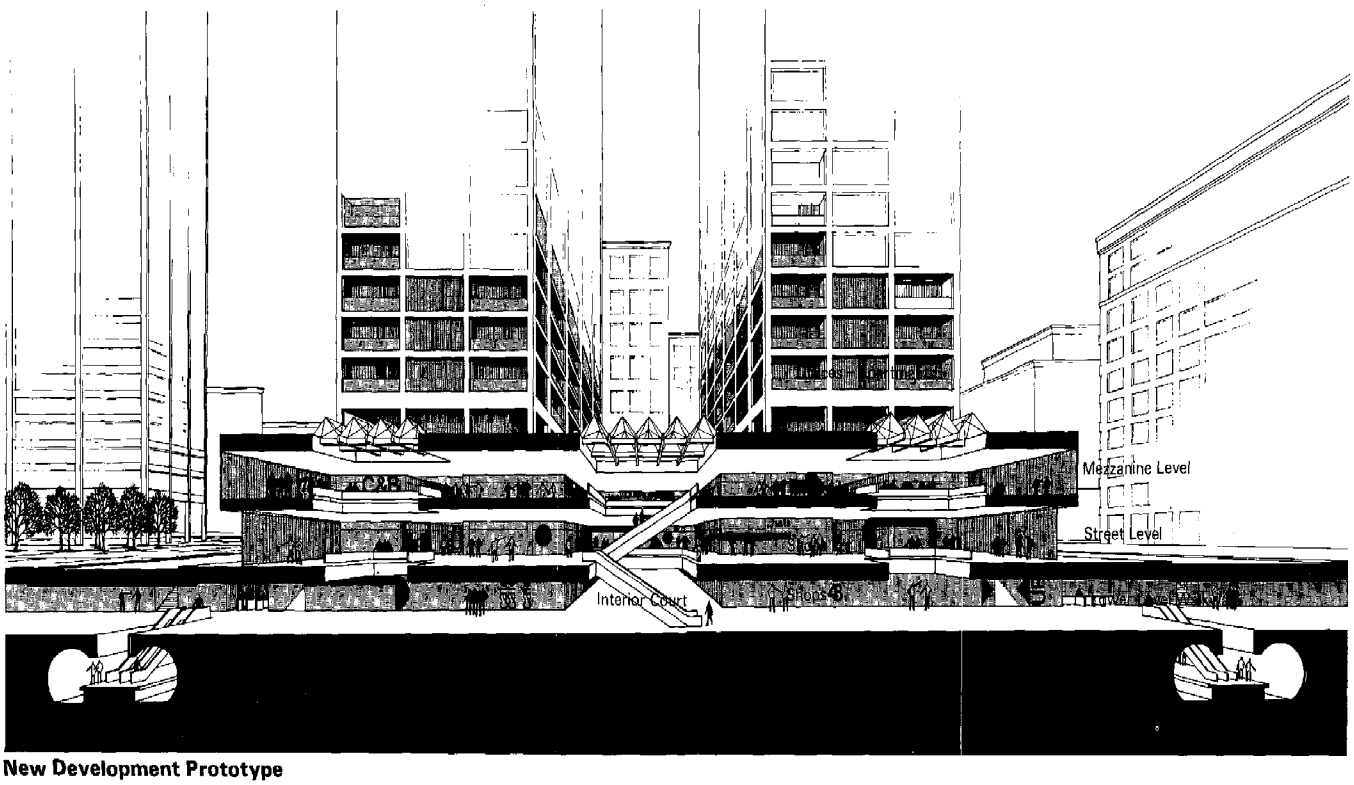
### Corridors for Development
The zone where concentrated new development is expected to occur generally lies at the edges of the Loop. Land use intensity is now relatively low there, and numerous buildings are marginal or obsolete. Replacement of the elevated tracks with a subway should make the area considerably more attractive for redevelopment.

### Pedestrian Walkway Systems
Opportunities to develop an enclosed pedestrian walkway system occur in the blocks between State Street and Dearborn east of the major downtown plazas: the Civic Center, First National Bank and Federal Center. This underground, grade-level and above-grade system, lined with shops in galleria fashion, would connect development in adjacent blocks while providing direct access to existing subway lines.

### Environmental Quality
Improvements required for the Central Business District include modification and/or expansion of the vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems; upgrading the quality of building development; specific beautification projects; and air, water and noise pollution control.




**Corridors For Development**




**New Development Prototype**

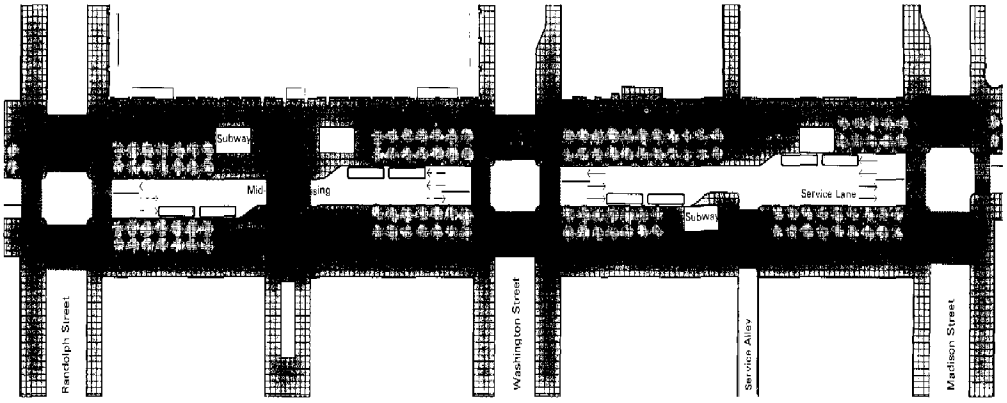
### State Street

A revitalized State Street should set the tone and establish the precedent for the ultimate redevelopment of many other streets in the Loop, including Monroe Street, which is proposed to be transformed into a pedestrian-oriented artery when the Distributor Subway is built. The subway will have a platform with connections to the First National Bank Plaza and the Dearborn Street underground passage. Connections to additional new development should be encouraged.

The entire length of State Street and Wabash Avenue within the Loop should become pedestrian-oriented shopping streets with transitways for buses. New retail and residential development on the east side of Wabash should be encouraged when the subway replaces the elevated transit line.

The State-Dearborn Corridor should retain a continuous street level retail facade with retail, entertainment, office and residential uses above. In this corridor new public development such as the proposed library, should also be provided.

**State Street Transitway Mall at Washington Street**

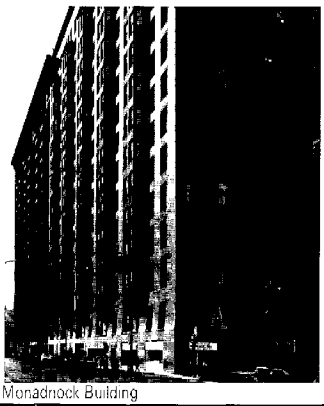



**State Street, Plan**

### Historic Preservation

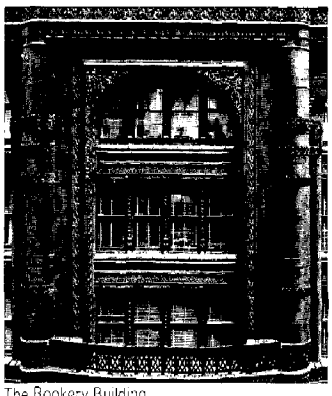
Because of the concentration of historic buildings, it is recommended that an historic preservation area be established to include important building development within the CBD.

The Astor Street area in the north communities and the Prairie Avenue district in the south communities have also been recommended as preservation areas.



Monadnock Building

The Rookery Building Lobby



The Rookery Building

# Transportation

## Transportation

The historic concentration of business and commercial activities in the Central Communities has been closely tied to the area's accessibility. Future change cannot be accommodated unless this high level of accessibility is sustained and enhanced. The following system improvements are recommended:

### Mass Transportation

Accommodate future increases in traffic to and within the Central Communities through improvements in the mass transit system.

Complete key projects; build the Distributor Subway and a subway to replace the Loop elevated.

Initiate supplemental transit system.

### Roadways

Construct the Franklin Street Connector.

Improve Lake Shore Drive and extend Columbus and Wacker Drives.

Reorient the system of streets in and around the Loop to provide separation between various types of traffic.

### Parking

Build an inner and outer ring of parking garages for commuters bound for the Loop.

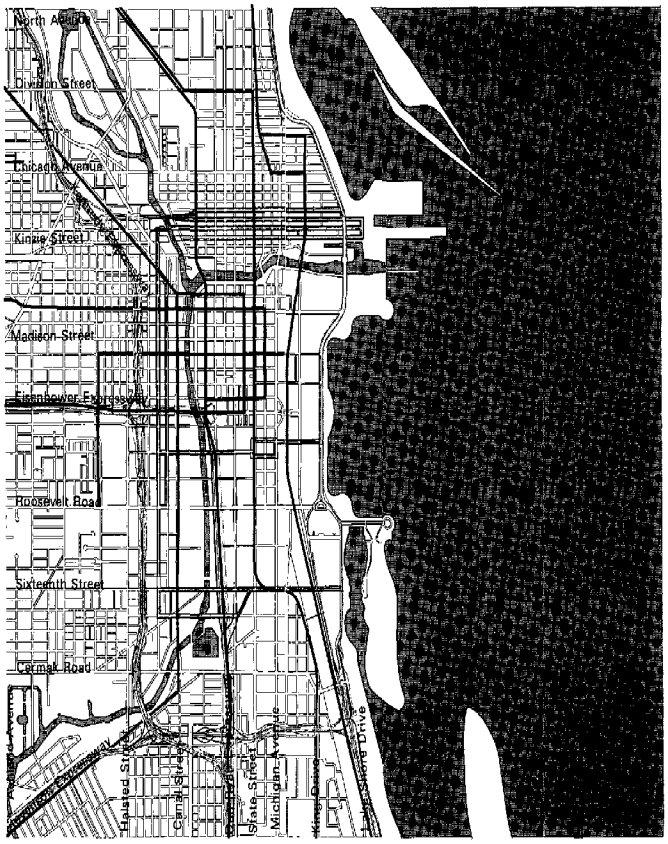
Coordinate the location and operation of new parking garages with rail transit to the Loop.

### Pedestrian

Emphasize convenience and comfort for shoppers and commuters traveling within the Loop.

Build a second level pedestrian skyway between the Franklin Street development corridor and State Street as a demonstration project.

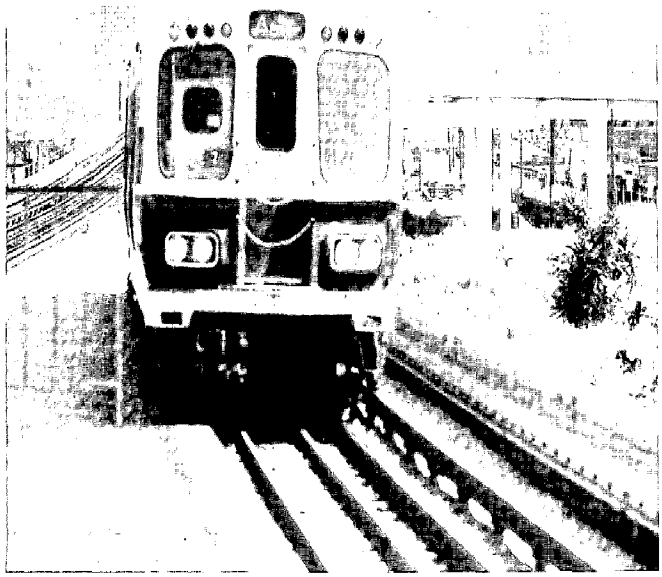
Build and landscape the State Street transitway mall and improve the State Street Subway stations.

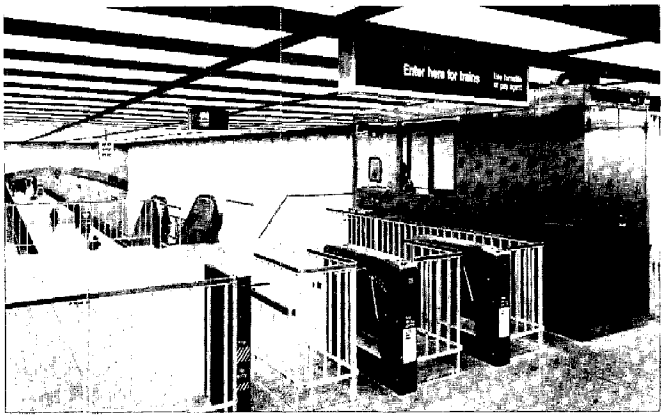


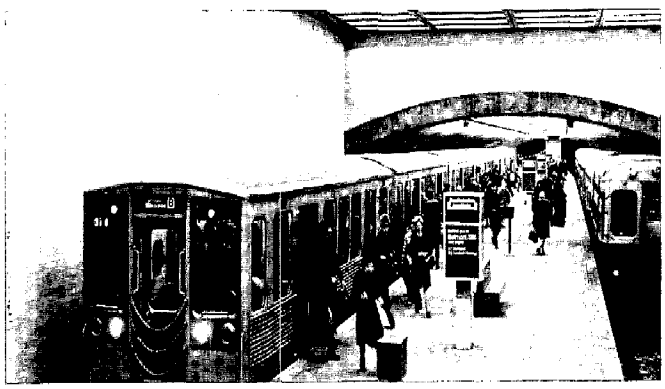

Proposed Transit

Proposed Street Improvements

**Transportation Plan**





# Open Space

### Open Space

A network of community and regional recreation and open space should evolve throughout the Central Communities, providing each neighborhood with facilities it most vitally needs. Larger facilities should be shared by several neighborhoods, while special facilities should be used by the entire metropolitan area and be located where access is easiest from all points in the region. Thus several tot lots and playgrounds would be provided for every neighborhood, while one swimming pool would be shared by several neighborhoods, and the Lakefront and Riverfront would be used by the entire region.

### Grant Park

The great formal open space contemplated in its original design should be maintained in Grant Park. The Monroe Street parking lot will be decked over to provide additional landscaped open space. On that deck land forms should be designed to accommodate spectators at outdoor musical events. The Park's eventual westward expansion over the railroad property will create additional parkland and improve pedestrian access.

### Chicago River

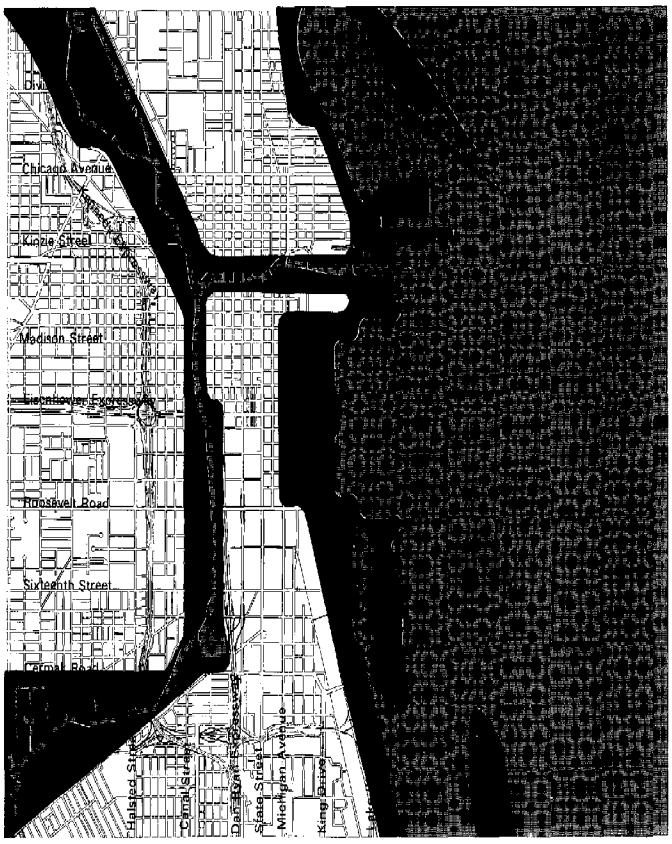
The Chicago River and adjacent areas represent one of the greatest opportunities for significant environmental improvement anywhere in the Central Communities. Along with determined efforts to greatly improve water quality there should be an active program to improve the use and environment of adjacent lands. It is recommended that a River Zone be established and guidelines created relative to development within that Zone.

### Lakefront

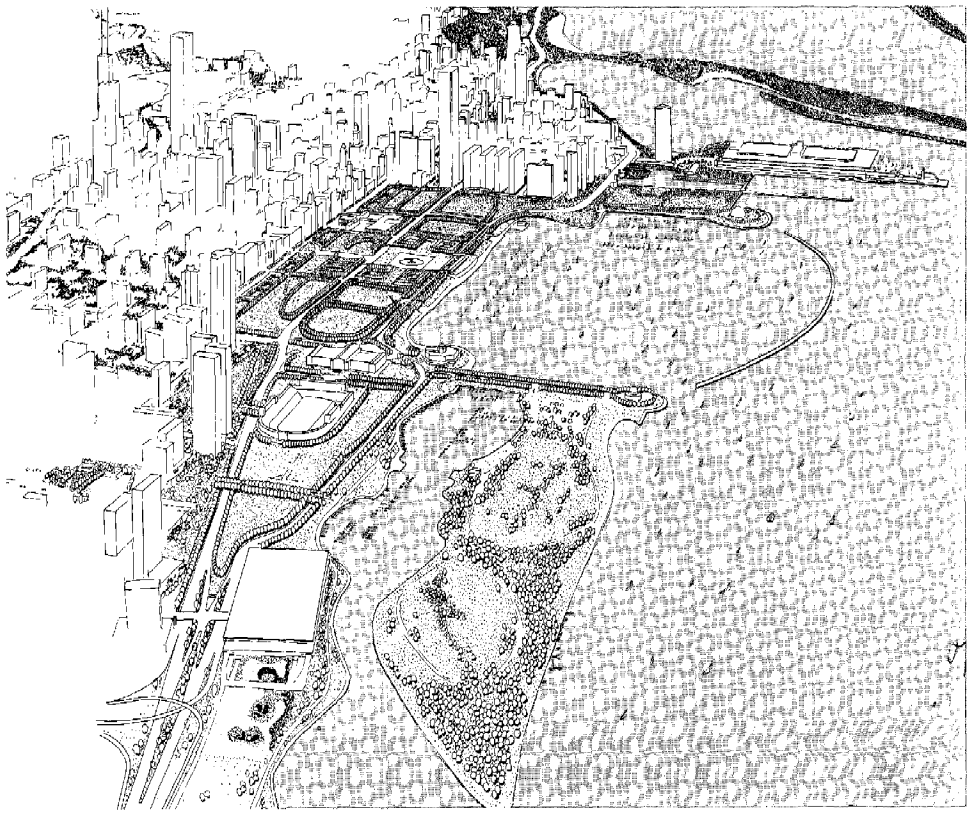
The entire Lakefront, designated as the Public Use Zone, should be devoted to parks and other public uses. In no instance should further private development be permitted east of Lake Shore Drive.

The Lakefront Plan recommends creation of a Lakefront Protection District comprised of Private Use, Public Use, and Off-Shore Zones. A Lakefront Protection Ordinance and additional legislation related to community environment impact delineates the boundaries and regulates the character of these Zones. This legislation should serve to ensure the highest quality environment along the Lakefront and in adjoining communities.

Meigs Field should eventually be deactivated, and the entire Northerly Island reused for open space and recreational purposes. The small number of passengers which use it can easily be accommodated at Midway Airport, which presently operates far below its capacity.




**Lake and River Zones**



**Chicago Lakefront**

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## New Tools

The task of implementing this Plan is threefold: (1) to assure that planning and construction of the Plan elements which are underway continue and in some cases be intensified; (2) to create the necessary institutions to accomplish Plan elements which due to financial, legal or organization constraints are not now underway; and (3) to develop new sources of funding.

A key to the successful realization of any plan is the establishment of mutual commitments to action by both governmental and private bodies.

Commitments must be accompanied by an on-going method of review and control to guide and coordinate activities.

The implementation process includes programs and actions required to create the spatial plan of the Central Communities, and equally important, those policies, incentives and controls which affect its non-spatial character as well. Recommendations for implementation are therefore both physical or project oriented and non-physical or program oriented.

The proposals having highest priority are those which will have the most dramatic impact on the Central Communities and which will contribute most toward its long-term vitality and desirability.

Of the critical proposals, the major public works projects—The Distributor Subway and the Franklin Street Connector—have been a part of the City's planning for some time and are identified in its current Capital Improvements Program. The necessary legal and organizational tools for their accomplishment already exist, as well as the local share required for their funding. The remaining tasks in this area, therefore, are to complete detailed engineering studies and to obtain Federal and State funding for right-of-way acquisition and construction.

One of the most important and dramatic proposals of this Plan is the construction of the South Loop New Town on the 600 acres south of the Loop itself. The projected 120,000 residents of this new town together with residents from other proposed developments will more than double the population of the Central Communities.

Programs to improve public housing areas will also require new public and private efforts sustained over a long period of time. Public services must be intensified, coordinated and made more readily available.

If this Plan is to be accomplished, private organizations and public bodies must not only continue to function in their traditional roles, but must find new ways of working individually and cooperatively, with new tools and/or methods.

A limited dividend development corporation, the Chicago 21 Corp., has been established as the vehicle to enable private investment in the major portions of the plan and to coordinate public and private efforts.

Major
Minor

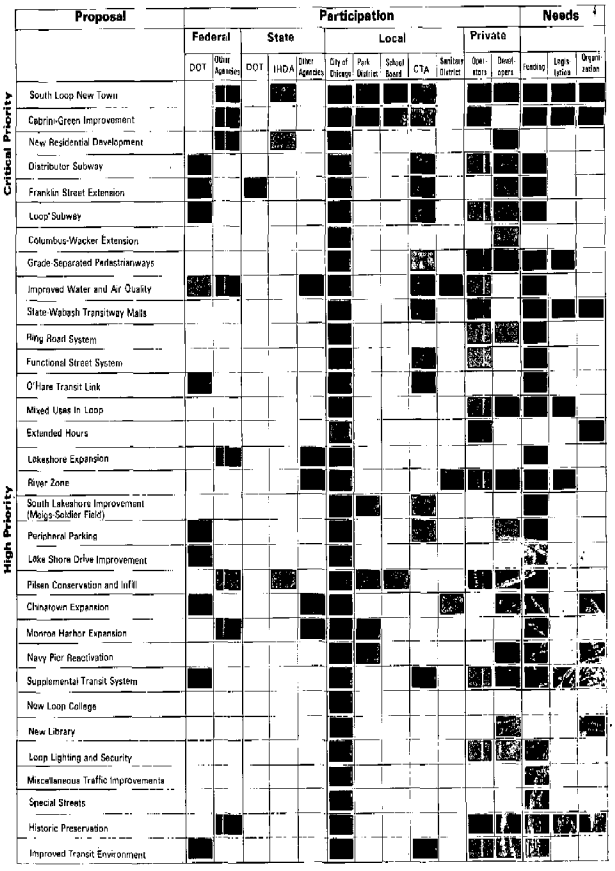
**Communities**
1 South Loop New Town
2 I.C.G. South Air Rights
3 Pilsen
4 Chinatown
5 Gold Coast Streeterville
6 Illinois Center-Ogden Slip
7 Cabrini-Green
8 Chicago-Orleans
9 Near West Side
10 West Central
11 Roosevelt-Blue Island

**Central Business District**
12 Above-Grade Walkways
13 Historic Preservation
14 Ground Level Environment
15 New Development Zones

**Transportation**
16 Distributor Subway
17 New Loop Subway
18 Supplemental Transit System
19 Lake Shore Drive
20 Functional Street System
21 Peripheral Parking
22 State Street Transitway Mall

**Open Space**
23 Lakefront Park
24 Monroe Street Harbor
25 Navy Pier
26 River Zone
27 South Loop River Development

Existing
Proposed




**Implementation Analysis**

**First Steps**