

53rd Street Vision Workshop II Summary

Saturday, May 3, 2008
Kenwood Academy
Chicago, IL



53rd Street TIF District



Introduction

This document will summarize the May 3, 2008 **53rd Street Vision Workshop** which was organized by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) in conjunction with a broad coalition of organizations and institutions. This workshop was planned as a follow-up to the December 2007 workshop.

The **53rd Street Vision Workshop** series is sponsored by 4th Ward Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), and a coalition of local institutional and community organizations including, the 53rd Street TIF Advisory Council, the University of Chicago, the Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce, Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference, Interfaith Open Communities, and the South East Chicago Commission (SECC).

A summary of the first workshop's objectives, outcomes and the associated polling results can be found in the 53rd St. Vision Workshop Report, which is available from the SECC, Alderman Preckwinkle's office or www.vision53.org. Taken in their entirety, the combination of the polling results, group discussions and individual worksheets from the December workshop established the following themes that needed further clarification and exploration:

- 53rd Street as main street / global village
- Density needed to support retail
- Walkability and accessibility; Complete Streets
- Urban design, aesthetics and neighborhood character

The objectives of the May 3, 2008 **53rd St. Vision Workshop Part II** were to:

1. Clarify the themes (listed above) that emerged from the December 8th Vision workshop.
2. Educate the public about the current market and trends impacting neighborhood revitalization and real estate development.
3. Continue to actively engage the community in conversations about the future of 53rd St.

4. Position the community to undertake the Model Block Exercise modeled after Minneapolis's Corridor Housing Initiative process, in November by discussing and documenting opportunities, problems and existing conditions in the 53rd St. TIF district.

Workshop Organization

Organizers held the workshop in the King Room at Kenwood Academy in Hyde Park. Representatives from CMAP provided an orientation to the day and Alderman Preckwinkle welcomed everyone and thanked Kenwood Academy for its generous support and participation in the event. A central component of the workshop involved small group discussions about each of the themes listed above led by guest speakers with expertise relevant to each topic which was followed by a walking tour intended to help residents develop a more comprehensive understanding of the district's opportunities and challenges. Participants were encouraged to document them by taking photographs (disposable cameras were provided) and notes along the walk.

Following the walks, the small groups reconvened separately in classrooms to assess and synthesize their experience and identify their key observations to share with the whole group. Each group selected a spokesperson (not one of the guest experts) to present their observations. The observations from each group are highlighted below. The workshop concluded with a showing of a video that described and chronicled the success and effectiveness of the Corridor Housing Initiative, an award-winning community planning process that organizers plan to replicate in Hyde Park in November.

Approximately 110 people attended the May 3rd workshop and a show of hands indicated that about 50% of the audience had attended the December 8th workshop.

This workshop featured a distinguished lineup of domain "experts" from the Chicago region:

- Andre Brumfeld, Director of Urban Design and Planning, EDAW
- Tod Cabanban, Executive Vice President and Principal of Zifkin Realty & Development, LLC (ZRD)
- Mary DeBacker, Parsons Brinckerhoff and President of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

- Eleanor Gorski, AIA, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Planning and Development, Landmarks Division
- Kiersten Grove, Pedestrian Program Coordinator, Chicago Department of Transportation, City of Chicago
- Benjamin Ranney – Principal, Terra Firma Company
- Barry Schain- Broker and Principal, Next Realty
- Joanna Trotter, Manager, Community Building Initiative, Metropolitan Planning Council.

Stephen Ostrander introduced the panelists and asked them to briefly describe the type of work that they do and to respond to the following question through the lens of their expertise and personal experience.

What do you think is the most important issue in creating a vital neighborhood center? What is the biggest challenge?

Some of the experts' answers are summarized below:

- The need for greater continuity and consistency on 53rd St.
- The need to create a unique experience for people
- Helping businesses recognize the full market potential of Hyde Park and the immediately adjacent and growing communities. Hyde Park businesses do not always market or serve the broader community. For example, one panelist, who lives two blocks west of Cottage Grove, reported that many local restaurants do not deliver north of 47th, or south of the Midway.... Yet residents of these areas patronize these very same businesses.
- The challenge is to create Class A retail spaces in key locations, with adequate parking and an improved streetscape
- The need to find a way to accommodate and respect all modes of transportation (pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, buses, etc.)

- To retain and recognize the neighborhood's character, while welcoming in new retailers.

Following these discussions, participants then chose which theme they would like to explore further. The experts and themes were paired as follows:

- 53rd Street as main street / global village – Tod Cabanban, Barry Schain
- Density needed to support retail – Ben Ranney, Joanna Trotter
- Walkability and accessibility; Complete Streets – Mary deBacker, Kiersten Grove
- Urban design, aesthetics and neighborhood character – Andre Brumfeld, Eleanor Gorski

After the small group discussions, participants went on a 45 minute walking tour of the 53rd Street corridor.

Observations

A representative from each group reported each group's observations as follows:

1. Main Street

- Need for continuity along 53rd St., east and west of Lake Park.
- Need to allow access for all modes of transportation
- Need for quality merchants; both local and national

2. Density and Land Use

- Mixed-use buildings exist, with buildings of different heights.
- There are opportunities for building higher.
- Single story buildings present re-development opportunities
- Need for more vibrancy and night life. Movie theatre would be a plus. Park 52 is great.
- Parking is essential. Needs to be well done and designed. Not surface parking.
- Crowded signage. Need to upgrade facades

3. Walkability and Access

- Hyde Park is **WALKABLE**; it needs tweaking – seating, sidewalk repairs, access control, stores in front with parking behind
- Need for more bicycle facilities: more racks, more parking for bikes and bike lanes
- Need for an aesthetic theme or identity
- Need for improved visibility and access to encourage greater use of amenities like Nichols Park.

4. Urban Design

- Pedestrian friendly – inviting streetscape, will lead to more interactions
- Surface parking lots disrupt streetscape. Explore other alternatives for parking
- Discontinuous uses along 53rd St.
- Simplicity of traditional buildings
- Opportunity for contemporary buildings
- Parks – Nichols Park has a “defensive edge” along 53rd St.
- Density is welcomed – must be at appropriate location. Single story buildings create opportunity for higher density
- Avoid repeating mistakes of the past

Conclusion and next steps

Participants returned disposable cameras, which will be uploaded and available from **Flickr** web site for viewing. Everyone then watched the 12-minute Corridor Housing Initiative video which is available for viewing from <http://www.housinginitiative.org/video.html>. Additional information and resources about the Model Block Exercise and the Corridor Housing Initiative is available from <http://www.housinginitiative.org/about.html>.

Organizers have scheduled Saturday, November 15, 2008 for the Hyde Park Model Block Exercise.

Comments and feedback

Participants received an evaluation and comment questionnaire. Most did not complete it. Of those that did as well as people who shared comments via email, the reaction to the event was overwhelming positive.

People liked:

- Interactive, “hands – on” aspect of workshop
- Opportunity to hear a variety of perspectives from the panelists and participants
- “really got me thinking”
- Gathering “empirical data” for subsequent discussion

What could we do differently?

- Planned walks with specific sites in mind
- Provide a group facilitator to assist facilitation of small group discussions.
- Provide leaders of small groups with better instructions
- Allow more time for walking tours



Appendix:

AGENDA 53rd St. Vision Workshop Part II: Bringing Hyde Park's Downtown to Life

- 9:00 am Welcome – Alderman Toni Preckwinkle
- 9:05 am Overview of today's workshop – Erin Aleman and Stephen Ostrander *CMAP*:
- How did we get here?
 - Agenda overview
- 9:15 am Introductions of our guest experts and discussion of:
- What do you think is the most important issue in creating a vital neighborhood center? What is the biggest challenge?*
- 10:00 am Choose a tour:
- **Main Street / Global Village**
 - **Land Use, Density / Zoning**
 - **Accessibility, Walkability, Connectivity**
 - **Urban Design, Aesthetics, and Neighborhood Character**
- 10:30am Hit the road with cameras
- 11:15am Return to Kenwood Academy for discussion
- 11:30am Report back on your group's top three observations.
- 11:50am Preview of our next workshop (**SAVE THE DATE: November 15, 2008**)
- Noon Thank-you for spending your morning with us!

Sponsors: Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, 53rd Street TIF Advisory Council, City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, Coalition for Equitable Community Development, Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce, Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference, Interfaith Open Communities, South East Chicago Commission, and University of Chicago.

Special thanks to: Kenwood Academy, Pizza Capri, and all of our guest speakers/specialists.

Workshop

Sponsors:

Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, 4th Ward
South East Chicago Commission (SECC)
City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

Workshop

Partners:

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Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce
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Interfaith Open Communities
Kenwood Academy
University of Chicago