

A New Vision for the Irving Park Corridor

A Summary Report Prepared for
Alderman Richard F. Mell's
33rd Ward Vision Committee

Submitted by



Metro Chicago Information Center

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Business Survey Code Book

MCIC Metro Survey adapted for Irving Park Corridor

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INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT



Community planning efforts in the City of Chicago's 33rd Ward have been continuous and ongoing for a number of years. Alderman Richard F. Mell created and has worked with the 33rd Ward Advisory Committee for a number of years. The 33rd Ward Advisory Committee is comprised of community leaders, advocates and members of business and community groups. More recently the 33rd Ward Vision Committee was formed to help take a closer view of the needs of the communities in the

Ward and to focus on specific areas to help provide Alderman Mell with input and direction in addressing the needs and aspirations of residents and businesses there.

In 2003, Alderman Mell and the Kedzie Elston Business and Industrial Council (KEBIC) sought and received a Commercial Contract from the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development. Under this Contract, KEBIC held a vision planning workshop for residents and business owners for the Irving Park Corridor between California and Elston and conducted a survey of businesses in the Corridor. These initiatives were designed to collect a rigorous and structured set of inputs from residents and businesses in the corridor as a framework for ongoing ward development efforts and for future planning initiatives.



On behalf of the Vision Committee, the Kedzie Elston Business and Industrial Council (KEBIC) contracted with the Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC) to provide technical assistance, to help plan and facilitate the Community Vision workshop on June 28, 2003 and to develop a business survey, administered by KEBIC and Vision Committee members in the summer and fall of 2003. MCIC's analysis incorporated findings from the Workshop as well as the survey results. Two interim reports and presentations were made for the 33rd Ward Vision Committee. The findings from the Community Vision Workshop were presented to the Vision Committee members in November 2003. The findings from the business survey were presented to the Committee in February 2004.

This report presents a Vision for the Irving Park Corridor as defined by the residents and businesses of the corridor. The report also presents, in more depth, the results of the Community workshop, business survey and 33rd Ward Vision committee review of these planning activities over the past year. These planning efforts have provided the Ward with community direction for ongoing development efforts and a framework for future planning efforts.

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Part I of this report is the Community Vision for the Irving Park Corridor. It is, in essence, an executive summary of planning initiatives detailed below.

Part II of the report contains the following three sets of results:

1. A summary and detailed results of the Community Vision Workshop and its constituent small group breakout sessions including community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and shorter and longer term priorities;
2. A summary and detailed data from the business surveys; and
3. A summary of interim discussion, commentary and analysis of the workshop results by the 33rd Ward Vision Committee.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was completed on a limited budget with support from talented Vision Committee members who volunteered for key assignments, such as collecting relevant background information on zoning and current land uses, administering the survey, conducting recruitment for the planning session, and developing detailed notes from the sessions and breakout groups. While this slowed the process down somewhat and created some information gaps, it generated substantial buy-in, good will, and added value and insights. MCIC acknowledges all the volunteers for their many valuable contributions.

Core Sponsors and Organizers:

Alderman Richard F. Mell
33rd Ward Vision Committee
City of Chicago Department of Planning & Development
Kedzie Elston Business Industrial Council

Additional Supporters:

A.C.T.N.O.W.
Horner Park West Neighbors
Jensen Community Organization
Montrose / Kedzie Chamber of Commerce
Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association
West River Park Improvement Association
West Walker Civic Association
State Representative Richard Bradley
State Representative John Fritchey
UNITE Civic Association

Major Contributors

Brisku's Bistro
Chief O'Neill's
Cousin's
Dunkin Donuts
Jewel
Leona's
Lo's Chinese Kitchen
North Community Bank
Regency Bank

This scope of work was funded by the Department of Planning and Development of the City of Chicago through a delegate agency grant to the Kedzie Elston Business Industrial Council.

THE ROLE OF THE METRO CHICAGO INFORMATION CENTER (MCIC)

Many volunteers have lent their energy and expertise to think and plan for the future of the communities in the 33rd Ward. In the spring of 2003, the Kedzie Elston Business and Industrial Council (KEBIC) on behalf of the 33rd Ward Vision Committee retained MCIC to support their volunteer efforts through the provision of the following products and services:

Community Vision Planning Workshop

- 1) Define a methodology for a vision planning workshop and business surveys;
- 2) Facilitate the community vision planning workshop;
- 3) Coach and train Committee volunteers as co-facilitators and presenters; and
- 4) Assist analyzing both workshop and survey findings.

Community Business Survey

- 1) Develop a survey specific to businesses in the Irving Park corridor;
- 2) Train volunteers on survey administration; and
- 3) Do data entry and quality control; analysis; and develop a survey code book.

33rd Ward Vision Committee Inputs

- 1) Reconvene the Vision Committee to finalize the Vision planning process;
- 2) Present final business survey results to the Vision Committee; and
- 3) Prepare this final report.

The purpose of this summary report is to document the process, observations, and recommendations generated from the Vision planning workshop. We will also document summary findings of the business survey and provide recommendations for next steps.

The project scope did not include comprehensive zoning, policy, or program recommendations or insights from MCIC at this time, or a full evaluation of the strategic planning process results.

**PART ONE
COMMUNITY VISION
FOR THE IRVING PARK CORRIDOR**

A NEW VISION FOR THE IRVING PARK CORRIDOR

PURPOSE OF THE 33RD WARD'S COMMUNITY VISION INITIATIVE



The 33rd Ward's Vision Committee is a diverse group of residents, community activists, representatives of community groups and business owners that have convened under the umbrella of the Alderman Richard F. Mell's office to develop a Vision for the Irving Park Corridor. The purpose of the Vision planning process is to identify ways to improve the general area around the local business district, and to do so in a collaborative fashion that involves a diverse group of community

stakeholders. The specific study area runs along Irving Park from California on the East to Elston on the West.

Historically, the area around Irving Park has enjoyed a stable, long-term residential community as well as commercial, light industrial, and institutional uses. A variety of small, independent shops continue to dot the business district. As a major arterial, Irving continues to have its share of heavy car and truck traffic. While this has brought traffic and parking challenges to the district, it has also helped draw new customers and visitors. Irving Park Road is a major east-west thoroughfare providing access to the Kennedy expressway not only for the Avondale and Irving Park communities but also for communities to the east such as North Center and Lakeview.

More recently, the residential community around Irving Park has seen a sharp increase in home values, particularly over the last ten years. Strong markets for new town homes, single-family homes, loft conversions, and big box retail have accelerated land values and competition over land-uses. The community overall has also seen an increase in its Latino population.

Recent changes have called into question what Irving Park is becoming – and what it should become. How can community leaders welcome new residents and uses while maintaining and enhancing the small-scale friendliness of the district? And as land values rise, how can longer-term residents on fixed incomes address the challenges of rising rents and real estate taxes? What should be done for those pockets of Irving Park that appear in decline, such as vacant or underutilized storefronts? How can local planning tools and strategies improve the district overall, and bind it together with a common theme, design, and sense of scale?

Leaders in the Irving Park community are not alone in asking these strategic questions. Shifting land values and conflicts over land uses throughout the City have motivated planners and local community organizations to rethink what their neighborhoods are, what they are becoming, and what they should become.

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At the same time all this has been happening, the City itself has been revisiting its zoning code. Last revised in 1957, the code has undergone only minor modifications over the years. Zoning affects every aspect of the built environment, from how tall a building can be to the type of land-use allowed. The new code will dictate development patterns throughout the city, reflecting Chicago's emerging vision of industry, commerce, and community. As such, the new code will affect the future of Irving Park.

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THE VISION FOR IRVING PARK



The Vision Planning Workshop was designed to present a community-generated framework, preferences and priorities for development of a strategic plan. How the plan is developed and implemented will be as important as achieving the specific community enhancements the plan will be designed to accomplish. Strong, inclusive, and ongoing community participation was one of the main factors identified as critical to the plan's success.

Survey results – and results of the community planning session – should be shared broadly. The 33rd Ward Vision Committee should empower local groups to carry out portions of its plan and to communicate those action items. One key area that requires improvement is effective local communication. Community groups are seen as valuable, but underutilized – sometimes somewhat ineffective. When they do take action, it is often seen as happening in a vacuum. Better communication and celebration of local successes will keep citizens invested and engaged in community activities and outcomes.

In that spirit, it is highly likely that additional community planning sessions would benefit from more inclusiveness of businesses owners, industrial users, and new and long-time residents. A special effort should be made to recruit more members of the Latino population. Together, as follow on planning steps develop and fill in a new “picture book” of what Irving Park is becoming, businesses and residents should be encouraged to include as many design ideas as possible.

One workshop participant resolved, “no more ugly storefronts!” But what is ugly, exactly? Why is the structure out of context of what is around it? Pointing out this strong dislike is an important first step. But what should the business district look like? How might developers be given clear instructions on what to avoid and why it doesn't work? Just as important, what *should* they be building? What will the design, color, feel, and scale look like? By illustrating to developers and local shop owners a range of likes and dislikes, the community just might get more of what it wants.

In the spirit of “make no little plans,” the Irving Park community should feel inspired to think big. Daniel Burnham gives us great advice. But to it we must concede, make some smaller plans, too. Identify clear and realistic projects that community organizations, volunteers, and city departments can work on tomorrow. Attach timelines and measurable outcomes. Show some early successes. While big plans have the power to “stir” our blood, it's the short-term victories that often keep us going.

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The overarching theme that emerged from the Irving Park Community Vision Planning Workshop was the desire of community residents and business owners to have a well-articulated community identity and comprehensive community strategic plan of action for the Irving Park Corridor.

Workshop participants identified a number of opportunities and short and longer-term priorities to be included in the plan for the Irving Park Community. Many

of these opportunities and needs are to more fully realize the potential of the area and its assets. These priorities will require strengthening existing public / private partnerships between and among the City of Chicago, community organizations, and business groups. They will also require continued strong advocacy for enhanced City services such as area cleanup, adding parking capacity, improving street lighting, adding additional planters; improve traffic management and police enforcement.

On the following page is the community vision statement for the Irving Park Corridor to be used in future planning and development initiatives.

THE COMMUNITY VISION FOR THE IRVING PARK CORRIDOR

Longer Term Priorities

- Construct a new, centrally located library and community center
- Continue streetscaping and corridor beautification initiatives
- Increase corridor parking capacities
- Expand the Riverwalk and enhance recreational activities
- Maintain and enhance safety, cleanliness and corridor amenities
- Provide for senior and low-income housing

Shorter Term Priorities

- Promote and foster community diversity
- Build on the strong participation of community organizations
- Enhance community identity and sense of community through improved communications, events and marketing
- Develop a plan for marketing existing and attracting new businesses
- Support preservation, improvements in business appearance and work to reduce vacant properties

**PART TWO
DETAILED FINDINGS**

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OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY VISION PLANNING WORKSHOP



On Saturday, June 28, 2003, the 33rd Ward Vision Committee sponsored a community Vision planning workshop in a large meeting room of Regency Bank in Chicago. The purpose of the Workshop was to build consensus for a shared vision for the future of the Irving Park Corridor. Over 70 community residents, business owners, public officials, and representatives of local community organizations attended. Participants heard presentations on the history and architecture of the corridor as well as on

the proposed zoning reform plans. They participated in small discussion groups, which generated rich qualitative information sets.

There were three distinct breakout session themes, and seven separate “dialogue stations” where small group discussions of each of these themes occurred. Each “station” contained between 7-10 participants. Breakout sessions were convened simultaneously. After each session, groups reported their findings. Then all participants were “reshuffled” to provide new opportunities for information sharing and team building.



The breakout sessions were:

1. The built environment: an assessment of existing land uses and designs;
2. The “functional” and “social” environment; and
3. An overall assessment of the Corridor’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (a SWOT analysis).

Workshop participants genuinely enjoyed their involvement and having their voices heard. Participants stressed the importance of continued community involvement as the planning process moves forward.

The City of Chicago and local elected officials received high marks for efforts and initiatives on behalf of the Corridor community. Alderman Mell and staff at the 33rd Ward were credited for initiating the vision workshop and overall community planning effort. Participants applauded the Ward’s on-going support of and partnering with local community groups. Participants were also grateful for the Alderman’s “concrete”

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accomplishments such as median planters, streetscaping, new curbs, diagonal parking, and traffic cameras to monitor the flow of traffic on Irving Park Road.

Mayor Daley's community initiatives were acknowledged and appreciated by name from streetscaping and beautification efforts to Graffiti Blasters, zoning reform, and the façade rebate program for businesses. The Mayor also was credited for enhancing city services in the areas of public safety and recreation. The Chicago Police Department's CAPS program, foot patrols, and bicycle policing initiatives were welcomed and seen to be reducing crime and increasing public safety. Residents thought local parks such as Horner and Independence were well maintained by the Chicago Park District, had more activities and were attracting residents as never before. Utilization and demand for new library services and facilities were noted as having increased; much needs to be done in this area, however, to more adequately meet demand. The need for a new library was a fairly unanimous thread throughout. Surprisingly, Chicago Public Schools were hardly mentioned except as potential sites for enhanced green space.



Workshop sessions were notable for the balanced and constructive tenor of the discussions. Participants were not motivated to complain, protest, or critique. Instead, residents and business owners suggested, recommended, and brainstormed enhancements, solutions, and new initiatives.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS ASSESS CORRIDOR QUALITY OF LIFE FACTORS

Breakout groups focused on what was working well and what could be improved in the areas of traffic, parking, public safety, cleanliness and beautification, sense of community; and historic preservation. Examples of the community input included:

- 1) Traffic signal timing was seen as working but cited as needing fine-tuning. such as more pedestrian friendly enhancements;
- 2) Diagonal parking was a welcome development, but more of it and other forms of “off-street” parking were needed;
- 3) Community policing initiatives were effective yet more enforcement of laws against public drinking, littering and rowdiness ordinances is needed;
- 4) Streetscaping was appreciated and seen as a significant public good but more was requested such as at street corners;
- 5) The value of new lighting in Horner Park and on Berteau Street was noted but requested for additional streets;
- 6) Trash cans were appreciated, but many more were needed;
- 7) Community groups were valued, seen as effective and worked well with local officials, yet more communication and outreach was desired from and among them;
- 8) Residents felt a strong sense of community and a desire to participate in community building activities, yet lacked meeting spaces, information and activities to foster that community spirit;
- 9) Historic preservation was seen as worthwhile. More awareness and communication is needed about its costs and benefits.

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Workshop Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Irving Park Corridor

Three main strengths of the Irving Park community were cited in nearly every one of the small group discussions in the third breakout sessions:

- 1) Community diversity;
- 2) An active citizenry; and
- 3) Support from political organizations of local groups.

Significant community strengths were identified in the first set of discussions on the likes and dislikes of residential, commercial/retail and institutional aspects of the Irving Park Corridor. A high volume of traffic creates opportunities for the businesses on the street. Pleasant, affordable, and well-maintained single-family homes in communities north and south of Irving Park make these areas good places in which to live.

Residents repeatedly cited ethnic and cultural diversity of the residential community as a significant asset that enhanced quality of life. So too, businesses on Irving Park provide a variety of shopping, dining, and services that the community values. Businesses also reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the community.

Recent real estate developments were seen as invigorating the Irving Park corridor and presenting opportunities to enhance the character and determine the future of the community. These developments and spreading gentrification also pose challenges to the affordability and diversity of the local neighborhoods

Strengths were often cited, however, with “qualifiers.” For example, local civic action and interest is seen as a strength, but its “dormant” or “unrealized” features were seen as a weakness.

Weaknesses repeatedly identified by the groups can be classified into two categories:

- 1) A need to enhance City services such as more garbage cans, diagonal parking and traffic management; and
- 2) Underutilization of the business potential of the corridor.

Again, strengths also doubled as weaknesses. While much was appreciated in the business corridor, most participants felt that much was still missing and that a better mix of stores could be achieved. Examples of new desired uses were specialty businesses such as cafes, bookstores, bakeries, dry cleaning, and daycare centers.

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Detailed Vision Workshop Results – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Priorities



This section of the report provides detailed community input from the Community Vision Workshop. The third set of small group breakout discussions in the workshop asked participants of the seven groups to develop summaries of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and shorter- and longer- term priorities for Irving Park Corridor and report these to the entire set of workshop participants. These inputs from the flipcharts used for the presentations are listed by group number on the following pages.

At the end of the workshop, all participants were asked to vote on those items they individually considered to the most important elements for the Vision of Irving Park by “voting” for these on the flipchart summaries of each of the groups posted on the walls around the meeting rooms. Each participant got “multiple votes” which they could cast or assign to one or more of the items – as summarized by any one of the groups. These votes are noted on the following pages with asterisks “ * ” and a total for each set of votes is noted as well after each item.

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Detailed Results of the Community Planning Workshop Strengths of the Irving Park Corridor

- # 1
 - All parks
 - Good for business
 - Planned river walk / access to river
 - Schools O.K.
 - Library program O.K.

- # 2
 - Community involvement
 - Potential – good location for all types – business / industrial / residential
 - Building on existing improvements

- # 3
 - Diversity
 - Community input, civic organizations

- # 4
 - Diversity * (1)
 - Strong community and civic groups * (1)
 - Political support of those groups

- # 5
 - Active residents (civics) willing to plan
 - Good foundation of business
 - Parks * * * (3)

- # 6
 - Irving Park road accessibility
 - Restaurants
 - Active community organizations
 - Green space / parks
 - Improvements – lights / sidewalks * * * (3)
 - Affordable housing * * * * * (5)

- # 7
 - Diversity * * * * (4)
 - Not fully developed / real opportunity
 - Community groups active / present / underutilized
 - Political response good
 - Long term residents
 - Capital improvement
 - Graffiti removal
 - Community group activities / action * * * * * (6)

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Detailed Results of the Community Planning Workshop Weaknesses of the Irving Park Corridor

- # 1
 - Not enough maximizing / parks
 - Closing of streets / schools
 - Library needs upgrading
 - Not enough activities / capacity at parks
 - Need / missing cultural center
 - Not enough play-lots
 - Access community office

- # 2
 - Lack of organization in traffic
 - Parking
 - Mix of businesses
 - Maintenance of structures by type

- # 3
 - Vacant stores
 - Appearances
 - Parking
 - Traffic
 - Homeless close to park
 - No destination points

- # 4
 - Too many vacant properties * * * (3)
 - Potential of over development * (1)
 - Potential for losing retail

- # 5
 - Not enough business / resident involvement * (1)
 - Foot police presence / a friendly face * * * * * (9)
 - Cleanliness – litter / garbage receptacles bus / residential * (1)

- # 6
 - Garbage containers * * * * * (6)
 - Parking * * * * * (6)
 - Lack of destinations
 - Police * * * * * (7)

- # 7
 - Parking – options not fully explored
 - Lack of marketing plan for corridor – Who/ What? * (1)
 - Lack of pedestrian trash management * (1)
 - Communication

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Detailed Results of the Community Planning Workshop Opportunities for the Irving Park Corridor

- # 1
 - Library
 - Existing storefronts
 - Capitalize on being a thoroughfare
 - Proximity to expressway

- # 2
 - Library
 - Parking
 - Senior housing

- # 3
 - Library * * * * * (11)
 - Supportive parking for stores (city lots) * * * * * (6)
 - Historic / cultural plan for street * * * * * (5)

- # 4
 - To bring in new / quality businesses * * (2)
 - Jobs creation * * * * (4)
 - New faces – growth in diversity

- # 5
 - Possibility of more community workshops * * * (3)
 - New library as cultural center * * * * * (15)
 - Opportunity of change – people committed to bettering community to live, shop

- # 6
 - Perception of community as run-down * * (2)
 - Number of empty stores * * * * * (9)
 - Lack of public parking * * * (3)

- # 7
 - Improve existing neighborhood communication tools (newsletters) * * (2)
 - Planning for development – accountable political, community leaders
 - Better understanding/educate public @ business wants/needs in area * (1)
 - Business growth * (1)
 - New library * * * * (4)
 - Parking * * (2)

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Detailed Results of the Community Planning Workshop Short-Term Priorities (next 12 months) for the Irving Park Corridor

- # 1
 - Left turn signals
 - Traffic cameras
 - Garbage cans
 - Need 1 big thing for impetus
 - Police foot / bicycle patrols

- # 2
 - Finish streetscaping
 - Street lights – signal @ Kedzie / Irving Park *
 - Garbage cleanup
 - Loading zones @ businesses * * * *
 - Angle parking *
 - Better communication * * *

- # 3
 - Diagonal parking * * * (3)
 - Traffic cameras (California / Addison / Irving Park) * (1)
 - Identify neglected properties * (1)
 - Identify what people want * * (2)
 - Kedzie bus * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * (14)

- # 4
 - Enforcement of property upkeep * * * (3)
 - Clean up the streets
 - Evaluate traffic patterns for smooth transit
 - (light timing, left turns lanes) * * * * * * * * * * (8)

- # 5
 - Clean up
 - Improve current building appearance
 - Kedzie bus

- # 6
 - Start clean up / install planters * * * * * * (6)
 - Safety improvements – brighter lights / police enforcement * * * * * (5)
 - Business attraction planning * * * * * * * (7)
 - Better communication programs w/ businesses

- # 7
 - Garbage cans * * * * * * * * * * (8)
 - Address parking issue * * * * * * * * * * (9)
 - Start the historical preservation process by identifying key sites * (1)

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Detailed Results of the Community Planning Workshop Long-Term Priorities (1-3 years or longer) for the Irving Park Corridor

- # 1
 - Library
 - Senior housing
 - Community center
 - Parking / streetscaping

- # 2
 - Library
 - Community spaces *
 - Senior housing * * *

- # 3
 - Corridor destinations – strategic * * (2)
 - Zoning – notification to residents * * (2)
 - New library * * * * * (6)
 - River walk expansion * * * * * * * (8)

- # 4
 - Attract new businesses (internet cafes) * * * * * * * * * *
 - Build a new library * * * *
 - Solve parking *
 - Farmer' s market / Taste of Horner Park * * * * * * * * * *

- # 5
 - Library
 - Community center
 - Senior housing / center

- # 6
 - River walk @ park * * * * *
 - Community center a) awareness, b) seniors, c) programs * * * *
 - Library

- # 7
 - Segmenting businesses – nodes
 - Space for business parking
 - Cultural center
 - Performing arts spaces * * * *

SUMMARY OF THE IRVING PARK CORRIDOR BUSINESS SURVEY

The survey yielded responses from 44 businesses in the Irving Park Corridor, the majority of which were in retail trade. These are well-established businesses with the average length of operation being 18 years. These businesses are strongly connected to the community, have loyal customers and want to be part of the positive changes they see happening in the area. More than half of the businesses surveyed noted the improvements in streetscaping and façade renovations throughout the Corridor. Overall businesses were satisfied with the new residential development occurring.

These businesses do struggle with some major concerns, however. The poor economy is affecting them and they have concerns about large chain stores moving into the area and how that competition will affect their bottom line. Business owners were also concerned about business turnover, vacant properties and gang activity.

When asked specifically about what changes they would like to see put in place, more retail shops and institutional facilities such as schools, parks and libraries were high on the list of priorities. They would like to see less industrial or manufacturing uses.

Solutions to specific problems included having more police to monitor the streets and provide a sense of safety and they would like more garbage cans to keep the Corridor cleaner. Parking was also felt to be inadequate and will be more of a concern as the new residential developments go up.

Highlights:

- The majority of businesses surveyed (59.1%) felt that the Irving Park business corridor has improved during the past two years. They noted the improved streetscaping, additions in businesses and housing development, and new façade renovations as all contributing factors.
- When asked if they might close or relocate their business in the next few years, almost three-quarters (72.7%) said that it was not likely.
- The majority of respondents, 61.4%, indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with the safety in the Corridor. Specific safety concerns included gang activity, loitering and not enough beat police.
- Nearly 70% of people surveyed were either very or somewhat satisfied with the cleanliness of the Corridor. Most indicated that they would like to see more garbage cans placed on the streets.
- The most commonly cited traffic concern was inadequate parking and how this might be exacerbated with more residential development.

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DETAILED CORRIDOR BUSINESS SURVEY FINDINGS

Business Survey Participants

The business survey yielded of 44 completed and usable surveys. Of the 44 businesses surveyed, 40.9% were in the retail trade. These included stores that sold groceries, cellular phones and beepers, flowers, clothing and music, even a pharmacy, to name a few.

Type of Business	Distribution
Retail Trade	40.9%
Professional Services (doctor, teacher, lawyer, accountant)	18.2%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	11.4%
Personal Services (hotels, beauty shops)	4.5%
Entertainment & Recreation Services	2.3%
Business and Repair Services (ad agency, consulting, electrical repair)	2.3%
Manufacturing	2.3%
Transportation & Communication	0.0%
Wholesale Trade (raw materials)	0.0%
Other	18.2%

More than two-thirds (68.0%) of those surveyed were business owners. Managers represented more than one-quarter (27.3%).

The businesses surveyed have been in operation for a very long time. The average age was more than 25 years and ranged from a business opening in 1902 to businesses opening in 2003. On average, these businesses have been operating in the Irving Park Corridor for 18 years (since 1985) though this ranged from 1945-2003.

The majority of businesses surveyed have only one location – the one in Irving Park Corridor. Only 18.2% indicated that they have other locations.

The average number of employees at the business participating in the survey was 4.8, including the person interviewed. Businesses were as small as 1 person and as large as 20 employees.

Nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of the businesses owned the space in which they were operating.

Despite the concerns over the economy, half of survey respondents felt that their business was doing about the same generally, 22.7% felt their business was improving

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and 20.5% indicated that they were struggling. When asked if they might close or relocate their business in the next few years, almost three-quarters (72.7%) said that it was not likely.

Likelihood of Closing or Relocating	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	44
Very likely	11.4%
Somewhat likely	13.6%
Not likely	72.7%
No response	2.3%

Among those considering closing or relocating, the number one reason cited was as the neighborhood improves, people were worried about rising rents, especially among businesses affected by the poor economy.

Businesses planning on staying in the Corridor indicated that they were happy with their location, had a loyal customer base, were committed to the area and enjoyed seeing the neighborhood change and improve and wanted to reap those rewards.

Less than one-tenth (6.8%) of respondents were dissatisfied with locating their business in the Irving Park Corridor.

Major Concerns of Business Survey Participants

More than three-quarters indicated that they were very concerned (54.5%) or somewhat concerned (27.3%) about the economy and the general business conditions. The poor economy is affecting 55.6% of these business owners and there has been a noticed decline in the number of customers due in part to high unemployment rates.

Specific Concerns on Economy & General Business Climate	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	27
The economy is bad and is hurting my business	55.6%
Lack of business / customers	44.4%
Cash flow of my business	22.2%
Community needs more job creation or job opportunities	14.8%
Competition from shopping malls	0.0%
Other	48.1%

When asked generally if they had any other concerns, several cited the threat of big chain stores coming into their service area. Again concerns over the economy's impact on their business were discussed. Several even worried about having to lay off their

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own employees for the same reason. This is the major concern as indicated by nearly half of those surveyed.

Top Concern	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	43
Economy/Business Conditions	46.5%
Parking/Traffic	23.3%
Safety	16.3%
Cleanliness	4.7%
Image/Amenities	4.7%
Housing	0.0%
Other	4.7%

Noting the diversity of land uses in the Corridor, which may be in conflict, and the many options for development, businesses were asked what they would like to see more of along the Irving Park Corridor. Both retail and institutions (such as schools or libraries) topped the list.

Most Desired Land Use or Development	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	42
More retail uses	16.7%
Institutional uses (schools, libraries, etc.)	14.3%
More market rate townhouses and condos	9.5%
Subsidized or affordable housing	7.1%
More parks and open space	4.8%
More industrial / manufacturing uses	0.0%
Other	50.0%
No response	13.6%

Other suggestions included a community center, senior housing, a grocery store, parking lots and entertainment centers such as a movie theater or bowling alley. In general, more commercial development was desired rather than residential or industrial.

Survey respondents were also asked what land uses or developments they would like to see less of in the Corridor. More than one-fifth indicated industrial or manufacturing use as their top choice. Bars, strip malls and chain stores were also cited.

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Least Desired Land Use or Development	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	42
Industrial / manufacturing uses	21.4%
Market rate townhouses and condos	9.5%
Additional retail	7.1%
Subsidized or affordable housing	4.8%
Parks and open space	0.0%
Institutional uses (schools, libraries, etc.)	0.0%
Something else	21.4%
No response	42.9%

Business Surveys Assess the Current Status of the Irving Park Corridor

The majority of businesses surveyed (59.1%) felt that the Irving Park business corridor has improved during the past two years. They noted the improved streetscaping, additions in businesses and housing development, and new façade renovations as all contributing factors.

State of the Corridor	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	44
Improved	59.1%
Worsened	25.0%
Stayed the Same	13.6%
No response	2.3%

Among the one-quarter of respondents who felt the corridor has worsened, they noted that there was a lot of business turnover and vacant storefronts as their main concerns. Gang activity was also cited.

Although nearly one-fifth of respondents indicated that they were very satisfied with the amenities in the corridor and its image, more than half (52.4%) were only somewhat satisfied. Slightly more than one-quarter indicated that vacant or abandoned properties were negatively impacting the corridor's image.

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Specific Concerns on Corridor Amenities and Image	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	40
Problem with vacant or abandoned properties or storefronts	27.5%
Need new, better or different commercial/ retail buildings or retail mix	22.5%
Business district has poor image	20.0%
Need better or more rest benches and shelters	15.0%
Need more historic preservation or renovation of existing properties	15.0%
General image and amenities issues	15.0%
Poor streetscape design	5.0%
Other	45.0%

Survey Highlights -- Specific Factors: Safety, Cleanliness, Transportation/Parking

When asked about safety in the corridor, two-fifths (40.9%) indicated that they were only somewhat satisfied with the safety of the Corridor.

Safety of the Corridor	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	44
Very satisfied	20.5%
Somewhat satisfied	40.9%
Not satisfied	22.7%
No response	6.8%
Doesn't affect my business	9.1%

The major concerns were with gangs in the area or “undesirable” people loitering. One-quarter of respondents would like to see more beat police and one-fifth indicated that the area needs more police patrols. Other responses concerned violence (break-ins, holdups, drugs, gang activity), traffic flow patterns and a lack of adequate safe parking.

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Specific Safety Concerns	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	33
Problems with gangs or gang-like activity	27.3%
Problems with loitering, “undesirable” people hanging out	27.3%
Need more beat police	24.2%
Need more police patrols	21.2%
General safety issues	21.2%
Problems with actual or perceived pedestrian safety	6.1%
Need better lighting	3.0%
Other	51.5%

When asked about the cleanliness of the corridor, slightly more than one-third of respondents were somewhat satisfied (38.6%).

Cleanliness of the Corridor	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	44
Very satisfied	27.3%
Somewhat satisfied	38.6%
Not satisfied	22.7%
No response	4.5%
Doesn't affect my business	6.8%

This problem can be easily remedied by adding more garbage cans throughout the Corridor – something nearly half of all respondents were concerned about. Many respondents noted the garbage in the alleys around restaurants, bars and food vendors as a major problem.

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Specific Concerns on Cleanliness	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	32
Lacking adequate refuse containers (garbage cans)	46.9%
General cleanliness issues	37.2%
Need more street cleaning	9.4%
Need more alley cleaning	6.3%
Need better or more graffiti removal services	6.3%
Need rodent extermination	3.1%
Other	62.5%

Traffic, public transportation and street infrastructure were not a major concern to the businesses surveyed. More than half were very satisfied with this aspect of the community.

Transportation Infrastructure in the Corridor	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	44
Very satisfied	47.7%
Somewhat satisfied	22.7%
Not satisfied	18.2%
No response	6.8%
Doesn't affect my business	4.5%

The most common suggestion put forth by respondents was that parking was inadequate. Several expressed concern over long delays waiting for the bus, heavy auto traffic at certain intersections and traffic lights that don't meet traffic flow needs. Many also indicated that left turn signals off Elston would be very welcome.

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Specific Concerns on Transportation Infrastructure	Distribution
<i>Total responses</i>	33
Not enough parking	36.4%
General parking/traffic/signage/street infrastructure issues	27.3%
Need better or more access to public transportation	12.1%
Need bus stop repairs	12.1%
Need more street signs or street sign repairs	6.1%
Need general street infrastructure repairs (pot holes, etc.)	0.0%
Other	63.6%

Other concerns were the homeless, buildings or their façades in disrepair, and traffic. A few businesses suggested that a more cohesive streetscape design or implementing design guidelines would improve the image.

Housing was less of a concern to survey participants with 81% being either somewhat or very satisfied with the new development taking place around the Irving Park Corridor. The major concern for one-third of the respondents was that there was not enough affordable housing being built. Others expressed concern that the increased residential population would compound the parking problems. Many suggested mixed-use housing with retail on the bottom floor and residential on upper floors.

VISION COMMITTEE PLANNING WORKSHOP – NOVEMBER 6, 2003

Attendees:

- Chuck Lomanto, 33rd Ward Chief of Staff;
- Mari Gallagher, Metro Chicago Information Center; (MCIC);
- Mike Cevasco, Kedzie / Elston Business and Industrial Council (KEBIC);
- Brian Sandstrom, Horner Park West Neighbors Association (HPNWA);
- Sally Katona Smith;
- Maureen Duffin, UNITE;
- Bill Ystrom, HPWNA; and
- Bill Murphy, KEBIC

Agenda and materials considered

Mari Gallagher of MCIC distributed an agenda for the session. Mike Cevasco distributed packets of write up materials from the Vision Committee Community Planning Workshop held on Saturday, June 28, 2003 at Regency Bank 3515 W. Irving Park Road. These materials, previously emailed to all Vision Committee members, included:

- A Narrative Summary of the Community Workshop
- Outline of the Breakout Session Discussion topics
- Summaries of community input from each session and session topic
- Flip Chart detail from presentations by the Discussions Groups

Mike also distributed an inventory of businesses, residences and vacancies on Irving Park developed by KEBIC as well as an interim planning feedback document of input from the workshop prepared for the 33rd Ward.

The Community Planning Workshop

Discussion then turned to debriefing the June 28th Workshop. Brian Sandstrom stated that Regency Bank proved to be an ideal venue for the workshop with adequate space, good parking, air conditioning and easy accessibility. Vision committee members reiterated their gratitude to Betsy Lazar and Regency Bank for its hospitality.

Brian thought that the process of reconstituting new small groups for each of the three breakout sessions was an excellent way to ensure that every individual in the groups had a chance to contribute to the sessions; was a way to enhance the interplay among participants and helped participants meet and network with more community members. Having breakout sessions in a single large space rather than in separate rooms, rather than being distracting because of noise, instead added to the excitement and feeling of inclusiveness. Also appreciated was the competent leadership of Mari and her assistant to pull last minute details together and prompt volunteers and facilitators to confidently perform new roles.

Vision committee members were grateful for the excellent input and many new ideas received from the Workshop. Mike cited the voluminous documentation of the input distributed to the committee. The challenge for the Vision Committee now was to use

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this input to define next steps in the planning process to create both a short-term and longer-term plan for the Irving Park Corridor.

Major Themes Raised by the Community Planning Workshop

Discussion then turned to specific feedback from the Community Planning Workshop.

A relative lack of minorities in the workshop was something to be addressed through increased outreach for on-going planning efforts.

Two key community needs were raised that the workshop may not have adequately emphasized. One is to maintain and create more affordable housing, especially for seniors. The second is a more concerted effort to preserve businesses and buildings that give the area its unique character and identity.

Maureen Duffin noted the desire to attract businesses that add to the vitality and diversity of the area such as the new Dharma Thai Restaurant. Brian Sandstrom gave the examples of the Bloodshot Recording Label, which is internationally known, and the Music Store, which has a wide variety of sheet music and supplies for musicians.

Much workshop input validated and amplified community concerns, needs and desired enhancements raised in Vision Committee meetings, other community forums and numerous informal discussions.

Committee members recognized their leadership role in driving the plan forward and responding to input from workshop attendees. Ensuing discussion focused on the longer-term “big picture” for Irving Park and the “one big thing for impetus” noted on a workshop flipchart.

Other models for development were considered such as what has taken place at North Center, on Southport and on Lincoln between Irving Park and Lawrence. Each of these areas has a longstanding ethnic identity, major community assets and/or destinations around which recent developments have taken place.

Examples of assets that create community identity, destinations and foot traffic are the Sulzberger regional library and park at Lincoln and Montrose; the Music Box Theatre on Southport; and the “L” stops on Southport, at Irving near Damen and at Western near Lawrence and three street intersections at North Center and Lincoln, Lawrence and Western. Sally Katona Smith noted that such community focal points help create opportunities for nearby businesses as people go to meetings, movies, theatre or performances then look for places to dine or have coffee before or after and also become aware of shopping or service opportunities as they walk near the “event venue”.

A New Library is Central to the Community Vision for Irving Park

One thing cited repeatedly in the workshop and voted for by over 40 of the participants was the need for a new library. Chuck Lomanto, the 33rd Ward Chief of Staff indicated

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that the Ward and the City have recognized this need and that funding for a new library is planned for 2006.

Mike Cevasco of the Kedzie / Elston Business and Industrial Council noted that workshop participants also cited desires for a cultural center; performance spaces; senior housing, services and activities; and more community meeting places. A consensus developed that the Library project/ development should be fashioned to incorporate some or all of these elements in the design. In short, the project should be a "Library Plus..."

While Irving Park does have Horner Park and McFetridge Sports Center as assets for the community, the creation of a central focal point or anchor for community development for the Irving Park Corridor would provide the destination that exists in the comparison communities. Thus a "Library Plus..." proposal for Irving Park takes on added significance. Such a development would have the benefit of being designed from the ground up to address the needs identified by the community. It would also have the constraints of funding, space availability and the capacities to adequately utilize and manage a multi-functional project.

The most likely site for a Library /community/ cultural center complex is the intersection of Irving Park and Kedzie at the center of the corridor. Mike Cevasco emphasized that a first step in developing this site might be to expand the existing redevelopment area. Focusing on both sides of Kedzie north of Irving Park would provide enough space to ensure adequate parking, green space, traffic flow and for fostering complementary adjacent developments and activities such as senior center and housing, store-front theatre space, and Internet cafes.

The Vision Committee members agreed that general site parameters need to be determined. Existing local or area community organizational assets need to be identified such as social service agencies, theatre groups, community groups and local businesses that could and would utilize the spaces / facilities being contemplated. The committee also agreed with Mike that continued involvement by community groups and local organizations is needed in the planning process. Their input and support for a plan will be crucial. Mike will begin to speak with these groups with the first contact to be on Dec. 1 at the next UNITE meeting.

APPENDIX – BRIEF BACKGROUND ON ZONING

The ability of governments to enforce zoning regulations was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1926 in the landmark case of *Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty*. Since then, almost every major city across the U.S. has adopted a zoning code. Zoning regulates land-use, including the size, shape, height, setback, and permitted uses of structures. As such, zoning greatly impacts where and what kind of people live in an area, and where and what kind of jobs are allowed. It impacts the location of stores and industries, the flow of traffic, and the availability of parking spaces.

Chicago's zoning code was first enacted in the 1920s and was substantially revised in 1957. Since then, it has been amended numerous times. But Chicago and other cities are finding that the approach to zoning needs to undergo a major overhaul. Such a transformation in the zoning code has the power to change entire blocks – indeed, entire neighborhoods. For this reason, issues concerning zoning are often highly charged.

Zoning takes on different forms throughout the U.S. Euclidean Zoning (named after the Village of Euclid, Ohio) and Performance Zoning are the most common. Under conventional Euclidean Zoning, the government creates zoning districts. Performance zoning allows for more flexibility. The government sets "performance standards" for each district and allows developers wide latitude in how their buildings will be designed and used. The standards usually affect density and access to light and air. Developers can build almost any building that meets the performance standards for that district.

Chicago uses a combination of these two approaches. Most parcels of land are categorized under a Euclidean system. Each year, the Department of Zoning updates its zoning code book, which covers every inch of the city one square mile at a time, to inform the public and developers around zoning changes that have taken place. At the same time, the city also has performance standards to govern manufacturing districts and planned developments, and reviews new developments within those boundaries through a discretionary approval processes.

Comprehensive planning and zoning are not synonymous. However, many cities are experimenting with entirely new zoning concepts, enforcement mechanisms, and visualization techniques that are a combination of the two. What should a community, a corridor, or street look like five, ten, or fifteen years from now? This is the core question that the 33rd Ward Vision Committee posed in developing the Vision Statement for the Irving Park Corridor.

Chicago's Zone Code Categories

The larger public that perhaps does not have as much familiarity with the intricacies of zoning will find this section useful. Various zoning code abbreviations are used, such as R1 and C2. But what do they mean? While the scope of this project does not include a

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detailed description of how zoning works, we have provided the basic zoning categories below to help the reader better understand technical jargon and abbreviations.

Residential Districts, R1 – R8

Business Districts

- B1 Local Retail Districts, B1-1 – B1-4
- B2 Restricted Retail Districts, B1-2 – B2-5
- B3 General Retail Districts, B3-1 – B3-5
- B4 Restricted Service Districts, B4-1 – B4-5
- B5 General Service Districts, B5-1 – B5-5
- B6 Restricted Central Business Districts, B6-6 – B6-7
- B7 General Central Business Districts, B7-5 – B7-7

Commercial Districts

- C1 Restricted Commercial Districts, C1-1 – C1-5
- C2 General Commercial Districts, C2-1 – C-2-5
- C3 Commercial-Manufacturing Districts, C3-1 – C3-7
- C4 Motor Freight Terminal Districts (single designation)
- C5 Commercial/Office Districts, C5-1 – C5-4

Manufacturing Districts

- M1 Restricted Manufacturing Districts, M1-1 – M1-5
- M2 General Manufacturing Districts, M2-1 – M2-5
- M3 Heavy Manufacturing Districts, M3-1 – M3-5