

SUMMARY OF MEETING

COMMUNITY MEETING #1

JEFFERSON PARK STATION AREA MASTER PLAN

June 19, 2017 | 6-7:30pm | Copernicus Center Annex

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Jefferson Park Station Area Master Plan will be an effort over the next several months to develop a vision and implementation plan for improvements around the Jefferson Park Station. The Study Area is located along Milwaukee Avenue and surrounding blocks from Berywn to Sunnyside and the Market Area is bounded by Bryn Mawr to the north, Montrose to the south, Austin to the west and Cicero to the east, as shown on page 4 of this Meeting Summary.

The Plan is funded by the Regional Transportation Authority and City of Chicago and will: 1) plan for neighborhood improvements around the Jefferson Park Transit Center; 2) improve access for all users to the Transit Center; 3) plan for neighborhood amenities around the Transit Center; and 4) develop a balanced vision for new development that builds on community character.

The first Community Meeting was held on Monday evening, June 19th at the Copernicus Center Annex. The goal in this first meeting was to listen to and learn from residents about what kind of changes they would like to see in their community. Alderman John Arena kicked-off the meeting by stating that a Master Plan is needed for Jefferson Park. “Jeff Park is such a strong community but our commercial area around the station needs to be upgraded.” Benet Haller of the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development thanked Heather Tabbert and the Regional Transportation Authority for providing funding for the project and discussed the importance of planning and developing a vision for the area around the Transit Center.

Scott Goldstein, Principal at Teska Associates and Project Team Lead outlined the plan’s objectives and provided an overview of the planning process. Laura Wilkison of Metro Strategies provided a preview of the results of the survey to-date. Over 450 residents have completed the survey to date, almost all of whom were from Jefferson Park and surrounding areas. The survey, posted at www.accessjeffpark.org, will remain open until June 30.

After these opening remarks, the meeting’s attendees participated in three interactive stations on community character/land use, economic development and housing, and transportation access. Residents of the neighborhood shared their ideas and vision for potential opportunities in each of these topic areas. Details from the conversations at each station are described in the sections below, and the following are major takeaways from those who attended the first community meeting:

- Residents value the small-town character of their neighborhood but also want to encourage new businesses to occupy existing vacant storefronts and to make the area more vibrant.
- The Jefferson Park Transit Center is a major asset that should be made into a more attractive destination, not just a place to pass through when commuting.
- Public improvements like cleaning up the viaducts and installing more crosswalks can encourage pedestrian activity in the business district.
- The neighborhood can be better marketed if it cultivates a clear vision and consistent identity.

PRESENTATION SLIDES

The presentation slides and exhibits can be found on the project website:

www.accessjeffpark.org/documents



COMMUNITY CHARACTER

During the discussion on community character, participants were asked questions about the identity of their neighborhood as they tried to define, “What is Jefferson Park?” Some people mentioned the historic nature of the community and how it has a quiet, small-town feeling, as if it is a suburb in the city. Many described the area’s accessibility and how easy it is to get to downtown, the airport, and elsewhere via the Jefferson Park Transit Center. Its reputation as a transportation hub is appreciated, though many talked about the need to spruce up the transit center and make it more appealing as a destination or a town center. Several participants said that they value Jefferson Park for being relaxed and safe, and they like how there is a lot of local pride in the community. Others talked about the need to define and foster a sense of identity and character so that the neighborhood can be better marketed.

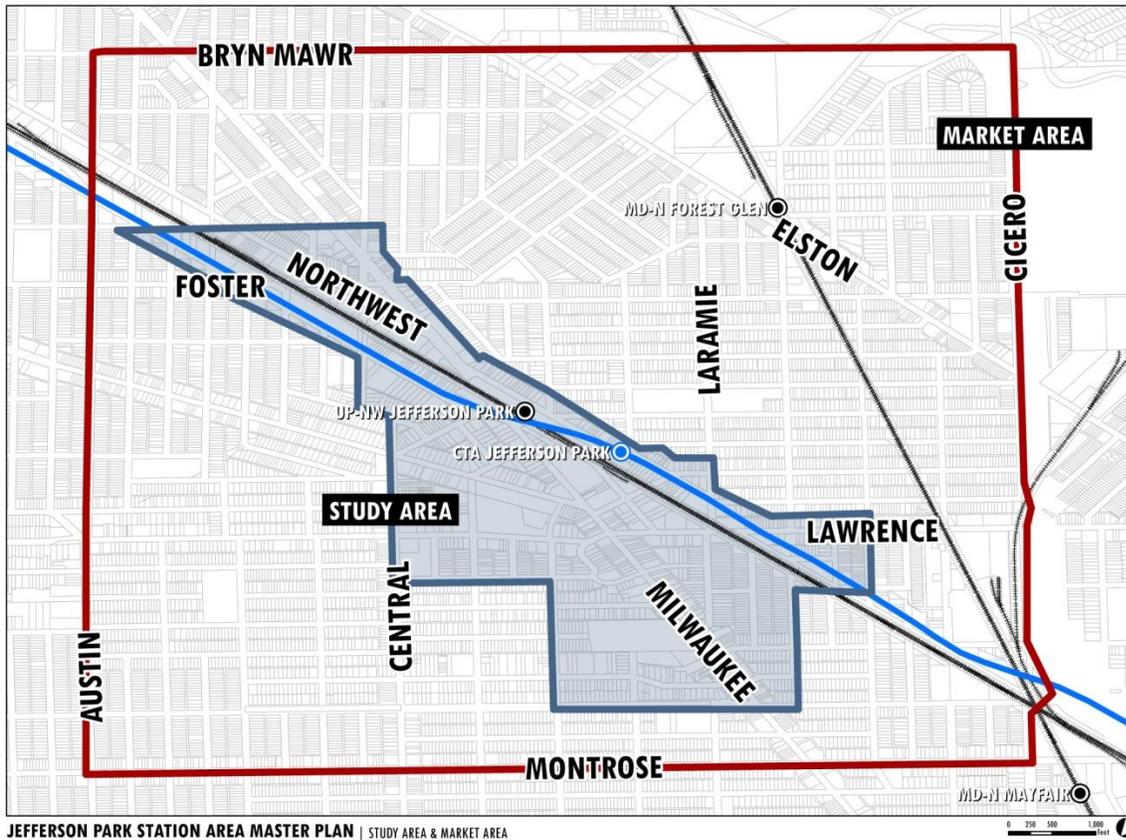
Additionally, participants at this station were asked what they think Jefferson Park needs in order to attract new businesses. Attendees talked about the need to make the neighborhood a destination with things to do such as cooking classes, breweries, craft centers, and in general more entertainment and restaurants. Residents said they want more businesses clustered together, so that they can have a walkable strip. To accommodate this there should be strategically located parking, streetscaping, and public improvements to strike a balance between supporting pedestrian activity as well as vehicles. Participants discussed how they want Jefferson Park to offer a “genuine experience” through keeping what the community has currently but updating and modernizing the area.

“You can get anywhere in 20 minutes, but we need more to do right here.”

-Meeting Participant

MARKET AREA & STUDY AREA

The map below illustrates the Market Area (marked by the red boundary line) and Study Area (marked by the blue boundary line). Station area improvements will focus within the Study Area. Data collection and market analysis will focus on both the Study Area and the Market Area, which offers wider coverage of the community reflecting visitors, shoppers and diners that serve the Jefferson Park Station Area. A sample of demographic data for the Market Area is provided in the presentation slides. The market analysis will be conducted by Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates (VSKA).



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING

Attendees at this station mostly talked about the potential barriers to economic development and possible amenities that could improve the business and housing environment. In regards to perceived barriers, residents raised the following issues: vacant properties in between existing retail, lack of awareness about the area, too much car dependency, large streets that are difficult cross (e.g. Milwaukee Avenue), and viaducts that are unpleasant for pedestrians.

Residents offered ideas for alleviating these issues and creating a better environment for economic development. Again, many people want a walkable business district that offers destinations like a museum, fitness center, yoga/Pilates studio, bookstore, and food hall. Several mentioned a desire for more restaurant options that are both sit down and fast-casual with outdoor or rooftop dining. One participant noted that people want “experiences” such as concerts, open mic nights, and tasting rooms. Activating public space was a theme for some who talked about wanting a public plaza or gathering space with a fountain, public art, green space, and farmers market. Multiple participants also had ideas for better utilizing and capitalizing upon the transit center—a luggage check, kiosks with neighborhood information,

“O’Hare Airport is the Gateway to the World, and Jefferson Park is the Gateway to Chicago.”

-Resident and Meeting Participant

and art exhibits inside the station could help to promote Jefferson Park as a destination during layovers or to/from downtown Chicago. Attendees also mentioned the need for more housing so that there are more people to patronize local businesses.

TRANSPORTATION

Sam Schwartz Consultants (SSC) is leading the transportation assessment and strategy formation for the project. SSC shared preliminary insights on the transportation challenges and opportunities presented by the Jefferson Park Station Area, which are summarized in the presentation slides. Key highlights discussed the evening of the Community Event included:



- Safe access to, from, and within the Transit Center
- Pedestrian crossings and access points are significant components to be studied
- Chicago Dept. of Transportation (CDOT) streetscape improvements along Milwaukee have already started
- Wayfinding and signage will be important, particularly around the Transit Center to alleviate points of conflict and help all users navigate the area
- I-90 and railroad physically divide the community – look for opportunities to overcome these barriers
- CTA Blue Line has significant ridership and is growing
- Twelve Pace and CTA bus routes serve the Transit Center
- Potential to assess Ventra transfer data
- Bus turning movements, particularly left turns from Lawrence to Milwaukee
- Pace will be rolling out its new Pulse service along Milwaukee, likely in 2018
- Better real-time bus and train arrival info so people waiting for buses and trains can determine if they have time to visit nearby businesses (e.g., get a cup of coffee, have lunch, visit a store).
- Bicycle parking capacity, design and utilization at Transit Center
- Accommodating taxis and ride services like Uber and Lyft is also important

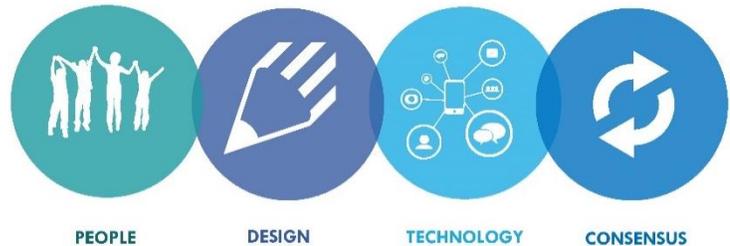
Participants discussed a variety of transportation challenges in the area surrounding the Jefferson Park Transit Center. The most prevalent issue was the pedestrian experience. Multiple attendees described the challenge of crossing Milwaukee Ave given the heavy traffic and limited crosswalks. Attendees also warned that the flow of pedestrians through the bus-only part of the terminal seemed unsafe. Solutions that were suggested included new crosswalk locations and benches for pedestrians to rest. It was noted that the Chicago Department of Transportation has plans to implement changes along Milwaukee Ave this summer that should make progress towards a better pedestrian experience.



Ideas were also suggested to improve the multimodal experience at the transit center. Given the complex arrangement of transit modes and destinations, attendees felt that wayfinding signage and customer information should be enhanced to guide travelers. One specific signage suggestion was to officially designate locations for drivers to pick up and drop off passengers at the station – currently drivers tend to do this in undesirable locations. Other discussion topics included how best to accommodate bicyclists and bike parking and how to avoid sanitation issues in parts of the station. Finally, there was an interest in improving access to the CTA platform from the north and east of I-90. Currently the barrier of the expressway makes this access quite indirect, so several participants recommended considering a new pedestrian bridge.

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Led by Teska Associates, Inc. and Metro Strategies, community outreach will include the following elements:



- Project website: www.accessjeffpark.org
- Stakeholder interviews
- Survey – over 550 people had taken the survey to date
- Three community meetings
- Outreach at community events
- Project cards, flyers, and other promotional materials
- The Business and Resident Resource Groups also serve as outreach elements to gain insights from the business community and local residents, respectively

NEXT STEPS

- **Community Events:** Outreach at local events, including farmers market, library, and fieldhouse
- **Existing Conditions Analysis:** Completion this summer
- **Next Meetings:** Residents Resource Group, Business Resource Group, and TAC in September to review input from Community Meeting, Existing Conditions Analysis, and to prepare for Community Meeting #2
- **Community Meeting #2:** October (TBD)