

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL
SEPTEMBER 14 AND 15, 2005



CAMPAIGN
FOR SENSIBLE
GROWTH



**PRESERVING, SUPPORTING AND
EXTENDING LOCAL RETAIL**
ANDERSONVILLE AND NORTH CLARK STREET
CHICAGO

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	-1
The Backdrop	-1
The Panel’s Charge	-3
Major Recommendations	-4
Problem Statement	-5
Sponsor Presentations	-5
Bus Tour	-6
Stakeholder Comments	-8
Final Presentation	-9
Geographic Recommendations	-10
Policy Recommendations	-11
Business Incubation and Preservation	-11
Parking and Traffic	-13
Affordable Housing	-14
Density and Land Use	-14

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The Campaign for Sensible Growth is a coalition of government, civic and business organizations promoting strategies to enhance the economic vitality of the greater Chicago region while preserving open space, minimizing the need for costly new infrastructure and improving the livability of communities. More than 200 organizations and 1,000 individuals are members of the Campaign, including the Metropolitan Planning Council and ULI Chicago.

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Executive Summary

The Backdrop

The Chicago neighborhood known as “Andersonville” was planted with apple orchards in the 1850s. Following the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, Swedes moved into the area as the log cabins they favored were outlawed within city limits. New residents opened up storefronts to provide goods and services, and the area stayed heavily Swedish for decades, until many began to move to the suburbs after World War II.

By the 1960s, the tidy business strip along Clark Street, alive with activity for nearly a century, had begun to decline. To preserve its ethnic heritage and market the area as a tourist draw, local merchants – still mostly Swedish, but reflecting a rich diversity of other cultures – then dubbed the area Andersonville and began both an annual parade and the Midsommarfest. They also began a tradition of cleaning the street en masse at 10 a.m. every Saturday morning.

Andersonville’s Swedish cultural heritage was solidified in 1976 when Kurt Mathiasson, owner of Svea restaurant and the

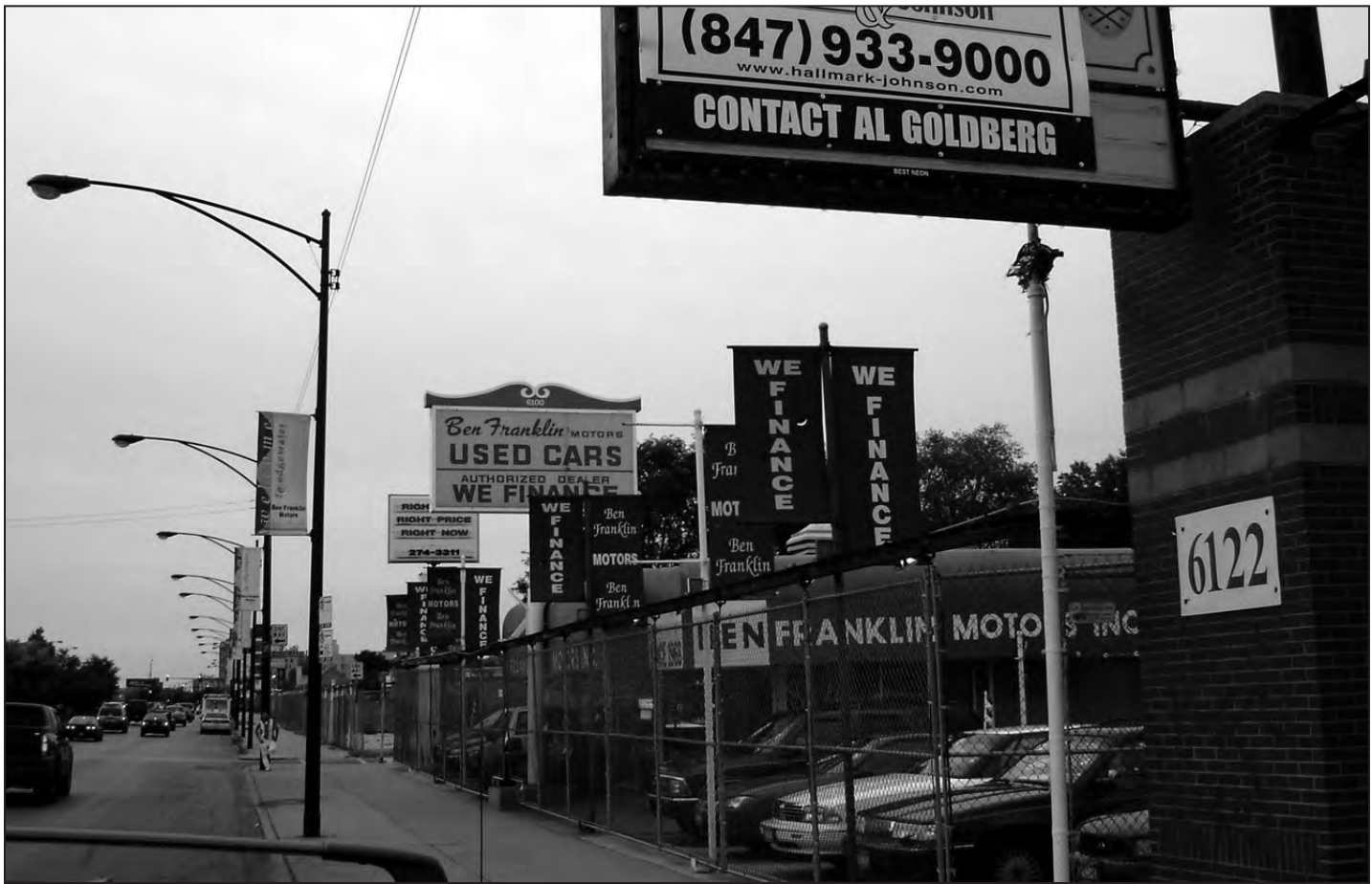
unofficial “Mayor of Andersonville,” led efforts to create the Swedish American Museum. However, the area’s economic fortunes continued to slide in the 1980s, with fewer longtime businesses, a weak retail identity, and the refusal of larger banks to make loans because they considered Andersonville a sketchy investment.

Under the leadership of longtime resident Bud Wyman, the Community Bank of Edgewater retained its faith in and financial commitment to Clark Street. One of the businesses it helped, the Landmark of Andersonville, opened by Jan Baxter in 1987, served as a tremendously effective business incubator, spinning off several still-thriving storefronts. This retail growth jump-started housing investment on nearby side streets.

The Andersonville section of Clark Street, from Ainslie Avenue (4900 North) to Edgewater Avenue (5732 North), is once again a bustling business district with a colorful array of shops and restaurants, many of them locally owned. The relocation of the Women and Children First bookstore from Lincoln Park to Andersonville drew gays and lesbians to the



A 2004 poll of local residents showed that more than 75 percent visit Andersonville’s local businesses weekly, citing the unique character of the businesses and charm of the area as primary reasons.



The northern portion of Clark Street in Edgewater is characterized by auto and commercial uses, with little pedestrian activity and high auto traffic counts.

community, among other new residents. Today, the area again feels like “Main Street,” with heavy foot traffic, a quaint character, and a thriving retail environment.

The Andersonville Chamber of Commerce, which has more than 200 members, formed a Special Service Area – funded by local commercial property and business owners – that pays for sidewalk cleaning, snow removal, and planter maintenance, as well as marketing, safety and parking initiatives. The chamber continues to produce Midsommarfest and several other special events each year, which help to contribute to the area’s popularity as a dining and shopping destination known for its mix of local merchants.

A 2004 poll of 512 Andersonville patrons showed that 72 percent said locally owned businesses attracted them to the neighborhood. More than three-quarters of respondents visit Andersonville businesses at least weekly, primarily restaurants (84.8 percent) and retail (76.6 percent), and cited uniqueness of businesses (71.7 percent) and neighborhood charm (69.0 percent) as their primary reasons for visiting the area. Nearly as many arrived on foot (41.6 percent) as by car (46.9 percent), while a whopping 80.9 percent said they preferred

shopping in a traditional neighborhood district over shopping malls or other types of areas.

The Edgewater community, of which Andersonville comprises the southwestern portion, runs from Foster to Devon avenues and from Ravenswood Avenue to the Lake. Edgewater holds a population of 62,200 in its relatively dense, one-and-a-half square-mile area, with an average household income of \$46,400, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The housing stock of Edgewater is very diverse with large single-family homes to high-rise apartments and condominiums along the lake. About two-thirds of the housing stock is renter occupied, primarily with people between 25 and 54 years old, nearly half of whom (41.4 percent) are college educated.

Andersonville contrasts in several ways with the northern portion of Clark Street in Edgewater. North Clark hosts a predominance of non-destination auto and commercial uses and a number of vacant spaces, with little retail activity or pedestrian use and a rather “sleepy” feel. The stretch mostly serves as a north-south thoroughfare for cars, with four traffic lanes and a 150-foot right of way – 130 percent wider than the 65-foot width of the street in Andersonville. North Clark has a far dif-

ferent “feel” based mainly on its expanse – but despite its large capacity, the area only receives 13,700 autos a day, according to the Chicago Department of Transportation.

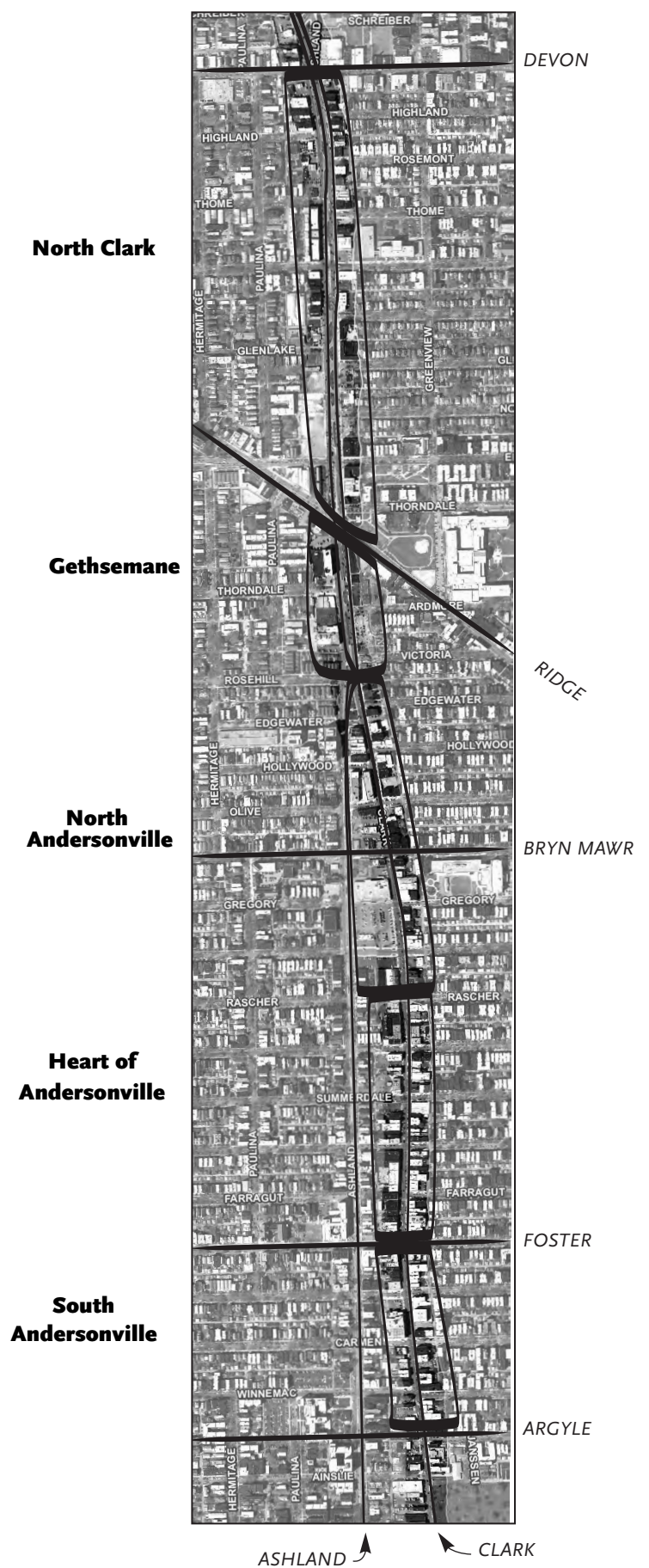
The two areas have vastly different assets and challenges. Andersonville draws shoppers and diners from surrounding areas, and has plenty of amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists and riders, including buses and a half-mile walk to the Red Line El. But customers and business owners perceive that the area offers little off-street parking. And it faces escalating retail rents and property taxes, causing occupancy costs to reach levels that could price out local merchants, a potential influx of chains that could dilute the area’s character, and budding interest from developers in teardowns to create larger structures that would be out-of-scale. Leaders need information about potential policy initiatives that could preserve and nurture its charm.

North Clark Street enjoys much more off-street parking. It has a nascent entertainment cluster anchored by the Raven Theatre, which was attracted in part through the establishment of a tax-increment financing (TIF) district. But the area must tackle an uninviting pedestrian environment, the lack of destination retailers other than Gethsemane Gardens at the far southern end (and in the center of the overall target area of the study), little complementary retail, and an overall lack of identity.

While these challenges contrast with those of Andersonville, leaders believe development of the two must be in sync. The appeal of the heart of Andersonville has attracted residents with greater disposable income, which could help draw needed development to North Clark; the wide expanse of North Clark helps to draw vehicular traffic toward Andersonville. But if the North Clark area includes big box stores in direct competition with Andersonville, or if Andersonville loses its unique identity to chain stores, the entire stretch of Clark Street from Ainslie Street to Devon Avenue would be weakened.

The Panel’s Charge

Ald. Mary Ann Smith (48th Ward), the Edgewater Development Corporation, the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce, and Andersonville Development Corporation asked the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Chicago and Campaign for Sensible Growth to organize a panel of experts to make recommendations on how to address these problems and achieve their goals. The local sponsors also brought a number of additional neighborhood organizations and block clubs into



the process, holding regular planning meetings for four months in advance of the formal panel, and provided outreach to Ald. Helen Shiller (46th Ward) and Ald. Patrick O'Connor (40th Ward) whom each have portions of the target area in their adjacent wards. The local sponsors worked together with ULI Chicago and the Campaign for Sensible Growth to develop a set of questions to frame the discussion, as well as an outreach process to involve a broad array of stakeholders from both Andersonville and the larger Edgewater neighborhood.

A two-day Technical Assistance Panel convened on Sept. 14 and 15, 2005 brought together developers, financiers, architects, lawyers, planners, and consultants to consider the challenges and possible solutions for the two sections of Clark Street. The TAP members reviewed detailed briefing books; interviewed area officials, residents and business owners; toured the neighborhood by bus and extensively on foot; and debated the possible approaches before developing a presentation delivered on Sept. 15.

The panel members considered how the community should:

- ▶ manage the pressures for redevelopment, rising lease rates and interest from national retailers, on the one hand, with an appropriate level of larger-scale development on the right sites;
- ▶ address parking, walkability, connectivity, transit, and traffic given the street's varied infrastructure from north to south;
- ▶ preserve, enhance and attract locally owned businesses through policies, programs, zoning, and other tools; and
- ▶ identify the most appropriate retail and commercial uses for the southern, middle and northern portions of Clark Street, particularly key sites such as the Antique Mall at 6122 N. Clark St., various auto-related uses along North Clark Street, and the stretch of parking lots near Clark and Catalpa streets.

Major Recommendations

The panel tried to find a balance among different views on how Clark Street should be developed, said panel chair Mary Ludgin, managing director at Heitman, who began the final presentation. Clark is a "large, complex corridor in a complex community," Ludgin noted, while gesturing to a map that showed the turf covered from south of Foster Avenue up to Devon Avenue.

While the parties who requested the panel mentally divided the street into two or three stretches, panel members saw five: the heart of Andersonville, the "Jewel" area immediately north, the "Gethsemane" area where Clark widens dramatically, the "Raven Theatre" area north of Ridge Avenue, and south Andersonville below Foster Street. "There were some nuances that made it five," Ludgin said.

In the heart of Andersonville, leaders should expand the mix of businesses, retaining the area's character with help from historic preservation tools, while seeking parking solutions. Immediately to the north, the panel recommended creating more continuity by addressing the area near Jewel as a site for a potential retail anchor, as well as a potential public gathering space. Near the Gethsemane Garden complex, where Ridge Avenue meets Clark Street, officials were advised to conceptualize a gateway to Andersonville. North of Ridge, the panel recommended a boulevard-like atmosphere, with wider sidewalks, planters, and redevelopment of key sites such as the Antique Mall. South of Foster, officials should close street wall gaps and find retail anchors for underutilized spaces.

In addition to specific ideas for each of those areas, the panel made detailed policy recommendations regarding local business incubation and preservation, parking and traffic management, affordable housing, density, and land use. On the business side, the panel recommended identifying "leaks" in retail spending by category, proactively targeting new businesses, and providing technical assistance to existing ones to improve profitability. Officials should explore creating a parking management district to maximize and market available off-street parking, raise the below-market cost of on-street parking, and consider changing one-way streets that are at least 32 feet wide to two-way to slow traffic.

To preserve affordable housing, the panel recommended working with owners to improve conditions, transferring properties to developers willing to preserve them, and targeting new, for-sale housing construction for the growing workforce. Leaders should not fear density, given its centrality to Andersonville's success, and they should explore design guidelines to make new construction fit in well with the feel of the neighborhood. Lastly, the panel urged leaders to reconsider their move toward downzoning as a counterproductive tactic, which could make it harder for local businesses to stay and compete by limiting the supply of space – and thus driving up rents.

A chart of the panel's major recommendations can be found at the end of the report.

Problem Statement

Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) are two-day sessions jointly sponsored by ULI Chicago and the Campaign for Sensible Growth. ULI members, who bring varied expertise – in such fields as real estate development, urban planning, law, engineering, and environmental advocacy – come together to provide recommendations on a set of questions related to land use and development.

The selected community creates a problem statement that lays out the key questions. Panelists familiarize themselves with background information prior to the meeting with an extensive briefing binder that includes a history of the community, current issues, demographic and economic statistics, maps, and any prior or ongoing analysis. Panelists then hear from key officials, business owners, and residents; examine and discuss the issues themselves, formulating their thoughts; and make recommendations at a public meeting that concludes the two days.

The panel addressed questions on several topics:

- (1) **Economics.** Given the dramatically increasing property values, tax assessments, and frequency of land speculation, how does the community manage the pressures for redevelopment, rising lease rates, and interest by national retailers, while balancing opportunities for larger scale development on appropriate sites?
- (2) **Infrastructure.** Given the varying infrastructure of the street from north to south, how does the community address parking, walkability, connectivity, transit, and traffic?
- (3) **Preservation/Incubation Tools.** What policies, programs, incentives, zoning, or other tools can be used to preserve, enhance and attract small, locally owned, independent business for the area (e.g. business incubators, formula retail ordinances, zoning, property tax reform, economic support, or incentive programs)? How does the community guarantee high standards of quality neighborhood design?
- (4) **Land Use.** Given the economics, infrastructure, and available preservation/incubation tools, what are the most appropriate or natural retail/commercial uses for the southern, middle and northern portions of Clark Street?



Ald. Mary Ann Smith (48th Ward) noted that local leaders have worked hard to improve pedestrian safety and a family friendly atmosphere.

- (5) **Critical Sites.** What advice can the panel give about the best (for the street and the community) uses of these sites or geographic locations: Antique Mall (6122 N. Clark St.); east side of Clark Street from Glenlake Avenue to Hood Avenue, automobile lots, the stretch of parking lots and curb cuts surrounding Clark Street and Catalpa Avenue, and the segment of Clark Street from Winona Street to Ainslie Street including the Ameritech building and other uses that detract from the pedestrian-friendly nature of the street.

Sponsor Presentations

The two-day session began with thoughts from the panel's sponsors. Ald. Mary Ann Smith (48th Ward) began by recounting how Clark Street was "in the toilet" 30 years ago, losing many of its original Swedish-owned businesses. It has rebounded in the years since thanks to those who stayed and "dug in their heels," in part by forming a neighborhood bank when the community was redlined by larger institutions, she said. The area's community cohesion, anchored by block groups throughout the area, has worked very well, and Andersonville now has less crime than surrounding neighborhoods, with one of the lowest rates in the city of Chicago.

Area leaders have tried to work on issues like improving pedestrian and bicycle safety, as well as maintaining and enhancing a family friendly atmosphere. They are now looking for tools to preserve the scale of the neighborhood and maintain existing structures while educating residents on the "quality of life implications of chain retail," such as truck traffic, Smith said. "Do we need a Best Buy in the neighborhood? No.



The Raven Theatre draws people to the northern portion of Clark Street but needs complementary uses such as restaurants to enliven the area.

How often would you go to a Best Buy, and what kind of trauma would it bring? How much do you lose when you lose your history and identity?"

Smith noted that a Target soon would open on Peterson Avenue near Clark Street, but said, "Peterson and Clark does not belong to pedestrians and doesn't need to. [Appropriate new development] depends on the scale and identity of the street." But, overall, the neighborhood does not want franchise businesses, she said, due to the outward flow of money spent there and the "loss of streetscape when large businesses take up several storefronts."

Smith told the panel that Andersonville attracts people because they "can walk everywhere," and the retail district "has most of what you want." North Clark Street "wouldn't necessarily be the same, but it has to be better," she said, adding that it could accommodate larger-scale development but needs to be more pedestrian friendly. She added that she's less concerned about the zoning of particular parcels than she is about the quality of proposed projects.

Ellen Shepard, executive director of the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce and Andersonville Development Corporation, said she would like to see better parking and transportation options for Andersonville, enhanced walk ability on North Clark Street, and tighter connections between the two areas; and she expressed concerns about galloping property taxes that could drive out locally owned businesses, including Latino-owned shops.

She said the chamber has been gathering input on zoning concerns from residents, businesses and property owners, praising the area's "strong officials [and] dedicated community groups open to progressive and innovative solutions." Shepard noted that Andersonville varies significantly from block to block in part due to downzoning imposed on the east side of Clark Street (in Smith's ward) but not on the west side (in the ward of Ald. Patrick O'Connor) or south of Foster (in the ward of Ald. Helen Shiller).

Adam Burck, executive director of the Edgewater Development Corporation, referred to North Clark Street as "fly-over country," saying nothing draws people to the area north of Ridge Avenue except for the Raven Theatre, which needs restaurants and other complementary uses nearby. The stretch contains incompatible uses such as car-repair shops and almost no housing, most of which is on side streets. Developers have been focused on nearby Broadway Avenue, but are shifting their focus to Clark Street due to its lower upfront investment, he said.

Shepard described Andersonville's history and said that the Swedish tradition is now augmented with a more diverse ethnic mix that includes Middle Eastern and Latino-owned businesses, as well as a significant gay and lesbian population. The area's cohesive identity, smaller-scale architecture and pedestrian flow face threats from doubling and tripling property taxes, which could destabilize the retail core, she said.

Although there is "nothing intrinsically evil" about chain retail, she added, it "would cause the area to lose its identity" and harm the unique neighborhood economy. Other issues for Andersonville include a perceived lack of sufficient off-street parking, geographic breaks such as the corner of Catalpa Avenue and Clark Street with its three adjacent parking lots, and the potential displacement of Latino-owned and other small businesses north of Catalpa Avenue and south of Ridge Avenue, Shepard said.

Burck summed up the twin desires of the two adjoining stretches of Clark Street: for Andersonville, the question is "how do we keep what we have?" he said. For North Clark Street, it's "how do we get something going?"

Bus Tour

Shepard, Burck, and local architect and community resident Thom Greene took the panelists on a mid-morning bus and

walking tour of Clark Street; panelists did quite a bit more pavement-pounding later in the day.

As the bus left Andersonville proper, Burck gestured to new homes built on the parking lot of what had been Edgewater Community Hospital (now shuttered) that sold for \$600,000 to \$750,000, illustrating the difficulties of creating affordable housing in the community. He pointed to Gethsemane Gardens, the only retail magnet north of Andersonville, which stretches for two blocks near the junction of Clark Street and Ashland Avenue just to the west. Burck noted that Ridge Avenue, which bisects North Clark Street, is roaring all day with traffic going to and from Lake Shore Drive, which makes it a particularly forbidding crossing for pedestrians.

Just north of Ridge Avenue, panelists saw a large clearing that awaits construction of a brand new fire station, which may also pose a formidable obstacle to pedestrians and retail activity when it is built. A bit further north is the Antique Mall, which has a small inlet on Clark Street but widens into a larger site that stretches behind several adjacent lots, creating the potential for a more sizable development especially if combined with other properties that front the street. Devon Avenue and Clark Street north of Devon are more like lower Clark Street in scale, while buildings around the corner in the 6300 block of Clark have a more historic feel to them.

Greene said the stretch between Ridge and Devon avenues is not pedestrian friendly, with too many “missing teeth.” The median planter down the center of Clark Street has helped the look, but has not made the street more walkable, he said,

while the traffic counts it tallies do not justify the width. Shepard said retail businesses do not want to move to an area showing little vibrancy, but North Clark Street needs a “pioneer” or three willing to take a chance. Greene said the area needs “several anchors. There’s no one walking.”

Burck said residents probably would embrace “entertainment-type” uses that would complement the Raven Theatre, but might complain about what they would bring – particularly those with liquor licenses. He pointed out a six-story building in the 5900-block of Clark that “provides people.” Any potential development on the Edgewater Hospital site itself is on hold due to ongoing litigation; the hospital building, which Burck termed a “white elephant,” is still standing.

The northern part of Andersonville (just south of Ridge Avenue) has a number of Latino and Asian-owned businesses, as well as some vacant storefronts, “but fewer and fewer as time goes on,” Shepard said. The 5700-block has seen more foot traffic, but that could result in higher rents, pushing out the ethnic businesses, she added. Greene pointed to the brunch hotspot M Henry as a major reason for the “energy moving northward.” But he said the Jewel and KFC site, put in place 25 years ago when a historic building was razed, presents a “vast wasteland” of parking that interrupts pedestrian momentum.

Further south, Shepard pointed out the Calo Theatre building in the 5400-block, which hosts “lots of small, independent businesses” and enjoys an “owner interested in historic preservation.” Many in the neighborhood are apprehensive



Community representatives expressed concern that higher rents may be driving out locally owned ethnic businesses.



Popular brunch spot M Henry attracts people to the northern portion of Andersonville.

about what will result from the sale of the “Landmark of Andersonville” building that no longer serves as an incubator.

South of Foster, Clark Street is “slowly coming back,” with new restaurants and condominium buildings, Greene said, with “development filling in from Wrigleyville north to Andersonville.” But the pedestrian feel of the street does not really start until about Winnemac Avenue, due to a cemetery on the east side of the street, then the imposing SBC building on the west.

Stakeholder Comments

Panelists met with groups of residents, business owners, and other officials in the Andersonville and Edgewater communities. One business owner said the area sees new residents all the time, but the retail strip’s foundation hasn’t changed, describing it as “the quiet money that walks up the street.” She added: “If they’re coming to my store, they’re going to every business on the street.” Bus tours also roll up, “and we all get a crack at ’em.”

Another businessperson and chamber of commerce officer said housing prices have doubled in the past four years, pricing out some people, but a banker who is also a longtime resident said his customer base has remained stable. A block club president said he and his neighbors are leery of chain businesses, preferring local ownership and feeling like parking is already enough of a problem. He said residential development on the hospital site could worsen that problem.



Community residents expressed a desire to see the Jewel parking lot area assume a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere.

The block club president said he would like to see new development that goes “out” rather than “up,” particularly north of Ridge Avenue, where more businesses are needed. He would like to see the Jewel parking lot, or at least part of it, become a park with a gazebo-type structure and “keep the pedestrian-friendly flavor moving northward.” But the torrential intersection with Ridge would be difficult to bridge, he acknowledged. “It is what it is,” he said.

A resident and development board member questioned the ability of the neighborhood to support retail continuously from Foster to Devon avenues. The Andersonville segment of the corridor serves the neighborhood and some regional traffic, but does not strive to serve the regional community. She expressed a need to study the opportunities within the transitional areas of the corridor that currently have lower rents allowing some of the businesses to survive, and serve a particular niche within the community. She asked: How can we help these businesses to remain without asking the property owners to take a hit on rents? When they renovate or when demand allows owners to raise rents, are there steps that makes it feasible to keep rents affordable for small businesses?

In the core area, property owners are sometimes willing to sit down around the table and explore creative ideas to keep longtime, locally owned businesses in place even as rents skyrocket. Angel’s restaurant, for example, managed to stay after community pressure on their building’s owner led to a compromise on the landlord’s desired rent increase.

“Clark Street’s a little forbidding. We were hoping we would trigger more restaurant and retail activity, and it hasn’t happened. ... We’re hoping our part of Clark Street gets to be a destination.”

— president of Raven Theatre

The block club president said residents would like smaller scale entertainment and are concerned about liquor licenses and the noise they bring. He and his neighbors would prefer more “family oriented” entertainment, he said, adding that “people don’t want to see locally owned restaurants replaced by a Chipotle.” The resident who sits on the CDC board said he “moved here because of the mix of uses” and does not see as much of a parking problem as others do.

The president of Raven Theatre said parking is definitely not a problem for his patrons, with a 20-space lot and plenty of



In the Heart of Andersonville, panelists recommended continued support of unique local businesses that give the area its character.

street parking on North Clark Street – but patrons have nothing to do within walking distance before or after a show. “Clark Street’s a little forbidding,” he said. “We were hoping we would trigger more restaurant and retail activity, and it hasn’t happened. ... We’re hoping our part of Clark Street gets to be a destination.”

The historic society president said he would not want to see the character of the neighborhood change, and that chains sometimes want to tear down historic structures. But a banker and chamber of commerce president said chains “wouldn’t necessarily be bad” on the wider part of Clark. “Clark Street is so many different things on one street,” he said.

A longtime business owner said higher density, particularly if it involves height in the commercial area, would do nothing beneficial and probably would aggravate the parking issue. He might support developers of high-rises paying into a fund to build a parking structure. His customers “pay anyway, and given the speed of the meter maids, they sometimes pay a lot,” he said. He said the chambers of commerce on several occasions have talked to landlords about steep rent increases on businesses and have reached a “meeting of the minds.”

Final Presentation

After one-and-a-half days of deliberation, taking into account all they had read, heard and seen on Clark Street, panelists delivered their final presentation to an audience of about 150 at the Raven Theatre on Sept. 15, 2005.

Panel Chair Mary Ludgin, managing director at Heitman, opened the presentation by thanking Ald. Smith, Ald. O’Connor and Ald. Shiller, as well as Ellen Shepard and Adam Burck “for educating us on the nuances.” She also gave thanks to “those who told us their stories” and added that the panel attempted to reflect the variety of views on subjects such as chain retail in its recommendations. “Where you stand depends on where you sit,” Ludgin said. “Many of us have friends here, eat here, shop here – but none of us know it as well as you do.”

Ludgin gestured to a detailed map on an easel to her left in describing the “turf” the panel covered along Clark Street, from south of Foster Avenue north to Devon Avenue, which she described as “a large, complex corridor in a complex community.” She said the panel’s charge was to identify “tools to preserve and nurture Andersonville and to develop a vision for



Panelists suggested investigating opportunities to create a parkway between Ridge and Elmdale Avenue to calm traffic and create a more pedestrian friendly environment.

North Clark” that would foster walkability, attractiveness, and economic viability.

The panel divided Clark Street into five districts in analyzing what tools and strategies were needed, Ludgin said. These included the Heart of Andersonville, from Foster north to Rascher Street; North Andersonville near the Jewel site, from Rascher to Bryn Mawr Avenue; the Gethsemane area near the garden complex, from Bryn Mawr to Ridge Street; North Clark, from Ridge Street to Devon; and South Andersonville, from Foster south to about Ainslie Street.

Ludgin added that the panel also would provide broad recommendations on policy issues like local business incubation and preservation, parking and traffic, affordable housing, density, and land use. Referring to the area’s history of business incubation, she said, “You have a wonderful energy in this neighborhood. How do you bring it into the 2000s and beyond?”

Geographic Recommendations

Ludgin’s colleague Jennifer Boss, senior vice president at Heitman, began the presentation of the five sub-zones the panel identified. **The Heart of Andersonville**, from Foster Avenue north to Rascher Street, enjoys a pedestrian friendly mix of locally owned specialty shops and restaurants that are key to the area’s identity, she said. The area is still evolving, she explained, with new condominium buildings and “great, new local merchants” continuing to set up shop.

The panel recommended continued expansion of the merchant mix for a broader neighborhood shopping experience, while supporting the funky businesses that will continue to

give Andersonville its unique character as the market evolves. Political and business leaders should preserve historic structures that also further the area’s charm, while working to identify parking solutions, Boss said.

Panelists could foresee an extension of the pedestrian friendly atmosphere in the **Jewel** area from Rascher Street to Bryn Mawr Avenue, Boss said. “It could be an extension northward of what you already have,” she said of the stretch, now characterized by a mix of soft and hard retail uses and some gaps in the street wall. The Jewel site itself does not have much development considering its size, and tends to halt pedestrian momentum, but serves a neighborhood need, Boss said.

To create greater continuity with the core area, the panel recommended looking at the adjacent Jewel and Thybony properties as an anchor that could include a park site or plaza to help fill in the “missing teeth” in the street wall. “We thought this was a nice area for a public gathering space,” Boss said, comparing its potential to that of Lincoln Square. Leaders also will need to evaluate parking and access options, and work to preserve historic structures and local businesses, including Hispanic and Asian ones, she said.

The **Gethsemane** area from Bryn Mawr to Ridge Avenue is characterized by the unusual street configuration where Clark merges with Ashland, and a few large businesses, most notably the garden complex itself, which have heavier parking requirements as regional draws, Boss said. The panel recommended building greater continuity by creating a gateway to the south while evaluating underutilized or incompatible parcels, and identifying succession issues to help preserve the larger businesses into the future, she said.

Panelist Maxine Mitchell, president of Applied Real Estate Analysis, Inc., detailed the final two sub-zones. The Raven Theatre area further north on Clark, from Ridge north to Devon Avenue, probably will remain a distinct area from Andersonville, with its much heavier traffic flow headed to and from Lake Shore Drive and south on Ashland, Mitchell said. “It doesn’t have the same pedestrian feel that the heart of Andersonville has,” she said, with fewer shops, larger users of space, and a predominance of auto-oriented businesses.

Nonetheless, with the Raven Theatre building as an anchor, the panel saw the potential to “change the feel of the area,” Mitchell said, “building on this wonderful theater complex, which, fortunately, is in the center.” However, the much greater street width of North Clark will dictate differences in the character and use of the street, Mitchell said. The razing of properties to create the fire station removed blighted uses; but, unfortunately, the station does not contribute to the economic viability of the area, adding to problems created by other auto-dependent uses, such as the car wash, used car lots, and the bank branch.

Yet those concerned about big box retail need not be, as the lot depths do not allow any significant big box sites. At the most, a “medium box” could be sited at the Antique Mall given its greater depth than surrounding properties, she said.

Panelist Michael LaRue, president of LaRue Associates, added that North Clark’s “enormous roadway and lack of consistent street wall” make taller buildings more appropriate for the scale. He added that a development of less than three stories would not be economically viable. Buildings could be “taller than one would want south of Ridge,” he said. “What’s the right number? That’ll come out in the wash as potential developers come along.”

The Antique Mall site would be more attractive if assembled with the adjacent brake shop and used car lot, LaRue said. “That would create a footprint for an interesting mixed-use complex,” he said. The area has potential as a theater and live entertainment district that could include restaurants and residential development and draw in auto traffic from elsewhere. “It could be a destination area,” he said. The Raven has been successful, and “it should be a priority to build on that success” with another theater or other entertainment.

To enhance the walkability of North Clark Street, the panel recommended investigating opportunities to create a parkway

look by either reducing the width to traffic lanes or removing a lane on the west side of Clark between Ridge and Elmdale avenues. This may allow space to add a bike lane, allow parallel parking on both sides, place building planters, and widen the sidewalks to invite more pedestrian traffic North of Clark. “We wanted not to constrict traffic but to make it safer,” said Todd Meyer, director of planning with The HOK Planning Group. “Even though the buildings are far apart, it can still be a pleasant experience.”

LaRue added that the edge plantings could create the opportunity for restaurants to offer al fresco-style dining. Setting the walk signal at the intersection of Ridge and Clark at 3.5 feet per second would give pedestrians more time to cross the intersection and could encourage at least some northward movement from Andersonville, the panel said. The insertion of bulb-outs – extensions of the curb to shorten the walking distance for pedestrians – at that and other key intersections also could improve conditions for pedestrians.

South Andersonville, from Foster south to Ainslie Avenue, also offers the potential to expand the vitality of the core with restaurant uses already moving in that direction, Mitchell said. But the area needs greater continuity – in particular a solution to the break in the street wall created by the SBC switching station – and anchors to support a broader business mix. As with other areas along Clark Street, officials need to consider parking and access options for this stretch, as well as preservation of historic structures and local businesses, she said.

Policy Recommendations

In addition to its geography-specific recommendations, the panel addressed several broader policy issues: business incubation and preservation, parking and traffic, affordable housing, and density and land use.

Business Incubation and Preservation

Economic development corporations (EDCs) and chambers of commerce should take the lead to incubate and preserve local businesses and maximize their opportunities, said Michael Shuman, vice president of Training and Development Corporation in Washington, D.C. “Our recommendation is to honor the strong small business community and to expand and build on it,” he said. “We see business incubation as a critical activity. Action needs to take place on several different fronts.”



Panelists suggested that underutilized sites such as this Antique Mall could become a physical incubator for developing new local businesses.

Political and business leaders need to identify pluggable “leaks” of consumer spending outside of the neighborhood that could be new opportunities, the panel said. They need to institute training for the “plenty of talented entrepreneurs who do not have businesses, do not have storefronts.” This could include mentoring, youth entrepreneurship, physical incubators, and links with colleges, Shuman said. They also must invest in local businesses by developing mechanisms for mobilizing local capital, including savings, pensions and investments, he said.

The Antique Mall could become a physical incubator to develop new businesses, Shuman said. Existing businesses need specialty technical assistance such as loan packaging, small business education, merchandising and marketing, staff training, help identifying financial support programs, and assistance with “negotiating the vast number of regulations that frustrate small business people,” Shuman said.

Panelist Jim Kaplan, managing principal of James Kaplan Companies, Inc., augmented Shuman’s comments about leakage. “What’s missing?” he said. “There’s a certain something you want to buy that you can’t get in the neighborhood. The idea is one of keeping you in the neighborhood – and bringing in others from the outside.” Those visiting the Raven Theatre, he added, might want to go out to dinner or visit a shop or two. “What else is there that you can make a day of it?” Kaplan asked.

“The good thing about Andersonville is that it’s not a shopping center,” LaRue added. “The bad thing about Andersonville is that it’s not a shopping center.” By the latter, he meant that a shopping center would have a more organized plan to fill in retail gaps, while a neighborhood shopping district “cannot declare by fiat” what it will have and will not have. “It’s a lot harder to do,” he said. “Chambers need to create a hit list of the most desirable, next most desirable, and least desirable.”

The EDCs and chambers need to become “want creators,” LaRue said, adding businesses that create wants and extending them north to North Clark Street. They should construct a database of vacant spaces, leases coming up, and the particulars of the “last dozen deals” so they can tell prospective retailers what lease rates and property taxes probably will be.

A prudent developer would approach the chamber, ask who is looking for space, and describe the space they developer has, Kaplan said. Hopefully the chamber will have a waiting list, which is more likely if EDCs have been out identifying independent merchants, and – if they’re really proactive – calling them. If an existing merchant wants to grow, EDCs should be finding them information about area developers who are looking for tenants and putting the interested parties in touch, he said.

Business leaders should aim for concentration in categories that benefit from it, Ludgin said. “Certain categories benefit from being with businesses of like type,” she said. For example, if you’re shopping for a dress, one store might not have it in your size, so you’re more likely to make the trip given two or three options.

Panelists recommended against a formula retail ordinance that would ban chain stores, Shuman said, with their views “ranging from ambivalence to deep opposition.” Panelists felt the aforementioned strategies would do enough to preserve locally owned businesses – and that a formula retail ordinance would be a too-blunt instrument that would “dampen competition, create divisiveness, and drain energy from the important business-building activities,” he said.

The panel was “not neutral about different types of development,” and recommended prioritizing local businesses wherever possible because they maintain character and greater control of the economy and promote a stronger sense of community, Shuman said. As such, incubation should be used to



Instead of the perceived parking shortage, the real problem is access to existing parking lots in the community, panelists said.

create them, he said. “The way to spread locally owned businesses is not through protection; it is through innovation,” he said.

However, if local leaders did pass a formula retail ordinance, it should apply to Andersonville only, Shuman said. Chains might harm Andersonville, but “North Clark desperately needs additional economic opportunities.” There, chains could add jobs and vitality, along with a diversity of price points and expanded selection and depth in an area that has limited availability for new local businesses, he said. But business leaders should work to find chains that match the local character, adhere to urban development patterns, and are compatible with the rest of the area, Meyer said. “We’re not promoting suburban sprawl,” he said.

Parking and Traffic

Panelist David Hudson, executive vice president of the Congress for the New Urbanism, shifted gears to provide the panel’s recommendations on parking. Its conclusion was that the problem, even in central Andersonville, is not a lack of parking, but a lack of access to existing parking – in sometimes-empty lots owned by businesses along the stretch. Spending the \$20,000 to \$40,000 per spot that it would cost for a structured parking lot would be a “mal-distribution of resources,” he said. “It’s a massive investment.”

Instead, political and business leaders should create a parking management district in conjunction with the existing Special Service Area that would provide valet service in the evening, insurance, snow removal, and other maintenance. “It is a vital

need, and it will change over time,” Hudson said. Empty parking lots are “a blight. They break the street wall and deter people from walking.” Many of them only are occupied for six hours per day, he added.

Given the tight street parking situation, the current on-street spaces, which cost 25 cents per hour, need to be “taken to market,” Hudson said. “You’re giving it away.” Area leaders need to consider installing machines that give them the ability to adjust costs based on demand. Leaders also could look to Highland Park, Ill., which acquired several lots devoted to public parking that permit short-term customer parking for free and then begin charging to encourage space turnover.

“The solution to parking is not always to build more spots.”

– panelist David Hudson

“The solution to parking is not always to build more spots,” Hudson said. If leaders do continue to believe they need more, they should create a Parking Improvement District as did Pasadena, Calif., and use the increase in street meter revenue to finance parking opportunities such as structured lots, as well as other community amenities. Pasadena also created a structured lot but charges more for its street parking, Hudson said. Andersonville should definitely continue its ban on residential permit parking as part of the mix, he said.

Kevin Hardman, vice president of Kimball Hill Urban Centers, added that any “parking problem” that exists in Andersonville is a function of the area’s success and popularity. “It should be turned into a positive,” he said.



Panelists recommended strategies for preserving affordable housing such as this rental building on Clark Street.

Whenever possible, access to parking lots should be created off Ashland Ave. to avoid extra traffic on Clark Street, Meyer said.

On another transportation-related issue, the panel recommended several measures to increase pedestrian friendliness and safety throughout the corridor. While there is streetscaping in the Andersonville portion, more can be done throughout the area. Crosswalks, signal countdowns, and bulb-outs should be created and added to, with “Walk” signals calculated based on a speed of 3.5 feet per second rather than four feet per second to account for the pace of the elderly and young children, he said.

While north-south movement along Clark is strong, east-west movement on side streets does not flow as smoothly, Meyer said. Some streets do not cross Clark and many are one-way. For example, a produce vendor in northern Andersonville has a parking lot, but some customers have to drive around the block to get to it. One-way streets interrupt the flow and create congestion, Hudson explained.

The panel recommended creating two-way streets where the width is 32 feet or more, to slow traffic, decrease congestion,

and improve connectivity and safety. That would allow for nine feet each way for cars and seven feet for parking, Meyer said. “That’s about as tight as you’d want to go,” he said. “We want to slow things down [to improve the environment] for pedestrians.”

Affordable Housing

Peter Levavi of Brinshore Development presented the panel’s recommendations on preserving affordable housing. He said area leaders, business owners, and residents had expressed concerns about preservation, with the need to both renovate existing units above retail shops and, most importantly, protect three large buildings “that house immigrant populations, which are all at risk of being lost.”

“We need to figure out a way to infuse large amounts of capital into those buildings,”

Levavi said, to rehab the rentals through “all the wonderful programs we have” and working to transfer ownership if needed to owners will-

ing to improve existing conditions for households at 30 to 60 percent of area median income. “If you lose those buildings, you will lose a large amount of the diversity,” he said.

Resources to protect them could include Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding, tax-exempt bonds, low-income housing tax credits, HOME funds, state and city housing trusts, and the use of Cook County’s Class 9, which reduces on going property taxes for all new or rehabbed properties in which at least 35 percent of the housing is set aside as affordable.

New affordable housing is likely to be “for sale” rather than rental, Levavi said, and should be included in all new residential for-sale construction. “It’s not for low-income families. It’s more for working-class families,” he said, adding that side streets will be a richer source for this income group than Clark Street itself.

Density and Land Use

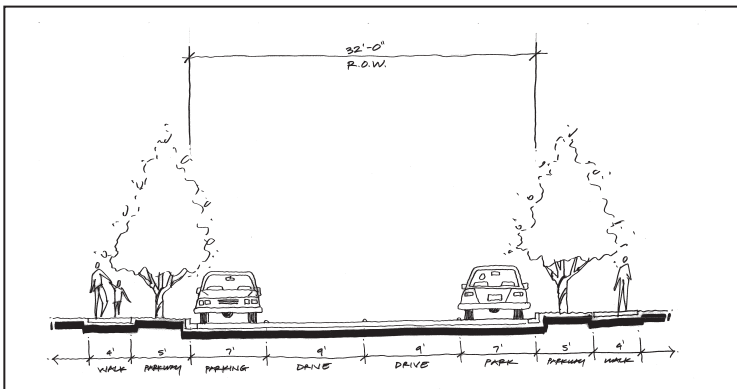
Although some community members and leaders have expressed concerns about too much density, the panel believes the success of Andersonville and North Clark is a function of density as well as factors like cultural heritage, architectural uniqueness, local entrepreneurship, and diversity.

“The reason Andersonville works is because of density,” Kevin Hardman said. “People can walk places.” Allowing mixed-use development along Clark with multiple stories will add to the customer base for retail stores. Sufficient density along Clark Street is critically important to the northern section of the corridor.

Leaders should focus discussions about density on topics like economic sustainability, diversity, walkability and vibrancy, and ask those opposed what specifically they don’t like about density. Does it bring too many units? Does it make parking too scarce? Are proposed buildings too high? Reframe the issue to get at what people are truly objecting to, Hardman said.

Hudson presented bar graphs showing that small-scale retail depends on foot traffic in urban neighborhoods, with pedestrians and bicyclists comprising a significantly higher percentage of shoppers in urban areas than in others. As density increases, car use decreases, with the average adult traveling only five miles in a vehicle per day in the densest neighborhoods, compared with 20 miles per day in the least dense areas. The panel showed a picture of the North Side Federal Savings and Loan Association building at Foster and Clark to demonstrate how “density can fit” in an urban neighborhood.

“Neighborhood economic sustainability depends upon pedestrians,” Hudson said. “The closer they are, the more likely they are to walk.” Auto use is 25 percent lower and pedestrian population 30 percent higher in cities than other geographic areas, he said, providing a “hedge against [some] national chains because pedestrians aren’t their format.” On a scale of one to 10, from most car use to most pedestrians, Andersonville rates a nine-and-a-half, Hudson said. “Daily vehicle miles drop drastically when you increase density,” he said. “Think about that before you battle that new [high-density] local development. The retail you want to keep needs it.”



Panelists recommended converting certain east-west one-way streets to two-way streets to slow traffic and improve pedestrian flow.

Managed density can enhance the area not only due to a higher customer base, but a wider array of housing options and more transit choices, the panel said. Hardman said panelists had heard more fear about height than anything else, especially in the heart of Andersonville, but “there are appropriate places for height,” he said. “There are missing teeth where density can go.”

“The reason Andersonville works is because of density. People can walk places.”

— panelist Kevin Hardman

One way of gaining more density without teardowns is to encourage air rights development over existing one-story structures worthy of preservation. Creative design solutions, such as setbacks to disguise upper floors, can ease people’s fears about height disrupting the scale of the street-wall, Hardman said. (He added that the panel was not necessarily recommending a certain height for a certain area.) Area leaders do need to reframe the conversation and show skeptics that density leads to “more people on the street, which feeds on itself.”

The panel recommended against further downzoning, in spite of its upsides in preserving existing character by reducing teardowns and increasing community control over development decisions. There are “good reasons to downzone,” Levavi said, “but it has a perverse effect of increasing the rents.” That’s because of increased competition for available space and lower economy of scale – and it worsens the troubles of local retailers in competing against chains, while hiking development costs. The panel encouraged local leaders to use other tools.

The community has limited short-term options to discourage land speculation, which does exist with many buildings and lots being un- or underused, Shuman said. “Speculation is always in the eye of the beholder,” he said. “Nevertheless, the issue is real.” Empty properties are an eyesore, prevent critical mass in residential and retail from being reached, and drive down property values.

In the short run, the panel recommended a combination of community outreach and recruitment of purchasers who want to develop parcels to their fullest potential. Longer term, the community could seek property tax reforms or a community land trust to purchase properties and put them back into use more quickly.

Panel Recommendations

Heart of Andersonville

- Stretching from Foster north to Rascher, this area enjoys a pedestrian-friendly mix of locally owned restaurants and specialty stores, with a rich history, unique character, and ethnic businesses that need support.
- Local business leaders and political officials should work to expand the mix of shops and preserve those in place to help retain the area's character.
- Other needs for this central stretch include parking solutions and historic preservation of decades-old structures.

North Andersonville

- Stretching from Rascher north to Bryn Mawr, this area offers the potential to expand the core retail strip, but doing so would involve addressing the mix of hard and soft retail uses and gaps in the street wall that disrupt the flow, particularly the Jewel lot.
- Officials should create greater continuity with the Heart of Andersonville by filling street wall gaps and addressing the area near Jewel and the Thybony paint store which offers a potential site for a retail anchor that would enhance the retail mix. Development there also could include a public gathering space.
- This area also could use an evaluation of parking options and tools for preservation of both historic structures and local businesses.

Gethsemane Area

- Sitting astride the V-shaped junction of Clark Street and Ashland Avenue, this area has primarily larger businesses that require considerably more parking.
- This area offers potential as a gateway to the Heart of Andersonville.
- Capturing the area's potential involves addressing underutilized parcels and some incompatible uses, as well as succession issues at existing businesses.

North Clark

- Stretching from Ridge Avenue north to Devon Avenue, this area is anchored by the Raven Theatre building, but otherwise contains mostly incompatible uses and enjoys little pedestrian activity. Instead, it serves as a thoroughfare for commuter traffic.
- Officials should examine mixed-use redevelopment of key parcels like the Antique Mall, which could support a "medium box," and add entertainment and restaurant uses to support the Raven Theatre along with housing.
- The street width dictates a different character and use than in the Heart of Andersonville. Current uses include used-car lots that create gaping holes in the street wall. While lot depths are too shallow for big box retail, this area offers potential for development that will improve the pedestrian environment.
- One option to enhance walkability is the creation of a boulevard atmosphere, with two traffic lanes in each direction, parallel parking on both sides, wider sidewalks, and planters. Walking time at the intersection of Ridge and Clark should be set at 3.5 feet per second to give pedestrians more time to cross the street.
- Taller buildings here would enhance the streetscape, serving as a complement to the width of the street. Further, the added density provided by such development would bring additional customers to support retail activity at grade level; anything less than three stories will not be economically viable.

South Andersonville

- Stretching from Foster south to Ainslie, this area provides the potential to expand Andersonville's vitality southward with a pedestrian oriented – but currently non-cohesive – streetscape.
- Officials must create greater continuity by bridging street wall gaps like the SBC switching station, and finding anchors to support a broader retail mix.
- Parking management strategies can enhance the viability of this congested area as well, by reducing the traffic of cars circling the area looking for a space to park.

Policy: Business Incubation

- The chambers of commerce and economic development corporations should continue to take the lead in helping existing businesses thrive, and should enhance services and products for these businesses, including planning by identifying “pluggable” leaks in retail spending; training through mentoring, youth entrepreneurship, physical incubators, and links with colleges; and investing by developing mechanisms for mobilizing local capital into startup businesses.
- Direct technical assistance should include loan packaging, small business education, help with merchandising and marketing, staff training, identification of financial support programs, and regulatory assistance.
- New retail should be proactively targeted by noting gaps in the store mix, identifying expiring leases, recruiting retailers, and working to create agglomerations in categories such as apparel, which benefit from co-locating.
- A formula retail ordinance to ban chain shops and restaurants is a very blunt instrument that would divert political energy. The objectives of such an ordinance could be met through other means such as incubation and nurturing local businesses. If passed, formula retail should apply to Andersonville only.

Parking and Traffic

- The heart of Andersonville has plenty of parking – but much of it is not accessible; officials should explore a shared-use arrangement for existing spaces. Creating more parking lots may not be necessary.
- Where possible, entrances to parking lots should come off Ashland.
- The area’s prohibition on residential permit parking in Ald. Smith’s 48th Ward should continue.
- The cost of on-street parking, currently underpriced at 25 cents per hour, should be “taken to market.” Local leaders also should explore the installation of parking machines similar to those installed in the Loop, and creation of a parking improvement district similar to one in Pasadena, Calif. The additional street meter revenue should be dedicated for the local area, and could be used to finance parking opportunities such as a structured lot, as well as other community amenities.
- Pedestrian enhancements such as crosswalks and bulb-outs to slow traffic on Clark Street should be continued and enhanced.
- One-way streets wider than 32 feet should be changed to two-way. This would slow traffic, decrease congestion, improve connectivity – and would make roadways safer for pedestrians.
- A parking management district, perhaps in conjunction with the existing Special Service Area, could handle shared parking arrangements between landowners, valet parking, insurance, and snow removal and other maintenance costs for lot owners that agree to participate in a shared-use program.

Affordable Housing

- Several affordable rental buildings in the area could be at risk. To preserve them, officials should work with owners to improve conditions through TIF funding and other means, transfer properties to developers willing to preserve housing, and leverage such sources as tax-exempt bonds, low-income housing tax credits, HOME funds, state and city housing trusts, and Class 9.
- New construction is likely to be for-sale rather than rental, aimed at households at or near the area median income, and could draw subsidies through the TIF or CPAN.

Density

- Density is among the main reasons for Andersonville’s success, providing economic sustainability, diversity, walkability, and vibrancy.
- Creative design solutions such as setbacks of upper floors can make higher buildings more appropriate to the scale of a narrower street.
- Small-scale retail depends on foot traffic: urban dwellers shop on foot far more often than people in the suburbs or town settings, and car use decreases markedly as density increases.
- If managed properly, density would enhance the area by creating greater transit choice, housing options, and customer bases for retailers.
- Encouraging air rights development over existing one-story structures worthy of preservation is another way to gain more density without teardowns. These upper floors also could be set back from the property line if necessary to block distracting views from street level.

Land Use

- Downzoning reduces teardowns and increases community control over development decisions – but the fiercer competition for space and reduced economies-of-scale result in higher rents and housing costs, and make it harder for local businesses to compete against chain retail.
- To battle land speculation, which probably does exist, officials can rely upon persuasion and their ability to recruit purchasers in the short run. Longer-term solutions could include property tax reforms or a community investment fund to purchase properties and speed them back into use.

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