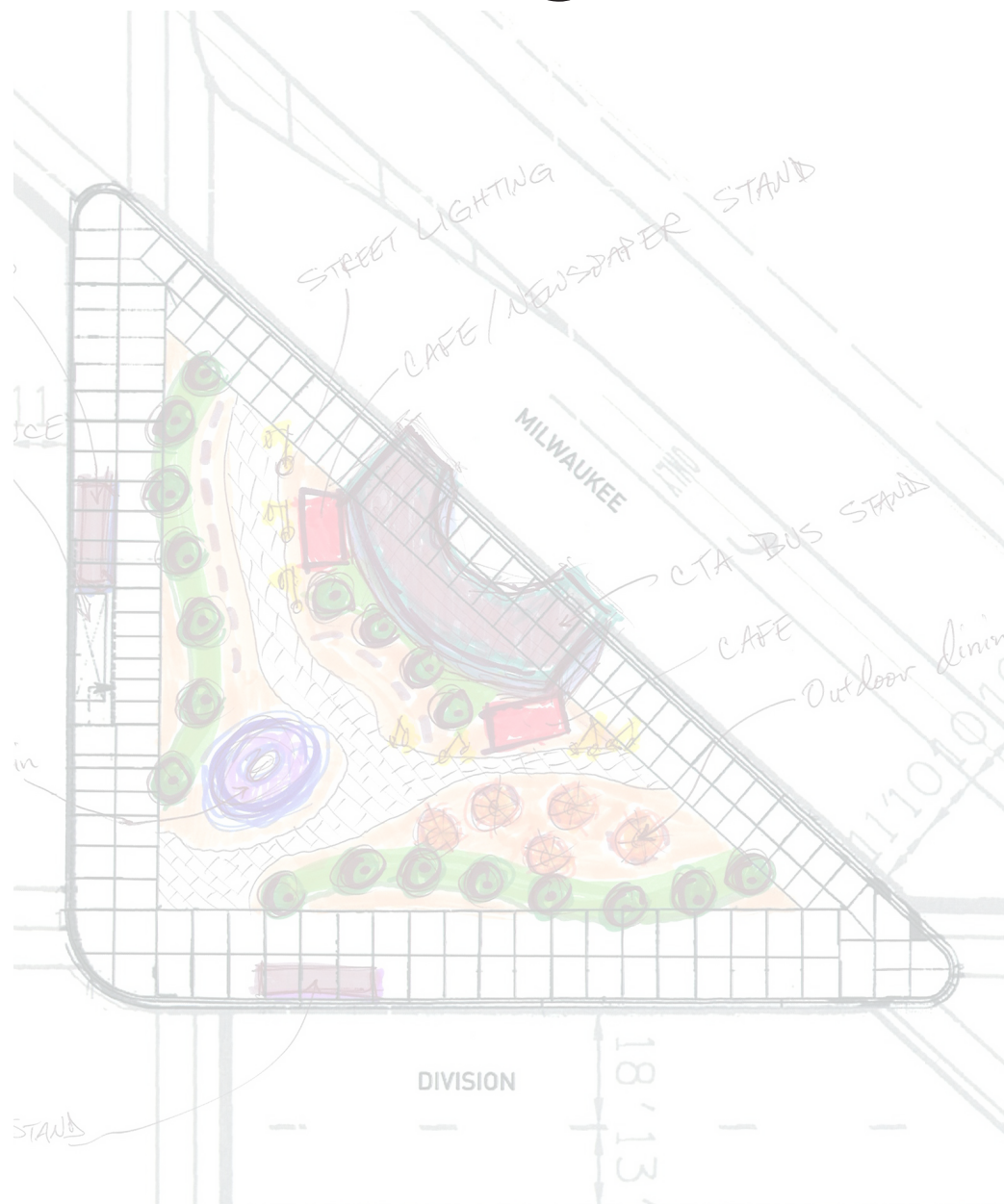
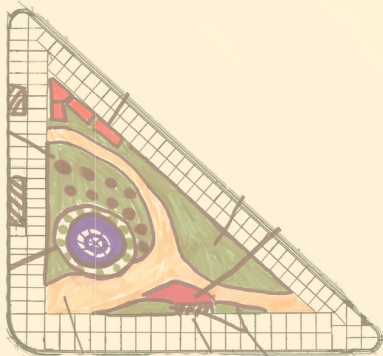
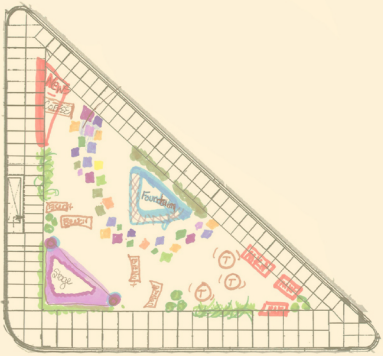
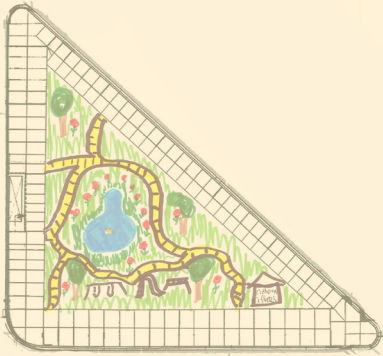


Placemaking at the Polish Triangle



Placemaking Chicago

Cities around the world are recognizing that safe, well-used public spaces are just as important to healthy communities as quality housing and reliable transportation. Placemaking Chicago, a project of the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), supports the creation and care of public spaces across Chicagoland through policy advocacy, close collaboration with public agencies and elected officials, direct outreach with residents and community organizations, and an active social media and online presence. Through Placemaking Chicago, MPC helps create and enhance public spaces that bring people together and foster healthier, more social, and economically viable communities.

metroplanning.org
placemakingchicago.com

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The Metropolitan Planning Council is grateful to the following funders for their support:

Prince Charitable Trusts

The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation

And to Joseph Freed and Associates for donating the use of a storefront for the Polish Triangle Open House.



Welcome

In the winter of 2009, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), WPB (Special Service Area 33, for the Wicker Park and Bucktown neighborhoods), and a steering committee of local aldermen, government agencies, and neighborhood organizations teamed up to transform the Polish Triangle into a well-used neighborhood space.

The Triangle, located at the intersection of Division Street and Milwaukee and Ashland avenues in Chicago, had been identified as one of the most unsatisfying places by residents who contributed to the 2008 Master Plan for the Wicker Park/Bucktown SSA.

This concern led WPB to propose the Triangle to MPC as a Placemaking technical assistance project. The goal was to delve more deeply into residents' concerns about the current conditions of the space and the types of changes they envision, and use these suggestions to transform the Triangle's physical space and how it is used.

This report briefly describes the history and current conditions of the Triangle, summarizes ideas generated through extensive community outreach, and identifies ways to implement some of the changes recommended by residents.

Recognizing the Triangle must evolve and adapt to be a truly successful space, this report is not intended as a final document. Rather, it synthesizes the breadth of resident suggestions for the Triangle and provides a guide for the ongoing management and planning of the space in accordance with their vision and priorities. The flow of ideas should not cease with this report. If you, as a neighborhood resident or user of the Triangle, have a recommendation for how to make it a better space, we encourage you to act upon it by working with your neighbors, WPB, and local aldermen. Placemaking tools point the way.

Placemaking model and approach

The Chicago region is a collection of distinctive communities and public places. Its vibrant system of plazas, parks, markets, boulevards, and streets form the “ground floor” experience of the city, and generate local economic, cultural, social, and leisure activities. The residents who use these spaces are essential to the creation and maintenance of successful public places.

In 2008, MPC partnered with internationally known, New York-based Project for Public Spaces (PPS) on the Placemaking Chicago project, which PPS described as “the boldest Placemaking agenda in the United States.” The goal of Placemaking Chicago is to help Chicagoans recognize the region’s amazing assets, inspire action to preserve, improve and create new public spaces, and enrich quality of life in the metropolitan region.

Placemaking is a people-centered approach to the planning and maintenance of public spaces. It involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space, to create a common vision. Central to the process are the 11 Principles of Placemaking, which include working with the residents, creating partnerships, thinking about how the space will be used, identifying short-term actions that can be done to start transforming the space, and creating an ongoing management plan.

The goal of Placemaking is to create well-used public spaces that bring neighbors together and create healthier, more social, and economically viable communities. In their study of

thousands of public spaces around the world, PPS has recognized some key attributes that all great public spaces share. The diagram to the right illustrates these key attributes: they are welcoming to all types of people, they are easily accessible, there are activities that bring people to the space and keep them there and entice them to return, and they are sociable places that create opportunities for people to interact.

MPC’s Placemaking Chicago project enhances the quality public spaces that already exist in the Chicago region, and works to create even more. This project involves policy advocacy for initiatives that support public spaces; collaboration with government agencies and community organizations to help both groups understand how they can better work together on public space projects; the creation of an online virtual “community” of Placemakers in the region through PlacemakingChicago.com and the Placemaking Movement network site (theplacemakingmovement.ning.com); education and outreach about the importance of quality public spaces through activities like the “What Makes Your Place Great?” photo and video contest; and direct

technical assistance with public sector leaders and community groups on public space planning processes.

The Placemaking Polish Triangle project is part of Placemaking Chicago’s technical assistance work, which includes outreach to residents and government agencies to understand their vision for the public space, and collaboration with the community group and other necessary organizations to turn these ideas into reality.

Why Placemaking? Public spaces are the “front porches” of our public and commercial buildings, where we interact with each other — and with the world. We connect with friends and neighbors on the sidewalks in front of homes and businesses, we hold celebrations in parks and plazas, and we spend afternoons reading on benches. When cities and neighborhoods have vibrant public spaces, they thrive. Placemaking, with its focus on creating and enhancing quality public spaces, is essential to maintaining a high quality of life in the Chicago region.

Key attributes of successful places



11 Principles of Placemaking

1. The Community Is The Expert
2. Create a Place, Not a Design
3. Look for Partners
4. You Can See a Lot Just By Observing
5. Have a Vision
6. Start with the Petunias
7. Triangulate
8. They Always Say "It Can't Be Done"
9. Form Supports Function
10. Money is not the issue
11. You Are Never Finished

Underlying Ideas

Planning & Outreach techniques

Translating Ideas into Action

Implementation

Building great neighborhoods around great squares

Successful public squares give neighborhoods identity and meaning to both residents and visitors. They are often the centers of cultural and social activity, where people come to experience and share their ethnic heritage and civic pride. When public spaces are designed and managed merely as objects to behold rather than places that provide a variety of experience, residents find their options narrowed. The “repeat business” of such places is small, and neighborhoods receive only a fraction of the economic and social benefits that could be accrued from a truly great space.

To understand how the Triangle can become a well-used public space, it is helpful to understand the qualities of great civic squares. In general, great squares share the following factors.

1. Image and identity

Historically, civic squares were the center of communities and helped shape the identity of neighborhoods and cities. Combinations of unique icons, amenities and uses give squares a strong individual identity and inviting image. For instance, a fountain can anchor a square as a valued, important place.

2. Attractions and destinations

Any great public space has a variety of smaller “places” in it that appeal to various people. These can include outdoor cafes, fountains, sculptures, or benches. The attractions don’t have to be big to make the space a success. In fact, some of the best public squares have numerous small attractions such as vendor carts or a playground that, when put together, draw people throughout the day.

3. Amenities

A public space should feature amenities that make it comfortable for people to use. A bench or waste receptacle in just the right location can make a big difference in how people choose to use the space. Public art also can be a great magnet for children of all ages to come together.

4. Flexible design

The use of a civic square naturally changes during the course of the day, week and year. To respond to these natural fluctuations, flexibility needs to be built in at the outset. Instead of a permanent stage for public events, for example, a retractable or temporary stage could be used.

5. Seasonal strategy

A successful square cannot flourish with just one design or management strategy. Great parks change with the seasons. Markets, artwork, and seasonal performances and events help adapt the use of the space from season to season.

6. Access

People must be able to get to a square easily for it to be successful. A park surrounded by lanes of fast moving traffic cuts off pedestrians and deprives the space of its most important element: people. Good signage, well-marked crosswalks, and lights that are timed for pedestrians are essential to the square.

7. An inner square and outer square

Visionary park planner Frederick Law Olmsted’s idea of the “inner park” and the “outer park” is just as relevant today as it was more than 100

years ago. The streets, sidewalks and buildings around a public space greatly impact its accessibility and use. For example, a restaurant with outdoor seating that overlooks the square can encourage restaurant patrons to stroll through the square after dinner.

8. Octopus-like reach

Just as important as the edge of the square is the way that streets, sidewalks, and ground floors of adjacent buildings lead into it. Like the tentacles of an octopus extending into the surrounding neighborhood, the influence of a good civic square starts at least a block away. Vehicles slow down, walking becomes more enjoyable, and pedestrian traffic increases. Elements within the square are visible from a distance, and the ground floor activity entices pedestrians.

9. Good management

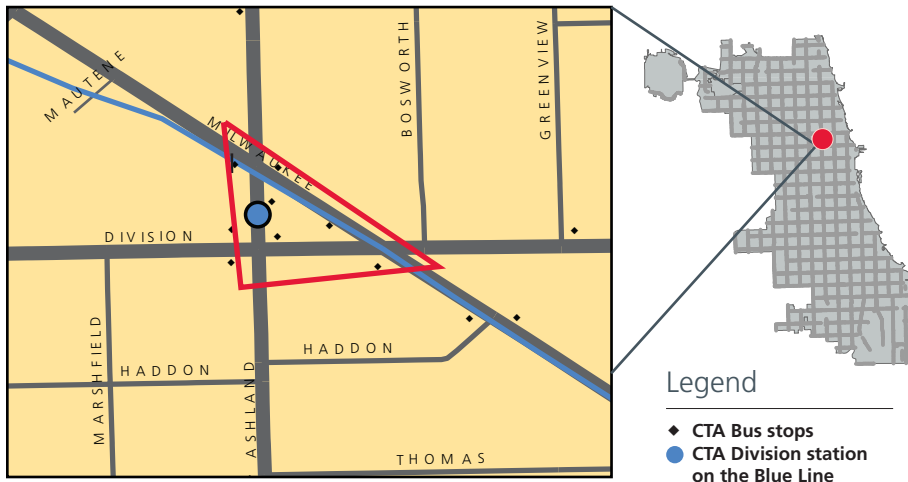
The best places are those that people return to again and again. The only way to achieve this is through a management plan that shows an understanding of and promotes ways of keeping the park safe and lively. For example, a good management plan creates a feeling of comfort and safety in the space, fixing it and maintaining it so people feel assured someone is in charge.

Background on the Polish Triangle

Wicker Park has a history steeped in rich ethnic heritage and diversity. The different cultures and backgrounds of people who have built up and lived in the neighborhood have each left a mark on the past, present and future of Wicker Park.

As Chicago was rebuilding itself after the Great Fire of 1871, wealthy Germans and Scandinavians moved to the edge of the city in what is now Wicker Park. Many of the city's beer barons and other wealthy families built large mansions in the neighborhood. By the 1930s, as this population began to move further northwest, a mostly Polish population moved in and soon became the dominant group in Wicker Park. The Poles established a number of businesses in the area, particularly along Milwaukee, which was known as the 'Polish Broadway' and ended at the 'Polish Triangle,' at the intersection of Division, Milwaukee and Ashland.

After World War II and into the 1950s, the population of this area once again moved northwest. An influx of Puerto Rican and Mexican immigrants moved into the neighborhood. Unfortunately, also during this time, there was a major disinvestment as many businesses left Wicker Park. The low rents and grittiness of the neighborhood soon attracted artists and creative groups during the 1980s and 1990s. Young urban professionals followed, and the ethnic and financial demographics of the area continue to shift as the area's popularity, location and accessibility attract wealthy and young people to Wicker Park.



North Milwaukee from Ashland



1201 N. Milwaukee (at Polish Triangle)

Historic photos courtesy Granacki Historic Consultants



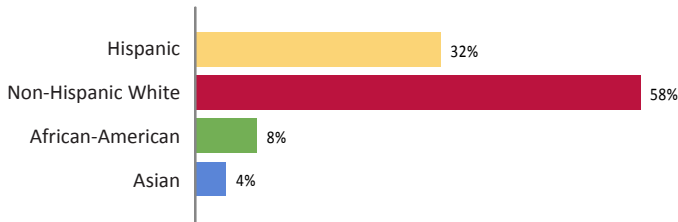
CTA station entrance at the Polish Triangle

Demographics

Wicker Park has been the center of the arts community in Chicago for decades. In recent years, however, the low rents and urban feel of the area started to attract young professionals, making it one of Chicago’s most popular neighborhoods. Although the number of people living in Wicker Park has remained at about 74,000 since 1997, the demographic mix of the neighborhood has shifted. The area has become younger and wealthier, and its ethnic makeup has changed.

The white population increased from 35 percent in 1990 to 58 percent in 2007, while the Hispanic population dropped during that same time period from 55 percent to 32 percent. Alongside this ethnic change, the population of this area has become wealthier, with the high end of the median income spectrum more than doubling between 1990 and 2007. The population also is very young, with over 50 percent of the population between 18 and 35, compared with 29 percent nationally.

Ethnicity/Racial Background

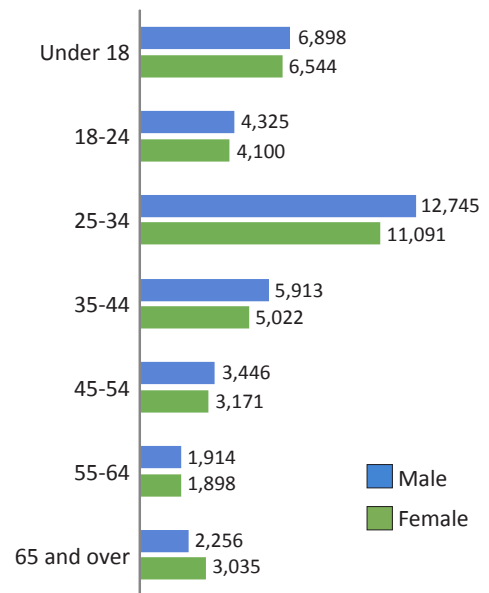


Gender



Total population: 71,361

Age



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Current conditions of the Polish Triangle

Located at the intersection of Division Street and Milwaukee and Ashland avenues, the Triangle is approximately 10,000 sq. feet. Public transit, a very large component of the Triangle's use, brings tens of thousands of people to, from and through it every day.

The Triangle is located above the CTA Blue Line Division station, one of the busiest stations on the Blue Line. With connections to O'Hare, the Loop, Illinois Medical District, and UIC, the CTA Blue Line carries almost a quarter of all daily riders. Almost 5,000 people enter and exit this station on a daily basis. Three bus routes have stops on the Triangle — 56 Milwaukee, 70 Division, and 9 Ashland — with stops on the opposite sides of each street as well. Ridership for these routes is high, with more than 50,000 people riding the three buses on an average weekday.

In addition to transit and transportation options, other amenities on the Triangle are a fountain, metal benches surrounding mature trees, and trash cans. While these elements are meant to make visitors comfortable, they also attract transients and pigeons, which were a common source of complaints among survey respondents.

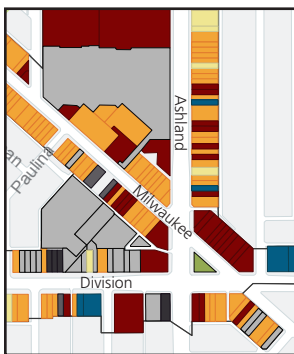
Pedestrian counts performed by MPC during the spring and summer of 2009 show, on average, about 500 people traveling through the Triangle every hour. The number of people in the Triangle increases dramatically during rush hours, jumping to 700 people per hour during the morning and afternoon rushes. Each person spends less than two and a half to three minutes in the Triangle, which shows people mostly use the space to pass through or wait for a bus.



The zoning of the Triangle and land surrounding it are a mix of "B" (Business) and "C" (Commercial) districts, which accommodates retail, service and commercial uses, with dwelling units above the first floor. The Triangle itself is zoned B. A pedestrian-zoned street is located adjacent to the Triangle on Milwaukee Avenue.

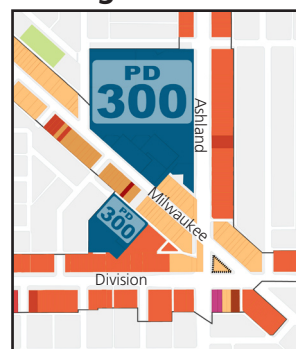
Source: Master Plan for the Wicker Park/Bucktown SSA, Interface Studio, Sam Schwartz Engineering, Civic Economics, pgs. 40 and 45, 2009.

Land Use



- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Residential
- Green Space/Park
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Pavement/parking
- Vacant Land
- Vacant Building

Zoning



- B 1-2 Neighborhood Shopping District
- B 1-3 Neighborhood Shopping District
- B 3-2 Community Shopping District
- B 3-3 Community Shopping District
- B 3-5 Community Shopping District
- C 1-2 Neighborhood Commercial District
- C 2-1 Motor Vehicle Related Commercial District
- POS-2 Neighborhood Shopping District
- PD Neighborhood Shopping District

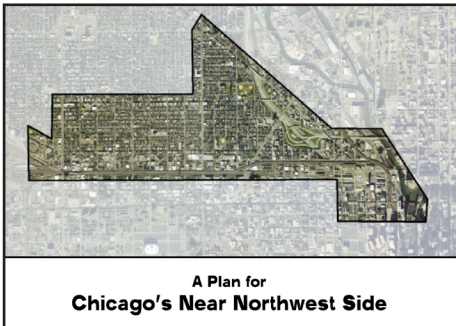
Recent plans for Wicker Park and Bucktown

A number of plans for the neighborhood around the Triangle have been completed in recent years. When appropriate, the recommendations in this report align with those in pre-existing plans.



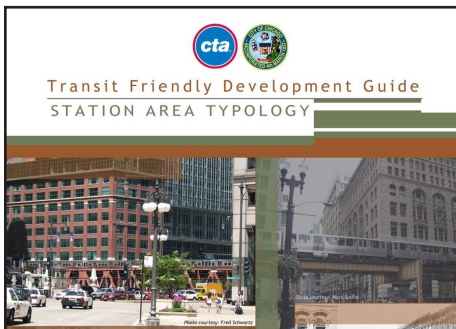
Master Plan for the Wicker Park/Bucktown SSA

In 2009, the Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce adopted a 2008 *Master Plan for the Wicker Park/Bucktown SSA*. The recommendations in this plan, based largely on community feedback, address ways to foster the eclectic and multicultural identity residents value, including attracting small businesses, encouraging street life, and planning public community events that enliven spaces like the Triangle. The plan specifically identified the Triangle as an area of concern, which led to the formation of the Placemaking Polish Triangle project.



A Plan for Chicago's Near Northwest Side

In 2002, the Chicago Dept. of Planning and Development adopted *A Plan for Chicago's Near Northwest Side*. Created by the Near Northwest Side Planning Advisory Committee, it outlines a vision for parts of West Town and north toward Wicker Park, from the Ukrainian Village neighborhood to River West and Halsted Street. Division Street's intersection with the Polish Triangle marks the northernmost point of the study area. Many recommendations in the Plan for Chicago's Near Northwest Side are similar to those in this report. For example, the Near Northwest Side Plan advocates for improvements to the CTA Blue Line station and bus stops, and calls for the Milwaukee Avenue streetscape to be improved through public art, benches, maintenance, new signage, and lighting.



Transit Friendly Development Guide

In 2009, the Chicago Planning Commission adopted the *Transit Friendly Development Guide* for station area typology. This guide classifies every CTA train station in Chicago, and advocates appropriate development around the station based on each category. The CTA Blue Line Division stop is classified as a "major activity center," which means it is outside Chicago's downtown core, but surrounded by residential, retail and employment land uses and can support high density development. The guide recommends focusing on Placemaking by preserving and improving the pedestrian environment, walkability, bicycling, and transit access, and ensuring a balance between commercial and residential uses of the area around train stations. These recommendations align with those made for the Triangle in this report.

Placemaking Polish Triangle project

In early 2009, WPB and MPC convened a steering committee of interested parties to help guide the process. It consisted of then Ald. Manny Flores (1st Ward), Ald. Scott Waguespack (32nd Ward), representatives from government agencies that have jurisdiction over the Triangle, and neighborhood organizations. The Triangle is located within the 1st Ward, but the 32nd Ward borders the space and many of its constituents live nearby.

Ald. Walter Burnett (27th Ward), has jurisdiction over the large co-op building on the southeast corner of Division Street and Milwaukee Avenue, which borders a small portion of the Triangle. Representatives from the steering committee spoke with him at the beginning of the process and have worked to keep residents of the co-op engaged.

The Triangle is not just a place;
it's a significant place.

Add native plants and
grasses that will look nice,
while reducing the cost of
maintaining the landscape.

I would love to
see wider side-
walks in front of
the stores. Right
now, the side-
walks are
narrow and
make it hard for
outdoor cafes or
streetscaping.

How about slowing down
the traffic with textured
paving and narrower
lanes?

My favorite thing about the Triangle
is the number of people who travel
through it daily. It's an amazing op-
portunity that the Triangle almost
entirely disregards.

Consider tasteful
advertising to
add revenue to
support the area.

Green space,
more seating.

The Triangle needs better benches; More
decorative elements; Statue of Paderewski;
Pylons on history of Polish neighborhood.

Community outreach

Once the steering committee was assembled, the next step was to gather input from residents about their ideas for the future of the Triangle. During the winter and spring of 2009, the Placemaking Polish Triangle project created and disseminated an online survey, formed an online networking group, and hosted an open house. Through these three means of community outreach, more than 700 residents submitted their ideas for the Triangle.

Online survey

The online survey was the first step in reaching out to residents. It was created using Survey Monkey in January 2009, and disseminated via listservs, e-mails, and online promotion. Between January and April 2009, 537 people submitted their ideas via the survey. It consisted of three main parts: demographic information about the people taking the survey; thoughts about current conditions of the Triangle; and ideas for the Triangle in the future. Of the 537 respondents, 81 percent lived in the community surrounding the Triangle. Of that, 46 percent have lived in the community for one to five years, 24 percent for five to 10 years, and 23 percent for more than 10 years. The remaining 6.9 percent lived in the community for less than a year.

Online network group

The online network group for the Triangle was created on an international Placemaking site, the Placemaking Movement (www.theplacemakingmovement.ning.com). It was launched in January 2009, and eventually grew to 57 members, all of whom live in Chicago and many of whom participate in lively discussions about the plans for the Triangle. Members also receive information about upcoming events or other information about the Polish Triangle project – such as the online survey and open houses – through this site, and can ask questions and make comments about the process. It is an easy way for anyone to get involved in the project, especially for those who may not live in the neighborhood or who cannot attend events in person.

Community Outreach Highlights

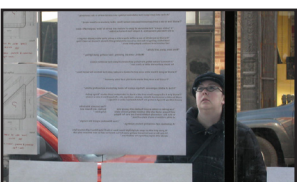
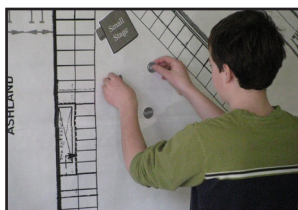
537 Online survey participants
+
57 Online networking members
+
140 Open House attendees

734 People engaged

Open house

The open house was held during the weekend of March 21-22, 2009, in a vacant storefront near the Triangle. The storefront is owned by Joseph Freed and Associates, who donated the use of the space for the weekend. Visitors were free to wander in and out and participate in any number of activities meant to engage the community in the process and get their ideas for improving the Triangle. These activities consisted of large and small interactive maps for participants to design their own vision for the Triangle, a photo suggestion booth, suggestion boxes, examples of other successful plazas around the world, stories and history of the Triangle and Wicker Park neighborhoods, and drawings by neighborhood architects showing their ideas for transforming the space. Over the two-day period, 140 people attended the open house.

Polish Triangle Open House



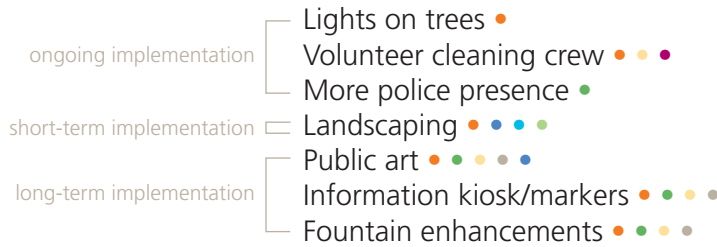
Examples of drawings by local architects of visions of the Polish Triangle can be found on pages 20-24.

Plans for the Polish Triangle

Residents who took the survey, attended the open house, or participated in the online discussion had suggestions for the Triangle that ranged from “install temporary artwork” to “close off Milwaukee Avenue and create a large pedestrian plaza.”

Recommendations

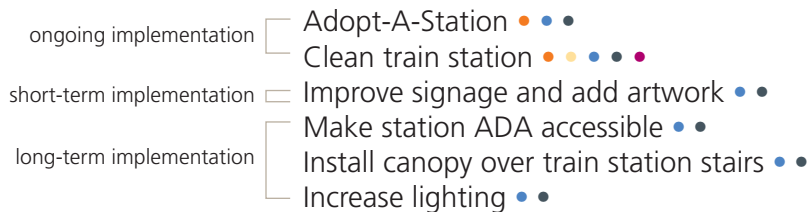
Comfort & Amenities



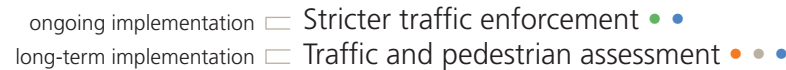
Activities



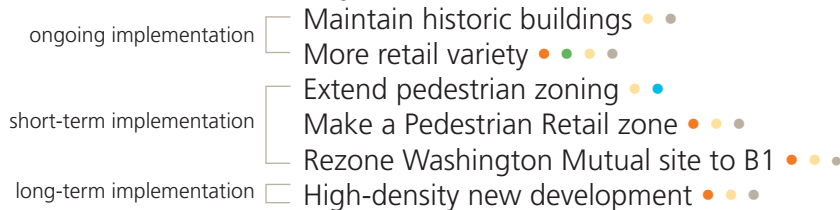
CTA Trains & Bus stations



Traffic & Pedestrian



Adjacent & Retail Use



Residents expressed a desire to create a space that is comfortable for all visitors and a welcoming entrance to the Wicker Park neighborhood. Most do not want the Triangle to change dramatically, but think that small changes will make a big impact on the plaza. Many expressed a desire to reflect the historic nature of the Triangle and neighborhood, and to make community information and navigation more accessible. People also wanted a variety of locally owned businesses nearby, specifically requesting no more banks be allowed around the Triangle.

This section of this report summarizes community input and identifies steps to make these suggestions a reality, as well as a city or neighborhood organization that can lead the effort.

MPC will work with the key players to implement these recommendations.

Key players in implementing the recommendations

- WPB
- Wicker Park–Bucktown Chamber of Commerce
- First Ward Office
- Adjoining Aldermanic Offices
- Chicago Dept. of Transportation
- Chicago Transit Authority
- Chicago Dept. of Consumer Affairs and Consumer Protection
- Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications
- Mayor's Office of Special Events
- East Village Association
- Holy Trinity High School
- Near North Montessori School

Comfort and amenities

Amenities add aesthetic appeal to the plaza and make it more attractive, but also provide a stronger sense of comfort and safety. Additionally, amenities encourage lingering and conversation, both of which are important in establishing a successful public place. Given the size of the Triangle, special care should be taken when adding new amenities so the space does not become overcrowded and more difficult to pass through. In addition, many people said the Triangle was not a comfortable or welcoming space. They cited a perception of uncleanness, an overabundance of pigeons, and not feeling safe in the Triangle.

Current progress

One short-term goal implemented in 2009 was putting holiday lights in the trees on the Triangle in the winter. WPB will continue to install holiday lights in the Triangle in the future as possible.

Regarding safety and comfort, a volunteer cleaning crew could be formed to supplement the sanitation done by the city and CleanSlate, which provides cleaning services through a contract with WPB. The First Ward Service Office and Holy Trinity High School have expressed interest in finding volunteers and students involved in community service to clean the Triangle. Holy Trinity, the First Ward Service Office, MPC, and WPB will develop a volunteer cleaning schedule.

A casual observer will note there is much evidence of alcohol consumption on the Triangle. This leads to increased trash (beer cans, liquor bottles) and contributes to feeling unsafe. Beat cops could be instructed to increase the frequency of patrols around the Triangle, which would help to eliminate illegal behavior. The Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce will coordinate with Chicago Police District 14.

Timeline: Ongoing. It may be possible to have volunteers clean the Triangle once a month, depending on the CleanSlate schedule.

What would you like to see at the Triangle?



Photos taken at the Open House, March 21 and 22, 2009.

Specific suggestions for improving the comfort and amenities:

- Landscaping
- Decorative elements such as artwork
- Increased lighting
- More benches or places to sit

Key players in implementing these recommendations:

- Aldermanic offices
- WPB
- CDOT
- Streets and Sanitation
- Chicago Police District 14
- Adjacent retailers

Residents' ideas for improving elements of comfort and amenities:

I would clean the Triangle up and have it cleaned regularly. I would also increase foot and bike patrols, and encourage businesses that have an incentive to keep it clean.

For lighting, consider the white Christmas-style lights on a string. They're low-slung and generally not too bright.

Paint the utility boxes. Get creative.

Activities

Residents involved in this process expressed a strong desire to activate the space by encouraging activities that bring people to the Triangle, provide convenient services for visitors, and make the plaza lively and active.

Some people envisioned a very active space, with performers and musicians, a public speaking forum, and children's events. Others, however, preferred the space to be passive and more appropriate for relaxing, small group gatherings, and people watching.

Current progress

MPC, WPB, CTA, and the First Ward aldermanic office have begun researching the options and necessary steps to allow a coffee vendor to set up on the Triangle. In addition to working with the Chicago Dept. of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection on permitting issues, they are looking into the possibility of setting up a cart as a satellite of the permanent vendor space in the paid area of the CTA station.

In addition, WPB coordinated a number of events for the Triangle in 2009. These included:

- A commuter station during Bike to Work week (June 15-19)
- A Halloween event featuring Collaboraction Theatre company (Oct. 31)
- A holiday event featuring Redmoon Theater (Dec. 5)

Timeline: Ongoing

Near-term opportunities

A farmers market, art festival, or bike station requires coordination with the aldermanic offices and WPB. They will work together to identify the appropriate permits, engage neighborhood businesses and community groups, and advertise the events. The Dept. of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, Mayor's Office of Special Events, and other city departments will need to be involved in securing permits for events.

Timeline: Summer 2010. Potential to coordinate with planned neighborhood events, such as the Do-Division Festival, Wicker Park Fest, and Renegade Craft Fair.

Long-term opportunities

Aldermanic offices, WPB, and the Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce will explore the option of having permanent vendor stands on the Triangle.

WPB will continue to plan special events at or centered around the Triangle. The success of the 2009 events demonstrates an appetite by residents for annual events.

Timeline: Ongoing

Specific suggestions for improving activities:

Farmers market
Art festivals
Neighborhood gathering space
Bike station
Coffee kiosk or food vendors

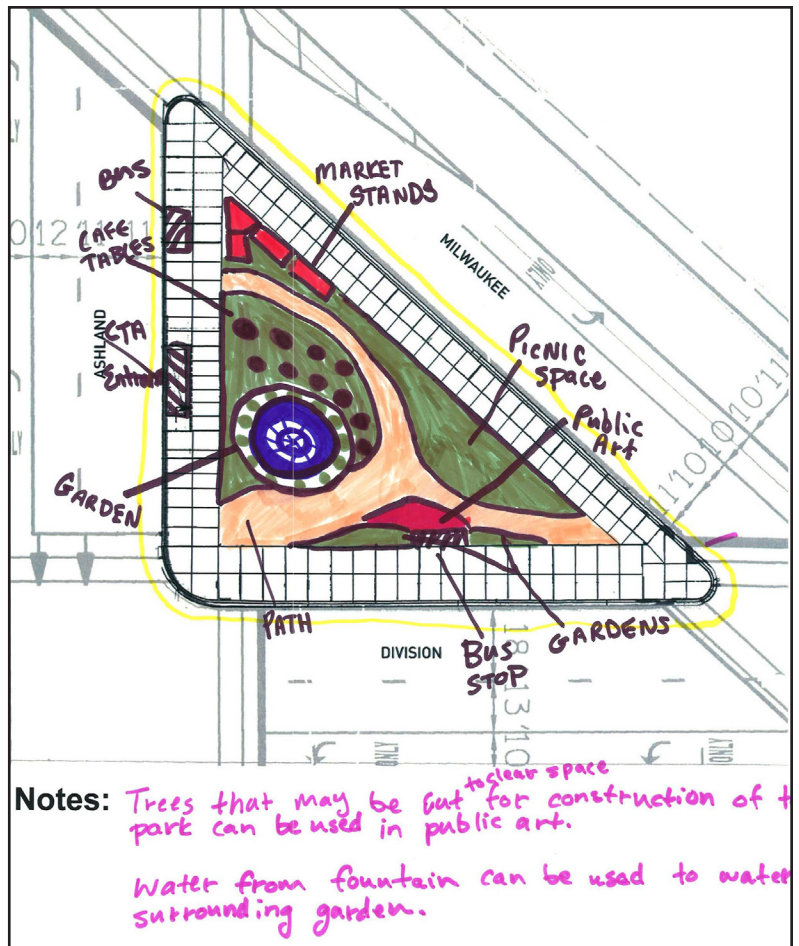
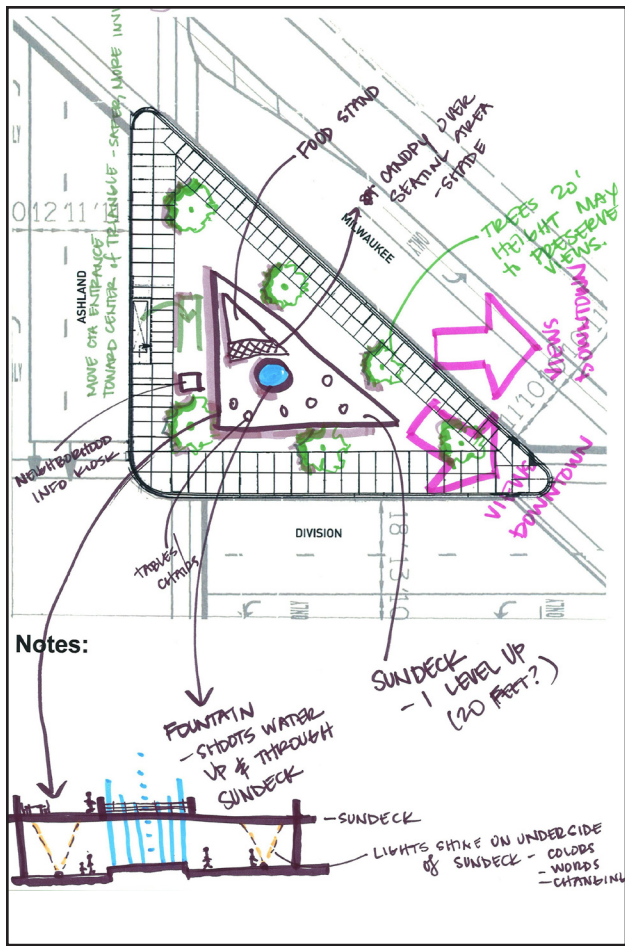
Key players in implementing these recommendations:

Aldermanic offices
WPB
Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce
CTA
Community organizations
Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications

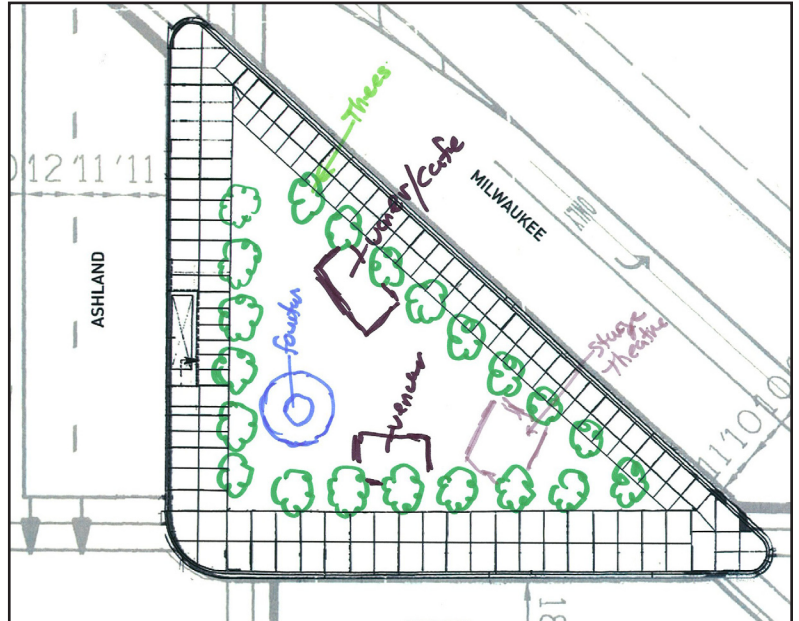
Residents speak out about desired activities on the Triangle

Due to its location, I would make the Polish Triangle a 'transportation' destination for coffee/food/newspapers, etc... Particularly Monday-Friday.

As a bicyclist, I think this would be a prime location for a bike shop/repair store.



Photos taken at the Open House, March 21 and 22, 2009.



Plans for the Triangle drawn by residents at the Open House, March 21 and 22, 2009.

CTA train station and bus stops

The residents involved in this process recognized the importance of the train station and bus stops to bring people to the Triangle, and want to make the most of these great amenities. Of the more than 400 people who provided input on the CTA train station and bus stops, almost half (45 percent) did not think the train station was safe and convenient. The bus stops, on the other hand, were perceived to be safe and convenient to close to 70 percent of the survey respondents.

Current progress

WPB and CTA have started to explore the feasibility of including the Blue Line Division Station in the CTA Adopt-A-Station program.

The volunteer cleaning crew mentioned in the “Comfort and Amenities” section would make the bus stops on the Triangle cleaner and more comfortable. The First Ward Service Office, WPB, and East Village Association are working with CTA to find volunteers to clean the station.

Timeline: Contingent on the Adopt-A-Station program. Assembling a volunteer cleaning has already begun and will continue.

Near-term opportunities

Small improvements, like improved signage, adding artwork to the walls, or painting the walls of the train station, would improve its appearance. CTA will explore the possibility of funding for such improvements. Holy Trinity High School’s art program could volunteer its services to add artwork to the station.



Timeline: 2010-2011

Long-term opportunities

Significant improvements to the train station are a long-term goal for the Triangle. Upgrades include:

- Updating the station so it conforms to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design.
- Installing a cover above both sets of stairs so they are protected from the elements.
- Increased lighting in and around the station.
- Adopt-a-Station participation.
- Installation of temporary/permanent art by the students of Holy Trinity High School.

Timeline: Ongoing. These recommendations are contingent on funding from CTA and CDOT.

Specific suggestions for the train station and bus stops:

- Cover the train entrances to keep them dry and safe in rain and snow.
- Make the train station ADA accessible.
- Add more lighting to the train station and bus stops.
- Spruce up the train station entrance and bus shelters.
- Add signage/neighborhood information in the CTA station.

Key players in implementing these recommendations:

- CTA
- Aldermanic offices
- WPB
- Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce
- East Village Association
- CDOT

Residents’ ideas for improving CTA train stations and bus stops

Signage in the train station, so you know if you’re heading to the Triangle or across the street, would be nice.

The two stairwells into the EI could be perfect locations for art and attractive, welcoming pieces.

More lighting [in the CTA train station]. The tunnels are kind of dark. Can the waiting areas be more lit, painted?

Traffic and pedestrian issues

Seventy-one percent of survey respondents said they thought traffic around the Triangle was too busy, and the majority said they only felt moderately safe while crossing any of the three streets at the intersections of Division, Milwaukee and Ashland. The combination of wide streets and heavy traffic provoked a number of suggestions, ranging from widening sidewalks to adding landscaping buffers on the Triangle, to installing pedestrian amenities to increase safety.

When asked what change they would most like to see regarding pedestrian safety, 68 percent of survey respondents said different or more visible crosswalks, followed by 61 percent who suggested adding bump-outs. Other ideas included stricter traffic enforcement of vehicles running red lights, speeding, and refusing to yield to pedestrians.

Current progress

Significant pedestrian traffic improvements have been made around the Triangle in recent years. In April 2006 and October 2008, the crosswalks around the Triangle were repainted. In May 2007, pedestrian countdown signals and left turn arrows were added to the traffic lights around the Triangle. In October 2007, red light enforcement cameras were installed. These changes have improved pedestrian accessibility to and around the Triangle.

In 2010, MPC joined the Active Transportation Alliance in advocating for the Pedestrian Safety Bill (HB 43), based largely on the recommendations heard through the Polish Triangle process about unsafe pedestrian conditions. This bill, which passed through the Illinois Senate in April, requires vehicles to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks, which will improve the pedestrian experience by making it safer to cross streets.

Near-term opportunities

Given the restrictions, a shorter term goal is stricter traffic enforcement. As mentioned in the "Comfort and Amenities" section, having beat cops patrol the Triangle more regularly should be a priority. The Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce will coordinate with Police District 14.

Timeline: 2010

Long-term opportunities

Residents suggested a number of long-term changes to improve traffic and pedestrian safety around the Triangle. These range from closing off Milwaukee Avenue to create a pedestrian plaza and improve access to the Triangle, to adding bump-outs at the intersections that would decrease the crossing distance for pedestrians. The first step toward any significant changes to the traffic patterns around the Triangle is for CDOT to do a traffic and pedestrian assessment. CDOT, the aldermanic offices, WPB, and MPC will work together on this long-range planning.

Timeline: Ongoing. This is a multi-year, long-term goal.

Specific suggestion for improving traffic and pedestrian accessibility:

- Bump outs
- Streetscaping
- Pedestrian Plaza
- Stricter traffic enforcement

Key players in implementing these recommendations:

- CDOT
- Aldermanic offices
- MPC
- Chicago Police District 14
- WPB
- Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce

Residents' ideas for improving traffic and pedestrian issues

More streetscaping to create a visual barrier between pedestrians and cars, and other visuals to slow cars down, like shrinking the surrounding lanes, placing pedestrian lights, decorative crosswalks, bump-outs, and lots of vegetation.

Reroute or otherwise redevelop traffic patterns to make it safer/ more user friendly for pedestrians.



Retail and adjacent uses

The most common suggestion from survey respondents for new retail or other uses around the Triangle is a restaurant, café, or coffee shop. Many people said they would like to be able to purchase food or a drink from a nearby vendor and sit in the Triangle to enjoy it; others mentioned sit-down restaurants with outdoor seating that would face the Triangle and add to sidewalk activity.

Other recommendations included bookstores, locally owned shops, convenience stores, small grocers, art galleries, and dry cleaners. A number of residents said they were less concerned with new retail than with providing more variety.

Current progress

Altering retail uses around the Triangle is a long-term goal that requires coordination with residents, business owners, city government, the aldermanic offices, and WPB. The vacant lot on the southwest corner of the Triangle presents an opportunity for such an outcome. A vacant Pizza Hut building currently occupies the space. In March 2007, residents groups, then-Ald. Flores, and WPB expressed disapproval over a proposal for a one-story convenience store for this site, preferring instead a higher density proposal that would bring more life to the Triangle and neighborhood.

As a measure of the importance of pedestrian-oriented development around the Triangle, at a Dec. 15, 2009, meeting with East Village Association representatives, then-Ald. Flores agreed to extend the pedestrian zoning designation from Marshfield Street to Ashland Avenue and to consider extending it all the way to Milwaukee Avenue.

Timeline: Ongoing

Near-term opportunities

In the near term, the First Ward Service Office and WPB will continue to engage residents as development proposals for adjacent building opportunities and new retail arise.

Timeline: Ongoing

Long-term opportunities

The aldermanic offices and WPB can encourage certain types of development and businesses, but ultimately, the retail market, building owners, and zoning dictate the type of commercial activity around the Triangle. One action that should be taken is to change the zoning of the streets around the Triangle from Pedestrian Street to Pedestrian Retail Street. This small but significant difference would entice the kind of retail that would activate the street and provide users of the Triangle with appropriate retail. Specifically, the Pedestrian Retail Street designation limits the number of banks that can be located within a certain proximity of each other.

Specific suggestions for retail and adjacent uses:

- Extend pedestrian zone
- Rezone former Washington Mutual site to B1
- Advocate for higher density in new development
- Preserve historic buildings
- Encourage diverse retail

Key players in implementing these recommendations:

- CDOT
- Aldermanic offices
- WPB

Residents' ideas for retail and adjacent uses

An asset of the Triangle is that it is surrounded by shops on all sides. The Chopin Theater is a distinctive jewel. As these spaces evolve into cafes and shops, such as those found on Division and Milwaukee, this can be a lively hub of activity.

I would love to see wider sidewalks in front of the stores. Right now, the sidewalks are narrow and make it hard for outdoor cafes or streetscaping.



19 Placemaking at the Polish Triangle

The former Washington Mutual property on the southeast corner of Division and Ashland is zoned C2, which is classified as Motor Vehicle-Related Commercial district. To attract the kind of development residents wish to see this should be changed to B1 zoning, which is for neighborhood shopping areas with residential units above the ground floor.

Long-term opportunities for retail and adjacent uses can be broken into two categories: existing building usage, and construction of new buildings.

Existing buildings

The majority of the lots around the Triangle have existing buildings. Many of these buildings are historic, and residents expressed a strong desire to maintain the character of the buildings. The aldermanic offices will work with the owners of the buildings to ensure upkeep.

Most of the buildings along Division Street, and Milwaukee and Ashland avenues around the Triangle have ground floor retail and commercial usage. Residents expressed interest in more variety for these spaces. The First Ward Service Office, WPB, and Wicker Park—Bucktown Chamber of Commerce will work with building owners around the Triangle to encourage them to rent to businesses that will create a better business mix.

Timeline: Ongoing

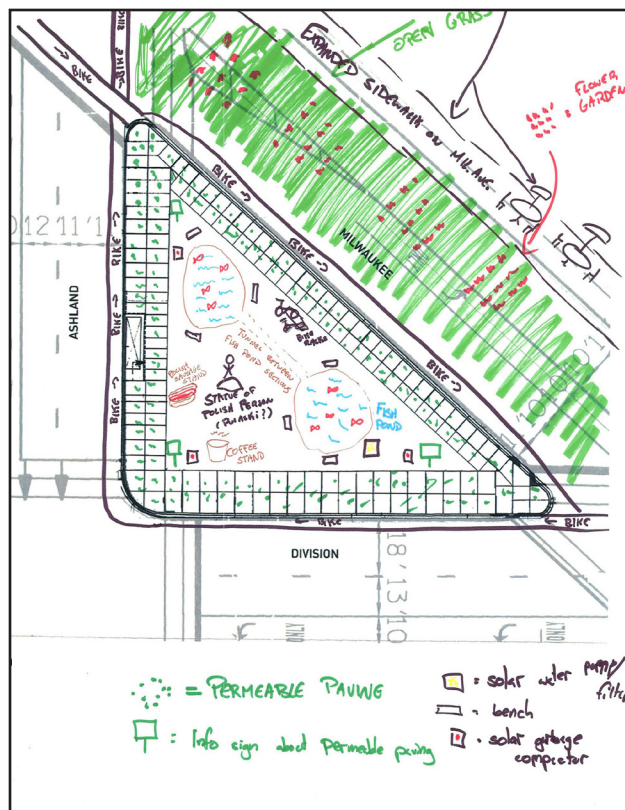
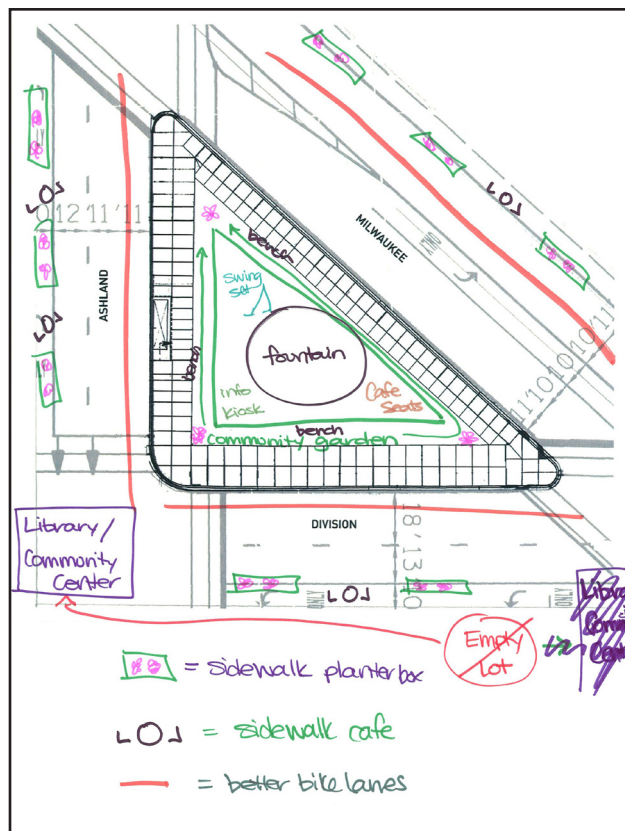
New buildings

The vacant lot on the southwest corner of the Triangle provides an opportunity for new development that will cater to the large number of people who use the CTA train station or bus stops at the Triangle. Priority for new development on this site should be given to buildings that are the same height or taller than the existing buildings around the Triangle, and for uses that would generate a high level of pedestrian traffic. Businesses that require a high quantity of off-street parking are inappropriate for this site because of its proximity to the Blue Line and three bus lines. Parking will also be difficult to accommodate due to the size restrictions of the parcel.



Recognizing that buildings often outlive their original user, the design of new buildings should acknowledge and reflect the history of the Polish Triangle and surrounding neighborhood.

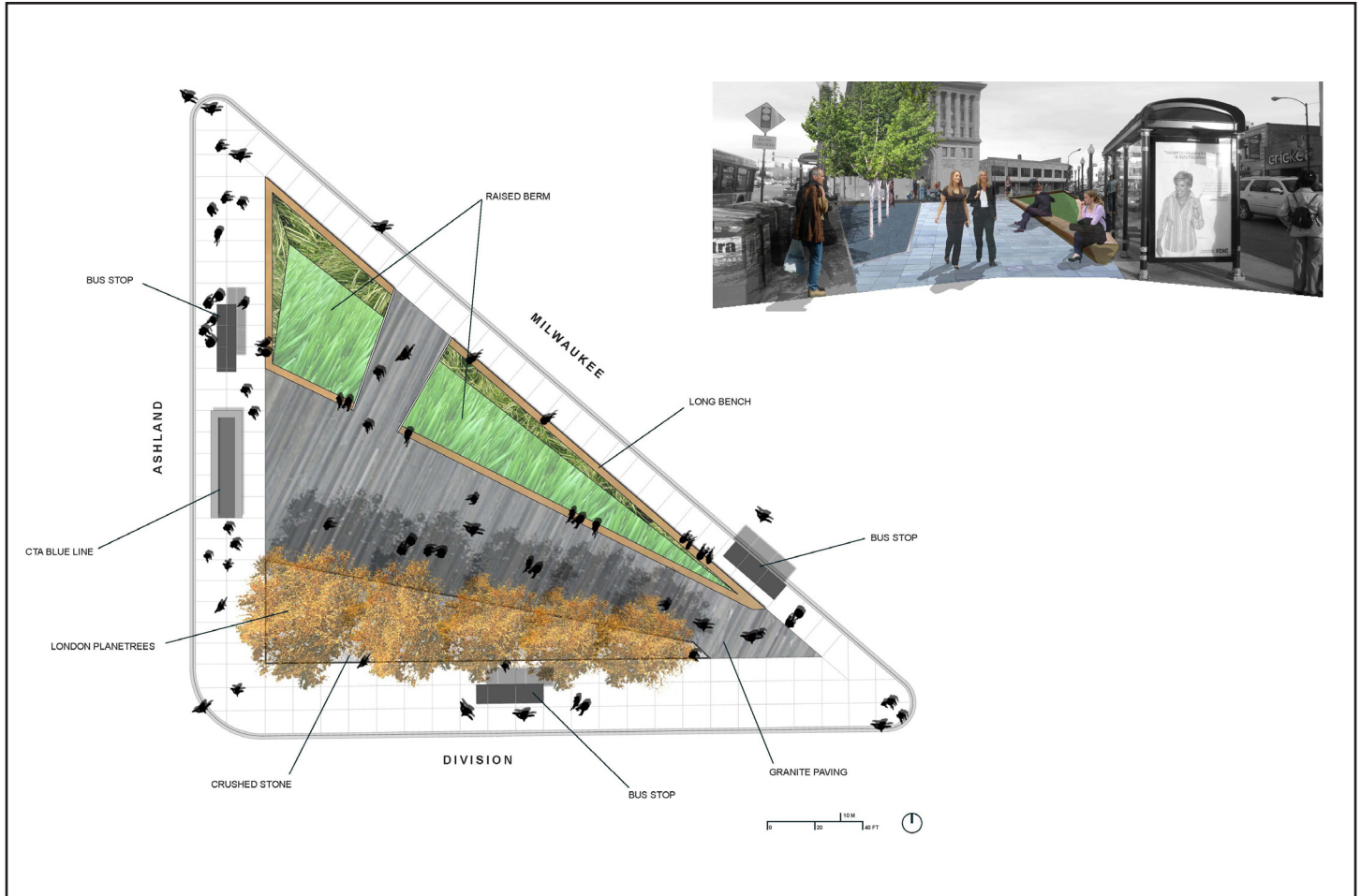
Timeline: Ongoing



Neighborhood architects envision the Polish Triangle

At the Polish Triangle Open House, neighborhood architects showed what they would do to the Triangle, given the opportunity — and unlimited funding.

Hoerr Schaudt

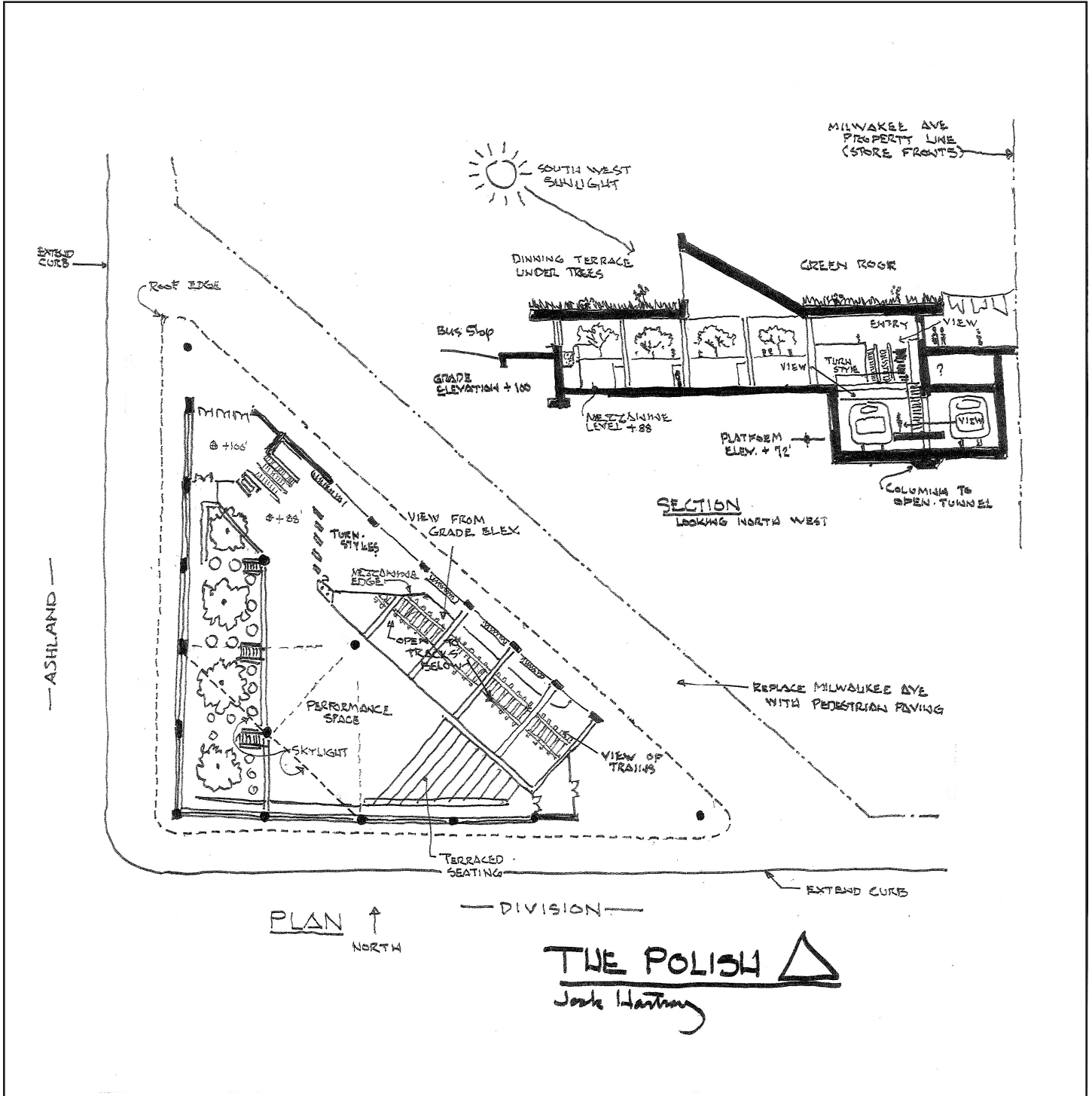


The wedge of land known as the Polish Triangle at the lively intersection of Milwaukee, Ashland, and Division is a valuable asset to the Wicker Park/Bucktown community. Although its present condition may raise cause for concern, we see much potential in this space.

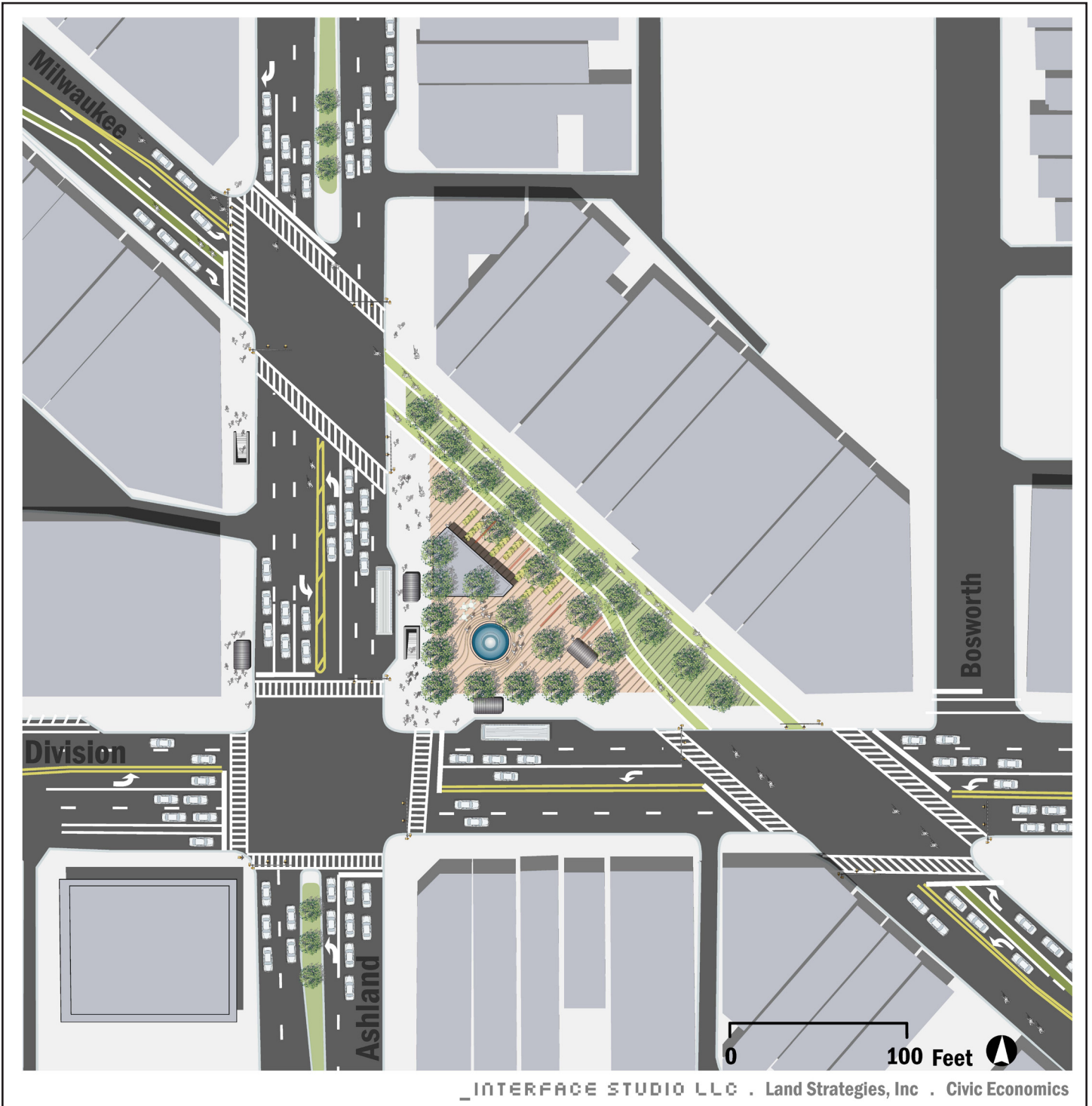
Our design's simple yet elegant form is derived from its role in choreographing heavy pedestrian movement across the site. Three main design components carefully bal-

ance pedestrian traffic, the need for seating and flexible space for community events: 1) A row of London Planetrees along Division shade users in the summer and allow for direct sunlight to warm the plaza in cooler months. 2) A granite paved boardwalk funnels pedestrians across the site yet also accommodates community events. 3) A raised berm interrupts street noise from Milwaukee and provides seating areas.

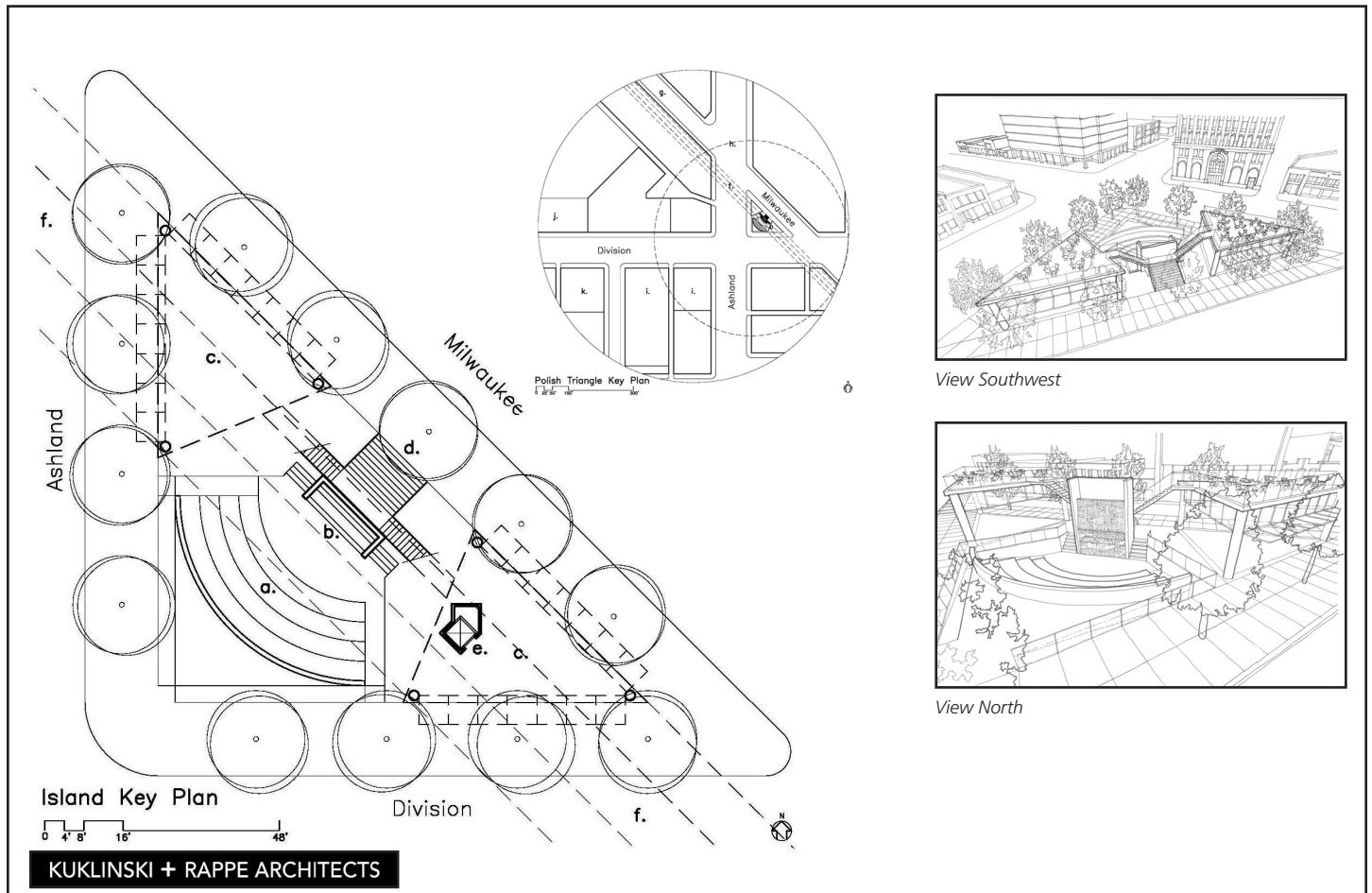
Jack Hartray



Interface Studio LLC



Kulinski + Rappe Architects



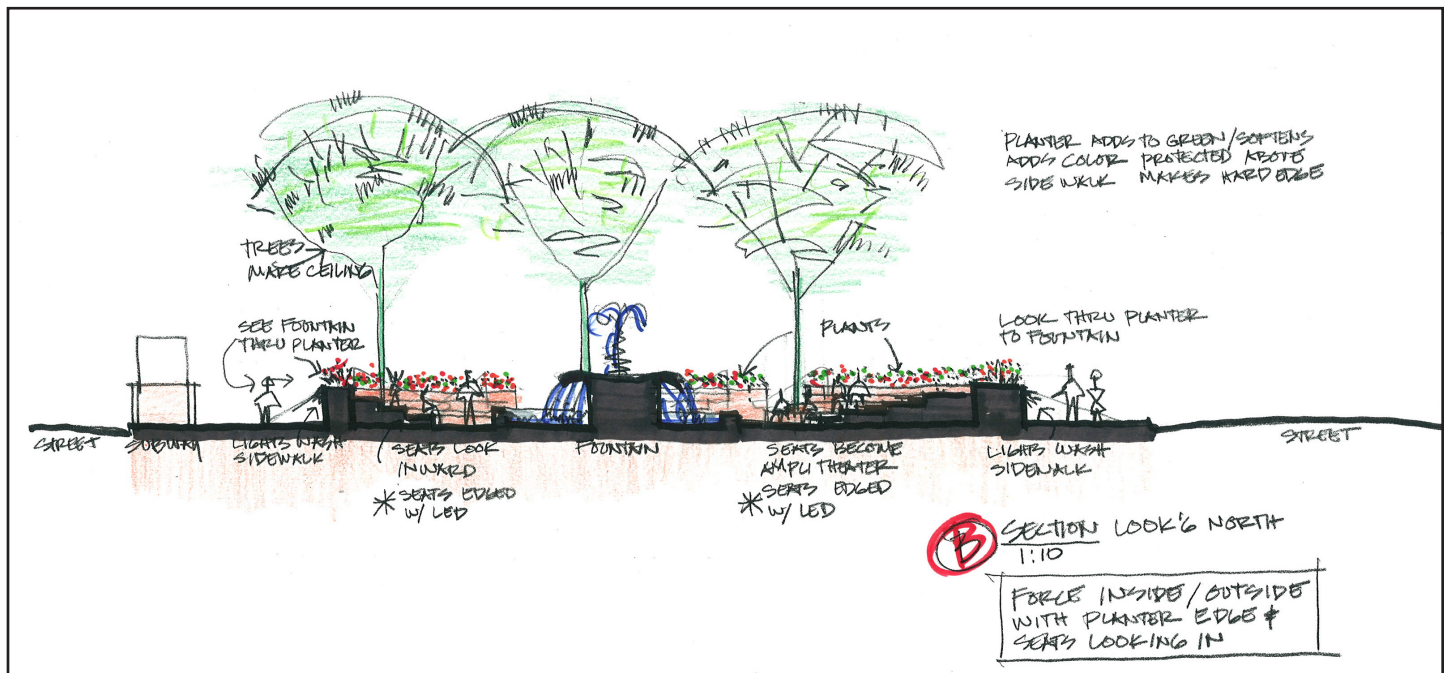
The size and isolated location of the island at the center of the Polish Triangle makes it a space to be traversed, rather than a destination to be inhabited. The challenge is to create a 'critical mass' of self-sustaining activity that will both serve the commuters already there and draw people who might otherwise not venture across three major thoroughfares.

An amphitheater (a.), depressed slightly to preserve sightlines across the island, would provide a venue for scheduled public events by local musicians, dramatists and poets as well as impromptu performances. At the rear of the stage a tall concrete structure (b.) would serve as a backdrop to the activity. In the summer, water would cascade down its sloping surface, creating white noise to mask the traffic sounds, and providing passive cooling with its fine mist. In the winter, the structure would serve as an outdoor fireplace, radiating heat into the amphitheater and providing a mesmerizing focal point.

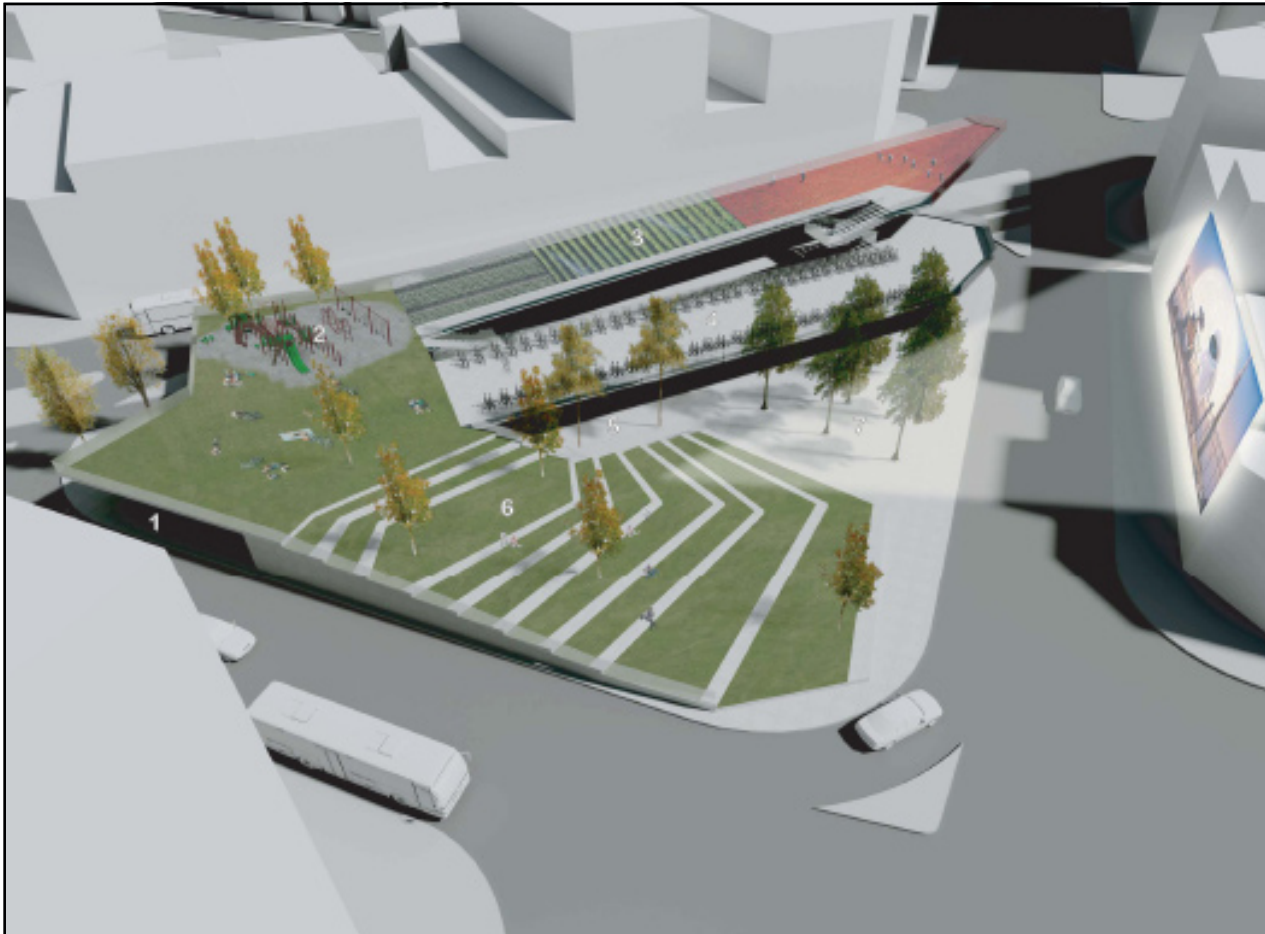
The limited size of the Polish Triangle is increased by constructing two open market halls (c.), each with café seating on top. The protected spaces underneath would accommodate year-around vendors, selling locally grown produce, baked goods, coffee and newspapers. Most importantly, they would provide an affordable alternative to expensive storefronts, for the sale of locally produced crafts, art and music CDs.

On the north side of the island, a grand stair (d.) would access the rooftop cafés. The elevated cafes would feel protected from traffic, afford birdseye views of the surrounding Polish Triangle and provide relaxed opportunities for people-watching. In the evenings, videos and still images could be projected onto the blank façade of the bank on the north side of Milwaukee Avenue. Activity in the cafes and on the stairs would create interest in the vertical dimension, something lacking in the existing flat plaza. The south market hall would accommodate an elevator (e.) providing access to both the café above and the Blue Line platform (f.) directly below.

Sam Marts Architects and Planners



Norsman Architects, Ltd.



The existing site is multi-level with the underground “el” connection below. Projecting Place expands on this notion by improving the connection to this level as well as projecting upwards to new elevated ground planes allowing for additional placemaking opportunities. Through the addition of a few levels of a continuously ramping bike garage, a sloping ground plane amphitheater with a new celebrated station entry/café space below, expansion of the park area through street narrowing and traffic calming techniques and the extension of elevated levels over streets the community can greatly expand the available public place and and projected uses.

STATION ENTRY -- 1

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMED SPACE - PLAYGROUND -- 2

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMED SPACE - URBANFARM -- 3

BICYCLE LOFT -- 4

CAFE/ COMMERCIAL -- 5

AMPHI-PLAZA -- 6

PLAZA -- 7

Conclusion

This report summarizes a direction for the Triangle, and identifies organizations and opportunities for implementing these changes. These recommendations should be used to guide future plans for amenities and activities on the Triangle, CTA train and bus stations, traffic around the Triangle, and land use surrounding the Triangle.

The recommendations in the report summarize ideas generated through community outreach in 2009, and identify ways to implement some of them. As detailed here, members of the steering committee will work to implement these improvements.

The success of the Triangle as a public space, however, depends on more than the work of the steering committee. Residents are encouraged to become involved in making the Triangle a well-used public space. It is the hope of the steering committee that the Placemaking Polish Triangle process sparked broad interest among residents in improving the Triangle, and we encourage individuals and organizations to act upon either the suggestions in this report or their own ideas for this potentially great public space.

Metropolitan Planning Council

Since 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has been dedicated to shaping a more sustainable and prosperous greater Chicago region. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, MPC serves communities and residents by developing, promoting and implementing solutions for sound regional growth.

WPB

To sustain and promote the prosperity and unique qualities of life of the Wicker Park/Bucktown neighborhood and commercial district, whilst preserving its diverse character for the benefit of its residents, visitors, and businesses through the wise and discerning investment of resources to enhance our public ways. Unique among Chicago's SSAs for its size and eclecticism, WPB encompasses a vibrant yet varied, mixed use urban area home to a diverse mix of people and a rare combination of nightlife, culture, family, and art. WPB's goals are to preserve, encourage, and enhance the qualities of Wicker Park and Bucktown that make the neighborhoods and their corridors distinct; and to balance the needs and desires of all residents, visitors, and businesses in the allocation and expenditure of their tax dollars.

For more information:

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