



# Lawrence Avenue Transit-Oriented Development Study

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CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transit is a vital component of life throughout Chicago, linking jobs, housing, recreation, and services. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a planning concept that concentrates development around transit resources to capitalize on public transit investments, reduce auto dependency, and enable vibrant, healthy, and walkable neighborhoods.

Understanding the history and important linkages between transit investments and communities, the Chicago Transit Authority conducted the *Lawrence Avenue TOD Study* to explore local preferences for TOD and/or transit-supportive design near the Brown Line terminal area. This study is intended to contribute to the larger community-wide discussion on the area's future and to complement other ongoing planning studies in Albany Park.

Achieving development that meets local goals requires partnership among many stakeholders. CTA engaged with many partners in this effort, including the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD), the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ward and other aldermanic offices, the North River Commission (NRC), the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), neighborhood organizations, and residents who participated in a series of advisory committee meetings in 2017. CTA met with these partners to gain a deeper understanding of the local vision for future development, which is documented in this report. These

### What is Transit-Oriented Development?

*Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) concentrates development around existing transit resources to maximize the relationship between land uses. Typically, TOD includes a dense mix of commercial, residential, office, and human services along an existing transit corridor. Focusing growth around transit capitalizes on public investments in transit and promotes walkable and vibrant neighborhoods.*



Kimball Station, looking south on Kimball Avenue.



efforts are only an initial step in implementing TOD and/or other transit-supportive improvements that realize the community's vision and expectations.

This study is divided into the following major sections:

**Section 2** provides information on the history and context of the Brown Line and existing conditions in the study area.

**Section 3** summarizes the stakeholder outreach conducted as part of this study and identifies the neighborhood vision that was developed through the outreach process.

**Section 4** discusses TOD principles and guidelines for future development in the study area. The guidelines focus on four key topics: transit-supportive land uses, transit stations and connectivity, neighborhood character, and the streetscape experience. This section also documents specific development ideas that participants provided during the study.





### *History and Context*

Understanding the area's legacy and its present-day conditions provides the context for its future. Albany Park, and specifically the Lawrence and Kedzie corridors, has had an interdependent relationship with transit over the past century. The TOD concept is not new and it has occurred organically over time as the Kimball and Kedzie 'L' stations were built and the surrounding area developed. This section provides a brief history of the study area's transit resources and its present-day conditions.

### *The Brown Line*

In 1900, the Northwestern Elevated Railroad Company completed its North Main Line that extended northward from the Loop to Wilson Avenue. In 1907, the company's Ravenswood Branch was extended northwest from Belmont Avenue to Albany Park, providing transit service to downtown Chicago. By 1908, the line's rail yard was operational. In this era, Albany Park was sparsely populated, yet residential real estate developers and local promoters sought transit improvements to ensure success for their projects.

Rail transportation was a predominant mode from the late 1800s through the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Decreasing ridership due in part to the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s made Chicago's private transit operations unsustainable. CTA was created to ensure the survival of transit in Chicago and in 1947 the new entity assumed operation of the city's rail system from private companies. In 1949, CTA



Kimball Yard, 1917. Chicago Transit Authority Collection.

inaugurated the Ravenswood Service, today's Brown Line service.

Changing lifestyles in the postwar era, aging infrastructure, the popularity of the automobile, and an exodus from Chicago to the suburbs led to financial difficulties in the 1970s and 1980s that left the CTA struggling to maintain its assets.



The tide began to turn in the late 1980s as North Side neighborhoods expanded in both population and appeal. Brown Line ridership started to rebound, increasing 30% from 1987 to 1998, and the rest of the 'L' system followed suit in the late 1990s. In 1993, CTA rebranded its 'L' lines from historical names to colors in part to help simplify navigation and capitalize upon Chicago's growing tourism market and the Brown Line was born.

In 2001, Brown Line ridership reached 13.7 million annual station entries but remained stagnant through 2003. The Brown Line was at capacity and unable to accommodate passengers to and from downtown Chicago during peak travel times.

To address this issue, CTA initiated the Brown Line Capacity Expansion Project in the mid-2000s, the largest capital improvement project of its era ever undertaken by CTA. Its primary goals were to increase capacity and provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades. Under the project, Brown Line station platforms were reconstructed and expanded from six-car to eight-car trains to match much of the rest of the CTA system. The Brown Line Capacity Expansion Project was successful in increasing capacity and the line's ridership surged before construction was completed at the end of 2009.

Use of the Brown Line has risen 37 percent in the past 15 years, which is a slightly greater increase than the capacity that was added through the Brown Line Capacity Expansion Project. Today, the Brown Line is CTA's third busiest rail line, with



Kimball Station, 1971. Chicago Transit Authority Collection.

segments operating at or over capacity during peak commuting hours.

### *Kimball and Kedzie Stations*

Kimball Station was placed into service on December 14, 1907. Transit architect Arthur U. Gerber originally designed this station in the American Craftsman style. A 1913 map shows the property consisting of a stationhouse, rail yard, employee offices, and several small buildings with ancillary functions, including a workshop. In 1975, the station was updated with a contemporary building that was similar to other newer stations on the CTA system at that time.



Throughout the decades, the locations of the property's basic elements have remained relatively consistent, with stationhouse functions concentrated at the southeast corner of Kimball and Lawrence, platforms extending south along Kimball Avenue, and related uses and yard activities comprising the rest of the parcel. Arthur U. Gerber also designed the Kedzie Station, which was brought into service in the same time as the Kimball Station in 1907. It was used until January 1974, when the 1907 station house was demolished. A new station with an enclosed walkway constructed of a black steel framework with large Plexiglas windows and skylights housing the fare controls was built, opening for service on January 31, 1975.

The Kedzie stationhouse and platforms were rebuilt in 2006 as part of the Brown Line Capacity Expansion Project to allow for 8-car platforms and enhanced ADA accessibility. The existing auxiliary exit at Spaulding Avenue was retained and upgraded to serve as an auxiliary entrance and a smaller version of the main station house.

### *Lawrence Avenue*

Historically, commercial development in the study area along Lawrence between Kedzie Avenue on the east and Central Park Avenue on the west consisted primarily of dense, mixed-use buildings with retail uses on the first floor and residential or office space on upper floors. Although the Albany Park area was largely farmland when the line was constructed in 1907, the area around the Kimball Station developed quickly, creating a transit-oriented destination in Albany Park.

By 1929, this segment of Lawrence Avenue had transformed into a bustling commercial corridor with dense mixed-use retail and entertainment uses like the iconic Terminal Theatre. In the ensuing decades, the Kimball Station area lost some of its older, multi-story, mixed-used commercial buildings to demolition in lieu of new, one-story, single-use, commercial buildings with dedicated off-street parking lots.



Kedzie Station, ca. 1970s.  
Chicago Transit Authority Collection.



Lawrence Avenue, ca. 1920s.  
Courtesy of Chicago Historical Society.



### *The Area Today*

This section discusses the study area's existing conditions, which served as the baseline for discussions at the project's advisory committee meetings (Section 3).

### *Land Uses*

Albany Park has a mix of land uses that contribute to its overall character. Land uses surrounding CTA's Kimball and Kedzie stations include single family residential, multi-story residential, institutional, and low-intensity commercial uses. Three- to four-story courtyard apartment buildings and three- to six-flat apartments are common near Kimball Station. This area has one of the highest population densities along the Brown Line. These larger apartment buildings provide most of the neighborhood's affordable rental housing stock and are typically found on corner lots near Kedzie Station. Single family residences and three flats are common on neighborhood streets.

Commercial uses are concentrated on Lawrence and Kedzie Avenues, with some newer commercial development on Kimball Avenue near the terminal station. Among the commercial properties near Kimball, there are several vacant or underutilized parcels that could potentially support higher-density commercial and mixed-use development.

The Village Discount Thrift Store, for example, is a single-story building located east of Kimball Station on Lawrence with a large underutilized parking lot that occupies more than half of the parcel. Across the street, there is a 12,000 square-foot vacant parcel with roughly 80 feet of frontage on Lawrence

Avenue. Another underutilized property is The Albany Bank & Trust Co. parking lot, located northwest of Kimball Station. Several additional single-story strip shopping centers with off-street parking also exist in the study area.



Lawrence and Kimball Avenues, looking west.



Lawrence and Kedzie Avenues, looking northwest.



Albany Bank & Trust Co. Lot



Park & Ride Lot



Single-Story Strip Shopping Center



Vacant Parcel



Village Discount Thrift Store





### *Transit Assets*

The Brown Line is the area's primary transit asset, with its stations and associated rail yard sited within commercial streets on Lawrence, Kimball, and Kedzie Avenues. As noted by study participants, the Brown Line is viewed positively and contributes to the neighborhood's character.

The Brown Line's terminus at Kimball station is a connector to other modes of transportation including pedestrian, bus, bike, and automobile. Route 81 (Lawrence Ave); Route 82 (Kimball-Homan); and Route 93 (California/Dodge) serve this station. These routes are highly used in this area. In 2016, Route 82 (Kimball-Homan) provided approximately 5.7 million rides, Route 81 (Lawrence Ave) provided approximately 3.9 million rides, and Route 93 (California/Dodge) provided approximately 950,000 rides. Bicycle amenities are adjacent to Kimball station, including a Divvy bike share docking station, uncovered bike racks east of the station entrance, and a shared bike lane in each direction along Lawrence Avenue. For auto users, the station contains two off-street surface parking lots: a Park & Ride lot is adjacent to the station and the other is a combination lot located within the rail yard that contains additional commuter parking spaces and parking for CTA employees. Additional on-street parking is available in the commercial districts along Lawrence and Kedzie. Most of these on-street spaces are regulated with parking meters and limited to 120 minutes.



Kimball-bound train in the Loop.

Kimball station has few passenger amenities. A Dunkin' Donuts franchise is located in an area dedicated for concession uses within the stationhouse and an ATM is available for passenger use. Seating is provided on the primary platform for customers awaiting trains. Public art at the station consists of a pair of aluminum sculptures resembling architectural columns. An overhang covers the art, which is integrated with the stationhouse. The art provides shallow sidewalk seating for the public along Lawrence Avenue. Station overhangs offer outdoor shelter for passengers waiting for buses as well as overhead lighting. Security cameras are located throughout the entire property.

## Lawrence Avenue Transit-Oriented Development Study



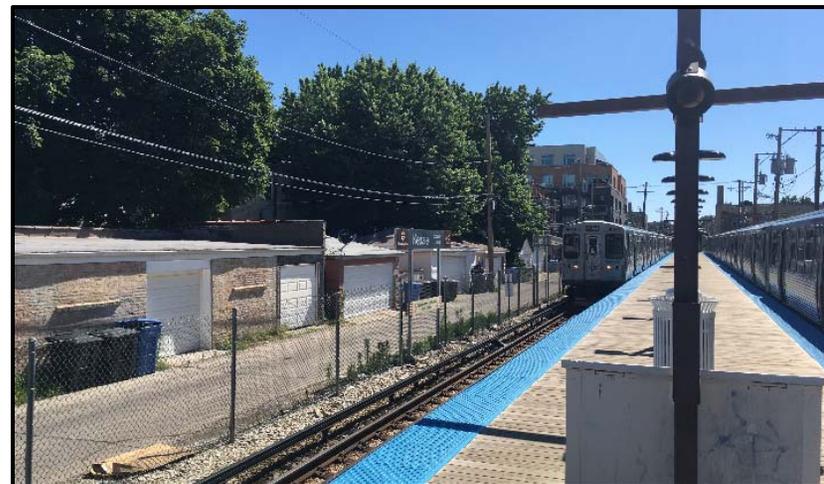
Kimball Yard, the Brown Line's rail yard and maintenance facility, occupies the northern terminus. Rail car storage, regular rail car inspections, periodic seasonal work and emergency checks, daily cleaning, traction power provision, employee training, and other operational duties necessary for operating the Brown Line occur at this yard and maintenance facility.

Kimball Yard is currently at capacity and cannot accommodate the full number of trains required to operate the Brown Line's peak-hour service. The yard accommodates six-car train sets, not the eight-car train sets that CTA currently operates. Given this constraint and existing service demands, many of the Brown Line trains must be split into smaller segments to fit into the yard. Seven eight-car trains are also housed at Midway Yard each evening when not in use on the Brown Line because Kimball Yard cannot accommodate them. Even with the additional rail cars provided by Midway Yard, the Brown Line is limited in its ability to increase its current peak hour service given the lack of available trains.

Kedzie Station is located less than one-half mile southeast of Kimball Station. Like Kimball, it is an at-grade station, with the main entrance on Kedzie Avenue and an auxiliary entrance on Spaulding Avenue. Kedzie Station has few amenities and transit connections. It has limited seating on the station platform, a few bike racks, and a share bike lane in each direction adjacent to it. A slight overhang also provides shelter outside the station. However, it has no concession area, bus connections, or parking.



Kedzie Station, looking south.



Kedzie Station platform.



### *Architectural Character*

Albany Park's architectural legacy adds to its unique character. Many older, high-quality multi-story buildings from the early 1900s exist along Lawrence and Kedzie Avenues. Participants throughout this study noted that the community prizes these buildings with their distinctive architectural styles.

Typical design elements that establish the neighborhood vernacular include 45-degree or rounded corners at major intersections, visually dynamic and varied facades, and ground level features that differentiate ground-floor public space from private uses above.

A few notable buildings on Lawrence Avenue are listed as "Orange" on the City of Chicago's Historic Resources Survey. This designation indicates that they possess significant architectural or historical features. For example, the Fish Furniture Building, a four-story Art Deco building from the 1930s, is located at 3324 West Lawrence Avenue near Christiana Avenue, and the Willis Building, a three-story mixed use Renaissance Revival building from the 1920s, still stands at 3225 West Lawrence Avenue, near Kimball Avenue.

Today, high-quality older buildings and auto-centric single-story strip shopping centers coexist throughout the neighborhood. The abundance of commercial buildings with dedicated parking in front reduces the area's overall density and disrupts the quality of the pedestrian experience.



Fish Furniture Building, 3324 W. Lawrence Avenue.



### *Lawrence Avenue Streetscape*

The study area supports a mix of vehicles, buses, bicyclists, pedestrians, and retail vendors who all share major streets and sidewalks. On Lawrence Avenue, there is one lane of traffic in each direction, with parallel on-street parking, and shared bike lanes in either direction. As study participants noted, most of the street markings, including crosswalks, are faded and not easily visible. Sidewalks are fairly narrow, causing “pinch points” at bus stops and intersections. On many blocks along Lawrence, streetlights are only provided along one side of the street and do

not maintain consistent lighting levels at sidewalks. A predominance of curb cuts into off-street parking lots further encroaches on pedestrian safety and comfort.

The pedestrian zone has an important social and economic role. During the study, several participants mentioned the study area’s minimal street amenities and landscape plantings along main commercial streets. Small trees, street lighting, and sporadic bike racks are present in the pedestrian zone between buildings and the street.



Kimball Station at Lawrence Avenue, looking south.



Kimball Station, looking east along Lawrence Avenue.



### 3. DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY VISION

During the study, participants' input guided the creation of a vision statement (see insert, this page) and design guidelines (Section 4).

With a goal to learn more about community preferences for TOD, input was received in a variety of ways. The primary method was through a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of stakeholders and representative organizations with an interest in TOD. The TAC was created to gather input and to review recommendations that were generated throughout the study. CTA convened the TAC three times in August, October, and November 2017. Between the meetings, additional online feedback was also encouraged.

At the first TAC meeting, participants completed a Visual Preferences Survey (VPS) by voting on design examples from other Chicago neighborhoods and rating their appropriateness for Albany Park. Preferences emerged with a high degree of consensus, including the following:

- Multi-story mixed-use buildings were seen as more appropriate than single-story retail (58% preferred traditional multi-story mixed-use buildings with minimal setbacks from the street).
- Pedestrian amenities were viewed favorably, especially sidewalk cafes (73% preferred) and curb extensions (65% preferred).

- A partially screened wall along Kimball to obscure views of the yard was preferred to a fully opaque wall (62% preferred).
- A station should be integrated with the streetscape, versus a freestanding property (74% preferred).

#### Vision Statement

*The Lawrence, Kedzie, Kimball area will become the activity hub of Albany Park, with mixed-use retail and mixed-income housing that enhance the existing neighborhood character, and walkable streets with a public square where the culturally diverse community can gather.*



Technical Advisory Committee workshop, 2017.

With a general understanding of preferences from the Visual Preferences Survey exercise, the subsequent two Technical Advisory Committee meetings were conducted as discussion-based workshops. Using input from the first meeting as a guide, the workshops focused on transit-supportive land uses, transit stations and connectivity, neighborhood character, and the streetscape experience. These discussions provided essential input for developing the TOD principles and guidelines (Section 4) summarized below.

**Transit-Supportive Land Uses:** While increasing density from current levels as a concept was generally viewed favorably, a

preference for higher density was noted around transit stations and at primary intersections. Additionally, a well-defined intersection or landmark node at Lawrence/Kimball and Lawrence/Kedzie was of interest to study participants.

**Transit Connectivity:** It was generally agreed that improving multimodal connections in the Kimball area is a priority. Adding a public plaza near the station was also viewed favorably, as was creating a unique connection to the transit facility and trains, such as a viewing spot for the rail yard or even a café or another type of rail-themed attraction. Using a decommissioned rail car for this purpose was recommended.

**Neighborhood Character:** The study participants encouraged a mix of uses, specifically the adaptive reuse/repurposing of existing buildings. As one of the nation's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods, participants felt strongly that maintaining Albany Park's diversity with a variety of housing options, including affordable housing stock, was vital to the area's future. Preserving existing affordable housing and creating new affordable housing options, especially larger units for families, was also strongly supported as an essential factor in the neighborhood's continued vibrancy. In the study area, many study participants were interested in a central public space or plaza with amenities and the activation of main streets, like Lawrence Avenue, with widened sidewalks and additional pedestrian amenities, such as street furniture and sidewalk cafés.



**Streetscape Experience:** Study participants expressed an interest in public plazas, widened sidewalks, and green space along primary streets, in addition to a neighborhood identity marker or a distinctive community gateway. Preserving the neighborhood's existing character was identified as highly important. If the Kimball Station were to be redesigned in the future, study participants were interested in reducing intersection congestion and providing covered bike parking

Study participants consistently raised the following themes: expanding affordable housing options, especially for families, immigrant populations, and the elderly; preservation of the neighborhood's older properties; and streetscape activation through new infill development and innovative design. These themes served as a basis for the TOD guidelines. During the two Technical Advisory Committee workshops, the study team presented the images in Section 4 to the study participants for initial feedback. The study team updated the TOD guidelines after each meeting to reflect the input they received.



Technical Advisory Committee workshop, 2017.



Kimball Station, looking east along Lawrence Avenue.



## 4. TOD PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

The following TOD principles and guidelines reflect the study participants' future vision for the Kimball terminal area. The principles discussed below draw from core concepts in the Federal Transit Administration's Six Livability Principles, which were applied to the neighborhood. The guidelines contain specific recommendations for the Lawrence and Kedzie corridors and are illustrated through a combination of conceptual, representative illustrations.

Among Chicago's many neighborhoods, Albany Park is exceptionally affordable and diverse with high quality housing stock and reliable access to economical transportation options. The vision identified in this study focuses on preserving this existing character while increasing local density and activity in selected areas. The resulting guidelines presented here support this vision by encouraging sustainable redevelopment and public way improvements that enhance pedestrian-friendly corridors. The broader principles of sustainability, affordability, diversity, and preservation are at the heart of these guidelines.

TOD supports **sustainability** by encouraging transit use. Street design strategies incorporating sustainable elements such as permeable surfaces and plantings can further contribute to improved air quality, public health, and an enjoyable pedestrian experience. Green building guidelines, such as LEED, incentivize construction adjacent to transit as well as the reuse of existing buildings to reduce the environmental impacts of new development.

Infill developments and restorations should support the neighborhood's **affordability**. Mixed-income housing is encouraged. Existing two- to six-flat residential buildings tend to be the most affordable family housing typology and should be maintained to support existing communities. New development can expand mixed-income housing options to encourage a **diversity** of ages, abilities, incomes, and ethnicities. Along with affordable housing, access to affordable transportation can reduce the cost of living (and environmental impact) through decreased reliance on personal vehicles and timely access to employment, education, and other human services and basic needs.



Community mural near Kimball Station.



TOD and **preservation** are complementary and integral. Existing exemplary mixed-use buildings from the early 1900s should not only be preserved, but also looked to as a model for new development. Conservation and restoration of the existing built environment, along with contextually sensitive infill development, could activate the neighborhood while preserving places important to local history and culture.

### Six Livability Principles

*The Six Livability Principles were established by the Partnership on Sustainable Communities, an interagency collaboration between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) & U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).*

1. *Provide more transportation choices*
2. *Promote equitable, affordable housing*
3. *Enhance economic competitiveness*
4. *Support existing communities*
5. *Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment*
6. *Value communities and neighborhoods*



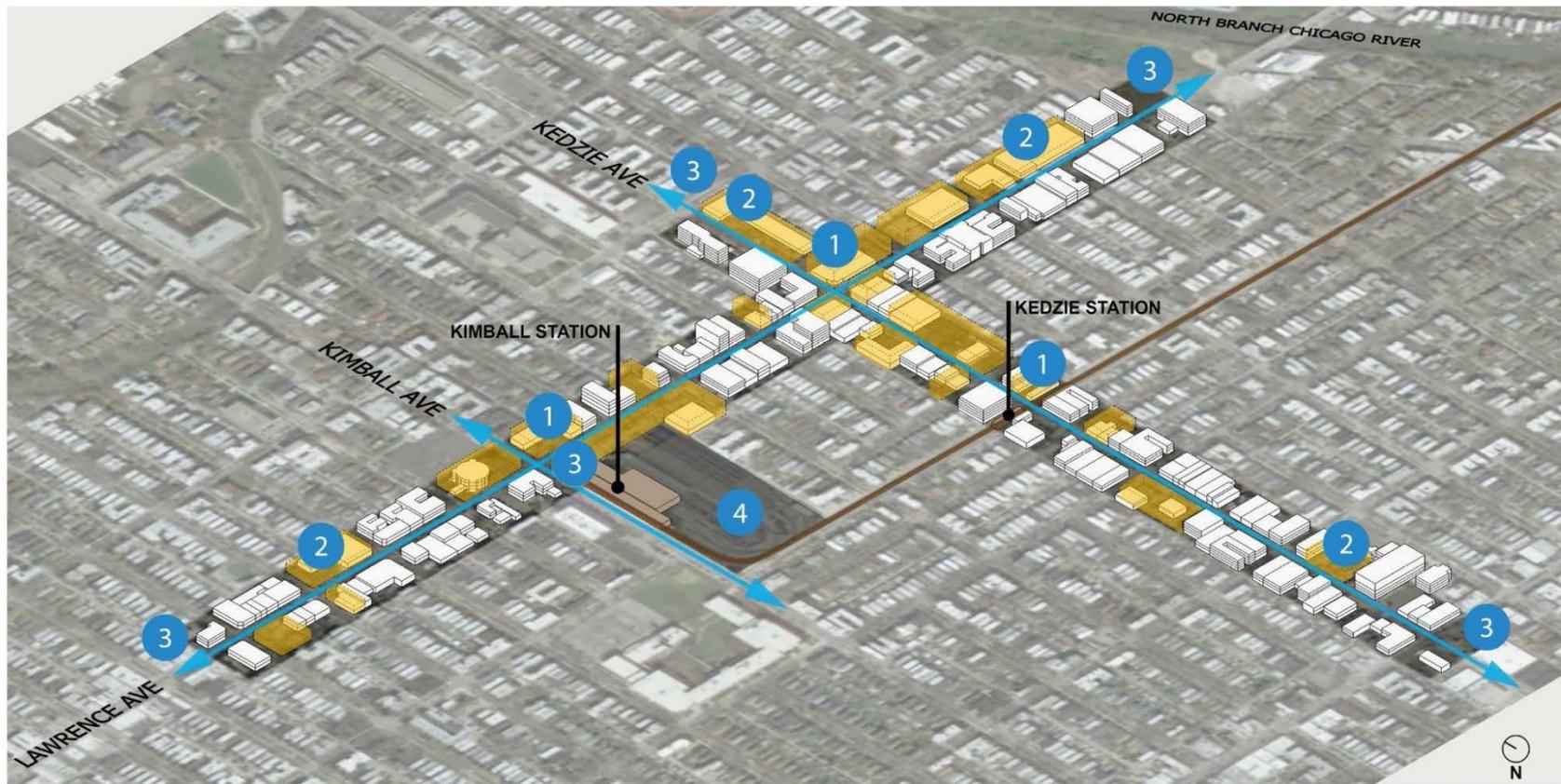
### *Transit-Supportive Land Uses*

Prioritizing higher density transit-supportive land uses can activate the Lawrence and Kedzie corridors. A variety of mixed-use infill developments can create a thriving community hub. Increased density encourages transit ridership, reduces environmental impact, provides convenient access to services and employment, promotes an economically vibrant community, and fosters redevelopment.

**Infill Development** consisting of multi-story mixed-use buildings with a minimal setback can stitch together the streetscape. Mixed-use buildings may contain public functions such as retail and human services on the first floor, and residential or office uses above. Developers could be encouraged to explore options for designing ground floor spaces that would allow for greater flexibility between retail, residential, and other uses. Higher intensity uses, typically housed in taller buildings should be located near transit stations and major intersections, and should taper off towards the surrounding neighborhood. Several practical, operational, financial, and land use constraints present challenges for building above the existing station and rail yard. In the context of a project that addresses CTA's operational needs, the Park & Ride lot on Lawrence Avenue could potentially be utilized for a higher intensity use in the future. This could be accomplished through a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CTA and the community. Other vacant and underutilized parcels in the area with ready access to transit provide opportunities for development.

**Pedestrian-Oriented Uses** should activate the area, and make use of and/or be visible from the street. Outdoor plazas/seating areas can provide relief and foster a healthy and safe neighborhood. Family-friendly land uses reinforce a family-oriented, safe community. Automobile-oriented uses are discouraged. Local businesses and community-focused signage can reinforce neighborhood identity. For example, Kedzie Avenue should continue to grow as a hub for restaurants and grocery stores.

*Housing types in the area should complement, not displace, existing multi-family affordable housing stock. Multi-family affordable housing should be maintained or increased throughout the surrounding neighborhood.*



ARTIST'S RENDERING OF EXISTING STUDY AREA HIGHLIGHTING OPPORTUNITY SITES

- 1 Increase density and land use intensity at major intersections and near transit stations to create activity node (5-6 stories)
- 2 Heights should taper off towards the river and the adjacent neighborhood (3-4 stories)
- 3 Define neighborhood entry with community identity markers
- 4 CTA Operations and Maintenance area
- Maintain or increase surrounding multi-family housing; preserve existing 2-4 unit (3-4 bedroom) affordable residential\*
- Create public plazas or parks to balance increased density\*

*\*general recommendation for study area*

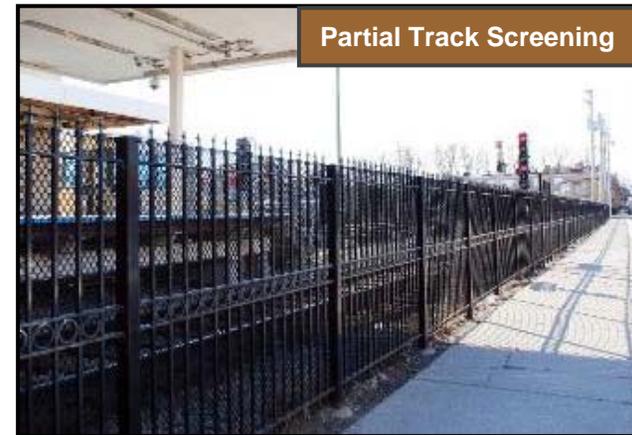


### Transit Stations and Connectivity

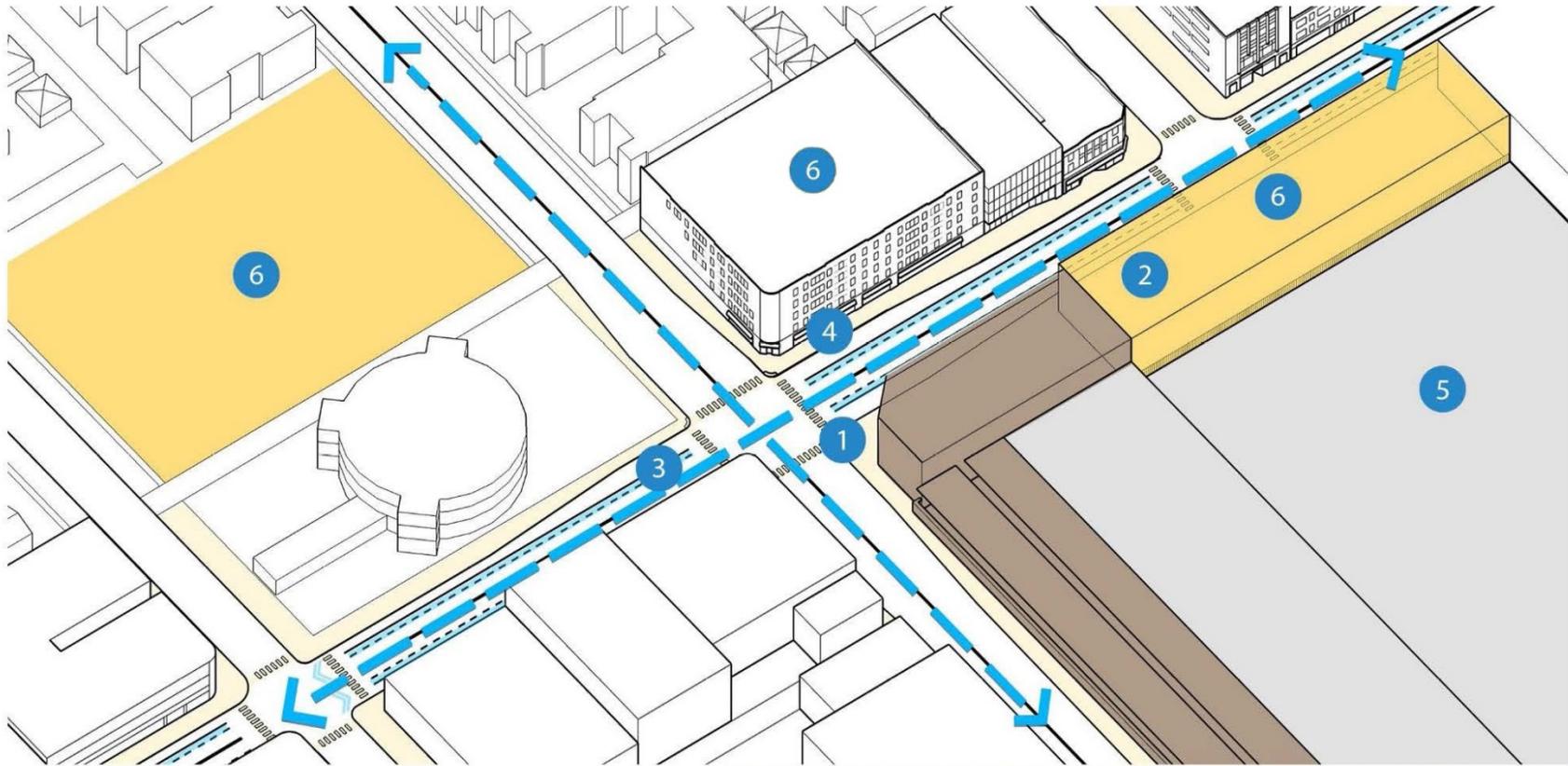
Transit stations can serve as activity hubs for the neighborhood and interface with the surrounding community in many ways. They facilitate neighborhood connectivity by accommodating multiple modes of transportation including pedestrian, bike, bus, and cars, and their design can enhance the surrounding urban fabric.

**Transit Stations** should be integrated with the streetscape where possible and may contain mixed-use or retail amenities. An adjacent public plaza could provide space for community uses and waiting for transit connections in a highly-visible location. Track screening should be partial, not solid, to maintain the transparency and visibility of public assets and investments. Track screening approaches may incorporate public art.

**Transit Connectivity** Incorporating convenient and covered multimodal transfers can encourage transit connectivity. Bike-friendly improvements such as bike-sharing stations and additional secure bike parking are encouraged to enhance connectivity and promote safe streets. The study area is a heavy bus corridor yet bus stops lack sufficient sidewalk width for a standard shelter and are often crowded. Future developments or improvements should prioritize relieving congestion with sufficient space for pedestrian flow that also allows for covered transit connections. If feasible, commuter parking could be integrated into mixed-use developments to prioritize the pedestrian experience. Dense, mixed income residential near the transit station maximizes access to transit.



*Future improvements at Kimball and Kedzie stations could include additional real-time transfer information, neighborhood destination signage, covered and secure bike parking, and a designated auto pickup location to reduce street congestion. Future improvements could consider a stronger integration with the streetscape and sufficient space for pedestrians awaiting connections.*



ARTIST'S RENDERING OF POTENTIAL FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AROUND KIMBALL STATION

- 1 Optimize pedestrian access to transit via safe and welcoming routes with minimal curb cuts
  - 2 Opportunity to use in conjunction with infill development or as a plaza adjacent to transit hubs
  - 3 Connect to bicycle network, provide covered bike parking & accommodate bike share adjacent to station
  - 4 Opportunity to expand public way with setback to relieve congestion at bus stops
  - 5 CTA Operations and Maintenance. Encourage views of trains and tracks from neighborhood with partial screening
  - 6 Encourage high-density infill uses to activate surrounding area
- Dense mixed-income residential maximizes access to transit\*

\*general recommendation for study area



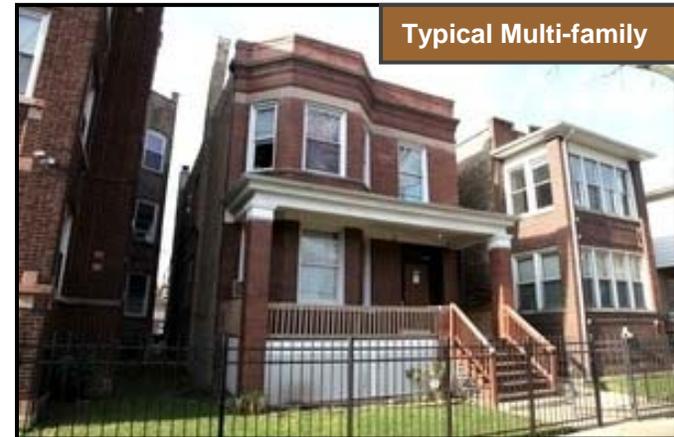
## Neighborhood Character

Successful urban design responds to the existing built environment and its historical and present-day context. Buildings should be accessible, sustainable, and pedestrian-oriented, drawing design elements from local examples of high-quality buildings. The reuse and adaptation of existing buildings is encouraged to retain the neighborhood’s unique character.

**Contextual Architecture** reflects elements of visual interest from its surroundings and avoids large expanses of monolithic uniform facades. Gateway features such as angled or rounded corners at intersections denote a sense of arrival and significance and increase visibility at the street. Designs should encourage a high level of visibility at the street level through a transparent first floor and clearly marked visible entrances. The ground floor public realm is distinguished from the private areas above through architectural features such as a change in material, ornamentation, or depth. Taller buildings may step back at higher floors to minimize shadow impacts and reduce the ‘canyon effect’ at street level.

**Reuse and Preservation** of existing high-quality multi-story buildings should be prioritized. Many existing two- to six- flat multi-family residential buildings provide affordable housing options for the community.

**Community Identity** is reinforced by street design features such as neighborhood markers and wayfinding signage. A well-defined intersection or exceptional building can serve as a landmark node for the community. Local artists and community members should be engaged to create a unique neighborhood identity marker.



*Future improvements could include sustainable design features.  
Improvements should celebrate the neighborhood’s character through the incorporation of public art and placemaking.*





ARTIST'S RENDERING OF DESIGN CHARACTER 'MODEL BLOCK'

- 1 45-degree or rounded corner 'gateway feature' gives importance & visibility to intersection
- 2 Re-use of existing multi-story buildings maintains a unique character and connection to the neighborhood's history
- 3 Articulated windows, balconies, and material changes create a visually dynamic facade
- 4 Transparent storefronts at ground level define and identify the public realm
- 5 Community identity-marker (e.g. site specific public art, unique multilingual wayfinding signage)
- 6 Upper stories of tall buildings may be set back to reduce 'canyon effect' at street level



### Streetscape Experience

An enjoyable pedestrian experience is an integral component of Transit-Oriented Development. Streets and sidewalks are not only organized to move vehicles and pedestrians and support other transportation modes, but also to organize social and economic activities. The pedestrian zone between building facades and the street has the potential to activate the streetscape and encourage pedestrian use.

**Pedestrian Zones** should contain features that encourage pedestrian interaction. Pedestrian-oriented features at street level include transparent and welcoming storefronts, signage and awnings, and sidewalk amenities such as street furnishings, trash cans, street trees, landscaping. Consistent tree canopy coverage and minimizing impermeable surfaces can enhance aesthetics, improve air quality, support better stormwater infiltration, and contribute to public health improvements. The streetscape is currently activated by street vendors that support a vibrant streetscape environment and these vendors should be accommodated. There is some potential for additional sidewalk cafés along Kedzie Avenue or on side streets near Lawrence Avenue.

**Walkability** is prioritized by minimizing or eliminating curb cuts that limit pedestrian space, reducing potential for pedestrian and vehicular conflicts, and providing sufficient space for pedestrians on accessible sidewalks. Existing sidewalk widths are challenging, particularly at major intersections with bus stops. Stakeholders should actively seek to reduce or minimize these conflicts. Small setbacks in new developments or the strategic reuse of parking spots could provide opportunities for relief. Traffic calming measures, such as curb extensions and textured/colored crosswalks, act to slow vehicular traffic, call attention to pedestrians, and increase safety.

**Public Plazas** and parks can activate the area and foster a healthy and safe neighborhood. Open space allocated off-street can extend the pedestrian zone and allow room for people to congregate. These outdoor spaces should be flexible, allowing for a variety of public uses, and contain seating for people of all ages. A successful public space will include green space and engage locals to provide programming.

*Enhancing pedestrian connections expands access to transit services. Setbacks can extend the pedestrian zone and relieve congestion. Public art, plantings, seating, and other public amenities enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage transit use.*



ARTIST'S RENDERING OF STREETScape EXPERIENCE 'MODEL BLOCK

- 1 Activate street edge w/ transparent welcoming facades and pedestrian-friendly uses
- 2 Incorporate resilient plantings to improve pedestrian experience, water infiltration, air quality and public health
- 3 Furniture zones and cafes encourage pedestrian use. Ensure pedestrian circulation zone remains clear
- 4 Sidewalks should provide adequate space for circulation, gathering, and transit connections. Additional sidewalk space at pinch points can be achieved through slight building setbacks
- 5 Accessible sidewalks and clearly marked crosswalks enhance pedestrian safety
- 6 Plaza / gathering space to facilitate a variety of public uses

