

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

# Discover Asia on Argyle

Argyle Street, Chicago

November 17-18, 2008



Metropolitan **Planning Council**



**Urban Land  
Institute**

Chicago

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MPC has partnered with ULI Chicago on many of its TAPs since 2001, and gratefully acknowledges the support of:

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### Uptown United

The mission of Uptown United is to provide technical assistance to businesses and economic investors located in and serving Uptown, initiate and participate in strategic planning, encourage economic development to strengthen the community's economic base, address broad issues pertaining to the quality of life for Uptown's diverse population, and be a network to encourage partnerships.

### Technical Assistance Panel Program

ULI Chicago's Technical Assistance Panel process is designed to enhance community leadership, clarify community needs and assets, and advance land use policies that expand economic opportunity, maximize market potential, and conserve natural environments. TAPs are typically intensive, two-day working sessions, where expert volunteers address a problem proposed by the sponsoring organization about a specific development issue or policy barrier within a defined geographic area.

ULI Chicago's criteria for selecting communities to work with include the following: strong local leadership capacity; a clearly defined problem statement, and three to four well-articulated questions to be addressed during the TAP; a defined geographic boundary (neighborhood, district, corridor, etc.); and transferability to other communities in the region.

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## Background

Argyle Street, from Broadway Street to Sheridan Road, is a microcosm of the spirit and culture that make Chicago one of the great cities of the world. As a part of the Uptown community, Argyle Street has undergone many changes in the last half-century. Some of the family names synonymous with Chicago business, such as Shulman and Pritzker, trace their roots back to Argyle Street's Uptown neighborhood. But the true heart of Argyle Street is entrepreneurs who came to the neighborhood with the desire to stake their place in America.

In the 1970s, Argyle Street was transformed by the resettlement of Chinese and Southeast Asian immigrants. They established ethnic businesses and restaurants along the street, initially to serve new populations, which have more recently attracted clientele from across the metropolitan area and nearby states seeking culturally authentic products and cuisines. While condominium conversions and the redevelopment of the entertainment district in Uptown have brought new residents into the community, Argyle Street remains a unique area with a rich and diverse fabric of Asian nationalities and traditions.

Today, Argyle Street is undergoing another transformation. Despite its attractions, the area faces challenges in realizing the full potential its cultural authenticity suggests is possible. Limited business hours close shops behind burglar bars at prime retail and dining times. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic range from virtually non-existent on weekdays to almost impassable on weekends.

Out of a desire to maintain the cultural strength of the area while supporting the economic viability of local business owners, Ald. Mary Ann Smith (48th Ward), Ald. Helen Shiller (46th Ward), and Uptown United, enlisted the Urban Land Institute Chicago District Council (ULI Chicago) and Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) to conduct a Technical Assistance Panel to begin formulating a plan to protect and grow the district's many assets.

ULI Chicago and MPC conducted a full year of planning and preparation for the TAP. They were assisted pro-bono by several professionals to collect all relevant past studies, define the current situation, gather financial information, construct base maps, and identify property and business owners and residents who have a stake in the outcome of the assignment. Unique to the Argyle TAP, the sponsors surveyed local business owners and garnered more than 51 respondents (over a 50% response rate), thanks to the tireless efforts of Tam Van Nguyen of Chinese Mutual Aid Association.

The Argyle TAP met November 17-18, 2008, to develop ideas to elevate this critical Pan-Asian connecting hub to suit its dynamic surroundings. The panel was chaired by Ngoan Le of the Chicago Community Trust and included a group of 11 real estate development experts, urban planning and design professionals, and community development leaders. Together, they evaluated all of the available qualitative and quantitative information related to the vision and statement of need, and then brainstormed, planned and offered objective recommendations. While Technical Assistance Panels typically involve panelists with little involvement in the area in question to ensure objectivity, given the uniqueness and cultural complexity of Argyle Street, several panelists had a working knowledge of current and historic issues facing the district to confirm the viability and cultural appropriateness of the recommendations. In addition to the expertise on the panel, organizers sought critical input through discussions with local business owners and residents, as well as City of Chicago planning officials.

The questions posed to the Argyle Street TAP were:

- What are the market opportunities for the Argyle District? In the face of growing competition, how can district merchants harness a broader market to grow their businesses?

- How can local businesses leverage new development nearby — residential construction, condominium conversions, commercial and mixed-use — to strengthen the district?
- What street and road design techniques will achieve the greatest efficiencies for traffic, circulation and parking in the Argyle District?
- What upgrades to the district's historical structures and character — building stock, street walls and facades, el station, sidewalks and streetscape — will improve the appearance and identity of the district?
- How can Argyle Street stakeholders build leadership and collaborate around a shared agenda?

After two full days of discussions about design, use, implementation, and financing, the TAP offered the following **recommendations** to improve this unique and dynamic area. The recommendations explored marketing opportunities, as well as infrastructure and streetscape issues.

#### **1. Incorporate Argyle Street into a larger Asian destination:**

- Extend the Argyle District to include Broadway Street from Gunnison to Winona streets to leverage the new Asian business investment on Broadway, increased pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and proximity to the entertainment district on Lawrence Avenue.
- Strengthen the identity of the expanded district with unique streetscape aesthetics and strong gateway features.
- Encourage land use controls that encourage retail over service uses, and an “activated” ground level along Broadway and Argyle.
- Consider new development opportunities at

key sites, including the Vietnamese Association of Illinois parking lot on Winthrop Avenue, and the multi-unit building just east of the CTA station that was recently rendered uninhabitable by fire.

#### **2. Create a community of sustainable businesses that engages and attracts area residents:**

- Enhance the overall shopping experience with simple aesthetic improvements to make the area cleaner and more inviting.
- Develop cooking or other food-related classes at the area markets and restaurants.
- Leverage local business leadership structures to serve the area better and establish informal cooperative efforts to succeed where formal efforts may not.
- Connect local business leaders to the area block clubs to identify common goals and opportunities, and specifically market events to those residents.
- Explore alternative parking strategies to increase parking availability and turnover.
- Diversify the types of goods and services available.
- Keep area businesses open longer.

#### **3. Create a landmark identity reflecting the area's diversity and appealing to a broader market:**

- Re-brand the expanded district as “Asia on Argyle” to clearly express the range of cultures represented in the district.
- Work with the city to develop tours of the area as a cornerstone of Chicago's cultural and ethnic heritage.
- Preserve existing architectural elements and

enhance facades to reflect the character of the area.

- Promote Argyle Street through signage and design features that connect the corridor to the neighboring Uptown Square Entertainment District and direct visitors from Lake Shore Drive and the neighboring bike path.
- Showcase the uniqueness of both the area and specific nationalities with cultural events in area restaurants and other spaces.
- Repair and update the CTA elevated train station with a distinct cultural feel without alienating specific nationalities.
- Establish culturally significant architectural or other “gateway markers” at the entrances to the Argyle District.
- Establish a local cultural center that reflects the histories and rich arts and cultural heritage of each of the nationalities represented in the district.
- Provide Asian-style entertainment to capitalize on the proximity to the Uptown Square Entertainment District and draw visitors looking for a cultural experience beyond merely shopping and dining.
- Pursue the creation of an Asian Night Market as a destination event, to be patterned off the night markets found in Asian cities – where vendors sell food and other goods in an open-air market accompanied by music and other entertainment.

## A Cultural and Commercial Crossroads

Bookended by Sheridan Road and Broadway Street in the Uptown neighborhood on Chicago’s North Side, Argyle Street hosts a unique blend of restaurants,

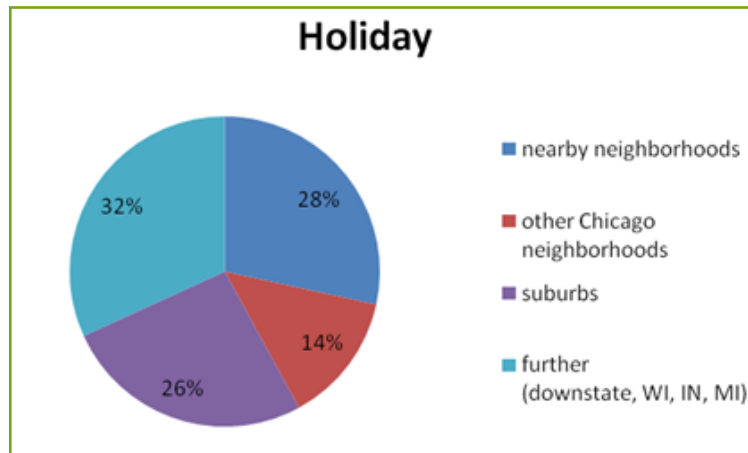
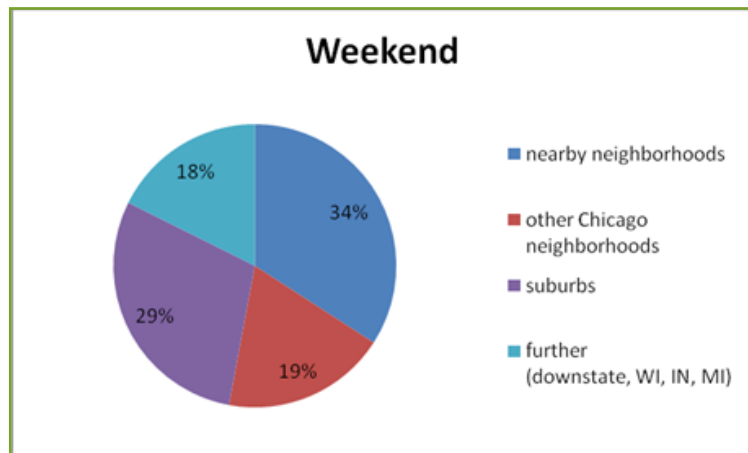
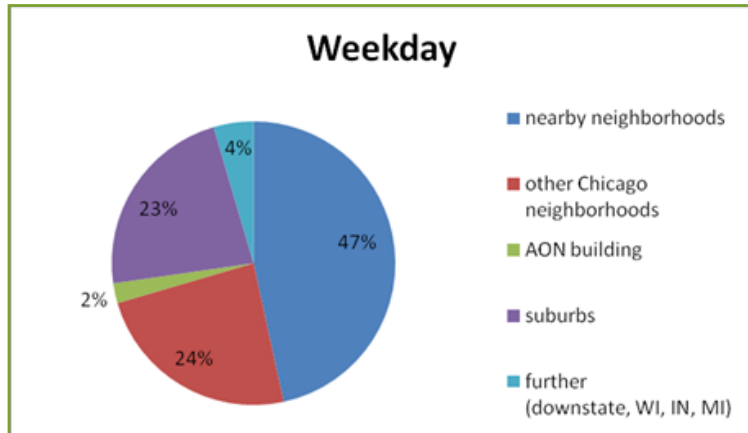
retail and service establishments owned and operated largely by immigrant and subsequent-generation Chinese and Southeast Asian populations. The intersecting streets along Argyle, including Sheridan, Broadway, Kenmore, and Winthrop, also host a wide range of residential, institutional, social service, and financial uses. Together, this geography unofficially comprises the “Argyle District,” which caters primarily – but not exclusively – to a diverse community of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, Laotian, Thai, African, African American, other Asian immigrants from across the globe, as well as to a broader community that makes up the culturally and ethnically rich, and economically diverse Uptown neighborhood.

Since its transformation into a major Asian district in the 1970s, Argyle Street has become a regional attraction for commercial and tourist activities, on weekends in particular. Argyle Street bustles with energy and excitement, drawing wholesale and retail consumers - from outlying neighborhoods, suburbs, and as far away as Wisconsin, Indiana and Iowa - to take advantage of the markets carrying distinct Asian produce, spices and other food items largely unavailable elsewhere, in an environment that is culturally familiar and small enough to be walkable. The Argyle Street visitor is transplanted to a unique culture, with each store and restaurant bringing a sense of adventure and discovery of new and exotic experiences.

Food drives much of the commerce on Argyle Street, with restaurants and Asian markets comprising a significant portion of the local businesses. The entrepreneurs who transformed Argyle Street into a diverse Asian commercial center have held tightly to the unique cultural and gastronomic experiences not found anywhere else in the city.

In the context of Chicago’s north side neighborhoods, Argyle Street is situated for success. The area is well-served by public transportation, with its own elevated CTA train station and bus routes on both Sheridan Road and Broadway Street. To the south, on Broadway and Lawrence, is a vibrant entertainment district that includes the Aragon Ballroom and Riviera Theatre. To the north is Loyola University, which recently enrolled

## Argyle Street Customer Base



Argyle Street business owners state their customers come from a wide variety of locations, depending on the time of the week and year.

its largest freshman class in history. And unlike many neighborhoods, local traffic is a benefit, not an impediment. The major north-south thoroughfares – Broadway and Sheridan, permit a high volume of traffic into

the area without being bottlenecks. Uptown generally is perceived as a “commuter shed,” with an estimated 10,000 commuters traveling between the northwest suburbs, Lake Shore Drive, and downtown Chicago during the week. As one attendee commented during the TAP’s evening reception on November 17th, “Argyle has the density of businesses many commercial corridors would die for.”

Political and community leadership in the Uptown area is committed to maintaining both the cultural authenticity and economic sustainability of Argyle Street. They do so in the face of mounting economic, aesthetic, and some community challenges.

## Cultural Impact

The same cultural diversity that is the very strength of Argyle Street also creates some of the most dynamic challenges to long-term sustainability. The community serves a number of nationalities, most of which are organized amongst themselves, but not necessarily across nationalities, resulting in a relative lack of cohesive leadership to advocate for the entire district. Given the historic pattern of immigration and current heterogeneous nature of the area, the different groups are rightly insistent that they be able to maintain the integrity of their respective cultures, and are strongly opposed to branding of the district specifically to one nationality, such as Chinatown.

Furthermore, government involvement may serve as a disincentive for organized involvement for two distinct reasons. First, many business owners came from countries and cultures where the government did little to earn the trust of the people. Second, in Chicago, government-sponsored programs have historically focused on homogeneity within nationalities, not cooperation among them.

## Understanding a Changing Market

Many of the local business owners are first-generation immigrants, and have been managing their businesses on their own or within their families for decades. Many operate at a sustainable economic level, and plan to transition their businesses to their children.

They are usually focused on day-to-day operations, not necessarily broader community issues. Many building owners do not live in the area, and typically have not invested in preserving the historic character of their buildings. As long as they remain profitable with their leases and maintenance expenses, they likewise have little incentive to participate in a community-wide effort.

This dynamic, however, seems to be changing. A majority (62 percent) of the Argyle Business Survey respondents said they would like to improve the appearance of their businesses. The business and property owners who met with panelists understand the market is evolving beyond the district's traditional customer base, a fact supported by market and demographic data. The challenge is developing a universal understanding among business and property owners of the changes, opportunities and needs of this new market. It is particularly important to reach the many property owners who do not live in the area.

### Visual Improvements

Aesthetic challenges are obvious. Some stem from lack of incentive for business owners to invest in the physical space, as described above. This inattention to aesthetics includes the use of burglar bars (where the lack of visual appeal is compounded by the implication of insecurity), inadequate snow removal, cluttered window presentations, and poor maintenance of awnings and entryways.

On a broader level, the most obvious need is at the CTA elevated train station located on Argyle, roughly one block east of Broadway. The supporting pillars are crumbling and, on many, the rebar is plainly visible. The tracks and station are in disrepair, and bear the results of an earlier attempt at Chinese-oriented branding that is generally discounted by the other nationalities in the area.

The aesthetic issues are compounded at night. When stores close, the burglar bars are locked into place, and the crumbling and disregarded facades leave a streetscape that is uninviting to both residents and

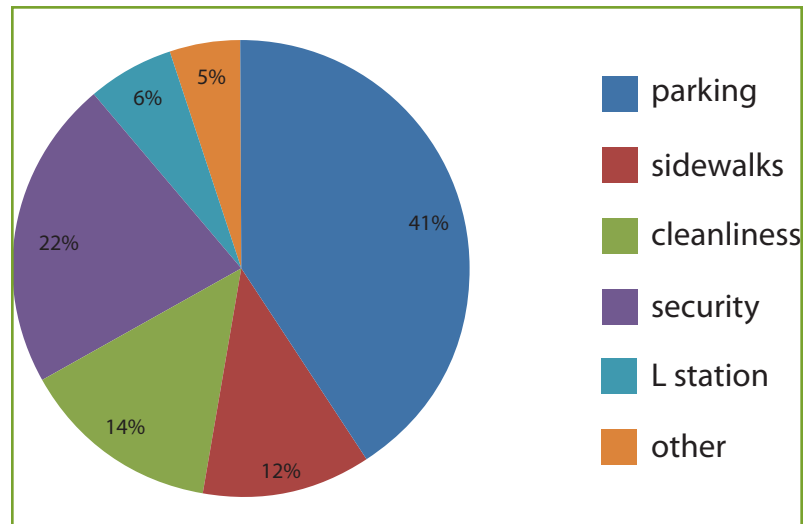
potential visitors, particularly in the glow of the entertainment district immediately south on Lawrence.

### Infrastructure

Parking consistently emerges as a source of frustration for residents and business owners alike. Nearly half (41 percent) of Argyle Business Survey respondents cited parking as the most important public improvement that could be made to support their businesses. During the week, parking is not a significant issue. However, on weekends – the prime shopping and dining days – Argyle Street is almost impassable, as wholesalers and other shoppers crowd all available parking space, in some cases double and triple parking, and parking in alleys.

Certainly, the nature of the shopping contributes to this problem. Some shoppers come from a distance – even other states – and buy in bulk (e.g. 50-pound bags of rice). Parking a block away, whether public or paid parking exists or not, simply is not an option

### Needed Public Improvements



Public improvements that could be made to help local businesses. Over 41% listed parking as a needed improvement.

for these shoppers. The city recently implemented pay-and-display parking in the nearby park between Sheridan and Lake Michigan, meaning more parkers will likely attempt to take advantage of free parking on and around Argyle, exacerbating problems for



residents and shopkeepers. Currently, non-metered on-street parking, free off-street parking, and parking without time limits can all be found within the district, which contributes to limited parking space turnover. According to some interviewees, the business owners and employees are using some of this parking, limiting availability for customers.

## A Move Towards Sustainability and Cultural Authenticity

The fundamental question addressed by the Technical Assistance Panel was whether the recommendations should promote the Argyle District as a destination – with more of a visitor orientation – or should help to sustain the economic viability of the area for local businesses and residents. The decision was made that it was possible to achieve both and, in the process, establish the Argyle District as a dynamic part of the city's multi-ethnic fabric and experience.

The panel focused on two broad areas of development: 1) leveraging marketing opportunities; and 2) streetscape, physical and infrastructure enhancements. The TAP offered the following analysis and recommendations to the relevant stakeholders.

## A Dynamic Array of Opportunities and Challenges

The panel conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis of the Argyle District based on the background information developed for the panel, conversations with area stakeholders, and independent data analysis.

### Purchasing Power of Area

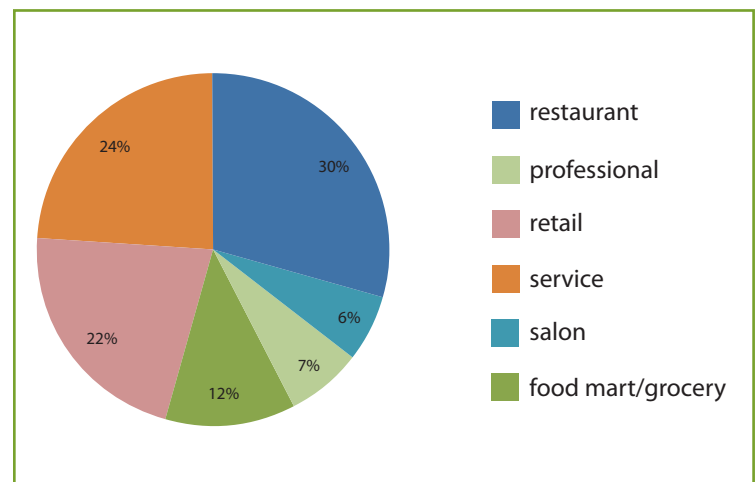
	0.5 Miles:	Census Tracts	5 Minutes	20 Minutes
Population	31,637	50,840	106,664	1,196,305
Average Household Size	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.3
% In Current Residence 5 Plus Years	19.2%	17.6%	17.9%	20.8%
Total Employees	8,275	15,935	33,485	1,060,708
Total Retail Expenditure	\$270,494,621	\$433,880,499	\$1,015,932,357	\$12,668,421,029
Eating & Drinking Expenditure	\$32,173,862	\$51,690,387	\$121,645,170	\$1,535,334,119

Demographic data © 2008 by Experian/Applied Geographic Solutions.

**Strengths.** Not surprisingly, food and culture serve as the commercial and cultural foundation for the area. The restaurants and markets are well known for their quality, selection, diversity, and authenticity. Asian food and cooking style dovetail with current consumer trends toward fresher and more varied ingredients. Similarly, the retail establishments afford shoppers access to authentic Asian décor, housewares and other items.

The panel was impressed by the purchasing power of the area. (See chart below) Independent research revealed 31,637 people lived within a half-mile radius of the area, with retail purchasing power of more than \$270 million. Expanded to a 20-minute drive time perimeter, the figures balloon to nearly 1.2 million people, with retail purchasing power of almost \$12.7 billion. The implications are clear: capturing only a

### Argyle District Business Types



The majority of Argyle Street businesses fall into either the restaurant (30%); service (24%) or retail (22%) categories.

small percentage of this revenue would result in significant economic benefit to the area.

**Weaknesses.** The panel observed four key challenges to the sustainability of the Argyle District. The first is this particular stretch of Argyle is relatively short as a “destination” street and, during non-peak hours, it experiences fairly low car and foot traffic. Second was the overall perception of poor safety, aggravated by issues such as deteriorating facades, burglar bars on most store windows, panhandling, poor lighting, and low nighttime foot traffic. Third was the general lack of foot traffic during non-peak hours, minimizing the overall draw of the area as a destination for pedestrians. There also is the perception that other types of businesses are needed to meet the needs of new residents who are not Asian. Fourth was the unavailability of parking during peak shopping hours and days. One stakeholder reported the three biggest problems on Argyle Street were “parking, parking and parking,” a recurring theme among community stakeholders. The problem seems to be most acute on weekends, when traffic is so bad as to render Argyle Street nearly impassable.

**Opportunities.** The panel saw a significant opportunity for the district to assert itself in the identity of the Uptown neighborhood. The proximity to the entertainment district at Broadway and Lawrence, the expansion of some of the Asian businesses to Broadway, and the strong and varied cultural identity of the area suggested the viability of Argyle Street as a true destination for the surrounding region. When considering the Argyle District as a physical space, the panel noted some of the more successful businesses are moving into larger, nearby spaces on Broadway. Currently, Argyle seems to naturally serve as a small business incubator given the size of the storefronts. Supporting this idea, 33 percent of the Argyle Business Survey respondents said they have plans to move to larger spaces in the next five years. Including Broadway in the district would capitalize on this trend and result in more visible connection to the Uptown Square Entertainment District, to the students at Truman College and future customers at Wilson Yard, which would in turn allow the Argyle District to benefit from the in-

creased pedestrian and vehicular traffic on Broadway. With the proper streetscape elements, this expansion would naturally draw traffic onto Argyle Street in a way that simply does not happen today.

**Threats.** Four specific threats emerged for the panel. First was the lack of connection and collaboration between the local business owners and residents represented by the block clubs, indicating a lack of a unified community vision. Second were the anecdotal reports from stakeholders that area retailers were experiencing increasing competition, both at a retail and wholesale level, from vendors outside the district. Third was apparent inattention by building and business owners to the preservation of the original architectural character of the area in favor of inexpensive and functional – albeit bland – improvements, when improvements did occur. Fourth, and not specific to the area, was the threat of rising costs, particularly highly fluctuating gas prices, which make travel into the area from more distant locales – an important component of the current retail customer base – less appealing.

In response to this analysis, the panel established **three goals** for the Argyle District. For each goal, the panel identified a series of **short, mid, and long-term recommendations**. No specific time frames were assigned to these classifications; they are merely a mechanism for defining the amount of effort, resources, and length of time that may be required by a particular recommendation.

**Goal 1: Physically incorporate Argyle Street into a larger Asian destination.** This is already an emerging trend, with the significant opportunity to expand the whole concept of the Argyle District to include the stretch of Broadway Street from Gunnison Street on the south to Winona Street on the north.

Short-Term Recommendations:

- Begin the expansion process by incorporating simple banners and signage to reorganize the identity of the district, and reorient and invite visitors.

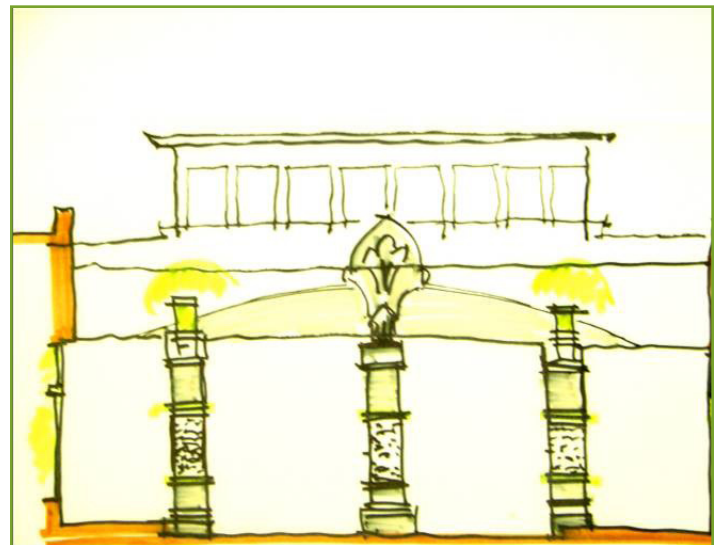
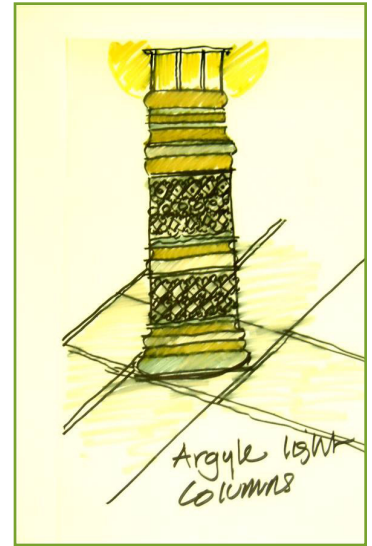


The Argyle District should span several blocks north and south along Broadway.

#### Mid-Term Recommendations:

- Develop a unifying visual concept to tie Broadway and Argyle together and establish the identity of the area. This visual concept would need to include a sense of entry and exit to the district via streetscape design that incorporates gateway features at the intersection of Broadway and Gunnison, Broadway and Winona, and Argyle and Sheridan. Due to its width, Broadway also offers the possibilities for other urban details such as median planters and sidewalk bumpouts that could unify and improve the area visually in a way Argyle alone could not. The new aesthetic concept would be reinforced along both streets through stylized lighting and unique streetscape details. The panel discussed the idea of columns of light emanating upward from architectural elements at strategic locations throughout the district. The panel also noted the elevated train station is in need of updating and repair, and could therefore serve as the centerpiece to the new aesthetic. The panel was very clear the aesthetic approach be rooted in a broad-based, contemporary Asian style, and not the widely

used elements (e.g. dragons and pagodas) that are the hallmark of "Asian-themed" locations and events. The panel expressed the need to find new ideas and aesthetics that incorporate multiple cultures, and suggested the solution is in a more subtle approach, with less reliance on iconic images.



"Light columns" and an updated el platform would reinforce the cultural identity of the Argyle District.

- Implement land use controls that would encourage retail over service uses, and an "activated" ground level along Broadway and Argyle.





The new Argyle District would contain aesthetic markers at each major intersection.

#### Long-Term Recommendations:

- Consider new development opportunities at key locations. The panel identified several sites as possibilities for development, but focused on the parking lot owned by the Vietnamese Association of Illinois located on Winthrop, just north of Argyle. The lot has roughly 100 parking spaces, but is used sparsely during the

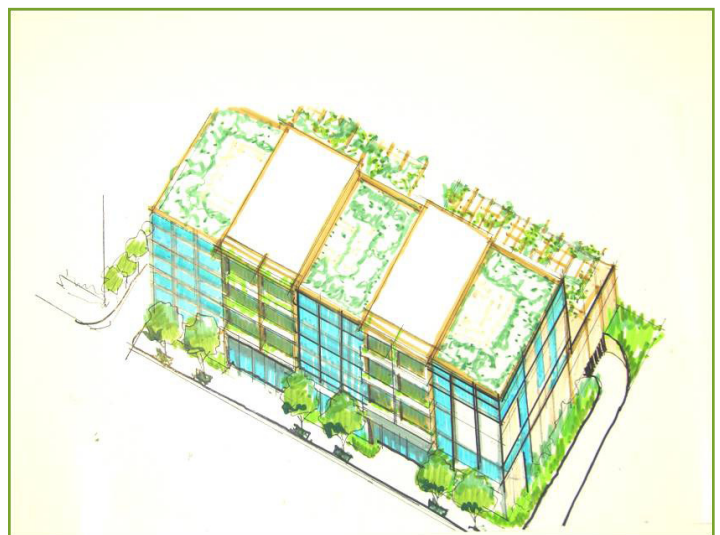
week. Its central location suggests its use could be expanded to benefit the community.

The panel explored one possible development scenario for a four-story, 70,000 sq. ft., building on the site. The building could have a multiplicity of uses, but the panel suggested first-floor retail or other program space with market rate senior housing above. Other possible uses might include cultural space and condominiums or apartments. The building would preserve the existing 100 parking spaces, with an additional 40 spaces for residents. If developed as senior housing, the building would address a need expressed by community stakeholders. Other possible locations for development include the site of a recent fire, just east of the el station, although the panel acknowledged that multiple property owners significantly increases the complexity of finding a common, mutually beneficial mix at that site.

#### 5013-37 N Winthrop Development Parcel

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Land SF	31,250	31,250
Use	Exterior Parking	Senior Living
Zoning	B3-1	B3-2
Allowed FAR	1.2	2.2
Actual FAR	0	1.7
Building SF	0	70,250
# of Units	0	30
Parking	100	140
-Public		100
-Private		40
Retail SF		7,500
Program SF		2,500
Height	n/a	50'
% Green Roof		75%
Avg Unit size		800-1000sf

#### Argyle/Winthrop Development Site



The parking lot north of Argyle on Winthrop is an ideal location for new development.



## Goal 2: Create a community of sustainable businesses that engages and attracts area residents.

### Short-Term Recommendations:

- Enhance the overall shopping experience with simple aesthetic improvements. The panel recognized the current work of the Special Service Area (SSA) to clean and market the streets, and recommended business owners duplicate that effort to create clean and inviting stores. Improved lighting both inside the stores and out, removal of burglar bars, and the cleaning and simplification of window displays were all seen as critical.
- Develop cooking or other food-related classes at the area markets as a means not only to stimulate interest in local products, but also mitigate the intimidation some visitors may feel when shopping in an unfamiliar environment.
- Leverage local business leadership structures to serve the area better. Although there are many active business-support mechanisms, such as Uptown Business Partners and Uptown United, and several informal networks organized by nationality, formal structures designed to support Argyle Street business types or nationalities have often struggled to maintain viability. Some interviewees said this is the result of the way funding has been allocated in the past, through state and city resources, to support culturally specific organizations instead of broader business and commercial development efforts. In addition, many of the local merchants and organizers of these informal structures voiced openness to connecting these informal efforts and working through more formal organizations such as Uptown Business Partners on appropriate issues. The panel recommended the incorporation of both informal and formal structures. For example, an informal association of restaurant owners could,

using area organizational resources, identify and pursue projects that support common interests like cooperative industry-related marketing efforts. Formal joint efforts such as involvement in Special Service Area (SSA) Commission, Uptown United, and Uptown Business Partners would help to coordinate street efforts with broader neighborhood economic development initiatives. Finally, the creation of the Asian Night Market could be conducted through Uptown Business Partners.

- Connect local business leaders to area block clubs to identify common goals and opportunities, and specifically market events to those residents.
- Explore alternative parking strategies to increase parking availability and turnover. The panel recommended several ways the parking situation could be improved in the Argyle District, including increased use of shared parking lots, paid short-term parking, better utilization of existing lots, such as the Winthrop lot and parking facility across from the Ace (formerly AON) building on Broadway Street, and the use of restaurant valets to shuttle cars out of the immediate area. Another recommendation is to employ parking meters at the currently free parking spaces along Argyle and some of the side streets. Doing so would discourage the use of Argyle Street as a parking lot by people who used to park for free near the lake, but will no longer be able to do so because of the new paid parking there.

### Mid-Term Recommendations:

- Keep the area businesses open later to accommodate both working families and busy neighborhood residents, respond to the increasing foot traffic in the Uptown Square Entertainment District, and enhance the overall feeling of safety along Argyle Street.

### Long-Term Recommendations:

- Diversify the types of goods and services available. The panel observed not all of the area businesses have to be Asian-focused, and that a variety of choices would more likely encourage repeat business as long as the corridor maintained its Asian identity overall.

### Goal 3: Create a landmark identity reflecting the area's diversity and appealing to a broader market.

### Short-Term Recommendations:

- Establish the area as a destination and invite visitors through signage and directional information along nearby thoroughfares and locales, such as Lake Shore Drive, the Uptown Square Entertainment District, and local bike path, as well as within the community itself. Moreover, encourage visitors to stay by providing clear directions to parking.
- Showcase the uniqueness of both the area and specific nationalities with cultural events in area restaurants and other spaces. These events could include cooking, art, or craft demonstrations.

### Mid-Term Recommendations:

- Rebrand the expanded district as "Asia on Argyle," to express clearly the range of cultures represented in the district. Strengthen this identity with a unique streetscape aesthetic and strong gateway features, as previously described.
- Work with the Chicago Dept. of Special Events to develop tours of the area as a cornerstone of Chicago's cultural and ethnic heritage.
- Preserve existing architectural elements and enhance facades to reflect the character of the area.

- Provide Asian-style entertainment to capitalize on the proximity to the Uptown Square Entertainment District and draw visitors looking for a cultural experience beyond merely shopping and dining.
- Establish an Asian Night Market. The panel recommended a specific concept – a night market – to help tie the goals and recommendations together, and begin to establish Argyle Street as a destination rich with authentic national and ethnic heritage.



Night markets are dynamic additions to the urban landscape and economies in many Asian cities.

The night market would be patterned off the night markets found in Asian cities – where vendors sell food and other goods in an open-air market accompanied by music and other entertainment. The concept of an open air market is very familiar to Chicagoans, with Taste of Chicago being the most obvious example. Although, a night market is a fairly new concept, the proximity to the Uptown Square Entertainment District suggests an Argyle Street event could be very well attended and gain traction as one of the premier cultural events in Chicago's robust

slate of neighborhood activities. Hosting the market after regular operating hours would promote the corridor without exacerbating the current parking challenges.

The panel recommended the night market initially could be held annually, and only encompass Argyle Street itself. As interest grew, it could become a quarterly event, run by the local Chamber of Commerce or other community groups, and expanded to the intersecting streets. In the long-term, it potentially could be a self-sustaining event, held monthly, with paid staff and generating positive revenue.

tive participation of the current and subsequent generations of business owners, residents and community stakeholders, Argyle Street can solidify its place in the rich texture of Chicago's cultural destinations.

#### Long-Term Recommendations:

- Repair and upgrade the CTA elevated train station with a distinct cultural feel, without alienating specific nationalities as described in detail above.
- Establish a local cultural center that reflects the histories, rich arts, and cultural heritage of each of the nationalities represented in the Argyle District.

## Conclusion

The Technical Assistance Panel saw tremendous opportunities for Argyle Street and its place among the iconic commercial districts of Chicago. Its deep cultural and historical tradition, broad national representation, and location near a vibrant entertainment district suggest Argyle Street could strengthen and expand its reputation and role as a destination for a wide variety of visitors and consumers from across the city, region, and surrounding states.

The panel recommended the need to expand the idea of Argyle Street to take advantage of the growth and vitality of Broadway to its west, and that the whole area could be branded as a unique destination with a wealth of Asian-oriented dining, shopping, entertainment, and other experiences. With the support and ac-

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