

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 18, 2024

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REVISED SIGN GUIDELINES PROPOSED TO SUPPORT DOWNTOWN BUSINESS VITALITY

Sign regulations along three downtown shopping corridors would be refined to increase advertising flexibility for local businesses through changes proposed to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Based on input from retail tenants and property owners, the Michigan Avenue Special Sign District and the Street Street/Wabash Avenue Special Sign District would be amended to expand the sizes and types of signs that are allowed within each area.

The amended regulations would accommodate new technology and best practices involving retail signage while maintaining the historic character of each shopping corridor, said Ciere Boatright, commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), which administers sign guidelines within the City's zoning code.

"Retailers across the country are facing existential challenges involving brick-and-mortar stores, and more flexible sign regulations are a proven way to reach customers," Commissioner Boatright said. "These refinements reflect a commitment to businesses while also protecting each area's legacy as a premiere, one-of-a-kind shopping destination."

Established in 1996, the Michigan Avenue Special Sign District would amend corridor advertising regulations between Roosevelt Road and Oak Street. The refinements would increase a business's maximum total sign area from two to three square feet per linear foot of street frontage. They would also allow previously prohibited signs, including:

- Banner signs, with maximum dimensions of four feet by 15 feet
- Projecting signs, with maximum dimensions of four feet by three feet.
- Illuminated letters and logos for cabinet signs, with maximum dimensions of three feet by 10 feet.
- And interior dynamic image display signs up to 30% of each window size and up to 64 square feet per lot. Operating hours would be limited to between 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. with one change per 15 minutes.

Additionally, the Michigan Avenue sign district refinements would:

- Increase the maximum size of window signs from 15 to 30% of a window's area.
- And increase the maximum size of lettering on awning signs from 9 to 12 inches.

Established in 2004, the updated State Street/Wabash Avenue Special Sign District would amend corridor advertising regulations between Wacker Drive and Harrison Street. The refined regulations would allow previously prohibited:

- Projecting signs, with maximum dimensions of four feet by three feet.
- Window signs, up to 30% of a window's area.
- And interior dynamic image display signs up to 30% of each window size and up to 64 square feet per lot. Operating hours would be limited to between 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. with one change per 15 minutes.

Additionally, the State/Wabash sign district refinements would:

- Eliminate setback requirements for signs located within shop windows, currently set at three feet.
- Allow lettering on awning signs to include content other than a business's name and address.
- And leave unchanged current sign area maximums of four square feet per linear foot of street frontage on State, and six square feet per linear square foot of frontage on Wabash.

Both special sign districts would update regulations for live theaters, allowing previously prohibited dynamic image displays on the endcaps of exterior marquees. Marquee signs would also not count towards the maximum sign areas for each lot.

The public-private working group that helped create the proposed changes was formed as a result of Mayor Johnson's "Cut the Tape" initiative and recommendations from the Urban Land Institute, which recently convened technical assistance panels to restore mixed-use vitality for Michigan and State.

Additional sign district amendments could be considered in the future that address more complex proposals involving contemporary advertising innovations.

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EXPEDITED PROCESS PROPOSED FOR SELECT CITY LAND SALES, AQUISITIONS

City land dispositions would undergo an expedited sales process through procedural improvements proposed to City Council today through Mayor Brandon Johnson's Cut the Tape initiative.

Intended to streamline neighborhood revitalization initiatives involving the nearly 10,000 parcels of vacant land under City ownership, the proposal would eliminate the City's practice of submitting proposed sales and acquisitions to the Chicago Plan Commission for

omnibus approval. It would also limit the Community Development Commission's (CDC) review of land sales to City parcels that were originally acquired through TIF funding or that are being sold for projects to be developed with TIF funding.

Currently, Plan Commission votes on all City land sales and acquisitions via omnibus resolutions, typically five to 10 per meeting. CDC votes on all City land sales and acquisitions in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, typically two per meeting. Neither commission is required by state law or the municipal code to make recommendations regarding City land transactions.

The new procedures would reserve the review and approval process for most sales to City Council, shaving weeks off typical timelines and freeing commission staff for other responsibilities.

###

TIF SUPPORT PROPOSED FOR RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION OF LOOP OFFICE SPACE

Seven floors of the high-rise at 79 W. Monroe St. would be converted from office space to 117 mixed-income residential units through \$28 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) support proposed to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

City support for the \$64.2 million Brown Derby LLC project would enable 35% of the project – 41 units – to be priced as affordable for households earning an average of 60% of the area median income.

Plans for the building also include a rooftop deck, renovation of the basement and ground floor, and creation of a lower-level retail space. Current tenant spaces occupied by Walgreens and Intrinsic Schools would not be impacted by the work.

Known as the Rector building upon its completion in 1906, the 14-story steel and masonry structure was designed by Chicago architect Jarvis Hunt. A Holabird & Roche-designed addition was completed to its south in 1924. In 2013, the building was included in the West Loop-LaSalle Street Historic District listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The building's distinctive weather prediction clock, installed in the 1950s by Bell Federal Savings & Loan, would be restored during the project, and the building's exterior elevations would be subject to a future City of Chicago landmark designation.

79 W. Monroe is one of four Loop office conversion projects approved for TIF assistance by the City's Community Development Commission earlier this year. City support for all four projects will create more than 300 affordable apartments with funding provided through the LaSalle/Central TIF district and a variety of other financial incentives.

###

TIF FUNDING PROPOSED FOR EAST GARFIELD PARK PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

BandWith Chicago, a youth performing arts and wellness advocacy organization, would create a \$12.3 million permanent headquarters in East Garfield Park through a financial proposal introduced to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

The nonprofit organization would receive up to \$5 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) assistance to build out a 21,460-square-foot building at 134-56 S. California Ave. for its free performing arts programs. The work would create new rehearsal and performance spaces and classrooms for music, dance, drumline, sound engineering and choral instruction.

Located one block from where BandWith began operations in 2013, the work would also include retail space for a cafe and a Horizons for Youth educational resource center.

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TIF FUNDING WOULD SUPPORT UPGRADES AT THREE NORTH LAWDALE SCHOOLS

Three North Lawndale public schools would collectively receive \$10 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) assistance for facility upgrades under proposals introduced to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

- James Weldon Johnson STEAM Elementary School, 1420 S. Albany Ave., would receive \$3.75 million in TIF to renovate four classrooms, modernize common areas and address critical facility needs.
- Thomas Chalmers STEAM Elementary School, 2745 W. Roosevelt Road, would receive \$3.75 million to renovate four primary classrooms, replace a roof, modernize common areas and address critical facility needs.
- Collins Academy STEAM High School, 1313 S. Sacramento Drive, would receive \$2.5 million to renovate four classrooms, upgrade a parent center and specialty career room, and address critical facility needs.

TIF would pay for the entirety of all three projects, with funding provided by the Midwest TIF district.

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LEASE AGREEMENTS PROPOSED FOR COMMUNITY PLAZAS ON CITY-OWNED LAND

A trio of new public open spaces in Grand Boulevard, Englewood and North Lawndale would operate for three more years through formal leases proposed to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Part of the Department of Planning and Development's Public Outdoor Plaza (POP!) program, the leases would formalize the City's partnership with the community organizations who are managing each space on behalf of visitors:

- Teamwork Englewood would enter a three-year lease for Englewood Breakroom at 1534 W. 63rd St. Opened in July 2023, the plaza includes flexible lawn space, play equipment, a performance area, retail spaces and an ice-skating rink in the winter. The improvements were made possible by a \$500,000 DPD grant.
- IAYV, Inc. would enter a three-year lease for South Side Sanctuary at 4702-04 S. King Drive. Opened in August 2024, the plaza revitalized a long-vacant lot with amenities for all ages, including performance space, a marketplace for local vendors and multiple murals. The improvements were made possible by a \$712,000 DPD grant.
- Steans Family Foundation would enter a three-year lease for plaza spaces at 3907, 3921 and 3939-41 W. Roosevelt Road. Now under construction, the plazas include walking paths, landscaping, seating, large-scale public art, a pavilion and play equipment. Construction is privately funded.

DPD launched the POP! program in 2022 to revitalize underused land at strategic locations. As of summer 2024, 11 plazas have been completed through more than \$5 million in City financial assistance.

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TIF SUPPORT PROPOSED FOR TIMELINE THEATER PROJECT IN UPTOWN

Timeline Theater's planned \$40 million Uptown performance venue would be supported by up to \$14 million in Tax Increment Financing proposed to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Being built within the vacant W.C. Reebie & Brother warehouse at 5035 N. Broadway, the four-story project will create a 250-seat theater and rehearsal, office, hospitality and community spaces.

Founded 25 years ago in Lake View, Timeline Theater's move to a new location will increase educational opportunities and expanded programming with Chicago Public Schools, among other enhancements.

The TIF funding would be provided from the Lawrence/Broadway TIF district as a \$10 million forgivable loan and a \$4 million loan that would be repaid after project completion.

The project is estimated to retain 12 permanent full-time jobs, 14 part-time jobs, and create 200 construction jobs. Initial performances are anticipated in early 2026.

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TIF SUPPORT PROPOSED FOR RESTORATION OF UPTOWN MUSIC VENUE

The Double Door music club would finalize the restoration and reopening of Uptown's historic Wilson Theater through \$5 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) proposed to City Council by Mayor Brandon Johnson today.

The long-anticipated \$11.5 million project at 1050 W. Wilson Ave. would create a live performance venue with capacity for 700 people. The Double Door Liquors 2.5 LLC project would also create a tuition-free after-school music program in partnership with Uplift High School, The People's Music School and Black Ensemble Theatre.

The Double Door operated for more than 20 years in Wicker Park before closing in 2017.

Built in 1909, the Wilson Theater building is part of the Uptown Square Landmark District. In January, the project was awarded a \$125,000 Adopt-A-Landmark grant for eligible restoration costs.

The TIF assistance is being proposed through the Department of Planning and Development's Community Development Grant program.

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LANDMARK STATUS PROPOSED FOR MARS CANDY FACTORY IN AUSTIN

The Spanish Revival facade of the Mars candy factory in Austin would be designated as an official Chicago landmark under a proposal introduced to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Located at 2019 N. Oak Park Ave. and fronted by a broad lawn, the factory's clay tile roofs, arched windows and balconets seamlessly integrated the one-story complex among adjacent residential blocks when it opened in 1929. The exotic design by Cleveland-based engineering firm The Austin Co. also belied the industrial innovations occurring inside, including the creation of popular confections like the Snickers, Milky Way and Three Musketeers bars.

The designation would protect the building's Oak Park Avenue exterior, a portion of the northern exterior and a nearby entry gate when the 20-acre factory site is redeveloped following its anticipated 2024 closing by its owner, Mars Wrigley.

###

TWO OPEN SPACE PROJECTS PROPOSED FOR CITY SUPPORT

A proposed garden in Uptown and a school athletic field in West Town would be created through \$800,000 in Open Space Impact Fee (OSIF) allocations proposed to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

- Winnslie Parkway on the 4800 block of North Ravenswood Avenue would be created through \$303,000 in OSIF. Consisting of .9 acres along a Metra rail line, the linear garden would be designed and managed in cooperation with Friends of Winnslie Parkway and the NeighborSpace land trust. Approximately 20 parking spaces along Ravenswood would be removed to accommodate the project.
- LaSalle II Elementary School, 1148 N. Honore St., would receive \$500,000 in OSIF to support the installation of an 11,000-square-foot artificial turf field and running track. The balance of the \$1 million project would be funded by Chicago Public Schools and LaSalle II's parent-teacher organization.

The OSIF program allocates fees paid by residential construction projects for open space improvements that offset the impact of new residents on community parks and related resources.

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PROPERTY TAX INCENTIVES PROPOSED FOR FOUR INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS

Four West Side industrial projects would save more than \$13 million in property taxes through Cook County incentives proposed to City Council today by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Lake Keeler LLC, 4202-32 W. Lake St.

Industrial developer Lake Keeler LLC would use a Class 6(b) incentive to construct a \$7 million, 44,000-square-foot industrial building on 1.36 acres of vacant City land in West Garfield Park. Valued at \$2.3 million over the 12-year period, the incentive would help create up to 50 full-time jobs when fully leased. In June, City Council approved the site's sale for its appraised value of \$196,000.

2525 W Taylor LLC, 2525 W. Taylor St.

Industrial developer 2525 W. Taylor LLC would use a Class 6(b) incentive to support construction of an \$8 million, 42,750-square-foot warehouse complex on the Near West Side. Valued at \$7.9 million over the 12-year period, the incentive would help create 60 full-time jobs when fully leased.

Prologis, 455 N. Ashland Ave.

Prologis real estate company would use a Class 6(b) incentive to support \$12.8 million in improvements to a 67,500-square-foot warehouse occupied by Nanograf Corp. in West Town. Valued at \$2.7 million over the 12-year period, the incentive would help create 50 full-time jobs and retain 26 full-time jobs.

2512 W 24th LLC, 2512 W. 24th St.

Industrial developer 2512 W 24th LLC would use a Class C incentive as part of the recent acquisition and environmental remediation of a 1.3-acre industrial site in South Lawndale. Valued at \$423,000 over the 12-year period, the incentive is part of an \$880,000 effort to update the property for contemporary industrial uses.

The Class 6(b) property tax incentive is intended to encourage industrial development in areas in need of revitalization.

The Class C property tax incentive is intended to facilitate commercial and industrial investment in properties that have substantial environmental contamination.

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