

Chicago Loop Alliance

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

2013

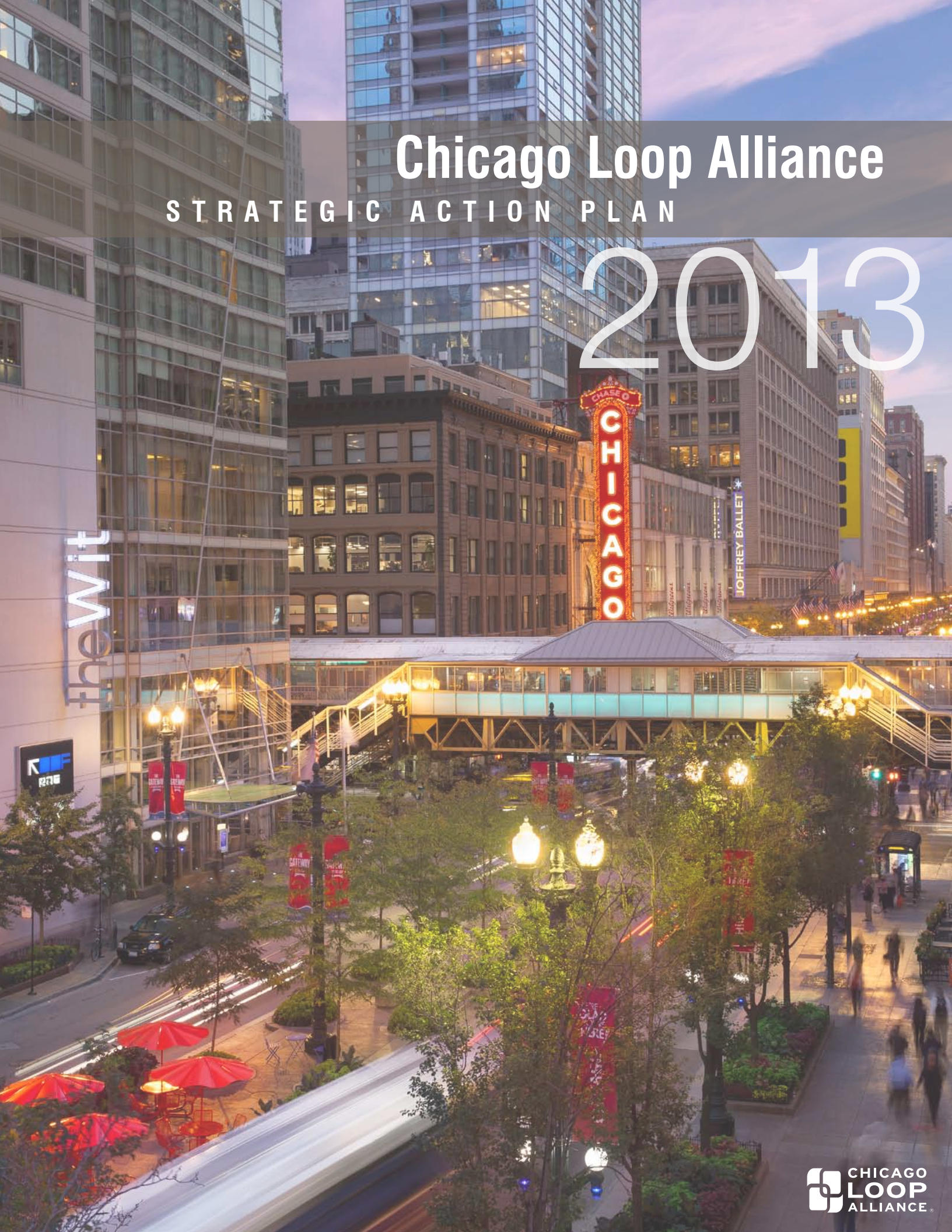






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Strategic Action Plan 2013

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PREPARED BY

Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.
510-845-7549
www.migcom.com



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The 2013 Strategic Action Plan defines a path forward for Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA). The organization's leaders and stakeholders identified a bold new vision of the Chicago Loop as a **vibrant global business center and recognized world class destination**. To secure that vision, Loop stakeholders created a clear mission statement firmly grounded in the organization's history, charging CLA with the mission of **creating, managing and promoting high-performing urban experiences, attracting people and investment to the Loop**.

The Strategic Action Plan provides focus and direction for CLA activities over the next five years. It articulates the organization's core values and competencies, and presents a detailed series of strategic objectives, plus corresponding projects and programs for realizing those objectives. This plan describes measurable indicators and targets to manage CLA performance in the coming years. It also recommends organizational changes that will improve CLA operations and support plan implementation. Four **program areas and four associated catalytic initiatives** provide a focus for CLA action.

A. BEAUTIFICATION & ENHANCED SERVICES

Strive for constant and continued improvements to the cleanliness, beautification, hospitality, safety and maintenance of the Loop's streets, sidewalks and common areas.

Catalytic Initiative #1: Enhancing Hospitality

A more intensive hospitality, social service and ambassador program will assure a positive "high-performance" Loop experience for all users, and advances many of the Strategic Action Plan objectives, including increased late night activity and student safety. This comprehensive program will include outreach for persons in need, hospitality for Loop visitors and ambassador services to provide information and assistance.

B. PLANNING AND ADVOCACY

Provide planning and project review and advocate for important Loop issues, to improve the ability of the Loop to compete for investment and help Loop stakeholders achieve their property and investment goals.

Catalytic Initiative #2: Creating a More Robust District for Doing Business

The extension of the Special Service Area (SSA) boundary will have a major impact on virtually all Strategic Action Plan objectives, leading to full realization of CLA's vision. CLA's sole service provider contract with the City of Chicago and SSA will expire in 2016. In anticipation of this date, CLA will



Creating a strong sense of arrival will draw more visitors into the Loop. Among the most important corridors is Wabash Avenue, as it separates State Street and the rest of the Loop from Millennium Park, a popular tourist destination.

actively pursue the renewal and expansion of the SSA and bring the added value of SSA services to many more Loop businesses and property owners.

C. PLACEMAKING AND MANAGEMENT

Improve the quality of the public realm, creating a distinctive sense of place and strong sense of arrival into the Loop.

Catalytic Initiative #3: Activating Places

Streetscape and intersection improvements have the potential to advance multiple Strategic Action Plan objectives, including breaking down barriers between the Loop and surrounding areas, improving street safety and sense of place, enhancing gateways and integrating all transportation modes and the pedestrian environment.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Facilitate the development of a vibrant Loop by supporting increased public and private investment in retail, office, tourism and residential development.

Catalytic Initiative #4: Transforming Wabash Avenue

Revitalizing Wabash Avenue has the potential to increase pedestrian access and connectivity to the Loop for the millions of visitors to Millennium Park every year. A transformed Wabash Avenue will become a “must see” Chicago destination impacting multiple Strategic Action Plan objectives, including improved gateways and increased pedestrian connectivity. Wabash Avenue will highlight and celebrate the iconic “L” as a benefit to residents, visitors, tenants, property owners and investors alike.



CLA's historic Strategic Action Plan—a vision that will guide the Loop's future—is the organization's first such document.

The overall charge of CLA staff, Board and committees is to realize the goals, objectives and actions for each program area as outlined in this plan.

GOING FORWARD

City centers worldwide are taking advantage of the opportunities created by baby boomers, creative Millennials, technology and global investment. Downtowns have regained their footing as centers of commerce, education, living and entertainment.

The Chicago Loop, long considered America's most authentic urban downtown, has continued to thrive over the last ten years despite the impact of the Great Recession. The Loop enjoys dynamic economic drivers including office, retail, residential, tourism, education, lodging, arts and culture, all providing the fuel for continued growth. New office developments, remarkable retail offerings, dynamic educational institutions, world-class culture and visitor attractions will continue to enhance the Loop's vitality. Service by the iconic "L", regional trains and alternative transportation options make the Loop hyper-connected into the future.

In order to amplify these assets, take advantage of opportunities and meet future challenges, downtown leaders intend to take strategic action. CLA has developed a vision for guiding the future of the Loop through this Strategic Action Plan.

The vision for the Loop and the Strategic Action Plan are not static. The Loop is ever changing as priorities shift, objectives change and new developments impact the social and economic dynamic of the Loop. Therefore, this Strategic Action Plan is a working document; it is a flexible tool that will evolve with the Loop as it changes and grows over the coming years.

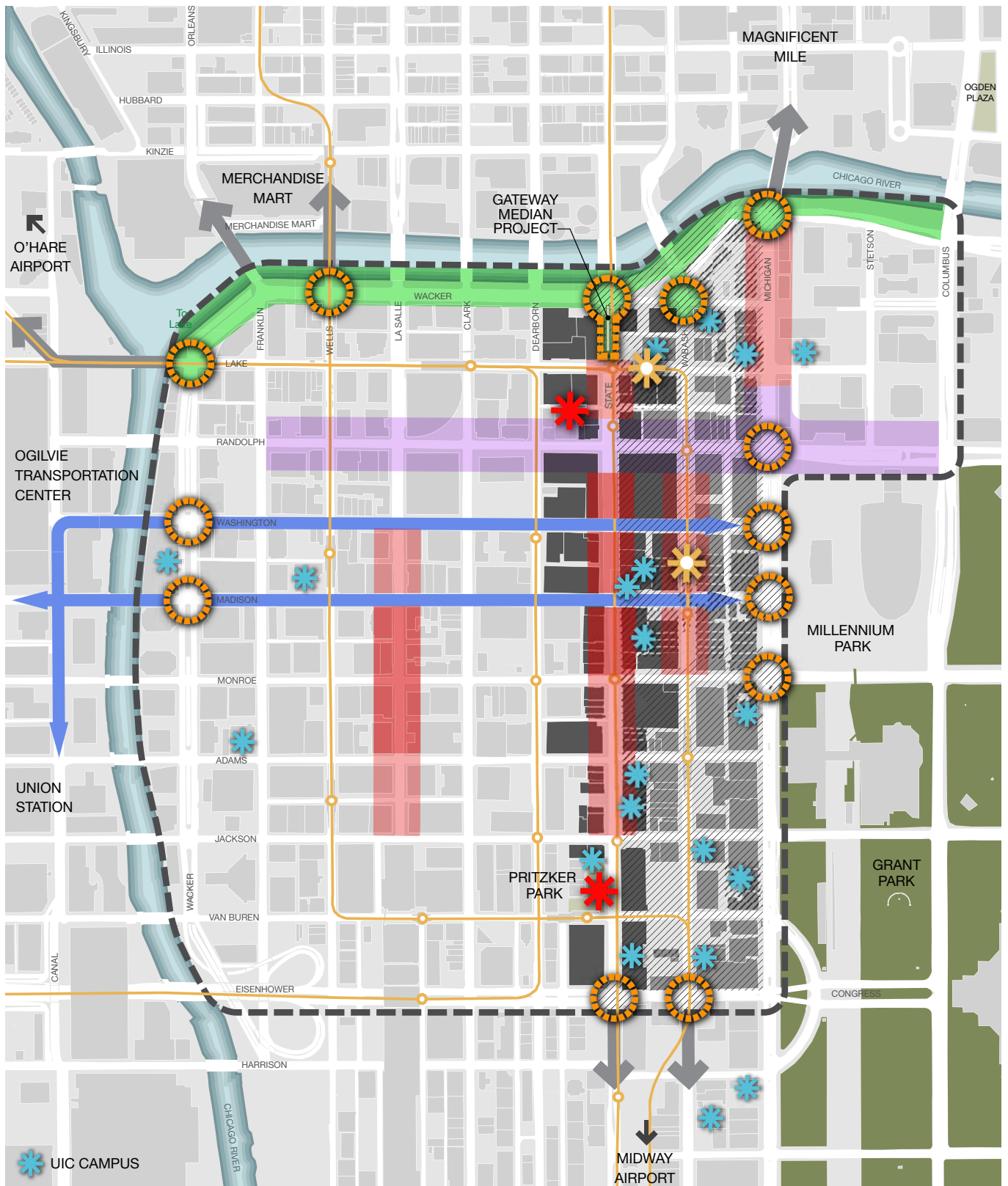


The Loop is bustling with activity. On top of its more than 15,000 residents, each day hundreds of thousands of workers, tourists and students flock to its offices, attractions and classrooms. (Photo credit: Taylor Linhart)

LOOP AREA STRATEGY DIAGRAM

The Loop Area Strategy diagram (opposite page) provides a structure for prioritizing activities related to the Strategic Action Plan. It depicts the relationship between current economic uses, transportation and circulation patterns, the potential SSA expansion area, and identified gateway linkages, such as Millennium Park, the South Loop and the Chicago River. This organizing concept is reflective of the Board retreat discussion and ensures that different Loop activities and economic drivers—such as retail, education, residential, theatres and office uses—support, rather than compete, with one another.

The diagram focuses on key projects, around which CLA will continue building consensus and support to enhance the function of the Loop as a whole. Within this context, the four catalytic initiatives—including enhanced hospitality, a more robust business district, place activation and a transformed Wabash Avenue—will provide a roadmap for projects that will intensify high-performing urban experiences that attract people and investment.



LOOP AREA STRATEGY DIAGRAM: CLA PRIORITY PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS





Photo credit: Taylor Linhart

1.1 CLA ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Chicago Loop Alliance

Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA) is a 501(c)(6) business organization that represents Chicago's most dynamic mixed-use district—the Loop—and advocates for the rapidly growing central business area. CLA is focused on promoting and uniting Loop businesses and organizations to support one another in creating a vibrant, flourishing Loop where people live, work and play.

CLA project area boundaries are the Chicago River on the north and west, Congress Parkway on the south, and generally Michigan Avenue on the east, with a few blocks extending northeast to Columbus Drive in an area north of Millennium Park called Lakeview East.

CLA members consist of more than 250 businesses, organizations and individuals located within the Loop and Downtown Chicago. CLA funds come from membership, events and sponsorships.

CLA is led by its Board of Directors, Executive Committee and President. The Board is comprised of business, civic and community leaders invested in the Loop's future. The Board-elected CLA officers and Executive Committee are tasked with overseeing the organization's day-to-day operations.

Chicago Loop Alliance Foundation

The Chicago Loop Alliance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) affiliate organization whose mission is to develop, support and promote artistic, cultural and public events that benefit businesses, individuals and stakeholders within the service area of Chicago Loop Alliance. The Foundation's tax exempt status allows CLA to secure government grants, larger private donations and foundation funding.

I. Introduction



The strategic planning process was guided by CLA's Board of Directors—a passionate group of people seeking a higher-performing downtown. (Photo credit: Taylor Linhart)

Sole Service Provider

CLA is hired by the City of Chicago as the sole service provider for the State Street Special Service Area #1 (SSA). An SSA is commonly known in other cities as a Business Improvement District (BID) and is a local assessment district that funds enhanced city services and programs within a targeted area. The SSA includes all property on both sides of State Street between Wacker Drive to the north and Congress Parkway to the south. Each year, the State Street Commission—made up of mayoral appointments with aldermanic support—approves a budget for SSA #1 which is determined by the levy the city collects.

Scalable Services

The SSA contract provides the majority of CLA funding for the services, programs and events CLA delivers along the State Street corridor. However, CLA activities, projects and programs are scalable to a larger geographic area. When warranted, CLA services can be effectively expanded to deliver necessary services over a larger area of the Loop.

1.2 CLA STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2013, the CLA Board of Directors began a process to complete a Strategic Action Plan in anticipation of the 2016 renewal and possible expansion of Special Service Area #1. The process identified the **activities, projects and programs** for CLA to deliver over the next five years to fulfill its mission and advance the vision for the Loop. It also included an assessment of CLA governance, financial, administrative and marketing structure to ensure CLA is organized to most effectively deliver increased value to its stakeholders.

A request for proposal was prepared and sent to five qualified firms. These firms had extensive strategic and organizational planning expertise and experience with downtown management organizations. Four proposals were received and MIG, Inc., headquartered in Berkeley, California, was selected.

Board, Staff and Stakeholder Engagement

This Strategic Planning Process is the first in the history of CLA, which was formed in 2005 from the merger of the Greater State Street Council and the Central Michigan Avenue Association.

The process included extensive outreach to a large collection of public and private stakeholders using multiple platforms, with the goal of determining stakeholder perspective on the current status and future of the Loop. Individuals were asked their opinion on opportunities and challenges facing the Loop, the strengths and weaknesses of CLA, and the appropriate role for CLA moving forward in order to best take advantage of those opportunities and address identified challenges.

The platforms used to gather stakeholder input included:

Telephone Interviews – The consultant team completed telephone interviews with key stakeholders identified by CLA staff, including government officials, partner organizations and Board members.

Board Interviews – CLA's President met individually with members of the Board of Directors leading up to a strategic planning retreat, specifically to discuss issues in the Loop and CLA's role in affecting them.

Staff Discussion – The consultant team met with CLA staff and reviewed the geography of the Loop, discussed current CLA programs and established working maps identifying the locations of key assets, planned improvements and future opportunities.

Loop Tour and Stakeholder Meetings – The consultant team toured the downtown area and led a series of meetings to discuss the Loop from a variety of perspectives. In an effort to facilitate focused discussion of the Loop's different economic drivers, CLA staff organized and grouped people by the following sectors: retail, education, theatres, office building owners and managers, transportation, residents, and arts and culture.

CLA Committee Discussions – CLA's Planning and Advocacy Committee identified plan stakeholders and discussed the importance of engaging key Loop property owners in this process and moving forward. The Marketing Committee discussed Loop attributes today and described its vision for the Loop in the future.



A comprehensive review of the state of the Loop and the effectiveness of CLA provided a base to build a new vision and mission for the organization. (Photo credit: Taylor Linhart)

Organizational Interviews – CLA leadership and consultants met with a number of key partner organizations, including: Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) of Chicago, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Chicago Transportation Authority (CTA), Greater North Michigan Avenue Association, World Business Chicago, universities, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development, Choose Chicago and the Cultural Mile.

Online Survey – CLA distributed an online survey to more than 6,000 downtown stakeholders. Completed surveys were summarized into topic areas including accessing, shopping, living and working in the Loop.

LoopedIn Membership Event – The April LoopedIn Networking Event was used to gather the input of CLA members. Five facilitators led 100 guests through an ambitious discussion covering topics including visiting, living, working and playing in the Loop.

Economic Data Update – CLA engaged market analysts at Goodman Williams Group to complete an Economic Study for the organization to lay the foundation for the Strategic Action Plan. The firm updated its analysis of 10 economic drivers affecting Downtown, including employment, residential, tourism, education, theatres, office, retail, arts and culture, education, hospitality and transportation.

Board Retreat – A Board retreat was held in April 2013. The majority of the CLA Board and all CLA staff participated in this session, facilitated by MIG, Inc. The group affirmed the opportunities and challenges before the Loop, discussed a new vision and mission for CLA, and identified specific activities, projects and programs to advance the vision and set the overall direction of CLA for the next five years.

BOARD REVIEW, APPROVAL AND MONITORING

Subsequent Board and Executive Committee meetings were held to refine the ideas and establish challenging yet achievable actions. The Board adopted the new Strategic Action Plan at its meeting in October 2013.

The inclusive planning process helped to ensure that the final plan reflects the ideas and interests of the people and organizations willing and able to drive the new CLA vision and improve the Chicago Loop.

Similar planning activities will be used in the future to continue engaging Loop stakeholders in updates to the Strategic Action Plan. These plan updates will be critical in enabling CLA to effectively lead an ever-changing Loop.



II. The Loop Today

The Loop continues to be a dynamic business center driven by powerful economic forces. Changing national demographics, global market changes, technological impacts and economic trends are impacting how the Loop functions every day. The Loop provides CLA with strong assets, important challenges and exciting opportunities to embrace and address over the next five years.

2.1 MARKETPLACE CONDITIONS

CLA and the Loop are part of a larger regional context. While the Loop is the historic center of Chicago and the most accessible area and business center for the region, other surrounding areas of the city have continued to grow and expand.

Growing residential development in Lakeview East and Streeterville, the Fulton Market District, the West Loop and South Loop provide alternatives to living in the Loop. North Michigan Avenue, River North and areas north of the Chicago River offer compelling retail, nightlife, and entertainment options later into the evenings and weekends. State Street is regarded as one of just four retail hubs in Chicago. The growth of the South Loop and retail destinations south and west of downtown must be monitored to maintain the Loop's economic position. At the same time, suburban shopping malls, inexpensive housing, plentiful parking and large office developments attract money and resources that might otherwise be invested in the city core. While the Loop remains the major center of business and commerce for downtown and the region, it is and will continue to be affected by the growth and revitalization of adjacent areas.

A multitude of inter-downtown relationships (involving a complex web of economic and demographic factors), trends and investment decisions will greatly affect the future of the Loop and the effectiveness of CLA. With its partners CLA must continue to explore ways to compete effectively in order to continue attracting the regional investment to the historic center of urban life.

Key economic data and trends in the Loop suggest CLA has abundant resources at its disposal. Within the Loop's geographical parameters, most economic indicators have trended positively over the last ten years, despite the recent recession.



Businesses like CityTarget—which opened its urban concept store on State Street in 2012—have contributed to a retail revival in the Loop.

Retail

The Loop has experienced an upward trend in retail demand and rents. State Street has been restored to one of the city's best retail streets and smaller retail zones, such as LaSalle Street, are serving the Loop financial sector.

Office

According to Jones Lang LaSalle, the Loop is home to 46 percent of the supply of competitive office space in the Chicago area. In the second quarter of 2013, direct vacancy in Chicago's central business district was 13.5 percent, compared to 14.1 percent the year before. Total vacancy, including vacant sublease space, was 15.6 percent. Office vacancy rates in the Central Loop and West Loop submarkets are below 15 percent.

There are currently proposals amounting to 4.3 million square feet of additional office space along the Loop's Wacker Drive corridor. A high vacancy rate in class B space exists in the East Loop submarket.

Residential

The Loop's residential population more than doubled from 2000 to 2010 (from 7,056 to 15,710 according to Census data). According to Appraisal Research Counselors, class A apartment rents in downtown peaked at \$2.64 per square foot and the occupancy rate remained strong at 94.2 percent in the second quarter of 2013. Goodman Williams Group reports new apartment buildings and student housing are under construction and additional residential projects are expected in the Loop.

Employment

Recovery has occurred from the job losses of recent years and employment is up seven percent since the recession low in 2010. According to the Illinois Department of Employment Security, employment in the Loop's largest category, which includes professional, scientific and technical services, was higher in 2012 than prior to the recession.

Education

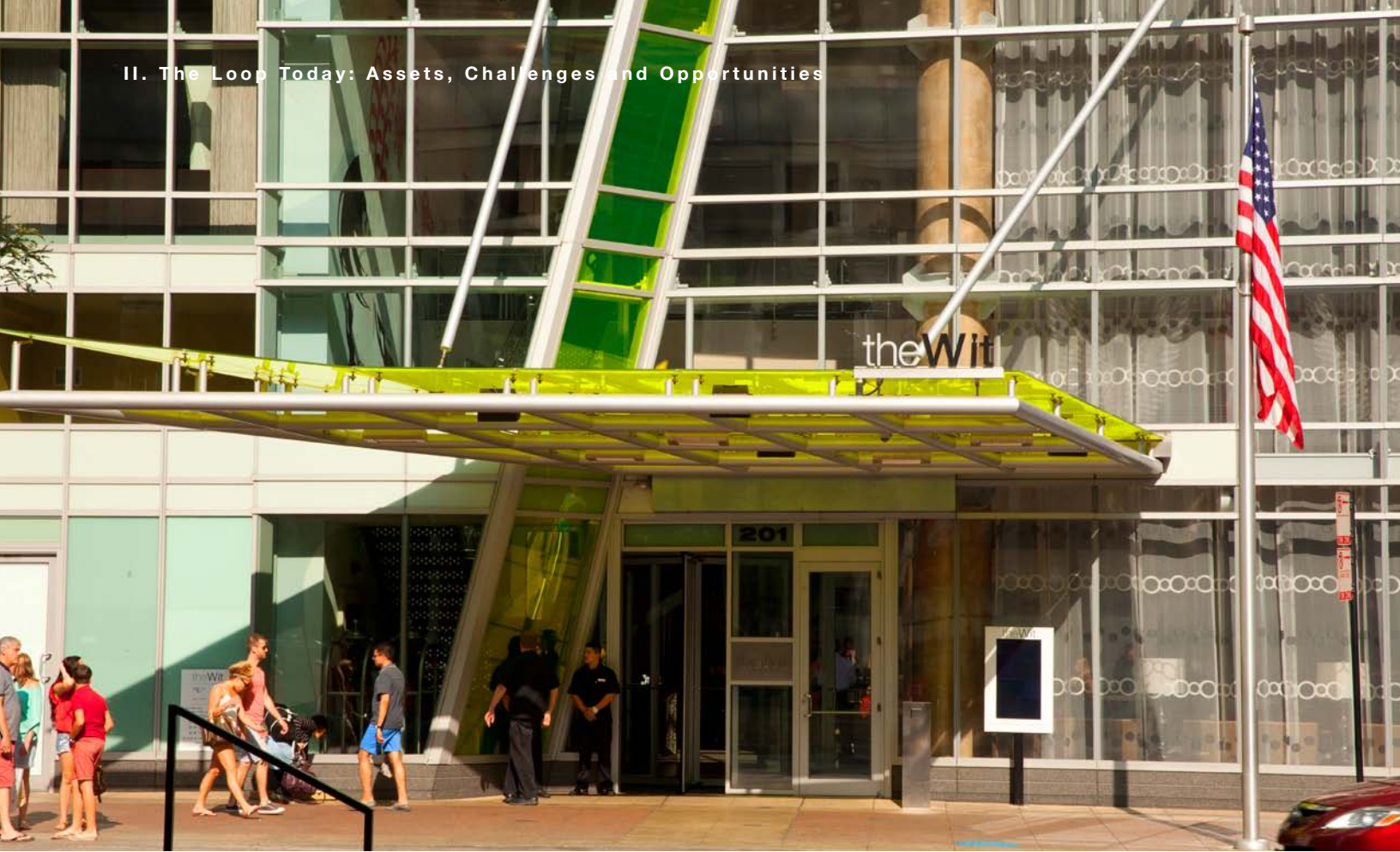
The Loop continues to thrive as the center of "America's Urban Campus"™, which encompasses colleges and universities across the city. With approximately 63,000 college students attending 21 institutions of higher education in the central business district, the area remains the largest concentration of college students in the State of Illinois. Recent development projects—including Roosevelt University's 32-story vertical campus, John Marshall Law School's student commons and entrance, and forthcoming student residence conversions on Jackson—indicate an expansion of higher education in the Loop. And on the outskirts of the Loop, the newly opened Jones College Prep High School building and ongoing GEMS World Academy construction represent major investments in schools that will attract families to the Loop.

Hospitality

According to Choose Chicago, between 2000 and 2012, more than 2,600 new hotel rooms at nine different sites were completed or under construction. Due in part to the recovering economy and efforts of Choose Chicago, six Loop hotels were in some stage of planning and development, bringing an estimated 1,700 more rooms to the Loop.

Tourism

Chicago visitation rose to 43 million people in 2012 as reported by Choose Chicago, shaking off the lingering effects of the recession. The Mayor's Office and Choose Chicago have invested \$31 million annually in support of tourism with a goal of attracting 50 million people per year by 2020. Additionally, the city made a major investment in the previously unrealized potential of cultural tourism in 2012 with the unveiling of the Cultural Plan. Each of these commitments has the potential to boost visitation to the Loop.



When it opened in 2009, theWit Chicago quickly became one of the city's trendiest hotels. And with a recently renovated rooftop that offers stunning views of the skyline, it continues to attract a dynamic audience into the Loop at all hours of the day and night.

2.2 MAJOR ASSETS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Loop's current strength is based on its many powerful assets. However, to realize its full potential, the Loop must address a series of key challenges and take advantage of several major opportunities as described below.

Assets

A vibrant, bustling urban core, the Loop boasts a great number of assets, including its **diverse range of people**, a strong **retail environment**, a robust **work and learning environment**, world class **arts and amenities**, and many transit choices and **travel connections**.

THE PEOPLE

- Strong downtown residential growth over the last ten years, with professionals, families and students moving to the Loop for its convenience and accessibility
- Distinctive energy and vibrancy of 294,356 daily Loop workers, which creates a dynamic, interactive and engaging weekday environment
- A highly concentrated student population, with approximately 63,000 people enrolled in 21 colleges and universities located in the Loop
- Visitors from all over the world who come to downtown Chicago to enjoy Millennium and Grant parks, the city's architectural heritage, museums, theatre, art and culture

THE RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

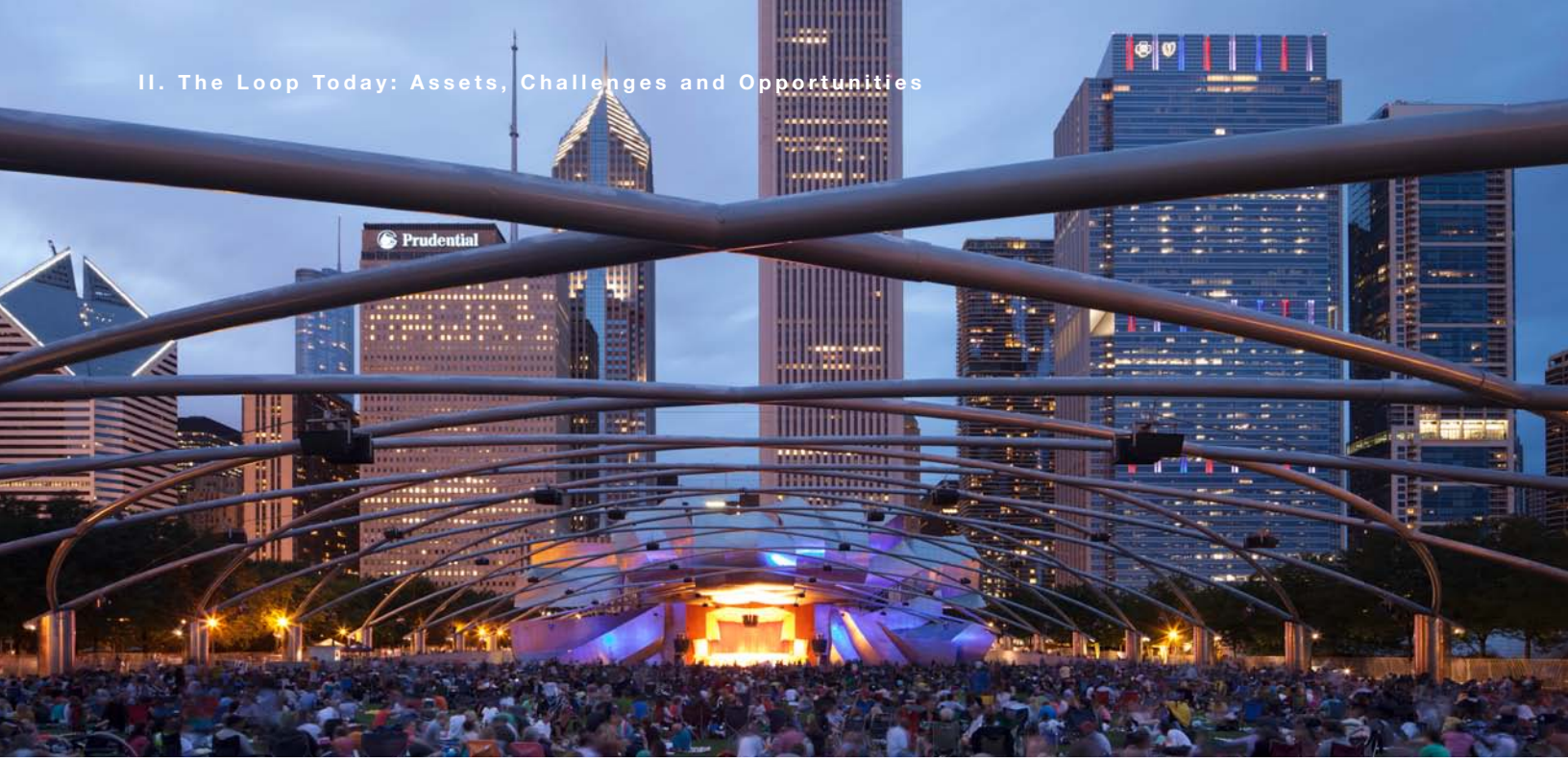
- A strong retail market, including Macy's flagship department store, CityTarget and Block Thirty Seven
- State Street's traditional downtown shopping experience with national brands concentrated between Randolph and Monroe streets, and continuing to Lake and Jackson streets
- Active retail along LaSalle Street from Washington to Jackson streets, primarily between Madison and Adams streets
- Historic Jewelers Row along Wabash Avenue, between Washington and Monroe streets
- New residential development along Wabash Avenue, West Wacker Drive and Wells Street, driving a shift in market demand and creating potential for new retail clientele
- The West Loop area—between the South Branch of the Chicago River and I-94 from Van Buren to Kinzie streets—is becoming a strong mixed-use neighborhood

THE WORK AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- A large, talented and diverse workforce in a cosmopolitan setting, attractive to international companies looking for a U.S. location
- A strong, shared commitment to campus and student safety and active collaboration among security professionals and local and federal law enforcement agencies
- Density and proximity of people, businesses and amenities, making the Loop efficient and effective as a central business district
- A strong mix of businesses, including government offices as well as legal, financial and creative companies
- Numerous institutes of higher learning offering competitive programs in a uniquely urban setting
- Availability of class B and C office space and flexible spaces for creative, non-traditional office uses

ARTS AND ATTRACTIONS

- The Chicago Cultural Plan, unveiled in 2012, which identifies opportunities for arts and cultural growth for the city, with an emphasis on job creation, enhanced property values and growth in tourism
- Millennium Park and the future Maggie Daley Park, providing dynamic, sustainable, multi-functional parks that reach out to the local residential populations, as well as the larger Chicago community and national and international tourist audience
- Harold Washington Library and the Skydeck at Willis Tower, attracting 1.5 million each in annual visitation
- A position as the capital of architectural tourism, with strong supportive programming and Chicago Architecture Foundation tour attendance exceeding 250,000 people annually
- Chicago's Theatre District, home to multiple world-class theatres and venues, including the Auditorium, Bank of America, Cadillac Palace, Chicago, Gene Siskel Film Center, Goodman, Harris, and Oriental theatres
- The Art Institute of Chicago, a world-class museum and "a label of Chicago" that attracts roughly 1.5 million visitors annually



A wealth of friendly entertainment options—for the whole family—attract cultural consumers to the Loop day and night.

- Highly successful CLA art programs and regional events like Lollapalooza, Taste of Chicago and the Chicago Marathon, attract millions each year
- Grant Park, the lakefront and the 18-mile Lakefront Bike Path, which attract runners, bikers and walkers from throughout downtown Chicago and provide recreation, leisure and alternative transportation that connects to the Loop

THE CONNECTIONS

- The “L” system, an essential transit option and connection to Downtown and a historically defining feature of the Loop neighborhood
- Direct transit access to O’Hare International and Midway Airports and 32 CTA bus routes, 13 CTA rail stations and five Metra commuter stations
- The Chicago Riverwalk which, when complete (est. 2016), will provide a continuous walkway and recreational amenity from the lakefront west to Lake Street along the Chicago River
- New bus rapid transit running east-west through the Loop along Washington and Madison, joining the Loop with Union Station/Ogilvie Transportation Center
- The Chicago Pedway, a useful amenity connecting Loop office, shopping, hotels and train stations via underground walkways, utilized especially during the winter months
- The new Eisenhower Expressway/Congress Parkway, a high-tech gateway into the Loop including LED lighting, amenities for pedestrians and cyclists, and safety enhancements
- A new city emphasis on bike amenities, such as protected bike lanes and Divvy bikeshare, providing new options for workers, visitors and residents



Multiple modes of transportation dominate city streets. More recently, protected bike lanes and the introduction of the Divvy bikeshare program in 2013 have made the Loop more accessible than ever before.

Challenges

Despite its numerous assets, the Loop also faces many challenges related primarily to physical constraints and broader issues pertaining to **place management and the public realm, promotion and marketing**, and the struggle to reach the Loop's full **economic development** potential.

PLACE MANAGEMENT AND THE PUBLIC REALM

- **Lack of “flow” from Millennium Park and Lake Michigan to the Loop** – The lack of a strong east-west pedestrian connection is a major challenge for Loop retail. While Michigan Avenue stores and the area's tourist appeal consistently draw Millennium Park visitors north, those pedestrians are infrequently drawn west into the Loop and to State Street.

A number of challenging and unsafe intersections along Michigan Avenue (lack of crosswalks, directional signage, etc.) deter east-west movement, as does the “wall” created by the Wabash “L” tracks and stations. West Wacker Drive creates a similar barrier between the Loop and the Riverwalk with few setbacks and a fortress-like appearance that is intimidating to visitors.

- **Raised “L” tracks and stations** – The raised “L” tracks, while a defining feature of the Loop, dissuade investors, diminish rental rates and real property values, and negatively impact safety and perceptions of safety on Wells, Wabash, Lake and Van Buren. Tracks are noisy and stations are considered dirty and old, which creates a physical and perceptual disconnect that impedes movement into the Loop.



Aging “L” tracks along Wabash Avenue darken the street and create a visual barrier for visitors looking west from Millennium Park, negatively impacting perceptions of safety and impeding movement into the Loop.

- **Street lighting and aging infrastructure** – With no building setbacks and numerous high-rise buildings there is a lack of natural sunlight in the Loop. Street lighting is also a challenge. While lights are gradually being replaced in the Loop, existing streetlights can create an uncomfortable and unwelcoming environment. In terms of infrastructure, much of Chicago’s CTA raised “L” track system is 100 years old, and Theatre District sidewalk markers are in disrepair.
- **Crime and street safety** – There is a need to maintain a feeling of safety downtown, which directly affects visitation. For local schools and universities, crime has a negative impact on student recruitment, the college experience and the campus image. In the evenings, theatre patrons and late-night visitors must be free of concern about feelings of safety.

Petty theft poses an increasing threat to public safety in the Loop and throughout Chicago. Violence, largely confined to other parts of the city, affects perceptions of Chicago on the whole and deters downtown and Loop visitation.

- **Homelessness and Panhandling** – Homelessness is an issue to be addressed in partnership with area social service providers. Panhandling in the Loop is common and at times overwhelming. Spitting, litter, pigeons and general grime are often noted throughout the Loop.
- **Managing the public realm** – A variety of players are involved in maintaining the public realm and infrastructure in the Loop (CDOT, Streets & Sanitation, CTA and others). This situation creates obstacles and challenges to advancing physical improvements (which often happen disjointedly) and changes to policy and design standards.



Along State Street, funds received through SSA #1 are allocated annually to infrastructure improvements, including sidewalk sealing and replacement.

PROMOTION AND MARKETING

- **Lack of nightlife and evening activities** – The Loop is viewed only as a place of principal activity Monday through Friday (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Many students and young professionals prefer River North and other “hip” neighborhoods. In addition, restaurant hours of operation do not encourage Loop business patronage following popular evening and weekend shows.
- **Lack of a neighborhood feel** – Despite the Loop’s growing residential population, it doesn’t feel quite like a neighborhood. The Loop lacks amenities for residents such as a dog park and family-friendly restaurants and activities, as well as practical, community-serving retail and a well-located, full-service neighborhood grocer. The evenings are quiet. Inviting benches and pocket parks in the Loop are hard to find and difficult to access. The Loop’s residential development is typically higher-end than its retail, pointing to possible gaps in both retail and residential development opportunities.
- **Limited and expensive parking** – Parking is costly, with significant increases in both price and parking tax rates over the last ten years. Parking will likely remain a real and perceived challenge to accessing the Loop and its many amenities, forcing CLA to develop a stronger value proposition to visitors. Restrictions on advertising competitive rates add to the lack of information about parking options and related confusion.
- **Uncoordinated marketing efforts** – Institutional divisions and differing priorities and approaches impede the cooperative promotion of the arts and cultural opportunities. This often results in limited, piecemeal marketing. There are known bureaucratic challenges to expanding the use of street banners to promote cultural events. The Loop also lacks physical space (e.g. kiosks) to promote events.



With so much activity going on in the Loop, it can be difficult to keep track. CLA has attempted to coordinate marketing efforts through programs that bring the best offerings to the forefront. But in some cases, these programs need to be revisited to fit changing needs. (Photo credit: D. Eric Murphy)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Lack of quality, affordable retail space** – National retailers have established a large presence in the Loop. While this is certainly an asset (for example, Loop residents value their proximity to CityTarget), the increase in national retailers has led to less affordable retail space for local businesses.
- **Lack of affordable downtown services** – Affordable services, including a lack of reasonably priced restaurants, stores, parking and childcare, are noted issues, particularly for students in the Loop area.
- **High costs and taxes** – The price of Loop office space is high, and concerns exist that Loop companies may begin to retreat to the suburbs or out of state to manage costs. Building owners are concerned by the State of Illinois pension problem and by the potential resulting increase in state taxes. Already, the Loop is home to the highest taxed real estate in Illinois, which could impact the renewal and expansion of the SSA.



Increased awareness of the value of the Chicago River will be reflected in the expansion of the Riverwalk from State Street west to Lake Street, improving the Loop's connectivity.

Opportunities

Many opportunities exist to address these challenges. They range from bolstering the area as a true **destination** and **strengthening connections** to creating an overall **more active, attractive, exciting and livable Loop**.

Become a Destination

To help establish the Loop as a more robust destination, CLA and partners can improve and promote the permanent features and amenities of the Loop, target future investments, and encourage and facilitate strategic collaborations among the Loop's businesses, hotels and cultural institutions to generate "buzz" and attract greater energy. Promoting ease of transportation is a potential part of the strategy.

Strengthen Connections to Lake Michigan and the Chicago River

There is near consensus on the need to draw visitors into the Loop from the lake shore, Grant Park, Millennium Park and the expanding Riverwalk. This can be accomplished primarily by way of streetscape, urban design improvements, transformation of problematic intersections and enhanced gateway locations. Activating Wabash with new retail, lighting and complete street enhancements will encourage tourists and visitors to cross into the Loop.

Improve the Downtown Living Experience

CLA, residents, property owners and others have the opportunity to come together to promote Loop "livability," establish desired community-serving retail and amenities, and create a safe and vibrant 24/7 downtown experience. Engaging residents in planning and visioning at the neighborhood level is critical.



Cultural influencers like Broadway In Chicago have created a demand for Loop nightlife that previously did not exist.

Create Vibrancy into the Evening

There is untapped potential to create an environment with amenities and opportunities that appeal to clientele from all core target groups. Loop stakeholders are called upon to “create a scene” (i.e., an atmosphere of fun with bars, restaurants, music, etc.), leverage new hotels, and give Loop workers and students a reason to stay into the evening.

Maintain and Promote Existing Assets

By maintaining and promoting existing assets such as the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Architecture Foundation, Skydeck at the Willis Tower, Theatre District, Chicago Cultural Center and the Harold Washington Library, CLA and partners can help draw business east from Millennium Park and from other areas.

Activate Opportunity Sites and Public Spaces

The activation of underutilized alleys, parks, streets and open spaces can attract more downtown visitors into the Loop by improving safety, creating opportunities for discovery, serving new residents and generating more traffic for retail and commercial activity.

Create New Mixed-use Pedestrian Environments

The buildings along West Wacker Drive, while acting as a “fortress,” run along the length of the expanding Riverwalk at street level. This presents a new opportunity to promote a thriving mixed-use environment. Specific openings exist to improve retail along northern portions of State and Wabash, which diminishes near the river, and to establish new, residential-serving retail along Washington and Madison streets.



The Loop is “America’s Urban Campus”™, boasting a diverse population of approximately 63,000 college students from 21 institutions of higher education.

Enhance the Theatre District

Existing theatre marquees and associated lighting activate the Loop and improve the feeling of vitality after dark. These venues drive evening, late-night and weekend activity in the Loop, supporting food and beverage services and related businesses. The Theatre District can build from these strengths and enhance its identity and visibility through greater use of visual cues such as sidewalk markers and marquees, wayfinding and promotions.

Develop and Promote “America’s Urban Campus”™

Many people outside Chicago are not aware of the wealth of higher learning opportunities in the Loop. CLA can increase this awareness by supporting the promotion of downtown Chicago as America’s Urban Campus™—a living, breathing classroom. Placemaking can create greater opportunity for students and elevate Chicago’s reputation as a place of creative and intellectual energy and activity. This work will create space for engagement and collaboration across campuses, strengthen the physical presence of higher learning and foster a sense of place and community for Loop students.

Improve Downtown Wayfinding and Gateways

There is a clear need to improve wayfinding for tourists and Chicago residents, including a system that helps visitors find the Theatre District and other arts and performance venues. Creating gateways to the Loop will strengthen sense of place. Noted gateway opportunities include State Street at West Wacker Drive and Congress Parkway. Opportunities exist to build off CLA success using art, design and technology to address critical public space issues including underutilized underperforming spaces, abandoned infrastructure and weak or ineffective gateways.

Develop a Destination Venue

Some stakeholders feel that CLA and others should advocate for an entertainment or sports venue in the Loop. Such amenities could help keep office workers in the area after work hours and attract a greater number of weekend visitors.



III. Strategic Action Plan Framework

The Strategic Action Plan provides decision making guidance for CLA staff and Board. It provides the overarching organizational structure for tracking and advancing the activities, projects and programs that will allow the Loop to reach its full potential.

The Strategic Action Plan identifies the CLA vision statement, mission statement, values, core competencies, goals and objectives, and performance measures. Together, these elements are needed for continued success in CLA operations and management of its resources. The CLA Strategic Action Plan framework diagram at the end of this chapter illustrates the relationship among the Strategic Action Plan elements.

3.1 VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND CORE COMPETENCIES

Vision of the CLA

The vision statement describes CLA's vision for what the Loop itself can ultimately become.

The Chicago Loop is a vibrant global business center and recognized world-class destination.

Mission for the Loop

The mission describes CLA's fundamental purpose, reason for existence and primary roles and functions.

Chicago Loop Alliance creates, manages and promotes high-performing urban experiences, attracting people and investment to the Loop.

Values

The CLA Board, committees, leaders and staff are guided by the following core values:



- **Transparency:** Operate openly with all stakeholders with a commitment to responsible and collaborative stewardship and management of CLA.
- **Partnerships:** Create cooperative and dynamic relationships across all sectors.
- **Constituent Services:** Provide consistent, quality service that exceeds the needs of CLA members and Loop stakeholders and strive for the highest performance in all activities.
- **Innovation:** The organization constantly innovates as Downtown evolves.
- **Return on Investment:** Add direct value that amplifies stakeholder investments in the Loop and in CLA.

Core Competencies

CLA has a long history of connecting businesses and people, creating and implementing programs to solve problems in the Loop and an ability to navigate through complex governmental processes. With a diverse Board of Directors providing multiple perspectives, CLA develops unique solutions to the challenges facing the Loop.



These four core competencies encompass CLA's proven assets and talents as an organization, and represent the foundation for the Board and staff in advancing the CLA vision and mission.

With an eye on SSA expansion, these core competencies can be scaled up to implement larger projects and over a larger geographic footprint within the Loop, enabling CLA to grow and evolve as opportunities and challenges arise in other areas of the Loop.

Connecting Constituent Needs

CLA will build on our strong record of facilitating business-to-business networking and connecting people by way of CLA events. CLA creates opportunities for people to identify new business connections and join in the pursuit of shared interests.

Implementing Programs

CLA has cultivated the skillsets to identify and create programs to capitalize on opportunities and meet the challenges facing the Loop. The development of the Clean Team program and Pop-Up Art Loop demonstrate an organizational ability to program effective responses to the evolution of the Loop.



Regular networking events bring together some of CLA's more than 250 members, fostering long-term collaborations among Loop businesses in an informal setting. (Photo credit: Kevin Shelton)

Navigating Governmental Processes

CLA has deep experience in understanding the changing governmental processes affecting the Loop. This has resulted in a combination of specific knowledge and personal relationships with key individuals and partner organizations, such as police, transportation, planning, public works and public transit. CLA's ability to navigate political and governmental decision-making processes and secure prompt decisions and approvals are valuable to CLA stakeholders.

Integrating Multiple Disciplines and Perspectives

CLA has a broad range of talent and skills throughout the organization. Involved individuals come from multiple sectors including commercial, arts, architecture, parking, politics, investment, creative and many more. This diversity of perspectives accelerates CLA's ability to find innovative solutions to complicated problems facing the Loop.

3.2 PROGRAM AREAS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Four program areas provide overall structure and direction for CLA as the organization strives to advance its service delivery and realize the vision. This section highlights the structure for organizing CLA staff and Board committees in support of the strategic initiative areas.

**Beautification
and
Enhanced
Services**

**Planning
and
Advocacy**

**Placemaking
and
Management**

**Economic
Development**



As the service provider for SSA #1, Chicago Loop Alliance is responsible for enhancements to the public way, keeping State Street clean, safe and beautiful.

Program A. Beautification and Enhanced Services

Goal: Strive for constant and continued improvements to the cleanliness, beautification, safety and maintenance of the Loop's streets, sidewalks and common areas.

On-Going Objectives:

- Support systemic, comprehensive solutions to addressing the issues of homelessness in downtown Chicago.
- Enhance the clean and beautification programs and increase program visibility.
- Assist in enforcement of regulations intended to improve street safety and the Loop experience, prioritizing problem areas.
- Focus on maintenance and stewardship of existing assets and revitalize priority blocks and corridors.
- Manage the pedestrian experience.



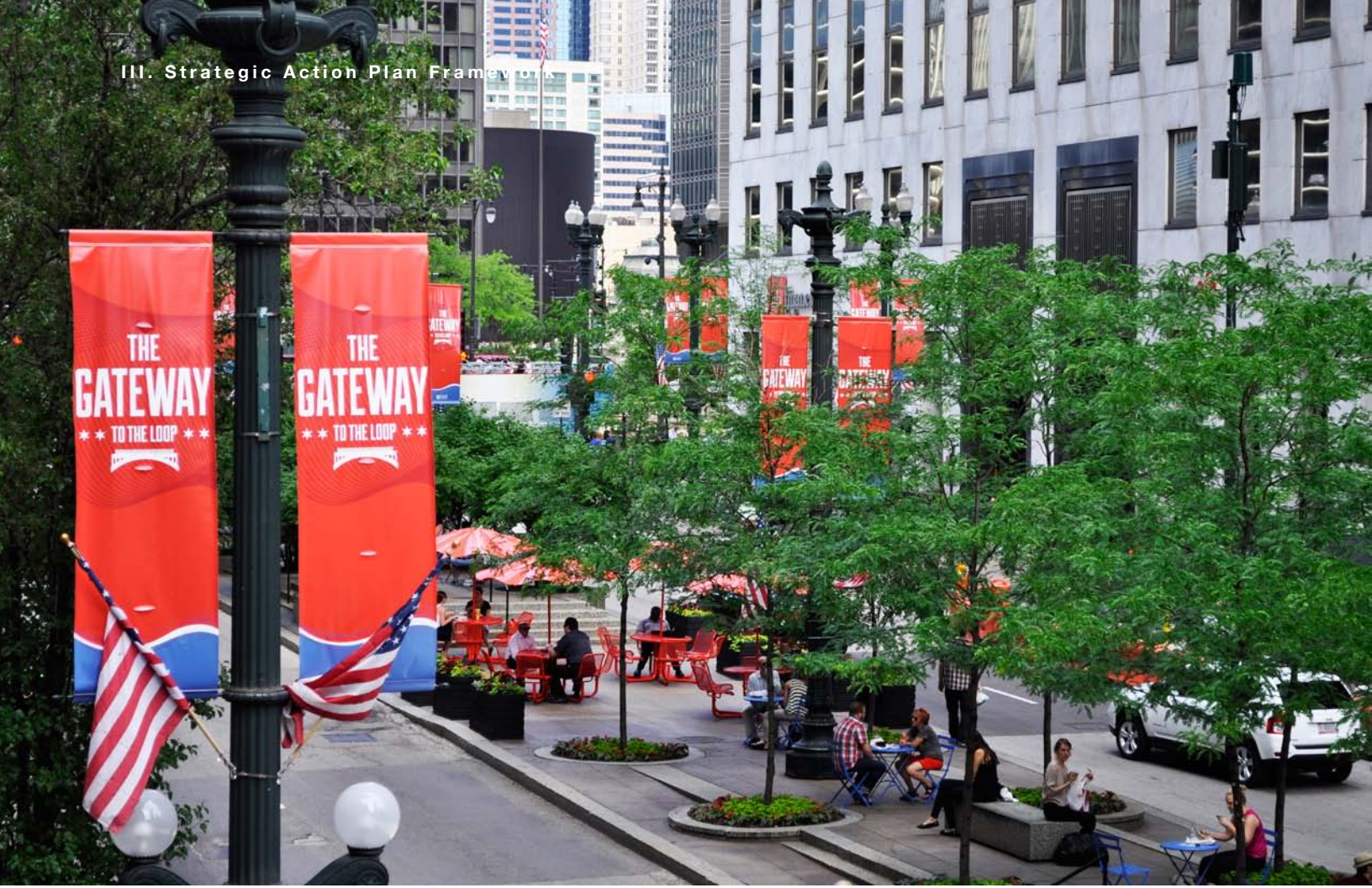
CLA's Planning and Advocacy Committee regularly reviews signage proposals to preserve the aesthetic appeal of the Loop.

Program B. Planning and Advocacy

Goal: Provide planning and project review and advocate for important issues to improve the ability of the Loop to compete for investment and for stakeholders to achieve their property and investment goals.

On-Going Objectives:

- Provide clear leadership and earn a seat at the table in downtown development, design, and general decision making.
- Work with the city for the most efficient process to support timely Loop development projects, signage ordinances and business regulations.
- Be the keepers of downtown promotion and design standards so that the Loop community can have a single, impactful and inspirational voice in creating an inviting public realm.
- Encourage activation of public and private spaces, and progress in architecture and design, holding true to the Chicago tradition.
- Advocate for zoning changes to encourage flexibility in residential unit size and parking requirements to meet market needs.



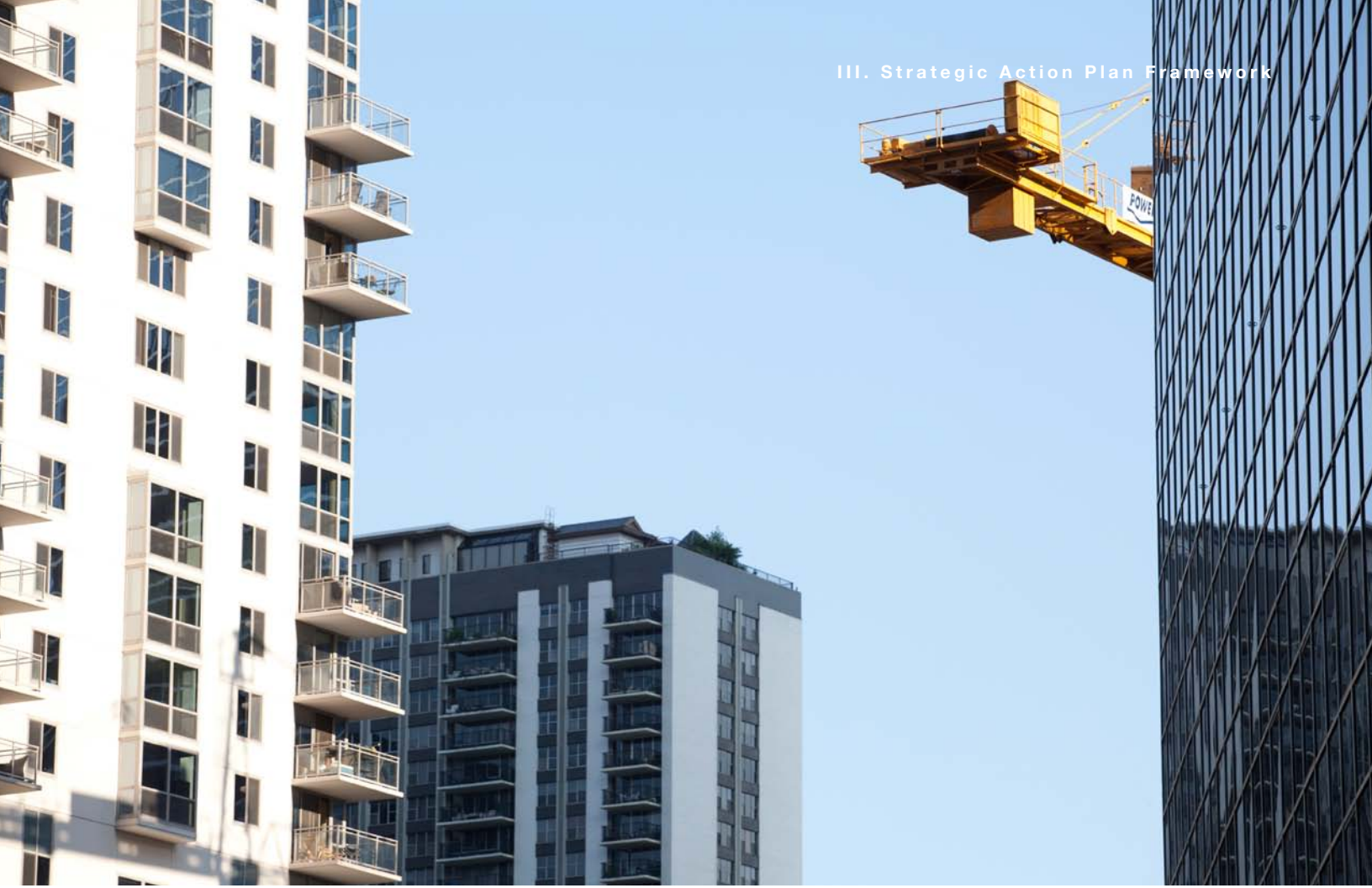
Opened in the summer of 2013, The Gateway activated the median at the north end of State Street with blue and red tables and chairs, flowerboxes, trees and banners, bringing new life to a once underutilized public space. (Photo credit: Taylor Linhart)

Program C. Placemaking and Management

Goal: Improve the quality of the public realm, creating a distinctive sense of place and strong sense of arrival into the Loop.

On-Going Objectives:

- Improve Loop access and reduce physical barriers to visiting the Loop through focused redesign of and improvements to the public realm.
- Support convenient Loop access and mobility, leveraging current city plans and opportunities.
- Promote existing Loop assets such as the Pedway, Couch Place, Pritzker Park, Daley Plaza and historic Jewelers Row.
- Utilize art, technology and design to evolve CLA public art programs to address issues such as lighting, gateways and wayfinding, and creative use of vacant and underutilized spaces.
- Enhance and support a dynamic Theatre District as a specific place.
- Support governmental efforts in placemaking to support CDOT's "pedestrians first" program with a focus on resident convenience, safety and improved pedestrian experience.



New construction keeps up with explosive demand, as the Loop's residential population more than doubled in just a decade.

Program D. Economic Development

Goal: Facilitate the development of a vibrant Loop by supporting increased public and private investment in retail, office, tourism and residential development.

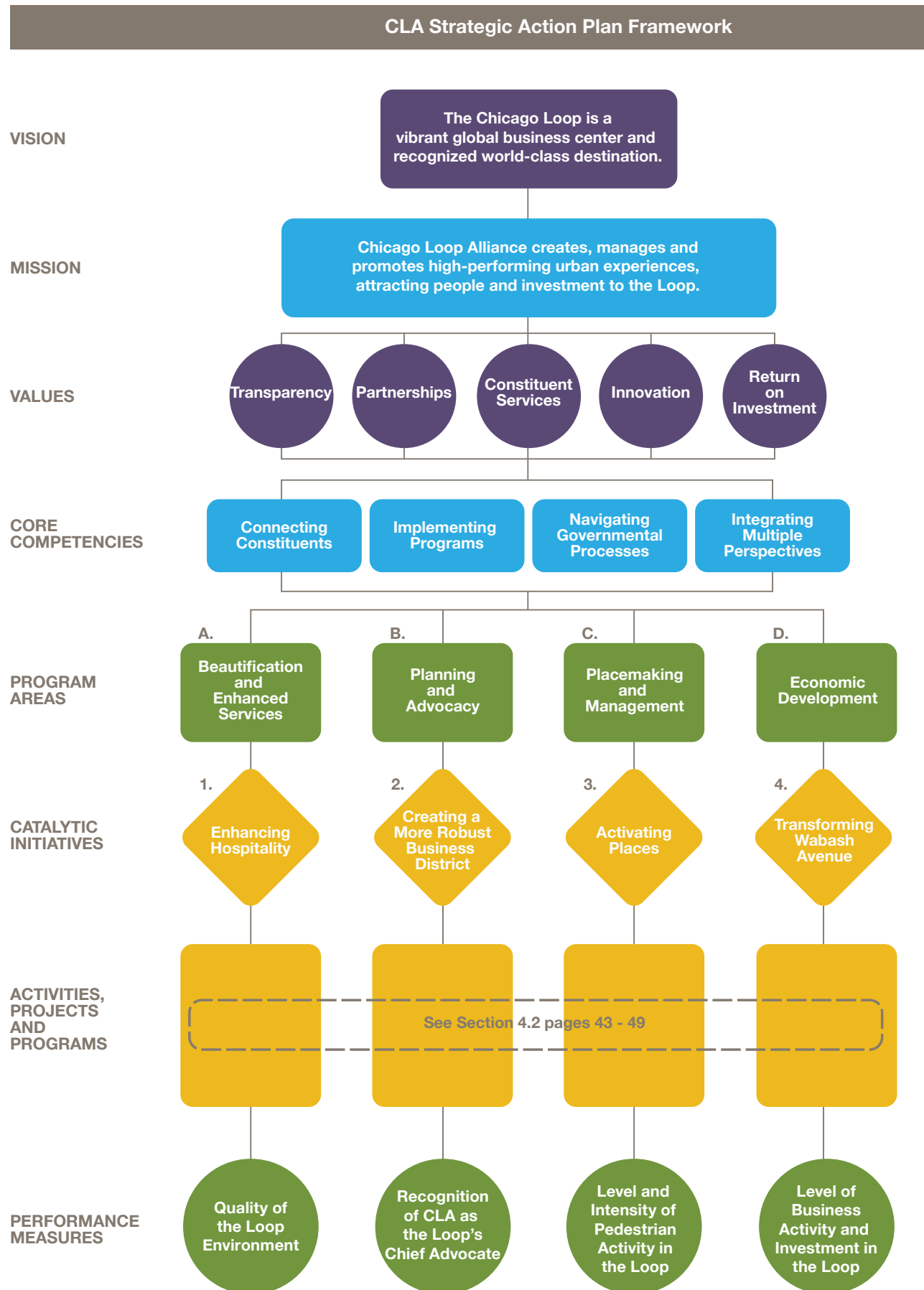
On-Going Objectives:

- Enhance and support the Loop as Chicago's primary location for business. Actively compete for the business of creative and global companies.
- Support the diversification of the Loop's portfolio of retail businesses, bars and restaurants to appeal to residents, commuters, students and visitors. Consider scale, character, culture and late night business in balancing the needs of multiple constituents.
- Promote events, activities and business participation to bring the Loop to life on weekends and in the evenings, creating an environment that is characterized by light, energy and vibrancy.
- Identify and advocate for important neighborhood services and amenities.



Tourism is big business in the Loop. Millennium Park alone draws an estimated 4 million people downtown every year, making it the second-most popular visitor destination in the City of Chicago.

- Promote tourism within the Loop and deliver a consistent downtown experience that supports Chicago's tourism initiative and prioritizes downtown economic development.
- Conduct outreach and coordinate with residential property owners, managers and residents to develop and connect with CLA programs.
- Lead the Loop narrative, using reliable data and knowledge as a basis, positioning CLA as a go-to source for quality, timely and useful information.
- Aggregate, interpret and distribute economic and downtown trends across a variety of topic areas important to the Loop and CLA stakeholders on a periodic basis.
- Work closely with key partners to disseminate knowledge and information in support of Loop advocacy and promotion.
- Engage Loop property owners, retailers and businesses, both large and small, supporting the needs of independent as well as "value and volume" businesses.
- Promote and facilitate the development of retail nodes and clusters in the Loop.





IV. Strategic Action Plan

The Strategic Action Plan framework is where the vision and mission get put into action. This section outlines CLA's program areas and associated catalytic initiatives. Each program area also includes a set of specific actions, projects and programs necessary for achieving the broad goals and objectives outlined in the previous chapter.

4.1 CATALYTIC INITIATIVES

Catalytic initiatives are “cross-cutting” projects with the potential to advance multiple goals and objectives across all four program areas. These initiatives are the “game changers” that take CLA and the Loop into a new direction, represent a fundamental organizational change and result in new added value to Loop stakeholders.



Each catalytic initiative is described below along with its associated program area, project priorities and key partners.

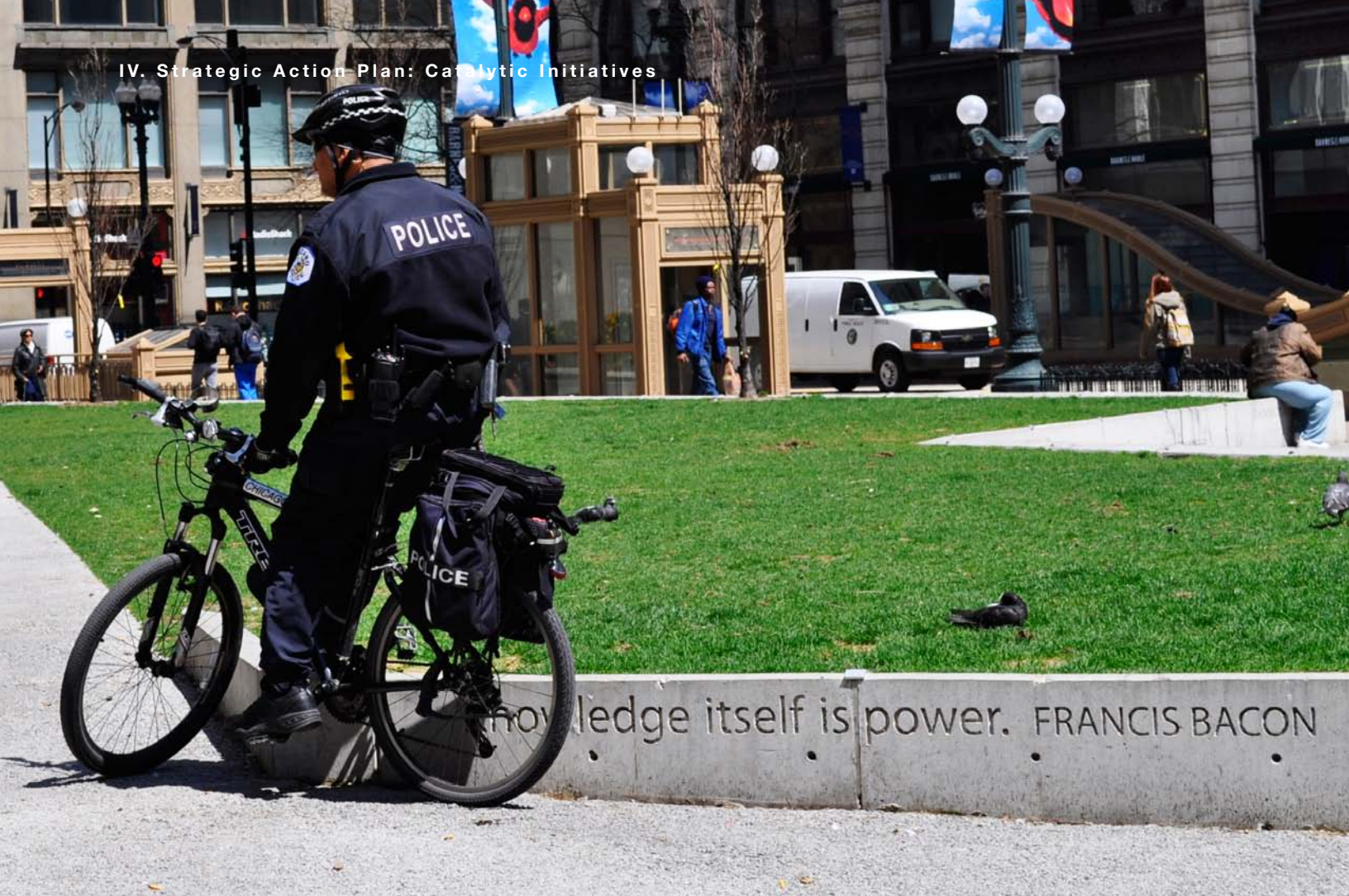
Catalytic Initiative #1: Enhancing Hospitality

A more intensive hospitality, social service and ambassador program will assure a positive ‘high-performance’ Loop experience for all users, by advancing other Strategic Action Plan objectives, including closer partnerships with homeless service providers, increased police engagement and visitor comfort. This comprehensive program will include hospitality services for Loop visitors, outreach services for persons in need and ambassador services to provide information and assistance.

Key components of this effort include:

- Improving the feeling of hospitality and safety in the Loop with a focus on the public realm
- Engaging the social services agencies, Chicago police and other public and private partners

IV. Strategic Action Plan: Catalytic Initiatives



Working closely with homeless service providers and in conjunction with the Chicago Police Department, CLA will enhance hospitality in the Loop. (Photo credit: Taylor Linhart)

- Creating effective partnerships with Chicago-area social service agencies
- Channeling homeless and at-risk individuals to appropriate services
- Providing timely and accurate information, such as directions, to Loop visitors
- Addressing issues associated with panhandling and enhancing the visitor experience in the Loop

Program Area: Beautification and Enhanced Services

Project Priorities: Focus on creating a new Street Team ambassador program along State Street from West Wacker Drive to Congress Parkway.

Key Partners: Chicago Police, homeless advocate agencies

Catalytic Initiative #2: Creating a More Robust District for Doing Business

CLA's sole-service provider contract with the City of Chicago and SSA will expire in 2016. In anticipation of this date, CLA will actively pursue the renewal and expansion of the SSA and bring the added value of SSA services to many more Loop businesses and property owners, which will have a major impact on virtually all Strategic Action Plan objectives, leading to full realization of CLA's vision.



CLA's current contract as the sole service provider for Special Service Area #1, which expires in 2016, includes properties on both sides of State Street between Wacker Drive and Congress Parkway.

Key components of this effort include:

- Conducting research in support of the 2016 renewal to assure the existing cost and benefit of the current assessment are in alignment to assure SSA renewal
- Completing an analysis of the needs along Wabash and Michigan avenues
- Developing a budget to deliver the current level of CLA services in areas of clean, beautification, safety, marketing and advocacy
- Determining the benefits to and the cost of these services for affected property owners on Wabash and Michigan avenues
- Beginning the process of establishing an extended or new SSA for delivery in 2016
- Investigating new legislation in coordination with Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) of Chicago and Greater North Michigan Avenue Association that could increase local authority and baseline services for the existing SSA, and/or research the benefits of introducing new BID legislation at the state level

Program Area: Planning and Advocacy

Project Priorities: Build recognition and awareness of the needs and benefits of SSA expansion.

Key Partners: Property owners, DHED, Mayor's Office, Alderman's Office



Reimagined in 2009, Pritzker Park has been identified as a potential placemaking opportunity for CLA. In fact, it has already received the organization's attention, serving as the site of Tony Tasset's massive *EYE* sculpture in 2010.

Catalytic Initiative #3: Activating Places

Streetscape and intersection improvements have the potential to advance multiple Strategic Action Plan objectives, including breaking down barriers between the Loop and surrounding areas, improving street safety and sense of place, enhancing gateways and integrating all transportation modes and the pedestrian environment.

Key components of this effort include:

- Improving streetscapes, intersections and pedestrian crossings
- Promoting the pedestrian experience
- Advocating for a more creative sign ordinance to help enliven the street environment and enhance the Loop's identity as a place of innovation and creativity
- Improving pedestrian corridors to facilitate pedestrian flow between Millennium Park and the Loop
- Advocating to the city for enhanced landscaping and amenities along key corridors
- Continuing partnership efforts with the Theatre District and other emerging districts
- Developing a comprehensive wayfinding and information systems to encourage visitors to explore the Loop
- Influencing the downtown Bus Rapid Transit to benefit Loop stakeholders

Program Area: Placemaking and Management

Project Priorities: Advocate for Michigan Avenue pedestrian crossings (identify priorities among the most problematic); experiment with improvements to the median at the north end of State Street; investigate the installation of the new planting medians on State Street from Lake south to Randolph Street; focus on underutilized alleys and public spaces and capitalize on the expanding Riverwalk.

Key Partners: CDOT, Streets and Sanitation, Alderman's Office



Defined by the iconic “L” and its historic designation as Jewelers Row, Wabash Avenue lacks the considerations in cleanliness and urban design that other high-performing streets, such as State Street and Michigan Avenue, have received.

Catalytic Initiative #4: Transforming Wabash Avenue

Revitalizing Wabash Avenue has the potential to increase pedestrian access and connectivity to the Loop for the millions of visitors to Millennium Park every year. The downtown retail experience will be heightened and public safety will be enhanced. Wabash Avenue will become a destination and an opportunity for highlighting and celebrating the iconic “L” as a benefit to residents, visitors, tenants, property owners and investors alike.

Key components for this effort include:

- Utilizing lighting, cleanliness, hospitality, streetscape and landscaping (as CLA has done on State Street) to make Wabash a high-performing urban experience
- Through art, design and technology, utilizing placemaking techniques to foster a greater sense of place and enhance safety
- Advocating for wayfinding to draw more visitors from Millennium Park to Wabash and through Wabash to State Street
- Encouraging greater investment through the closure, redesign or relocation of aging, underutilized and otherwise problematic “L” stations
- Advocating for travel time technologies to make using the “L” easier, more predictable, useful and more enjoyable
- Balancing modern technologies with the historic infrastructure to increase convenience and celebrate the character of the “L”
- Beautifying raised tracks through lighting, sound, technology, art, etc. (along Wabash and then throughout the entire “L” in the Loop)



An artist's rendering depicts the proposed "L" platform at Washington and Wabash that could be a transformational project for a revitalized street.
(Photo credit: CDOT)

- Advocating for increased accessibility to the "L" by adding more escalators and elevators to stops near tourist attractions to the east
- Advocating for the planned construction of the Washington/Wabash "L" station in replacement of the Randolph and Madison "L" stations
- Advocating for the use of downtown-inspired art pieces at the "L" stations to remind riders of what neighborhood they are in
- Painting the rest of the "L" (Lake, Van Buren and then Wells)

Program Area: Creating a More Robust Business District

Project Priorities: Advocating for the new "L" station on Wabash at Washington Street; painting the rest of the "L" (Lake, Van Buren and then Wells).

Key Partners: Wabash Property Owners, DHED, Alderman's Office, CDOT, CTA

4.2 ACTIVITIES, PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

The following actions are organized by Strategic Action Plan program areas. CLA committees are tasked with providing the direction, oversight and energy required to implement each successfully. Actions range in priority and scale, and the level of planning, effort and investment required to achieve each action varies.

CLA's role as a supporter, facilitator, or leader and key implementation partners are identified for each action, as well as a timeline for completion as follows:

- Short: 0-2 years
- Medium: 2-5 years
- Long: 5+ years

Support – S – Due to its reputation, CLA is in a position to lend support to partner organizations to accomplish projects that advance the CLA vision. CLA support for BRT, bike sharing or the development of more downtown housing are recent examples.

Facilitate – F – CLA currently is in a position to facilitate projects in the Loop. With the help of our partners that bring funding, political clout and specific expertise CLA can encourage them to take action to advance the CLA vision such as the activation of the median on State Street or engaging stakeholders in large public infrastructure projects.

Lead – L – Oftentimes CLA must take the lead on projects it wants to accomplish to advance the vision of the organization. These projects tend to be the ones CLA is in a position to fund such as events, research studies or street service.

The action tables for the four program areas are followed by a Loop Area Strategy diagram, which articulates the special location of many activities, projects and programs.

PROGRAM AREA A: BEAUTIFICATION AND ENHANCED SERVICES

Activities, Projects and Programs		Timeline	CLA Role	Key Partners
A.1	Investigate installing (whiter) street lights in the Loop on east-west streets and important Loop gateways.	M	F, S	City of Chicago
A.2	Establish an ambassador program providing hospitality, information, business contacts, and homeless and panhandler outreach services.	S	L	City of Chicago
A.3	Review and amend, as appropriate, laws to prohibit panhandling in the Loop.	S	L, S	City of Chicago
A.4	Advocate for the city's continued maintenance of landscaping and planters throughout the Loop.	M	F, S	CDOT
A.5	Work with a homeless coalition service organization to channel the homeless to the services they need.	S	L	Social Service Agencies
A.6	Work with private building security personnel on a weekly basis to monitor, understand and take action to decrease criminal activity in the Loop.	M	L, F	Chicago Police Department; BOMA
A.7	Advocate for an increased police presence in the Loop.	S	L, F	BOMA

PROGRAM AREA B: PLANNING AND ADVOCACY

Activities, Projects and Programs		Timeline	CLA Role	Key Partners
B.1	Support and promote economic development to advance new private investment in the Loop.	M	S	World Business Chicago
B.2	Investigate the pursuit of Federal Transportation Management Agency Program funds to create in-house capacity for focused transportation advocacy for the Loop.	M	L	CDOT; Local MPO
B.3	Facilitate the deployment of reliable Wi-Fi in key locations in the Loop.	M	F, S	City of Chicago
B.4	Actively advocate in favor of a Loop location for the proposed Chicago casino.	S	S	City of Chicago
B.5	Organize businesses to offer student discounts at more Loop locations including retail, food, hotel and events.	M	L, F	CLA; Universities
B.6	Advocate for the consolidation of the existing “L” stations into one modern Washington “L” station.	M	F, S	CDOT; CTA
B.7	Advocate for an updated signage ordinance that is reflective of new technology, materials and uses to promote more creativity and enliven the commercial districts in the Loop.	M	L, F	City of Chicago
B.8	Conduct a survey of State Street property owners leading up to the SSA renewal process to determine their level of satisfaction with CLA services and to better understand stakeholders’ opinions on the value of CLA services.	S	L	CLA
B.9	Evaluate the impact of third-party advertisements and establish a policy regarding the use of third-party advertising on State Street and in the Loop.	S	L	CLA

PROGRAM AREA C: PLACEMAKING AND MANAGEMENT

Activities, Projects and Programs		Timeline	CLA Role	Key Partners
C.1	Promote and market iconic Loop amenities such as the “L”, Willis Tower, Picasso and Calder sculptures, Cloud Gate, State Street, Chicago River, etc.	S	L, F, S	Choose Chicago; DCASE
C.2	Coordinate affected businesses and property owners along Washington and Madison Streets regarding the final BRT station design.	S	L, F, S	CDOT; GNMAA; CTA
C.3	Research technology to determine pedestrian counts that facilitate leasing by brokers and building owners.	M	L	CLA; DHED; GNMAA
C.4	Investigate reincorporation of classic lights in trees to activate public spaces, underutilized areas and gateways.	M	L	CLA
C.5	Evolve Art Loop into the purview of the CLA Placemaking Committee and use it as a way to activate public spaces, mitigate design challenges and create a sense of place and arrival.	S	L	CLA; CDOT
C.6	Deliver the City’s “Make Way for People” project and activate areas such as Couch Place between State and Dearborn, the median on State Street and Pritzker Park.	S	L, F	CLA; CDOT; Property Owners; Real Estate Community
C.7	Explore the feasibility of distributing needed information that connects major attractions and draws visitors into the Loop.	L	L	CLA; Choose Chicago
C.8	Promote the availability of creative, flexible and non-traditional workspaces in the central Loop, targeting young and innovative companies.	S	L, S	CLA
C.9	Explore the possibility of creating or supporting new marquee events in the Loop.	S	L, S	CLA; Choose Chicago

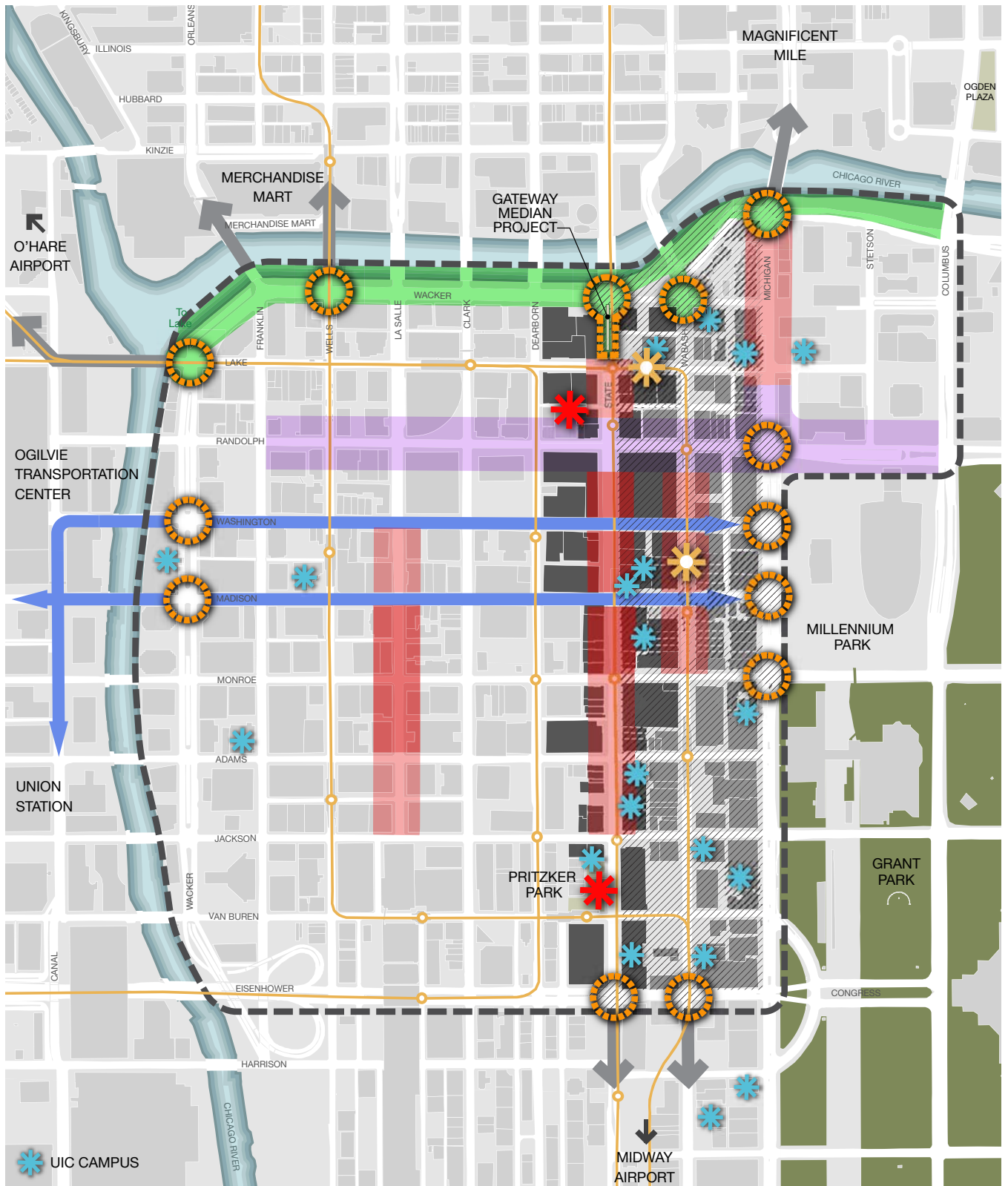
PROGRAM AREA D: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Activities, Projects and Programs		Timeline	CLA Role	Key Partners
D.1	Facilitate an open house tour promoting downtown living and showcase downtown's high-quality residential development.	L	L, F, S	Real Estate Community
D.2	Support the development of Union Station into a mixed-use retail destination, the development of high-speed rail and improved transit to the airport(s).	L	F, S	DHED; CDOT
D.3	Support tourism by improving the visitor experience including the Theatre District, wayfinding and joint projects.	M	L, F, S	Choose Chicago
D.4	Provide third-party support with relevant data to the clients of office and retail brokers to help build the story of why they should locate in the Loop.	M	L, F, S	Real Estate Community
D.5	Host robust and compelling business-to-business networking events on topics that advance the CLA vision and mission.	S	L	CLA
D.6	Develop and publish annually a public and private investment map and release at the CLA Annual Meeting.	S	L	CLA; Real Estate Community

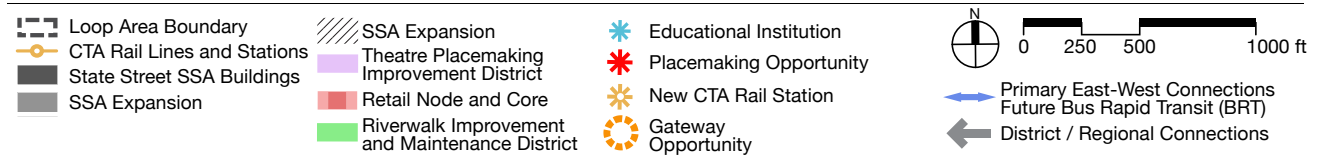
Program Area D table continued on next page

PROGRAM AREA D: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (continued from previous page)

Activities, Projects and Programs		Timeline	CLA Role	Key Partners
D.7	Develop a logical methodology to clearly define the economic value of CLA programs in terms of increased occupancy, rent and value to property owners.	S	L	CLA
D.8	Publish a State of the Downtown report to set the narrative for the Loop and distribute the report widely within Chicago and in national and international trade associations with appropriate thought leaders.	M	L	CLA
D.9	Update and analyze the Economic Study to tell a story about the current condition of the Loop reflective of the efforts of CLA and its partners to advance the vision of a healthy and growing Loop.	S	L	CLA
D.10	Update the Education Study once every five years to clearly understand the impact of the universities in the function of the Loop and what specific opportunities or challenges CLA and its partners should address.	S	L	CLA; Universities
D.11	Create a new Downtown Living Report and begin to develop a compelling narrative of the Loop living lifestyle.	L	L	CLA; Residential Property Managers
D.12	Investigate local and national foundation priorities and identify opportunities that align with CLA's strategic direction.	M	L	Foundations



LOOP AREA STRATEGY DIAGRAM: CLA PRIORITY PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS



4.3 PARTNERSHIPS

CLA is committed to fulfilling its mission and achieving its strategic goals and objectives. However, no true, sustainable progress can be made without the **investment and energy of CLA's many partners**.

The following is a list of partnerships CLA has identified as important to furthering its vision. These partners are crucial in supporting the CLA vision and mission to create a thriving business district.

KEY PARTNERS

Key partners are critical to the success of CLA, and CLA could not advance a robust Loop agenda without them. These partners, through their individual missions, provide **essential services** necessary for a successful Loop environment. The partners who make CLA's work possible include political leaders, police, public transit, streets, sanitation, transportation and development.

- Chicago Transit Authority
- City of Chicago and its Departments
- State Street Commission

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Strategic partners provide unique opportunities in support of advancing CLA strategic goals and objectives. These organizations align their missions where appropriate to creating and maintaining a compelling Loop experience. Their contributions include providing world-class venues and events and focusing energy and resources on specific Loop initiatives.

- Art Institute of Chicago
- Broadway In Chicago
- Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) of Chicago
- Center for Housing and Health
- Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness
- Chicago Architecture Foundation
- Chicago Central Area Committee (CCAC)
- Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce
- Choose Chicago
- Grant Park Conservancy
- Greater North Michigan Avenue Association
- Health and Disability Advocates
- Metropolitan Planning Council
- Near South Planning Board
- Real Estate Community
- State of Illinois Departments
- Thresholds
- Universities and Educational Institutions
- World Business Chicago
- Others...

EMERGING PARTNERS

CLA also forms partnerships with groups and organizations who have expressed interest in participating in the advancement of the CLA vision. They represent new opportunities and energy available for CLA to channel into new activities, projects and programs supportive of a more dynamic Loop.

- 1871
- Chicago Council on Global Affairs
- Cultural Mile
- Friends of Downtown
- Friends of the Chicago River
- Friends of the Park
- Wabash Arts Corridor
- Others...



V. Organizational Development

5.1 ALIGNING STRATEGY WITH GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

CLA has a long tradition of leadership, inclusiveness and program excellence as the primary advocate for the Loop. It has a strong foundation upon which to build its future direction. There are many opportunities for the organization to take an even greater role in determining the future of the Loop.

Downtown organizations differ dramatically in terms of scale and structure, organizational history and decision making. In today's complex downtown environment, **it is critical that the CLA Board of Directors align its performance to the requirements of the downtown it serves and be willing to change as the organization itself evolves.**

The Board of Directors, through review, approval and oversight of this Strategic Action Plan, sets the organization's agenda and priorities. As part of this strategic planning process, CLA undertook an evaluation of its organizational and governance structure to ensure that it is positioned to fulfill its ongoing and future mission.

Fundamentally, governance and strategic leadership are about making informed organizational choices: choices about what needs to be accomplished, the best ways to achieve those results, the resources that will be required and how the Board will know it is making a difference. The Board of Directors must ensure that it is providing strategic leadership valued by its stakeholders and then make choices about how the organization can be more effective.

If CLA is to enhance its role as a collective voice for the Loop and remain as the go-to organization, an efficient, visible and collaborative foundation is critical to its future success. While change is difficult and not always deemed necessary, organizations must evolve to grow in stature and effectiveness. Identifying the key components of effective governance is not a simple matter. With this in mind, the CLA Board of Directors will strive to implement a governance model that:

- Creates the appropriate mix of Board capabilities and utilizes those skills strategically
- Provides for a high degree of inclusivity and diversity representing invested interests of property owners in the Loop
- Encourages Board participation through focused discussion at meetings to address important issues, including strategic and fiduciary responsibilities

V. Organizational Development

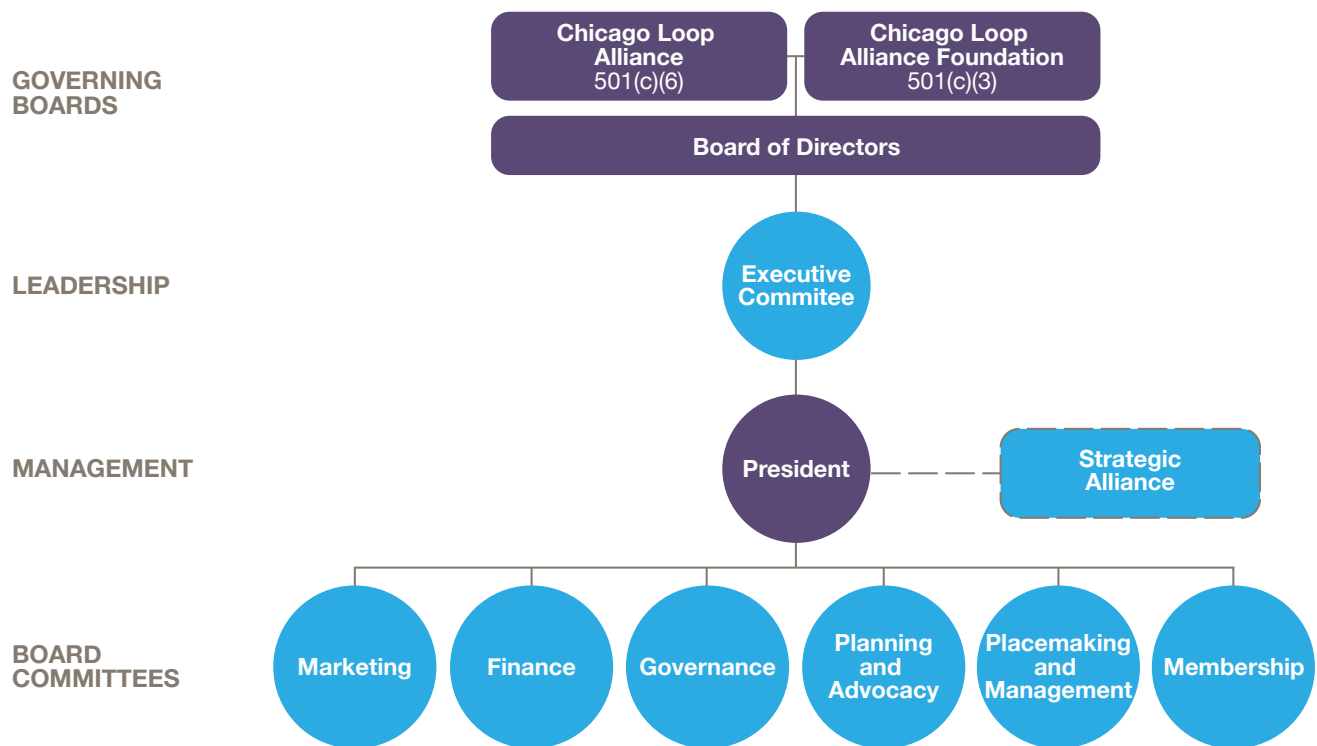
- Maintains an effective relationship with the CLA President by engaging in quality communication outside of Board meetings
- Ensures there is respect for healthy dissent and a sense of equal opportunity for participation at Board meetings
- Fosters an environment where information flows between Board, staff and stakeholders to ensure all parties are aware of relevant issues facing the Loop

5.2 CLA BOARD

The composition and organization of CLA Board, officers and management is critical to the future of the organization and its ability to support realization of the Loop vision (see “CLA Board Organization” diagram on the following page). Actions to strengthen Board and leadership capacity to achieve Strategic Action Plan goals include:

- Lowering the maximum number of Board members to strengthen the weight and significance of Board positions while maintaining Board capacity, depth and diversity
- Increasing the number of property owners on the CLA Board, committees and the State Street Commission
- Reducing officers to Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, phasing out Assistant Secretary and Treasurer positions and the positions of Second Chair and Vice-Chair
- Confirming the eligible use of Chicago Loop Alliance Foundation for a broader range of downtown enhancement activities beyond arts and culture to benefit the public in the Loop
- Establishing a strategic partner working committee (Strategic Alliance) made up of executives of CLA partner organizations to meet monthly as a group with the CLA President to discuss issues before the Loop that are important to CLA
- Reviewing and developing a new set of CLA and CLAF bylaws that reflect how CLA operates and are consistent with Illinois not-for-profit and federal not-for-profit tax law
- Establishing standing committees including executive, finance, governance, marketing, planning & advocacy and placemaking & management
- Utilizing special committees for specific activities, projects and programs
- Reviewing the Strategic Action Plan annually to track progress, make changes as necessary and adopt an annual CLA business plan

CLA Board Organization

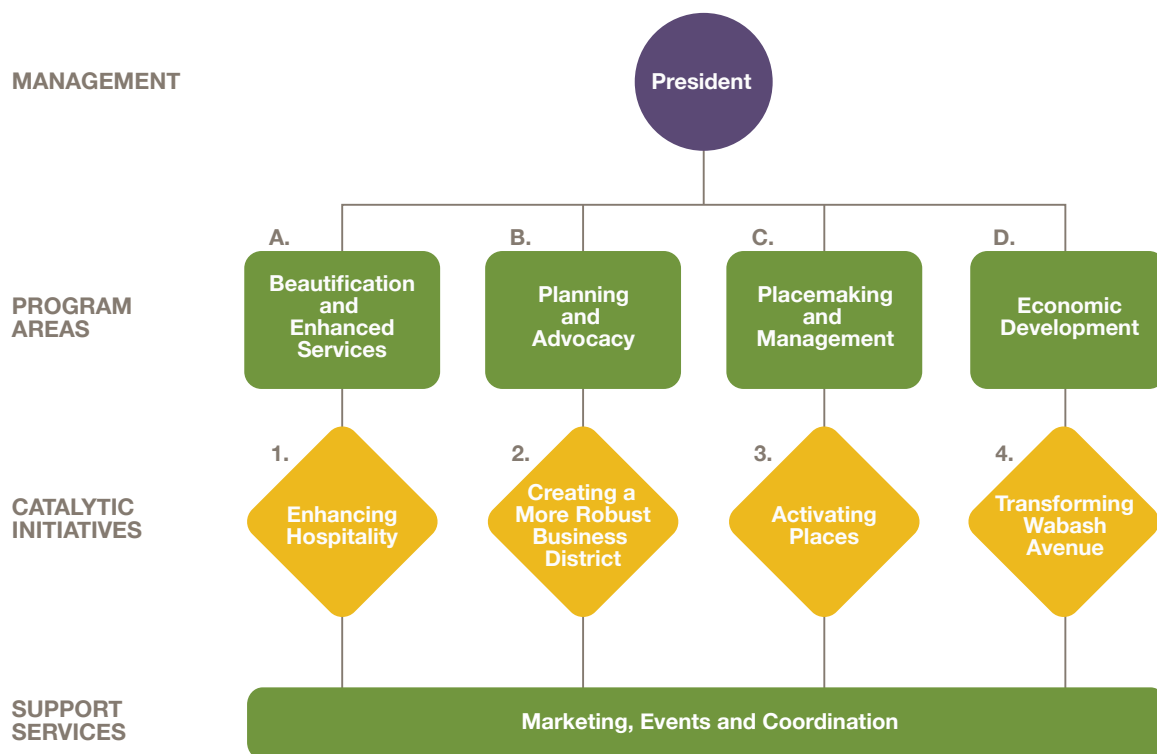


5.3 ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

CLA must evolve its administrative and management processes to ensure successful Strategic Plan implementation (see “CLA Organization and Program Structure” diagram). Key actions to achieve this internal process streamlining include:

- Developing a more sustainable membership program to attract new members to broaden CLA’s base of support, and explore alternatives to hiring a full-time membership manager
- Increasing Board participation in fundraising efforts of CLA including sponsorship and membership in coordination with the President
- Packaging and selling annual corporate sponsorships across a full year of CLA offerings including meetings, reports, collateral material and events
- Investigating local and national foundation priorities and identifying opportunities that align with CLA strategic direction
- Ensuring the development of CLA budgets reflect the organization’s strategic direction and the specifics of each year’s annual business plan
- Reviewing the current staff capacity to support the Strategic Action Plan direction and aligning job responsibilities and job descriptions
- Upgrading or relocating the CLA office to more professional space including a conference room large enough to hold most meetings
- Creating a new employee handbook that meets all federal not-for-profit transparency requirements
- Establishing a formal process for employee performance evaluations tied to the annual adopted CLA business plan

CLA Organization and Program Structure





Bolstered by a community of invested stakeholders, CLA will position itself as a knowledge leader in the Loop. (Photo credit: D. Eric Murphy)

5.4 MARKETING AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Communications and marketing tools must be used to position CLA as a can-do organization to support elected officials and community leaders, to articulate the growth and development of the Loop. Key actions necessary to achieve this include:

- Hiring a new marketing director and expanding the marketing department to assume full responsibility for marketing to support all CLA program areas
- Creating a three-year marketing and communication plan that advances the new vision
- Reviewing all existing marketing materials to be sure they reflect the new strategic direction and enhance CLA's brand
- Developing a brand for the Loop that positions the area as a global center and world-class destination through targeted, strategic messaging and high-quality photography, collateral materials, and web content and design
- Updating and protecting the CLA brand both internally and externally through messaging, photography, website and collateral materials
- Broadening CLA marketing by moving beyond its traditional focus on membership and towards telling the Loop story, leading the narrative, attracting visitors and stimulating investment across all identified economic drivers

V. Organizational Development

- Launching a consumer-facing website in 2013 to provide timely, accurate and useful information to CLA customers including Loop visitors, workers, residents and students, in addition to members and investors
- Advancing and expanding the use of mobile technology to promote the Loop and enhance the visitor experience
- Broadening the menu and use of marketing and promotional tactics to help increase Loop visitation and evening and weekend business patronage

5.5 FUNDING

Currently, 90 percent of CLA funding derives from a sole-service contract with the City of Chicago to provide an array of services to property owners along State Street from Wacker Drive to Congress Parkway. Membership dues, fundraising and sponsorships account for approximately 10 percent of CLA revenues. CLA members include businesses, organizations and individuals located throughout the Loop area.

Looking forward, CLA will bolster its financial position by:

- Expanding the SSA, thereby allowing CLA to add value to affected properties and increase services to the SSA
- Making adjustments to the SSA assessment rate and contract terms and reviewing them in the context of the 2016 SSA renewal and expansion
- Increasing Board fundraising efforts, securing sponsors and expanding the membership base
- Pursuing additional future revenue sources such as grant funding from government agencies and foundations whose priorities align with those of CLA

5.6 A NEW STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

A new Strategic Alliance will be formed to broaden the participation of key partners and community leaders necessary to advance the Loop vision.

The CLA President will convene a meeting of CLA partners to engage them in planning and developing the Loop in the context of downtown and regional growth.

The Strategic Alliance will provide a forum for in-depth, peer-level discussion on issues and opportunities related to implementation of the CLA Strategic Action Plan.



Chicago Loop Alliance

27 East Monroe Street, Suite 900A

Chicago, Illinois 60603

312.782.9160

www.chicagoloopalliance.com