State of the Loop

Q2 2026 (April-June)

Executive Summary: Cultural and Economic Energy in the Loop

In the second quarter, the Loop continued to experience a resurgence in investment and activity, marked by dozens of new restaurant openings and significant real estate development. This, alongside growing local buyer participation and a stabilizing office vacancy rate, showcase a revitalized central business district. Rising ridership and declining crime support improved public transit use and safety, while pedestrian activity remains steady with strong weekend surges. Meanwhile, arts and culture continue to play a central economic role, contributing over $395 million to the Loop's economy this quarter.

In the last year, 18% of Chicago property buyers have been local while 29% of sellers have been from outside of the United States, indicating a renewed interest in local buying (CoStar). This has shown up in the Loop with local purchases of 227 S State, 133 S State, and the Thompson Center's local redevelopment. Office and commercial vacancies in the Loop, which have increased since 2020, began to level off in Q2 2026, and properties in the Loop are on the leasing market for about the same amount of time as they were in Q2 2025. This includes new multi-floor office leases from Huntington Bank and law firm Vedder Price. Office occupancy stayed at **an average of 101% of 2024 levels** in April and May, showing that hybrid work trends are here to stay in the Loop.

Economic Investment

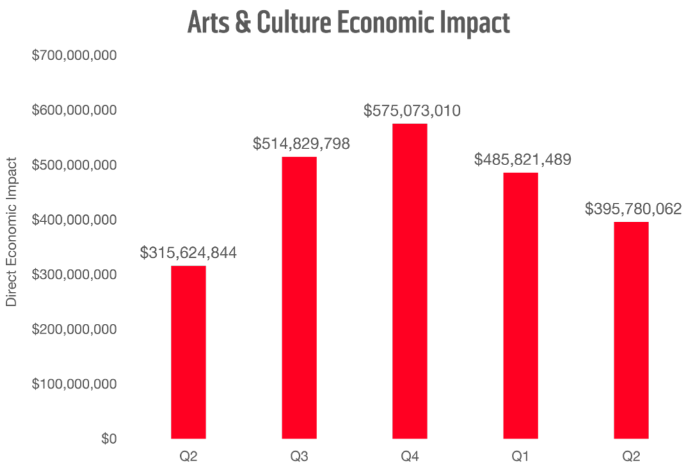
This map shows the 19 new restaurants and cafes that opened in the Loop in Q2, along with the 20 other establishments that recently opened or are set to open in 2026. Overall, **investment in new construction and renewed uses of existing Loop property totaled $673 million.**


A rendering of the planned redevelopment at 19 S LaSalle. Source: Urbanize

Momentum in the LaSalle corridor continues, as three residential buildings are under construction as a part of the LaSalle Corridor Revitalization Initiative. Along with these city-funded projects, there are 19 other privately funded downtown conversions planned—more than the last 20 years combined. In total, these projects will bring nearly **4,000 new residential units and over $1.67 billion in investment** to the Loop (Department of Planning and Development).

Arts and Culture

Arts and culture events and venue visitors contributed **$395 million to the economy in Q2, representing a 20% increase** from Q2 2025.



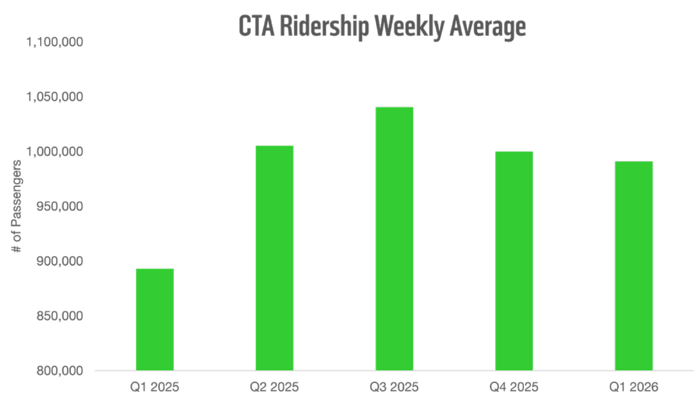
Sources: Choose Chicago, DCASE, CLA estimates

As summer festival season began, the Loop's arts and culture events and venues saw **almost 1.5 million visitors** in Q2. Events like Sueños Music Festival, Chicago Blues Festival, Daley Plaza Farmers Market, and the beginning of Millennium Park's music and film series drew visitors to the Loop to enjoy the summer weather.

Fans enjoying the music at Chicago Blues Festival.
Source: Choose Chicago

Transportation

CTA ridership averaged just under 1 million riders each weekday in Q1, representing **111% of Q1 2025 ridership.** Metra, which also converges in the Loop, averaged 300,000 riders each month in Q1, a 9% increase from the same time last year. Crimes at CTA locations are **down by about 25%** compared to this time last year, showcasing one benefit of increased ridership.



Source: Chicago Transit Authority

Daily pedestrian activity on State Street averaged around 82% of 2019 levels. However, weekend events continue to draw visitors to the Loop, as Saturday and Sunday pedestrian numbers on State Street averaged **105% of 2019 levels.**

> "The Loop [is] really emerging more as a multi-use district. [There is] still a very important focus on business and commerce, but also recognizing the importance of arts and culture and other assets."
>
> - Dr. Suzet McKinney, President & CEO, Chicago Loop Alliance

Source: WGN