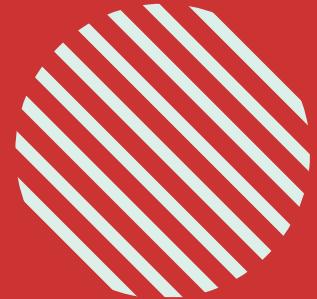




THE STATE OF WELLS STREET CORRIDOR

FRIDAY APRIL 16TH

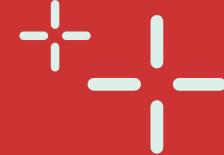
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Wells Street Corridor Plan is a collaborative effort between the Old Town community, Old Town Merchants and Residents Association (OTMRA) and Special Service Area (SSA) #48 Old Town.



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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION





OVERVIEW

The Old Town neighborhood conjures distinct imagery for most Chicagoans – the charm of the historic buildings, thriving culture and entertainment, alluring architectural details, the vibrancy of people roaming Wells Street, old taverns and modern bars, a mix of traditional walk ups and contemporary high rises, and the warmth of outdoor cafes and twinkling lights. Undoubtedly, it is one of the city's most recognizable and unique neighborhoods.

Despite its name, there is plenty of "new" in Old Town, as the Wells Street corridor has seen an increased number of new buildings and new residents over the past couple of decades. Living up to its history of vibrancy and livability, Old Town has continued to attract residents with new development. With an estimate of over 2000 new units

projected in Old Town's near future, the Old Town Merchants and Residents Association (OTMRA), along with Special Service Area #48 (SSA) are planning the future of the Wells Street corridor and recommend future land use in the district. Many factors indicate that the future of the Old Town neighborhood and SSA district is bright. However, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has heavily impacted local restaurants, entertainment venues, and businesses throughout the District,

UNDoubtedly, OLD TOWN IS ONE OF THE CITY'S MOST RECOGNIZABLE AND UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOODS.

The Wells Street Corridor Plan effort was initiated in November 2020 by OTMRA and SSA #48 to envision a thriving, connected, and sustainable future for the District, one that caters to old and new residents and businesses. This Plan will focus on the ongoing influences of the pandemic and explore strategies to enhance Old Town's key commercial street and improve quality of life for residents and visitors.

This report summarizes existing conditions and identifies a series of key takeaways that will be built upon in the following phases of this planning effort.



PLAN MISSION

Going forward, the Wells Street Corridor Plan will establish a compelling vision and revitalization priorities to guide local actions and partnerships. For OTMRA and SSA #48, the Plan will serve to guide decision-making on allocating resources for initiatives aimed at managing a vital District now and into the future. For the broader community – local businesses, property owners, residents, and local stakeholders – the Plan will serve as a resource for stimulating new ideas and ways of thinking on collaborations that can achieve a stronger community and an active and vibrant street, that makes Wells Street unique. The commitment is evident, and the possibilities are numerous. The Plan will provide the spark for imagination and creativity to make Wells Street a compelling destination for locals and visitors. The Final Corridor Plan will identify priority investments and outline the steps necessary to achieve Plan initiatives, investments, and implementation action steps.

PLAN PROCESS

PHASE 1: ENGAGE & DISCOVER

The first phase establishes a dynamic community engagement process to create a comprehensive information base for the Wells Street Corridor existing conditions.



PHASE 2: ENVISION & EMPOWER

During the second phase, the vision and goals of the Plan are outlined, and concepts and recommendations for physical enhancements, placemaking, and business development will be crafted and ultimately formalized into a draft Corridor Plan.



PHASE 3: IMPLEMENT

In the third and final phase of the planning process, the Corridor Plan will be developed to communicate the vision for the future of Wells Street. The focus of this phase is to develop implementation strategies and prioritize improvements to the SSA District.





OUTREACH PROCESS

The public visioning and outreach program of the Wells Street Corridor Plan included significant engagement of community residents, business owners, property owners, OTMRA and SSA #48 Board members, condominium associations, and more.

From the beginning, stakeholders were engaged in a dialogue about the Old Town neighborhood and the District – its key assets, areas for improvement, and what its future could be.

In early February of 2021, the planning team engaged a wide variety of Old Town stakeholders, including residents, local business owners, property owners, Board of Commissioners, representatives from local organizations such as the Franklin Fine Arts Center, and local civic institutions such as The Moody Church. Through these meetings, a number of key issues emerged regarding the history of Old Town, the changing demographics, planning initiatives, key challenges, and opportunities.

Stakeholder input will be noted throughout the State of Wells Street Report.

KEY TOPICS COVERED:



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Enhancing physical conditions and the curb appeal of the streets, sidewalks, buildings, facades, storefronts, streetscapes, and open spaces within the SSA District. The built environment also focuses on the types of uses and their location along the corridor.

PLACEMAKING

Connecting and unifying Wells Street into a cohesive street, as well as creating vibrant social spaces. Placemaking needs include pedestrian amenities; temporary gathering spaces; improved crosswalks, wayfinding and signage; public art; and special features that contribute to Wells Street's sense of place and identity.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Growing and nurturing local businesses, generating local wealth, jobs, and long-term vitality and resilience, and continuing to retain new businesses to cater to its community.

CONTEXT

Old Town is a neighborhood located in the Near North Side community area. The neighborhood is bound by Lincoln Park to the north and west, Gold Coast to the east, and the River North area to the south.

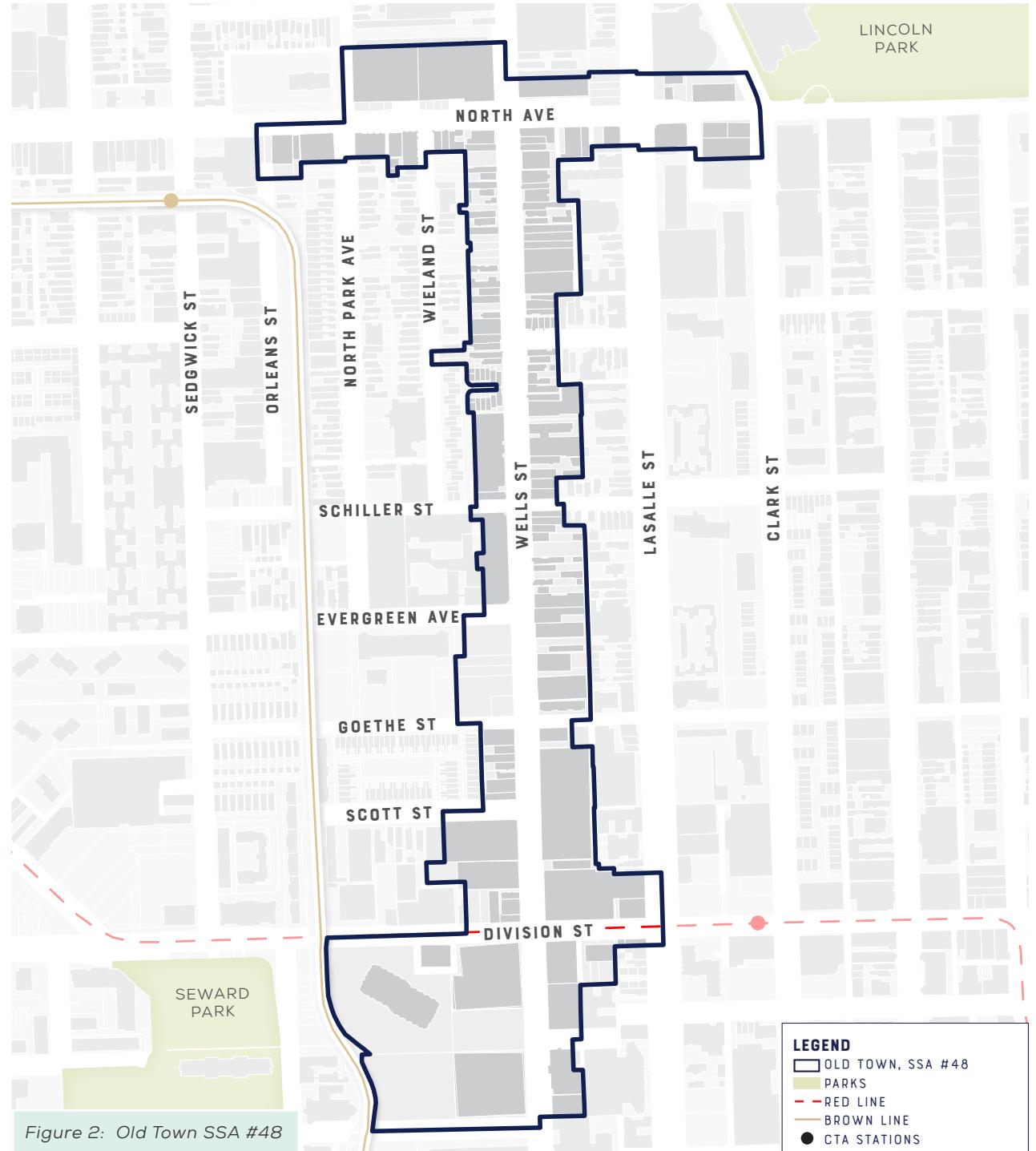
This active and eclectic neighborhood has a diverse history, first settled in the 1850s. Old Town's history is exhibited in its unique landmarks, including the St. Michael's Church – one of the few buildings to survive the Chicago Fire. Previously known as Old Town Triangle and North Town, Old Town continued to expand its boundaries over the years. Being a cultural and entertainment destination for decades, Old Town is one of Chicago's core neighborhoods, catering to locals and domestic and international visitors.



OLD TOWN SSA #48

Established in 2009, and reconstituted in 2018, Old Town SSA #48 is a locally-controlled and locally-funded taxing district focused on community development. The District's boundaries expanded in 2019, offering services and programs to more areas in the Old Town neighborhood, including north of North Avenue, the north side of Division Street, and Burton Place on Wells Street. Governed by a seven-member Commission, the Old Town SSA #48 offers landscaping, beautification, and security services, as well as programs and events.

The Old Town SSA #48 includes the stretch of Wells Street from North Avenue to W. Hill Street, including the Old Town Park development on Division Street. The District also includes the stretch of North Avenue from Orleans Street to Clark Street.



SECTION 2

LAND USE & PHYSICAL CONDITION





LAND USE

The Old Town neighborhood has a unique urban fabric with a combination of significant historic resources from the 19th and 20th centuries and from the 1970s through the present new construction infill developments. Thoughtful rehabilitation of older buildings has allowed the District to maintain its architectural integrity, diversify its architectural character, and create a distinctive sense of place. The northern portion of Old Town SSA #48 exhibits small-scale “finely-grained” parcels and blocks, along with a handful of new mixed-use developments. The height and massing increases gradually closer to the southern portion of the District culminating at the 32-story Old Town Park development.

The area is home to a number of historic buildings:

- Piper's Alley (210 W North Avenue), built in 1965
- Emmel Building (1349 N. Wells Street), built in 1855 and reconstructed in 1871
- Germania Place (108 W Germania Place), built in the 1890s
- The Moody Church (1635 N LaSalle Drive), built in 1925

A variety of land uses currently exist along the Wells Street corridor, including single-family residential, multi-family residential, mixed-use, institutional, industrial, and unimproved/parking lots.

The most predominant land use found within the Wells Street corridor include mixed-use (49%), followed by multi-family residential (29%). While Franklin Fine Arts Center’s

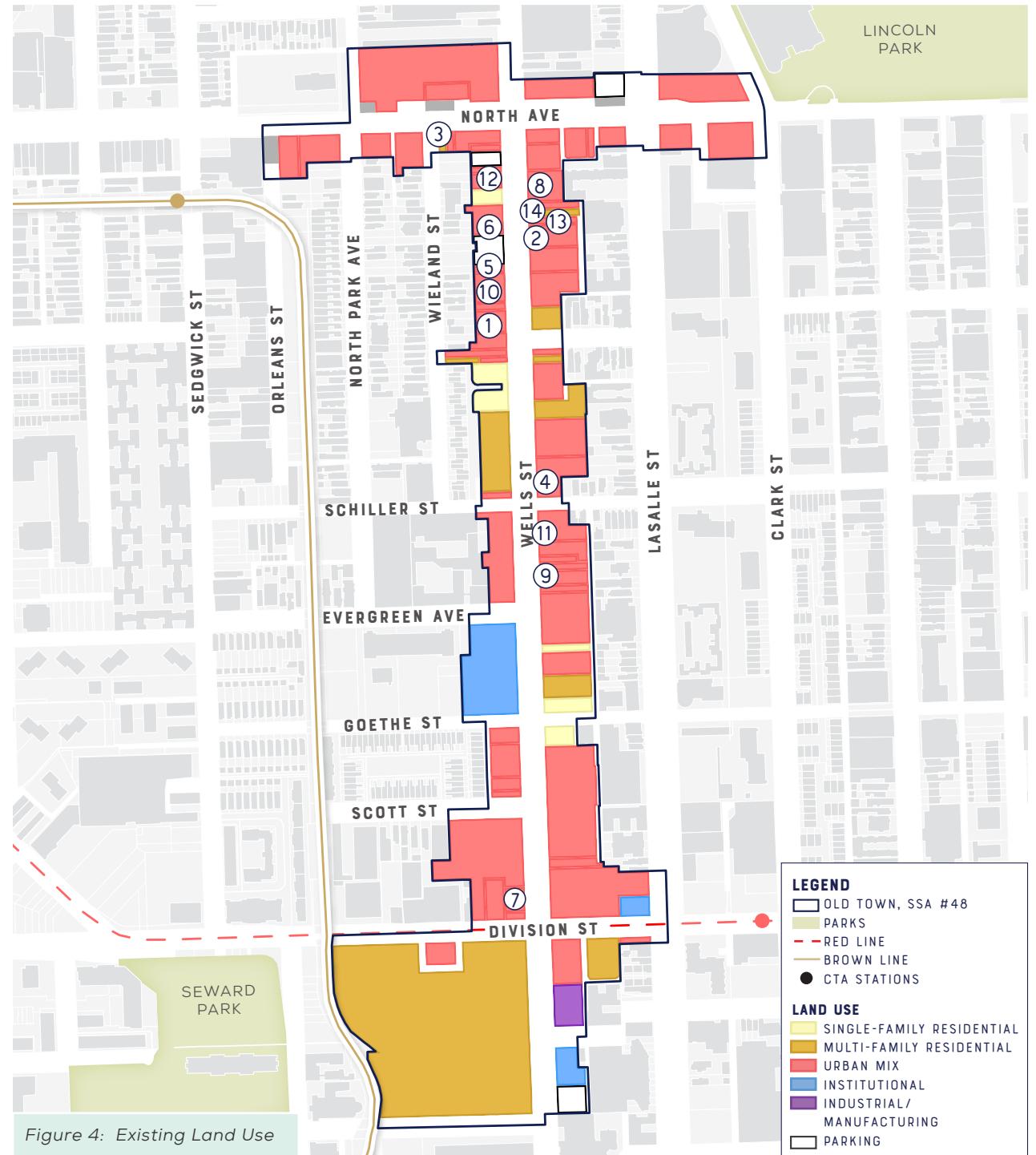
building footprint is not part of the SSA’s boundary, its open space contributes to the institutional use of 11%, along with the LaSalle Street Church. This space is currently utilized by the community at large – this is discussed more thoroughly in the Public Realm section below.

The new mixed-use development, Old Town Park, contributes to more than 50% of the multi-family use, given its large footprint, and while it contains some commercial space, it is fairly minimal compared to the parcel’s overall size. The majority of new infill development along the Wells Street corridor includes commercial spaces on the ground floor, ensuring an active street front that continues to improve the pedestrian experience.

Key restaurants and retail landmarks and destinations within the District boundary, were noted during stakeholder interviews, including:

1. Fireplace Inn (1448 N. Wells Street)
2. Kamehachi (1531 N. Wells Street)
3. Old Town Ale House (219 W. North Avenue)
4. Orso's Restaurant (1401 N. Wells Street)
5. Topo Gigio Ristorante (1516 N. Wells Street)
6. The Fudge Pot (1532 N. Wells Street)
7. House of Glunz (1206 N. Wells Street)
8. Mercy Beaucoup Resale Boutique (1545 N. Wells Street)
9. Sara Jane (1343 N. Wells Street)
10. The Spice House (1512 N. Wells Street)
11. String a Strand on Wells (1361 N. Wells Street)
12. Up Down Cigar (1550 N. Wells Street)
13. La Fournette (1547 N. Wells Street)
14. Old Town Oil (1543 N. Wells Street)

Figure 3: Old Town SSA#48 Existing Land Use

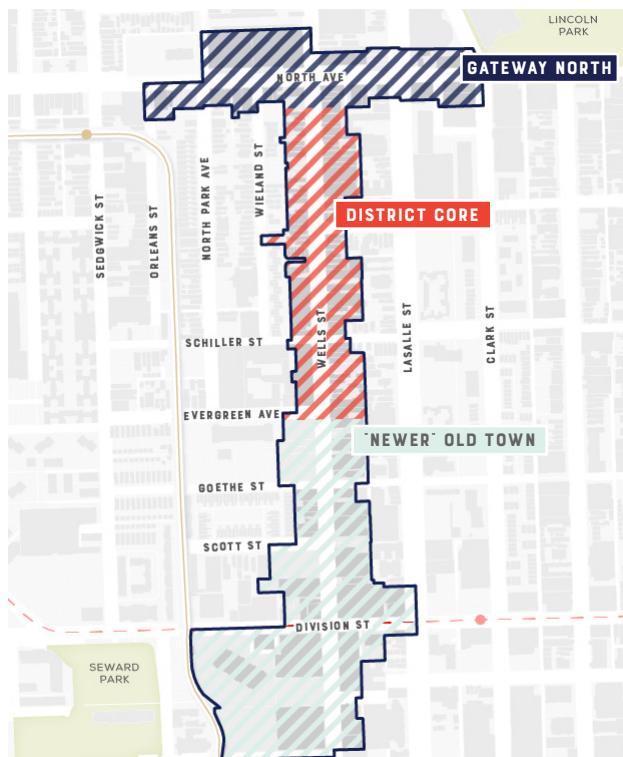


PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CHARACTER AREAS

In addition to its land use development pattern, Old Town SSA #48 can also be defined by specific character areas—distinct nodes along Wells Street that share common building types and architectural characteristics, site features, and streetscape and urban design conditions. Specific nodes may also present opportunities for new development.



GATEWAY NORTH - North Avenue from Orleans Street to Clark Street

North Avenue, also known as Route IL-64, defines the northern boundary and gateway to the Wells Street corridor. This stretch of the corridor varies in building heights and architectural styles, ranging from one-story Gothic Revival commercial buildings to ten-plus-stories new mixed-use development. The buildings along Gateway North are constructed with a variety of materials, including brick, stone, concrete, wood, and other material types. Architecturally distinctive buildings include the FJ Dewes, a former brewery on 319 W. North Avenue, dating back to the late 19th Century. This building features intricate architectural ornamentation with some original detailing and materials. Similarly significant buildings include late-19th century Queen Anne mixed-use developments on the south side of North

Avenue. Culturally significant buildings include Second City and Pipers Alley. A handful of buildings have been altered over time with new façade materials; in some cases, storefronts have been modified.



DISTRICT CORE - Wells Street from North Avenue to W. Evergreen Avenue

The District Core contains the most significant concentration of older traditional, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use developments, with minimal variation in that development pattern throughout the character area. Buildings are typically three to five-stories in height, extend to the edge of the sidewalk, and feature mostly masonry construction. Small-scale lots have resulted in fairly narrow buildings, with the exception of wider new infill development. The majority of the buildings in the District Core are historically significant, particularly the stretch between North Avenue and Schiller Street.



THE OLD & NEW IN OLD TOWN

Despite its name, there is plenty of "new" in Old Town, as the Wells Street corridor has seen an increased number of new buildings and new residents over the past couple of decades, and will continue with this trend in the near future. Living up to its history of vibrancy and livability, Old Town has continued to attract residents with new development. However, maintaining Old Town's historic character and charm is key to several stakeholders. Multi-generational businesses, such as Orso's Restaurant, have played a major role in embracing the history of this neighborhood, maintaining its sense of place. Historic markers/plaques and some of Old Town's old murals also contribute to the community's heritage and unique history. While stakeholders acknowledge the importance of such landmarks that make Old Town a destination to many, they also see a growing need to keep evolving. "Old Town is old and new" emphasizes the need to align with local and regional market trends, while recognizing the existing rich urban fabric.

According to the Chicago Historic Resource Survey, 1543-1545, 1547, 1552, and 1553 Wells Street are properties that exhibit architectural features and historical association that makes them of high significance to the Old Town neighborhood. 1505 N. Wells Street is a multi-family residential building that has also retained high architectural integrity, although altered from its original condition. While some new infill development is sensitive to the character and scale of existing historic buildings, the majority are not. District Core maintains a large selection of historic buildings, despite alterations and infill developments over the years, and provides for a compact urban feel that caters largely to pedestrians. There are opportunities for redevelopment, including potential adaptive use.



'NEWER' OLD TOWN - Wells Street from W. Evergreen Avenue to Old Town Park

Along Wells Street, past W. Evergreen Avenue, the character area does not maintain a traditional low-scale building environment of three- to five-stories. "Newer" Old Town exhibits a more varied development pattern with mid- to large-sized developments – some with significant setbacks from the

sidewalk. This portion of the District has a significantly higher proportion of recent to pending construction, focused on mixed-use with rental units and large-scale commercial spaces. While new development is notably higher than the existing traditional fabric, the majority are set back after the 5th floor to maintain a pedestrian-oriented experience on the street level. Large retailers including Aldi's and the Public Storage facility contribute to the changing scale and massing of buildings along this stretch of Wells Street. Old Town Park, the most recent mixed-use development within the District, is home to a variety of uses including office and residential units, surrounding a public plaza space. This development also offers a selection of housing typologies including apartments and townhomes. "Newer" Old Town will be home to the majority of Old Town SSA #48 residents, in the years to come.

STOREFRONTS

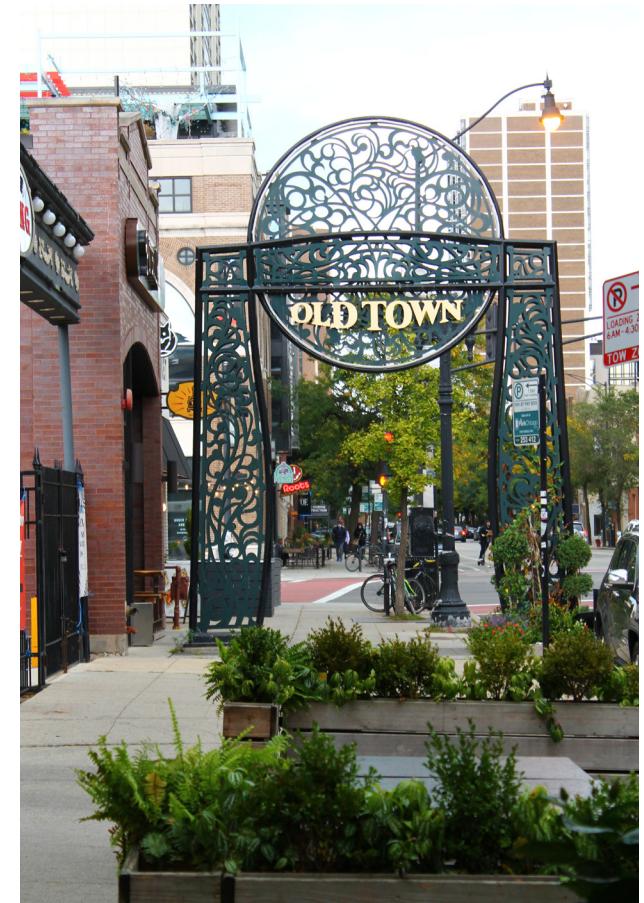
Storefronts vastly differ throughout the District, exhibiting traditional-style awnings, modern sign-bands, display windows, and in some cases, marques. Older businesses have kept their identity with original storefronts and awnings that display their services, while newer businesses have leaned towards a more modern look with sign-bands along the façade of the buildings. The styles and conditions of storefronts along Wells Street vary, yet generally are in great condition. In rare cases, storefronts are deteriorated, detracting from the appearance of the street.

Additionally, vacant storefronts along Wells Street create a gap in the pedestrian environment, which ultimately leads to an unpleasant walking and shopping experience. Vacant or inactive storefronts have increased over the last year, given the pandemic.



PUBLIC ART & MURALS

Wells Street is home to a small number of murals and public art installations. The District is home to six of the largest neighborhood identifiers in Chicago, designed with ornate detailing and reflecting on the community's historic character. The O'Brien's metal clock is another artistically and culturally significant piece, complementing the old-fashioned streetlights, which to many stakeholders are distinctive public art pieces. The Franklin Fine Arts Center exhibits faces of students along Wells Street, under the initiative "You Make This Place Beautiful." One ghost mural - old hand-painted advertising signs that have been preserved on some of the older buildings - can be found on the southern side of 1335 Wells Street, promoting Village Cycle Center. The vacant parcel, pending development of a hotel, features a washed-out mural on the northern edge. Further south, a colorful mural wraps the Broken English two-story commercial building, exhibiting a cropped view of cartoon-looking cats. This mural stands out on Wells Street for its large size and use of punchy colors.



PUBLIC REALM

WELLS STREET

In 2000, the Wells Street streetscape between Division Street and North Avenue was reconstructed to include many recognizable features, much of which still remains. The last streetscape project included:

- Six Art Nouveau inspired wrought iron gateway arches spanning the sidewalk, which have become synonymous with the Old Town neighborhood.
- Traditional double acorn style, pedestrian scale lights
- Intermittent seating pockets, with decorative concrete planters, precast concrete pavers, and wrought iron garden furniture
- Historic plaques, telling the history of the area and identifying historic properties along the Wells Street
- A plaza space at the Burton Place cul-de-sac, that featured raised planters and landscaping
- New sidewalks, curbs, and street trees in curbed planters and tree grates

After two decades, some of the original streetscape elements are holding up better than others. The gateways have become icons for the area and remain important neighborhood identifiers. The lighting remains, but the fixtures and light levels might be due for an upgrade with better LED technology and/or aesthetics. The seating pockets at times interrupt pedestrian flow and the landscape within some of the planters is sparse. Some of the concrete planters and elements have shifted over

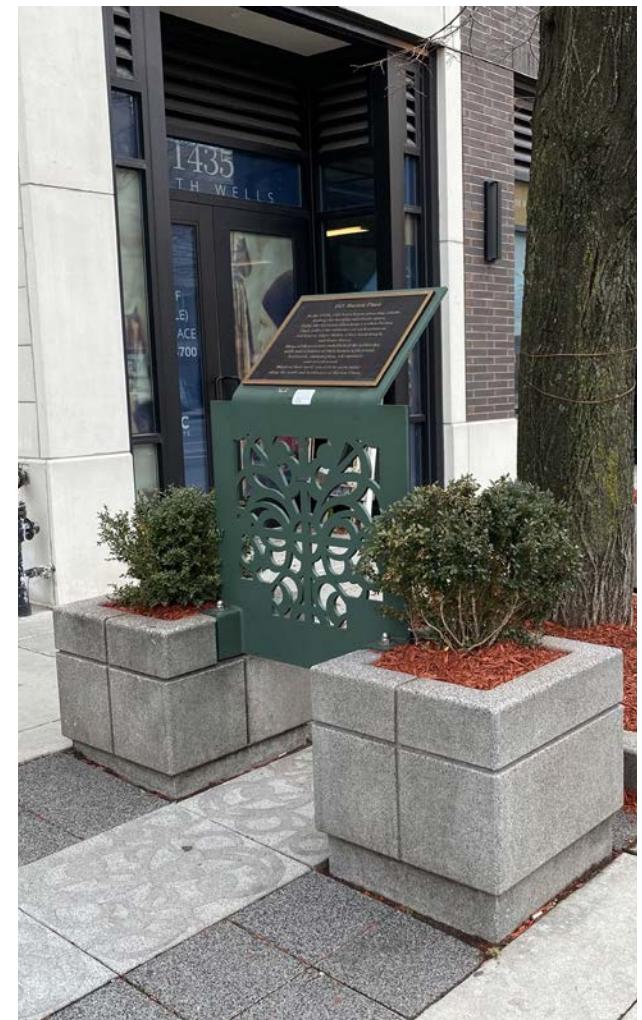
time and are showing signs of wear, such as chipped corners or broken pieces. Many of the tree grates have been overwhelmed by the tree root systems and some of the trees are overgrown and/or have poor form.

By and large the concrete pavement and curbs, with some exceptions, are in good condition. As new buildings have been constructed, the frontages have been rebuilt using a generally consistent style and palette of materials as the 1999 streetscape. In addition, various elements have been added along the street over the years, including several styles of bike racks and some sections of brick or precast concrete pavers.

While a number of restaurants have expanded onto the sidewalk with outdoor seating, Wells Street lacks street furniture that could provide for additional casual seating areas.

Further south along the Plum Market frontage, a new and contemporary streetscape has been installed, featuring long curbed planter areas with trees, groundcover, and perennials, edged by a modern metal railing. In some instances, the metal railing was bent and in need of repair. A similar approach—at a smaller scale—was implemented across the street in front of Vision Boutique and Row House. Overall, this streetscape approach has introduced a new style and feel to Wells Street with increases in permeable surface and planting space and a wider variety of planting. In the long run, this condition will benefit trees as they will remain healthy for a longer period of time, compared to those planted in tree grates.

South of Division Street, along the frontage of the new Old Town Park development, the streetscape has been improved with trees in grates and wide concrete sidewalks. On the east side of the street, however, the conditions are less than ideal, with narrower sidewalks, trees in open pits, and paving that is in disrepair, in certain areas. Of note, there are also older “cobra” style lights along this stretch, which aren’t prevalent along Wells Street to the north.



NORTH AVENUE

North Avenue is only one of seven state routes that enter Chicago, serving as a major east-west street through the city. The SSA boundary includes a relatively short stretch of North Avenue, extending from Clark Street to Orleans Street. As a key connection that links the Kennedy Expressway (I-90/I-94) to Lake Shore Drive, North Avenue has always served as a predominantly vehicular travel route, carrying high volumes of automobile traffic (ADT). The configuration of the street reflects its function as an arterial street, with two travel lanes in each direction, a raised center median that changes to a shared bi-directional turn lane at intersections, and parallel parking on each side. With the focus on moving cars, this has negatively impacted the streetscape conditions and comfort level of pedestrians and bicyclists.

The sidewalks on North Avenue are narrow—approximately eight to ten feet wide—and consist of concrete paving in varying conditions. There are street trees in tree grates both on the north and south sides of the street, yet many of the tree grates need to be replaced. Additionally, some of the trees are in poor condition or dead. The streetscape lacks other landscaping, planters, street furniture, artwork, and other supporting streetscape elements. The roadway lights consist of dated “cobra” style lights, which detract from the appearance of the corridor.

Further east near the Wells and North intersection, the sidewalk narrows significantly, and the streetscape lacks

character, while the pedestrian space becomes more constrained particularly on the south in front of Foxtrot and east of Wells Street. On the north side of the street along the Walgreens frontage, the sidewalk is wider, but in disrepair; many of the trees in this location are in poor condition.

The Wells and North intersection is particularly challenging for pedestrians, due to the long crossing distance and lack of queuing space at the corners, particularly given the high number of pedestrians going to key locations, such as Starbucks, Walgreens, and Foxtrot. Multiple stakeholders mentioned the desire for this streetscape and intersection to be improved for both safety and aesthetic purposes.

Overall, the study area streetscape could greatly benefit from a variety of paving, such as brick or concrete pavers, as well as more planters, a unified family of street furniture, meaningful public spaces, artwork, and visually interesting urban elements.



PLACEMAKING & STREETSCAPES

Stakeholders expressed the need to expand placemaking efforts throughout the District to better “bind” the character of the area. Old Town’s iconic archways mark the entrance to the Wells Street corridor and have been a destination marker to a lot of community members. While the District is not heavy on placemaking initiatives, events like the yearly Art Fair distinguish Old Town as an artist community with a great sense of uniqueness. Stakeholders mentioned the need to better connect social spaces and provide additional opportunities for public art and pedestrian amenities. Old Town local organizations and neighboring institutions, including the Franklin Fine Arts Center and Catherine Cook School expressed interest in public art partnerships that expand on the Art Fair, encouraging local amateur contributors to take part in defining the area’s sense of place.

Temporary activations were mentioned as a unique opportunity to bring day-time activity to the District, including the utilization of vacant storefronts, side streets, and parking lots. Stakeholders also expressed a rising concern with the disconnect between North Avenue and Wells Street and proposed finding an interactive approach to bring more unity and cohesion to the District’s character.

While Old Town’s streetscape is holding up, current amenities and elements can be revamped to better reflect the area’s identity and provide for existing and future users. Stakeholders also voiced the need to improve the built environment through physical improvements throughout the District. Streetscape and placemaking elements can be one and the same in various scenarios, with the distinct goal of capitalizing on local assets, bringing joy to community, promoting active well-being, and bringing people together.



PLACES TO GATHER

There is a need for places to gather along the Wells Street corridor, to allow for a more dynamic pedestrian experience. With Old Town positioned near Lincoln Park Zoo, Downtown Chicago, and Lake Michigan, Wells Street is a prime location for a public space anchor. As Wells Street adapts to the growth of the City and the addition of multiple high-rise developments in the neighborhood, there is an avid need to reimagine outdoor spaces. Property owners shared that commercial renters are looking for spaces with outdoor areas, particularly in light of the pandemic. OTMRA has expanded their outdoor dining initiatives to provide more flexibility for businesses and alleviate economic stress over the last year. While providing immediate solutions for outdoor dining is important to the survival of Wells Street's businesses, there is a larger need to redefine outdoor dining spaces along the Wells Street corridor.

OPEN SPACE

Looking at the broader context, several nearby open spaces serve the community and city residents with a host of passive and active recreational needs. Lincoln Park and Seward Park are both in close proximity and serve as larger park spaces. Within the study area, however, there are few open spaces or public spaces.

As previously noted, Burton Place was enhanced as part of the 1999 streetscape project. Burton Place is a small plaza tucked between buildings at the end of a cul-de-sac that fronts Wells Street and connects to LaSalle Street to the east. It currently contains a small water feature, large curbed planting areas with ornamental railings, and special pavers that match those used in portions of the Wells Street streetscape.

There are six relatively large trees that form a canopy over the space and provide shade during summer. Historically, it has functioned as a pedestrian pass through and is primarily a visual plaza since it does not contain seating. However, a new plan that is slated to begin construction in 2021 re-envisioned this plaza as a more useable public space in an area that has few. The new design proposes new benches and seat walls, additional ornamental trees and landscape enhancements, a refurbished water feature, and new specialty pavers. This renovation should be a positive revamp that adds functionality to this open space along Wells Street.

In addition to Burton Place, the study area has few open spaces abutting the main stretch. Franklin Fine Arts Center, a Chicago Public School, is located along Wells Street

between Evergreen and Goethe. Like most CPS schools, the campus features an open lawn and play field, as well as a playground surrounded by an ornamental metal fence. Neighborhood residents use the property for recreation, however, the use of the campus as a dog park has been an ongoing issue that OTMRA and FFAC are trying to rectify. Otherwise, the appearance of the property and frontage is well-maintained, and it serves as an open space hub in many regards.

As part of the new Old Town Park mixed-use development, a plaza space is located between the high rise building on the north and modern rowhomes to the south. This space includes seating, sculptural lighting, trees and landscape planting, and features special pavers and high end finishes throughout. Its integration within this high-end development, however, makes it feel exclusive and not open to the public.

Overall, the Wells Street Corridor study area has a very limited amount of open space and needs to maximize its opportunities along the street to create meaningful people places that invite community members to come together.



WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

As noted, the six Old Town gateway arches have in many ways become important branded elements for Wells Street and the neighborhood. Other signs and plaques displaying historic information use a similar Art Nouveau style as part of the design vernacular and are found periodically along Wells Street. However, the overall study area lacks additional gateway, identity, and directional signage, which are elements that unify commercial districts and streetscapes and direct motorists and pedestrians to key destinations and supporting amenities, such as parking.



LAND USE & PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

OBSERVATIONS

- *The character of the Wells Street corridor is not consistent throughout the District, exhibiting a varied development pattern.*
- *The majority of new and pending mixed use developments occur on the southern portion of District, while the northern portion maintains a higher level of architectural and cultural integrity.*
- *Portions of the existing building stock and low-scale building character encourages small business development, walkability, and a cohesive physical realm.*
- *Developments within the District, should maintain well-scaled and designed transitions between buildings, streets, and the adjacent neighborhoods.*
- *Storefront styles and conditions vary throughout the study area, but the majority are well kept and maintained.*
- *The identity of the Corridor needs to be celebrated through preserving and increasing public art opportunities.*
- *Physical enhancements to the District have the opportunity to create new places and experiences that will continue to define the Wells Street corridor for years to come.*
- *While a number of restaurants have expanded onto the sidewalk with outdoor seating, Wells Street lacks street furniture that could provide for additional casual seating areas.*
- *The overall streetscape on Wells Street is in good condition, but lacks variety in paving and hardscape materials, landscape, and other elements that would contribute to a more unified District.*
- *Along certain stretches of Wells Street, the sidewalk is higher than six inches and can get up to approximately one foot.*
- *The Wells Street Corridor study area has a very limited amount of open space and needs to maximize its opportunities along the street to create meaningful people places that invite community members to come together.*
- *Strategies should be developed for incorporating additional planting areas and permeable surface and eliminating broken tree grates.*

SECTION 3

MARKET OVERVIEW





DEMOGRAPHICS

The data used for this market overview is based on Census, American Community Survey (ACS), Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES), and ESRI. The pandemic has disrupted the tools typically used to study local markets, and for that our team has paired data estimates with field work and observations, stakeholder interviews, and other qualitative data collected.

Wells Street market overview focused on two geographic areas:

- Old Town SSA #48 boundary
- Half-mile radius from the intersection of Wells and Schiller Streets

A few caveats apply when working with small geographies like the SSA boundary, or dense neighborhoods like Old Town. In small geographies, similar to the one-tenth square mile within the SSA, the Census tracts and formulas are imperfect. As for the half-mile radius, the analysis takes into consideration households who have shopping options in all directions and are not considered Old Town's exclusive consumer base.

It is important to note that the data provided for the half-mile radius is inclusive of the Old Town SSA #48.



POPULATION

The population around Old Town has been slowly growing, with no large jumps in recent years depicted in the data. However, with the recent addition of 1,500 new residential units - part of which is pending development - the growth rate within the SSA boundary will certainly be higher than forecast. The 2020 estimated population for SSA #48 of 4,140 people represents 2,858 households. With the addition of more than 1,500 residential units at 1435 Wells and Old Town Park, the number of households in Old Town will increase more than 35% in the near future.

AGE SEGMENTATION

Age is a useful proxy for household stage, from young, newly-forming households to older, empty-nester households. Younger households spend more on goods/items, including home furnishings, as well as dining, entertainment, and experiences. Chicago is a relatively young city, with a median age of 34.6 years, the same as the median age for households within the SSA Boundary. Median age in the half-mile radius is 37.6, with the largest age group being adults (25-34), followed by older adults (34-55). Over the next 5 years, population projections show the older adults age group slightly increasing in size, aligning with the growing median age, nation-wide.

Figure 5: Population Growth

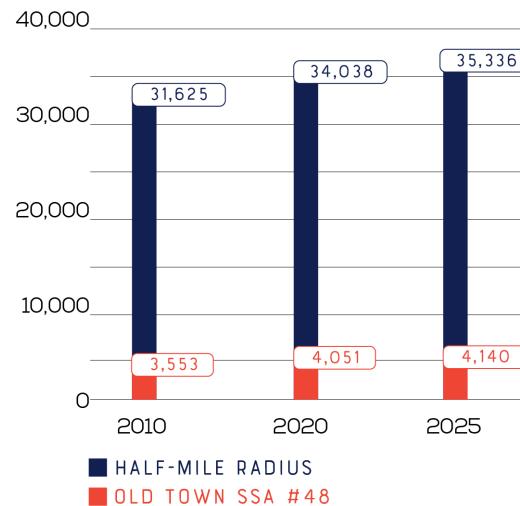
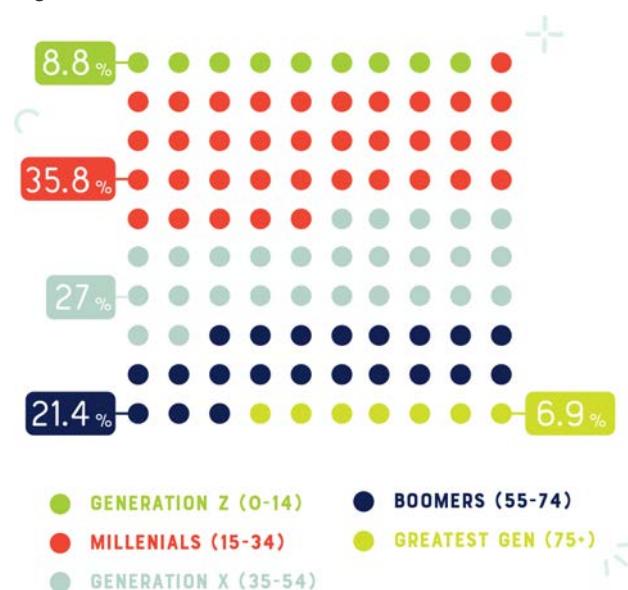


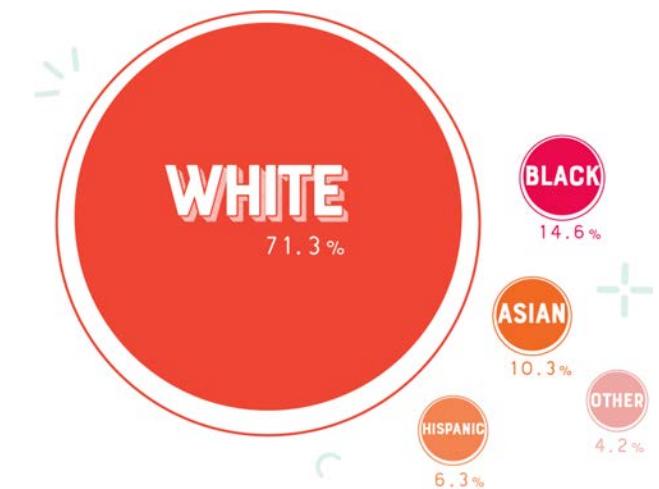
Figure 6: 2020 Half-Mile Radius Generations



DIVERSITY

Within a half-mile radius from the center of the District, growth remains an expectation in the African American, Asian, and Hispanic, biracial populations. The population's diversity index (1) of 49.9 for 2020 is up from 44.7 back in 2010 and is expected to grow to 52.5 by the year 2025. Currently, the area is home to approximately 15% African American, 9% Asian, and 6% Hispanic populations.¹

Figure 7: 2020 Half-Mile Radius Race and Ethnicity Distribution



¹ ESRI's Diversity Index captures the racial and ethnic diversity of a geographic area on a scale of 0 to 100. This provides insight on the diverse or monochromatic nature of a population.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Old Town and its surrounding neighborhoods are relatively affluent. The 2020 median household income for the SSA District is \$87,280, slightly less than the \$93,841 recorded within a half-mile radius. The neighborhood's median is significantly higher than the City of Chicago's median household income of \$58,247. Old Town young adults, paired with their spouses or co-habitating partners, are comparatively able to spend more money in and around the District as they add a new restaurant, bar, shop, or experience to their "to-do" lists.

EDUCATION

Educational level within a half-mile radius is extremely high, with 79% of residents having a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the City of Chicago's 39.5%. A remarkable 88% of residents are employed in white-collar jobs, some of which could permanently shift to remote work as a result of the pandemic.

Figure 8: 2020 Median Household Income



Figure 9: 2020 Educational Attainment - higher education



TAPESTRY SEGMENTATION

ESRI's proprietary Tapestry™ system classifies all US households into one of 67 "lifestyle segments" based on a combination of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Generally, the majority of households fall into a few of the 67 segments, primarily due to the fact that profiles with similar incomes and lifestyles tend to live in proximity to each other. (The segments are nationally recognized and not Chicago-specific.) ESRI reports the number of households in a user-defined geography that align with one or more national Tapestry segments.

The concept of consumer segmentation – also called “psychographics” – is based on the idea that household characteristics such as age, income, background, and education, affect consumer behaviors. In addition to demographic data, Tapestry integrates other population characteristics that help to define household behaviors. These areas include things like personal and consumer interests, politics, and values.

In Old Town, and particularly within a half-mile radius from the center of the District, the “Metro Renters” and “Laptops and Lattes” Tapestry Segments rise to the top and account for approximately 71% of households. See Figure 10 on the following page for a breakdown of the top three Tapestry segments within a half-mile radius from the District’s core.

Tapestry segmentation is commonly used by national retailers and restaurants in their location scouting to identify potential sites that match their consumer profiles. In neighborhood-based development, Tapestry can be used to inform retail mix and housing development. In Old Town, the two largest Tapestry segments show distinct commonalities:

- “Metro Renters” and “Laptops & Lattes” prefer renting, with an average of \$1700 per month.
- Both segments participate in leisure activities including yoga, wine tasting, dining out, theater, museums, and spas.
- Both segments spend on clothes, yet “Laptops & Lattes” have a higher disposable income that allows them to shop at high end places such as Ted Baker, Bonobos, and COS, compared to “Metro Renters” who prefer Banana Republic, Gap, and Nordstrom.

Baby Boomers do not specifically show up in the Tapestry segmentation, nevertheless, they represent a significant portion of the Old Town population and will largely influence aspects of this plan, including business development.

Figure 10: Half-Mile Radius, Top Three Tapestry Segments

TAPESTRY PROFILE	% OF HOUSEHOLDS	KEY CHARACTERISTICS
Metro Renters	42%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate household income with a median of \$67,000 – mostly have no children • Young, with a median age of 32.5 years • Mostly single-person households • Mostly renters • Commute by public transit, taxi, walking, and biking • Well-educated • Environmentally conscientious • Spend a large portion of their wages on rent, clothes, and the latest technology
Laptops & Lattes	28%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High median household income of \$112,200 • Median age 37.4 years • Singles, couples, and shared (non-family) households • Includes high proportion of same-sex couples • Favor city living • Mostly renters; some homeowners • Commute by public transit, taxi, walking, and biking • Well-educated • Health conscious • Environmentally conscientious
Emerald City	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate median household income of \$59,200 • Median age 37.4 years • Mostly singles and non-family households • Mostly renters • Environmentally conscientious • Well-educated • Health conscious • They place importance on learning new things to keep life fresh and variable. • They are interested in the fine arts and especially enjoy listening to music.



EMPLOYMENT

Among residents of Old Town, employment is concentrated in three broad areas defined by the American Community Survey as: Professional, scientific, management, administrative; Education, healthcare, social assistance; and Finance, insurance, real estate. Combined, these sectors account for 68% of employed Old Town residents. This employment breakdown is reflective of the education and income levels of the Old Town population.



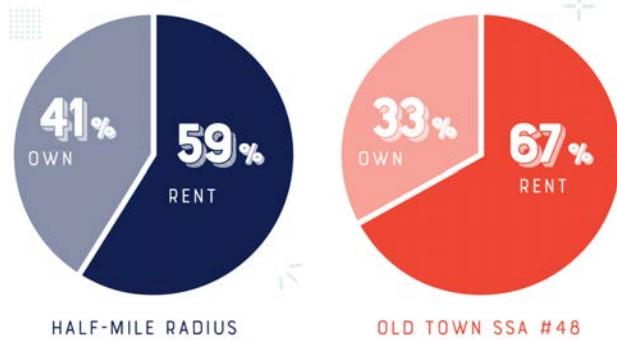
Figure 11: Employment in Old Town, 2019 American Community Survey

INDUSTRY	% OF POPULATION
Construction	1%
Manufacturing	6%
Wholesale Trade	3%
Retail Trade	5%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	4%
Information	5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	17%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Adminstrative	31%
Education, Healthcare, Social Assistance	20%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accomodation, Food Services	6%
Other Services, except Public Administration	3%
Public Administration	1%

HOUSING

In the SSA district, approximately 67% of residents rent, compared to 59% renters within a half-mile radius. This aligns with recent development products, that are mainly geared towards rental units and cater to the lifestyle characteristics of a large portion of Old Town residents.

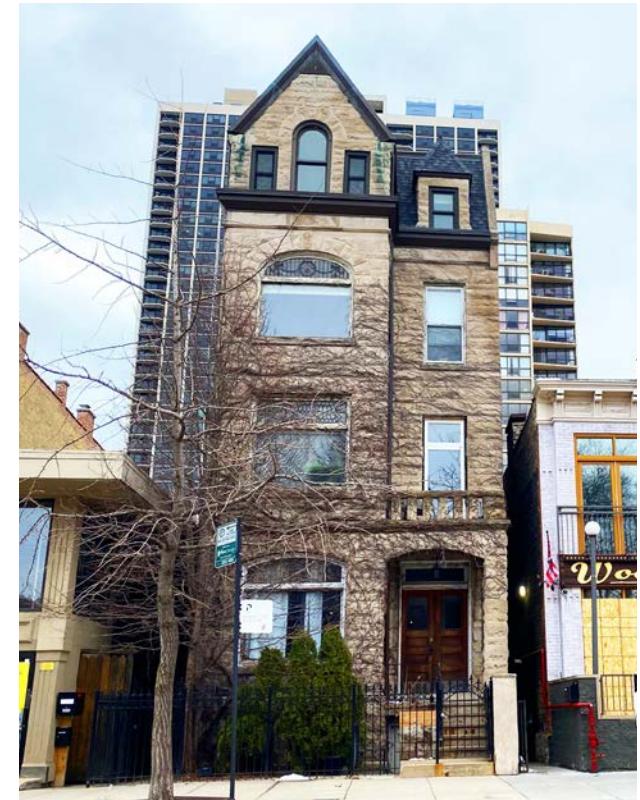
Figure 12: 2020 Housing Tenure



The pandemic has driven a preference towards larger living spaces that offer an extra bedroom, also utilized as an office space. The housing industry anticipates the trend for larger spaces to be a lasting one. At the same time, the increasing number of remote work may encourage knowledge workers to live further away from their jobs. This might encourage some people, who were willing to pay a premium to live close to their downtown jobs, will opt for less expensive housing outside the city. The coming years will be a period of adjustment; continuing to make Old Town a vibrant district will help attract

residents irrespective of where their jobs are located and will help counter the economic attraction of moving further away.

The two prominent Tapestry segments in Old Town, "Metro Renters" and "Laptops and Lattes" (discussed above), are, primarily, renters who live in larger, multi-unit buildings (Despite the name, a smaller percentage of these two segments are condo owners.) Households in both segments tend to be mobile, moving frequently. The pandemic has caused a broad movement toward larger living spaces, and toward homeownership. Home purchases have been partly driven by low interest rates and have been particularly strong in suburbs and exurbs, outside of central cities. It is not yet clear how the pandemic may influence homeownership trends in central cities.



BUSINESS MIX

Using a business inventory compiled through field work, 107 ground-floor businesses were tallied within the SSA district². Restaurants and bars are by far the largest business category, making up 41% of all ground-floor businesses. A small percentage of those are drinking-only establishments. Retail of various types, from apparel to pharmacies, comprise 23% of ground-floor businesses. Personal care, such as hair and nail salons and the like, make up 12%, followed by fitness businesses at 8%.

Several businesses have closed either temporarily or permanently, during the pandemic.

The inventory is a helpful way to see the range of business types in the district. There are more retail businesses in the district than one might initially perceive, when casually walking through the Corridor. Stakeholders mentioned their desire for specialty and boutique stores, which seem missing at a first glance, but are, in fact, present.

The business inventory reflects the number of business entities rather than square feet by industry (e.g., Plum Market and Aldi have large footprints compared to most other businesses). A business inventory can hide obscure problematic uses that detract from the quality of the district. For example, while there is only one storage/warehouse business



BUSINESS MIX

Restaurants, cafes, bars, and entertainment account for the majority of businesses along the Wells Street corridor, predominantly catering to a younger demographic, and their preference for a vibrant nightlife. Stakeholders expressed the need to diversify the business mix, attracting more upscale restaurants, specialty stores, services, and high-end consignment shops. Old Town is a diverse community, home to different age groups, who enjoy both a daytime and nighttime economy. A more diverse business mix that caters to a multitude of users of the Wells Street corridor will help create a more inclusive environment, accessible to families, empty-nesters, and multi-generational households. The importance of staple neighborhood businesses and one-offs, such as the Old Town Spice Shop and Old Town Oils, and the need to maintain and attract such businesses was overwhelmingly expressed by stakeholders. Retail stores were heavily impacted by the pandemic. Residents also mentioned the need to further promote and emphasize diverse and ethnic establishments within the District.

Figure 13: Old Town SSA #48 Business Mix

BUSINESS TYPE (GROUND FLOOR)	APPROX. NO. OF BUSINESSES	% OF SSA BUSINESSES
Restaurants, Cafés, Bars + Entertainment	47	44%
Nightclubs and Theaters	3	3%
Retail	25	23%
Groceries	3	3%
Apparel	4	4%
Services	18	17%
Personal Care Services	13	12%
Fitness Clubs	9	8%

² Includes two apartment-rental businesses, which we classified as "residential".

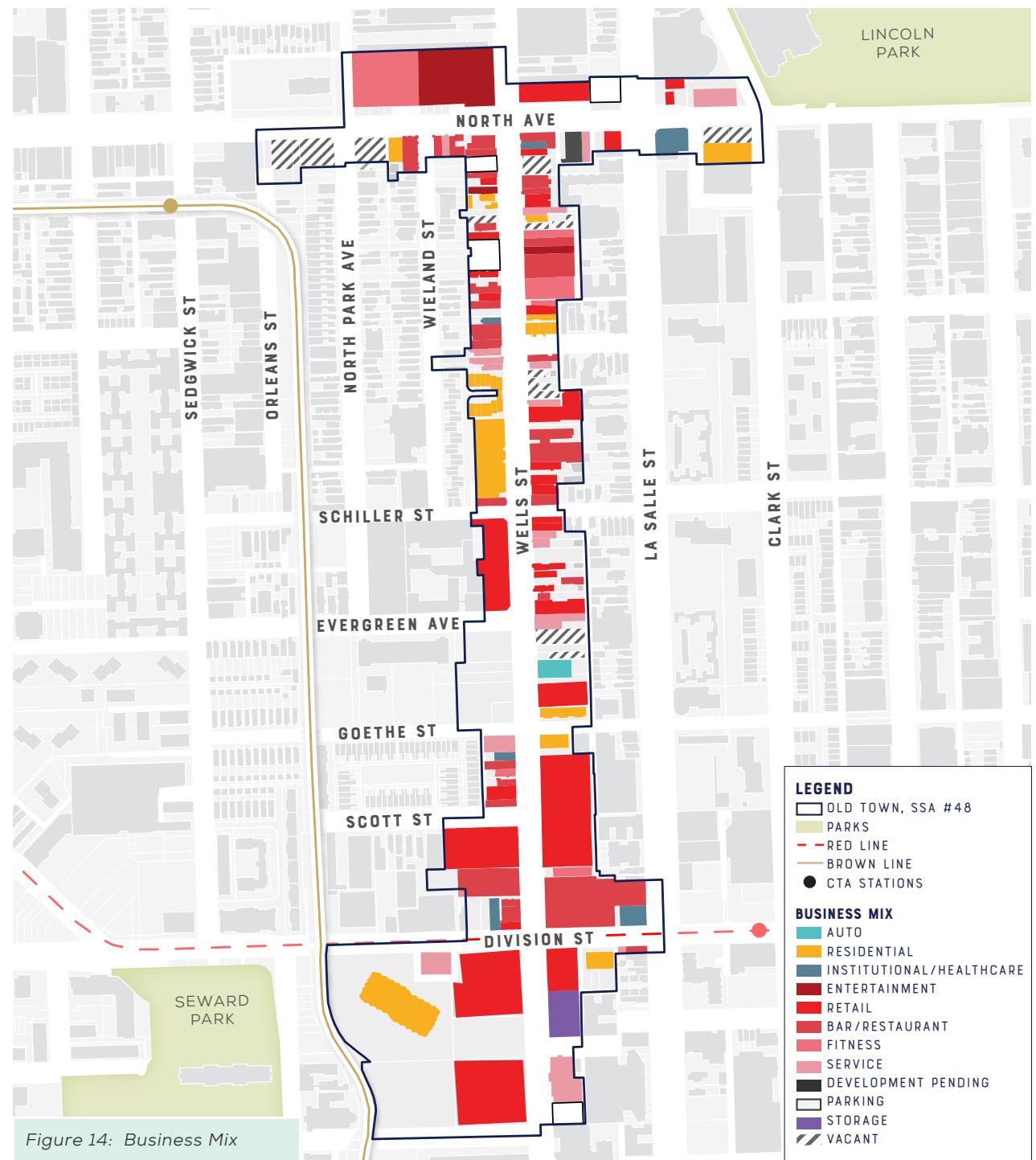
in the SSA district, it exerts an oversized impact on the pedestrian experience. This business inventory provides insight into the relative mix of business types within the District.

The opening of Aldi, with its expanded organics model, and The Plum Market are trailing market indicators of the growing importance of residential in and around Old Town. Grocery stores and other resident-serving businesses tend to show up after the people have already arrived. As a result of this past year, retail grocery industry may be at the early stage of a disruptive reshaping, as online grocery sales have accelerated during the pandemic.

BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND RENTENTION

Traditionally, OTMRA's work in business retention has focused on drawing customers to Old Town, using special programming and events (like "Live Well Week") and by bringing social media attention to Wells Street and its businesses. More recently, OTMRA has offered educational webinars for businesses, providing them with tools they can use to strengthen and grow. Webinars have covered subjects like financing, social media, and ecommerce.

In the area of business attraction, OTMRA has focused primarily on providing data to prospective businesses. These include quarterly market reports available on the OTMRA website, pulling real estate and leasing data from CoStar and LoopNet.



OTMRA recognizes a need to establish commercial development programs for attracting new businesses and helping existing Old Town businesses expand in place.

BUYING POWER

Buying power reflects the spending potential of residents in a given geography, regardless of where they make purchases. Traditional market analyses have combined buying power with estimated sales capture by local businesses to determine sales leakage (also called sales void). However, the growth of omnichannel retailing (which has blurred the lines of whether sales take place online or in-store), and the rapid migration of retail purchases to online-only retailers, have meant the concept of "sales leakage" has lost relevance.

It can still be useful to report consumer buying power and to place it in the context of Old Town's business strengths. Comparing consumer expenditures to the Old Town business mix:

- There are few apparel stores relative to available consumer spending, however many of these purchases are made online, in big-box stores, and at malls.
- There are few jewelry stores relative to available consumer spending.
- Spending on membership fees and ticketed events encompasses a broad range of activities, making it hard to discern the relative impact on Old Town business categories like fitness clubs and theatre/nightclubs.

- Pet ownership may be under-served in Old Town, relative to available spending.
- Food at home (groceries), food away from home (restaurants), and alcoholic beverages (at home and away from home) are well-served, relative to consumer spending.
- Home furnishings appears under-served in the business inventory, though many of these purchases have migrated online.

Figure 15: Retail Goods and Services Expenditures, ESRI

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	TOTAL EXPENDITURES (BUYING POWER)		
	1/4M RADIUS (\$)	1/2M RADIUS (\$)	1M RADIUS (\$)
Men's apparel	\$4,359,000	\$15,685,000	\$37,563,000
Women's apparel	7,370,000	26,079,000	62,197,000
Children's apparel	3,116,000	10,971,000	25,776,000
Footwear	4,835,000	17,164,000	40,745,000
Watches and jewelry	1,243,000	4,463,000	10,642,000
Computers and software	2,967,000	7,019,000	16,778,000
Entertainment: Membership fees	2,409,000	8,521,000	20,546,000
Entertainment: Tickets to theatre, opera, concerts	825,000	2,931,000	7,064,000
Tickets to movies	577,000	2,056,000	4,927,000
Pets	5,927,000	20,569,000	49,075,000
Toys, games, crafts, hobbies	1,188,000	4,129,000	9,762,000
Sports, recreation and exercise equipment	1,948,000	6,808,000	16,085,000
Food at home	50,446,000	178,253,000	424,313,000
Food away from home	37,472,000	133,534,000	319,575,000
Alcoholic beverages	6,407,000	22,968,000	55,553,000
Household furnishings and equipment	12,704,000	44,164,000	97,530,000

VACANCIES

Pre-pandemic, Old Town's ground-floor retail space was performing well, with a very low vacancy rate and newly-developed retail space commanding top rents, in the range of \$55 PSF. Vacancies inched up during the pandemic and hovers around 6% of ground-floor commercial space (based on field work and observation), but newer, larger spaces have seen very little absorption. Asking prices for new-construction commercial dropped at least 25% during 2020 and early 2021. Reduced demand for retail space is a national trend largely driven by shifts to online and omnichannel. Commercial districts that had a predominance of chain businesses have been particularly impacted as national retailers have contracted and closed many of their brick-and-mortar outlets. Old Town, with its large number of independent businesses, has been relatively insulated from those closures.

The former Treasure Island Foods, a 44,000 SF footprint just outside the SSA district, represents one of the larger unrenovated retail spaces impacting Old Town. Treasure Island was part of a local grocery chain. Today, Old Town is well-served by newer grocery additions, such as Plum Market, Aldis, and Foxtrot making a retail food use challenging for the space but not impossible. The building was purchased in 2019 by a Fern Hill Company affiliate for \$14.8 million and plans for the site have not been announced.





COMPARABLE COMMUNITIES

Old Town compares favorably to other Chicago neighborhoods that could be considered its peers or competitors. The population in the half-mile radius is slightly larger than others in this group because of the presence of high-rise residential buildings immediately to the east. Household income, while high, is a bit lower than the Armitage & Halsted, Southport, Wicker Park, and West Loop areas. This is likely because the half-mile radius includes somewhat less-affluent areas just west of Old Town. All the neighborhoods in this group have exceedingly high education levels, but Old Town's median age is significantly older than the others, and Old Town has more single-family households than Armitage & Halsted, Southport, and Wicker Park.

Old Town is known for its comedy clubs and nightlife, a different evening economic niche than the nighttime economy of some of its competitors like the West Loop. Old Town attracts a younger evening crowd than the median age of nearby residents. One of the goals of this planning process is to diversify the Wells Street economy so it attracts more visits during the day.



	OLD TOWN	LAKEVIEW EAST	ARMITAGE & HALSTED	SOUTHPORT	WICKER PARK	WEST LOOP
POPULATION*	34,038	32,226	17,831	19,514	18,618	18,833
MEDIAN HH INCOME*	\$93,841	\$82,093	\$137,346	\$127,522	\$128,054	\$124,849
AVERAGE AGE*	37.6	33.2	30.6	31.8	33.1	33.8
BA OR HIGHER*	79%	80%	89%	86%	82%	88%
AVERAGE HH SIZE*	1.57	1.6	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.6
BUSINESS MIX	Restaurants, comedy clubs, independents	Independent businesses + restaurants	Small scale national retailers and unique dining	Balance of upscale chains and independents	Balance of chains and independents	Fine dining, hotels, and night life
KNOWN FOR	Improvisational comedy and restaurants	Proximity to the lake	Small scale boutiques + trendy bites	Mix of national chains, dining, and boutiques	Apparel and upscale used apparel	Nightlife; Restaurants and bars
VIBE	Improvisational comedy and restaurants	youthful, energetic, and on the go	Established empty nesters and young families with money to spend	Young couples and families out for a stroll	Hipsters, graffiti, and artists	Tech communities, fine dining, and cocktails
URBAN FORM	Traditional historic brick buildings that transition into skyscrapers	3-5 story mixed use and walkable neighborhood	3-5 story Traditional Mixed Use Brick Buildings	2-5 story Traditional and new construction mixed-use buildings	3-5 story historic mixed use buildings to modern mid-rise mixed use buildings	Adaptive Re-use of an Industrial Corridor with modern design and density
STREETSCAPE	Slightly dated streetscape in need of some improvements, few places to sit, room for outdoor dining	Narrow sidewalks with street trees, cohesive lights, banners, and furniture, and plenty of outdoor dining	Very narrow sidewalks with trees in grates and very few amenities	Wide sidewalks, newer consistent paving, cohesive furniture and street trees, lots of public art, and plenty of outdoor dining	Very wide sidewalks with large planters and street trees, lined with outdoor dining	Narrow sidewalks, trees in the center median; plenty of outdoor dining, but feels cluttered

* half-mile radius from the center of the Districts | Variables such as Business Mix, Known For, and Vibe reflect the character of the Districts' cores.

MARKET OVERVIEW

OBSERVATIONS

- Eating and drinking establishments are the backbone of Old Town's economy. Like many commercial districts across the country, restaurants, cafés, and bars have often driven revitalization. These types of businesses have been hit the hardest by the pandemic and, while things are starting to open up, the economic crisis for restaurants may continue for some time.
- Reduced indoor seating capacity at restaurants, whether mandated or the result of changed diner preferences, will affect their business model. This may result in restaurant spaces not commanding the same level of rents that they did in the past, or having to operate with reduced staff. Restaurants will also likely have to continue offering outdoor dining, in part to make up for lost indoor seating capacity and revenue.
- Entertainment businesses like Second City, Zanies, and Red Orchid make up a small portion of the total businesses in Old Town, yet contribute significantly to Old Town's identity. Such establishments will remain important anchors to Old Town's future economic strategy, as long as they survive the impacts of the pandemic.
- Old Town attracts visitors from the greater Chicagoland area, as well as national and foreign tourists visiting Chicago. This is largely due to the thriving entertainment establishments, restaurants, and bars that make Old Town more than a neighborhood commercial District. Acknowledging the broader audience and attending to outside consumer spending will be an added asset, especially when visitors return post-pandemic.
- Because of Old Town's draw of customers from afar, neighborhood demographics and neighborhood consumer spending do not limit Old Town's potential, as these might in many other places. Input from residents and businesses gathered in interviews and surveys as part of this planning process can inform economic strategies that OTMRA adopts, but the strategies are not necessarily limited by what residents can financially support.
- Old Town retains a mix of independent businesses but has also added many chain businesses in recent years. Over the last several years, most chain businesses started implementing omnichannel sales systems, allowing online shopping, in-store shopping, pickup in-store, etc. Many independent businesses have been slower to adopt omnichannel practices, having traditionally made the majority of their sales through their physical space. A quick audit of Old Town businesses' websites shows that chain businesses have, for the most part, full omnichannel capabilities. Many independent businesses have not fully implemented these tools yet.
- Along with restaurants, fitness businesses have also endured extreme hardships over the past year. Old Town, relative to its size, is home to a large number of fitness and wellness businesses. Unlike entertainment businesses, gyms are primarily used by people who live or work nearby. While the various gyms and fitness studios in Old Town have different specialties, it may prove hard to sustain them all.
- Old Town's online and social-media presence lacks a consumer-centered website where users of the Old Town commercial district can look for information about the different businesses, events, and ways to shop online. The OTMRA website is primarily geared toward SSA ratepayers and therefore serves a different purpose.

SECTION 4

TRANSPORTATION





INTRODUCTION

Old Town's proximity to the Downtown Chicago, the lakefront, and Lincoln Park Zoo makes it a prime destination for residents and visitors alike. The transportation network for the Wells Street Corridor is a vital asset to the neighborhood and offers a strong multi-modal connection to the City and surrounding areas. As a well-serviced area, the Corridor has multiple transit options, a strong cycling network, and arterial roads connecting the corridor in and around downtown.

WELLS STREET

Wells Street extends north of North Avenue and becomes Lincoln Avenue, a key arterial road that connects the area to the northern area of Chicago. Wells Street connects Old Town to Chicago's South Loop, among other neighborhoods. Experiencing an average daily traffic ³ (ADT) volume of 13,700 in 2018, Wells Street is considered one of Old Town's major collectors. The stretch of Wells Street, within the study area, is roughly 48 feet in width with a travel lane, a buffered bike lane, and pay-to-park parallel parking lane on each side. There are two key signaled intersections in the study area, Wells Street and North Avenue and Wells Street and Division Street, that act as entrances to the Wells Street Corridor.

NORTH AVENUE

The stretch of North Avenue from Clark Street to Orleans Street acts as the northern gateway to the District, connecting the area east-west to surrounding neighborhoods and amenities, including Lincoln Park and Lake Michigan. As discussed earlier, North Avenue a state route and is considered a connector rather than a destination. This avenue features two travel lanes, shared bi-directional turn lane, and pay-to-park parallel parking lanes on each side.

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION



RAIL

The Wells Street Corridor is accessible by the Brown and Purple lines at the Sedgewick Station and the Red line at the Clark/Division Station. The Sedgewick Station had an average weekday ridership of 3,729 in 2019 and 1,211 in 2020. The Clark/Division Station had an average weekday ridership of 7,453 in 2019 and 2,640 in 2020⁴. Riders can reach the Loop in approximately 15-20 minutes, door to door, via CTA 'L' Lines. CTA ridership, City-wide, experienced an 80% drop due to the pandemic, and CTA is working to prepare for a post-pandemic world in which ridership will likely increase.

BUS

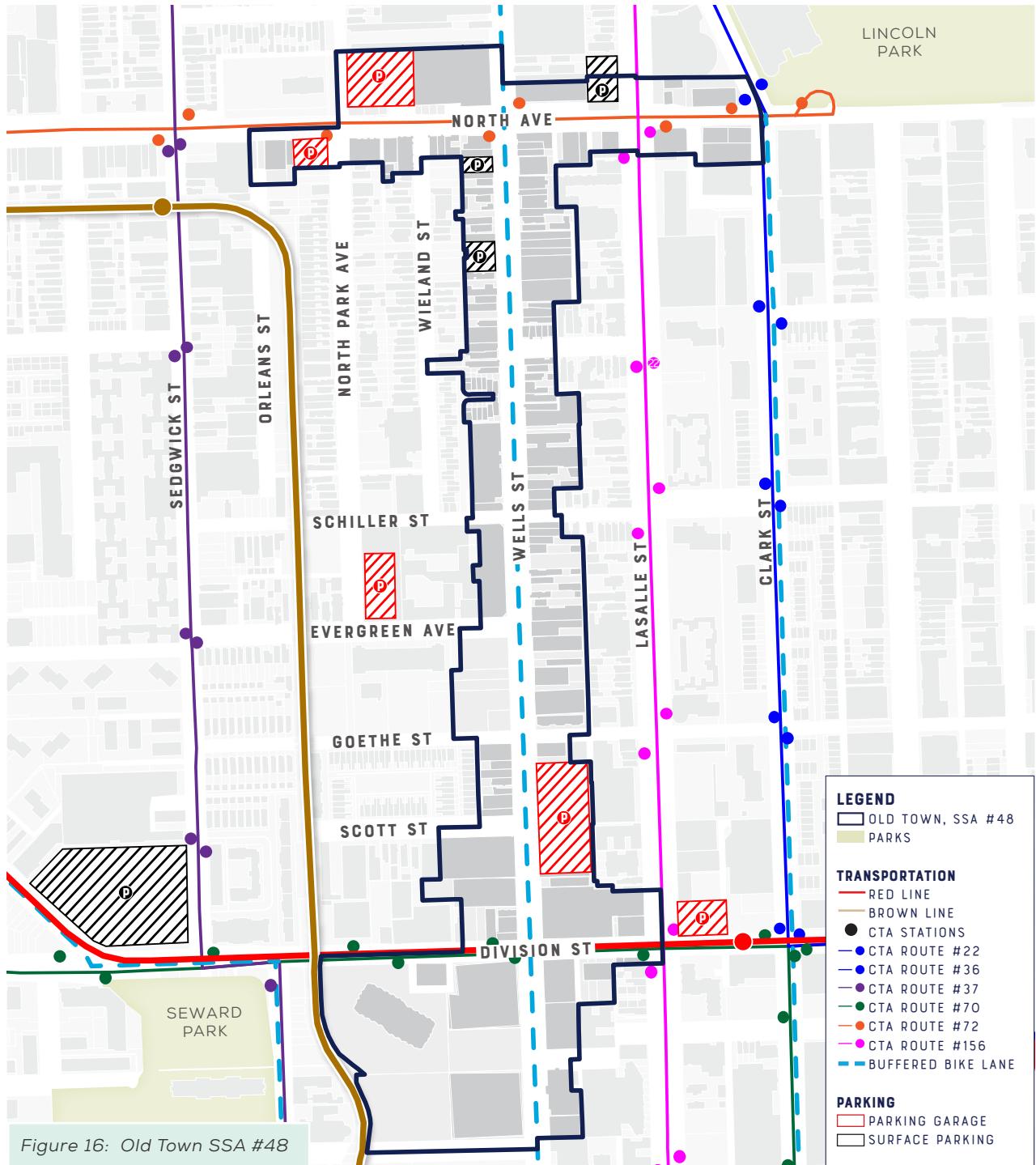
Although no direct bus route services Wells Street, multiple CTA routes serve the Wells Street Corridor. East to West routes that run through SSA#48 Old Town boundary, providing connections to western neighborhoods and the lakefront, include North Avenue Route #72 and Division Avenue Route #70. North to South routes, directly adjacent to the District, connecting the corridor to the Loop, include LaSalle Street Route #156, Clark Street Route #22, and Broadway Street Route #36 to the east, and Sedgewick Street Route #37 to the west.



TRAFFIC & PARKING

Share rides, such as Uber and Lyft, as well as taxi cabs, have caused a notable increase in traffic volumes along Wells Street. Stakeholders emphasized the need to better regulate vehicular circulation, especially during the weekends. In addition, shared ride cars have been known to stop for long periods of time along Wells Street, blocking both vehicular and bike traffic, and creating an unsafe environment. Stakeholders also voiced their concerns about party buses that seem to create additional traffic, pre-pandemic. Some stakeholders voiced their concerns about the parking capacity, while others stated that this is typical for a bustling neighborhood. Stakeholders also mentioned the need for better directional signage, denoting accessible parking options for District visitors. Problematic intersections include North and Wells, Wells and Evergreen, and Wells and Schiller. Wells and Schiller/Evergreen intersections pose a safety issue during school hours, with heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic going in multiple directions. A need for additional east-west crossings along Wells, particularly at Burton Place, was deemed necessary.

⁴ Chicago Transit Authority



CYCLING AND PEDESTRIAN

Sidewalks average approximately 8 feet, and grow wider to 12 feet adjacent to commercial buildings. Striped crosswalks delineate pedestrian crossing at all intersections along Wells Street and the majority of intersections along North Avenue, with the exception of North Avenue and N Orleans and Wieland Streets. Wells Street features a buffered bike lane in both directions that has been identified as a Crosstown Route by CDOT's Chicago Streets for Cycling Plan in 2020, functioning as a key commuter route connecting Chicago's northern neighborhoods to the Loop. Within the surrounding area, Clark Street to the east and Clybourn Street to the west provide additional buffered bike routes that run north south.

SHARED MOBILITY

Bike share and car share options are also available to residents and visitors of the Wells Street Corridor. Two Divvy stations are located on Wells Street, north of the Franklin Fine Arts Center and another across from Aldi. Within a half mile radius from the core of the District are 14 Divvy stations. Five zip car stations within a half mile radius of the Corridor.

PARKING

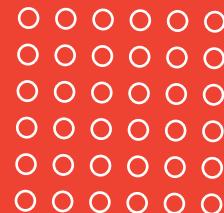
There are three surface lots and three parking garages located within the study area, some of which are utilized by residents and visitors under a public/private partnership. Paid street parking exists on both sides of Wells Street as well as North Avenue. While the area is deemed to have adequate parking, according to a number of stakeholders, others explained that parking is insufficient. District visitors explained that parking garages feel unsafe, compared to surface parking lots.



TRANSPORTATION

OBSERVATIONS

- *Old Town and Wells Street are well served by transit with multiple modes of transportation.*
- *Transit options are mostly located adjacent to rather than through the District.*
- *Certain intersections hinder pedestrian safety and should be addressed.*
- *Parking for the area is right-sized, especially during the day, given the current uses but a comprehensive parking guide for Old Town would help users to find parking.*
- *Traffic and parking on weekends, and especially at night, is deemed a major issue to Old Town residents.*
- *Shared rides, such as lyft and more largely in the form of party buses create additional traffic and should be better managed.*
- *Parking garages create a safety concern for many residents and visitors alike.*



SECTION 5

COMMUNITY SPEAKS





SURVEY RESULTS

The engagement portion of the Wells Street Corridor Plan is very critical for the success and of this process and provides residents and leadership a sense of ownership to the plan. Approximately 90 people participated in the first online survey, starting in March of 2021, sharing their vision and inspiring ideas for the Wells Street Corridor. This survey introduced the planning process while providing a series of interactive exercises to understand what the community's priorities are and provide them with the right tools to visualize the future of the area. Categorized into seven sections, the survey focused on

- Development/Redevelopment Opportunities
- Pedestrian Safety Improvements
- Public Space Improvements
- Streetscape Improvements

- Placemaking Opportunities
- Signage & Wayfinding Opportunities
- Business Mix

VISUAL PREFERENCE

The goal of the Visual Preference Survey is to gauge the community's attitude towards the corridor's potential character. Participants were asked to rank imagery related to the physical realm, placemaking opportunities, and types of businesses, among others. Each of the seven sections outlined above included a visual preference exercise.

CLICK MAPS

Each of the seven sections included a Click Map feature that allowed participants to mark locations of issues and opportunities and prioritize areas of improvement.

VISIONING MAD LIBS

Crafting a vision statement that illustrates the future of this District is a community collaborative effort. Participants were asked to substitute for blanks with four to five keywords that best describe their idealistic version of Wells Street Corridor.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

84% of respondents live on Wells Street, on North Avenue, or in the Old Town neighborhood. The remaining 16% of respondents either work in Old Town or are visitors of the District. 65% of respondents were 40 years of age, or older.

The results of the survey are summarized in the following section.

DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Adaptive use was the most favored type of development/redevelopment opportunity, followed by stand-alone commercial, townhomes, and mixed-use developments. Traditional brick buildings and high levels of craftsmanship were highly preferred.

Opportunities that exist along Wells Street were mapped by respondents. Emphasis was on activating vacant storefronts and under-utilized sites while preserving the historic fabric and character of the area.



"Preserve the historic buildings and infill with consistent designs/quality."
-SURVEY RESPONDENT

VISUAL PREFERENCES

CLICK MAP

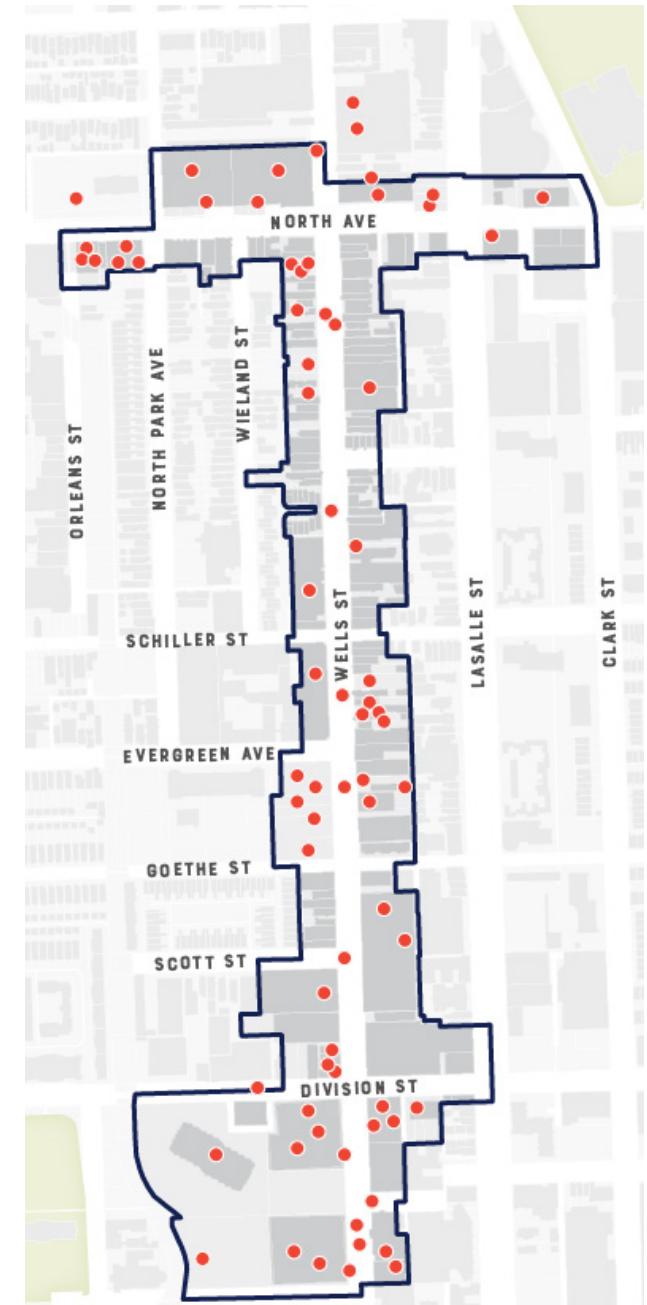


Figure 17: Development/Redevelopment Click-Map

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Painted and/or raised intersections were the most favored pedestrian safety treatment. Other preferred improvements included painted crosswalks and bump-outs. In general, participants expressed the need to enhance Wells' physical environment.

Certain intersections along Wells St. including Division and Schiller Streets, as well as North Avenue were deemed problematic and unsafe.

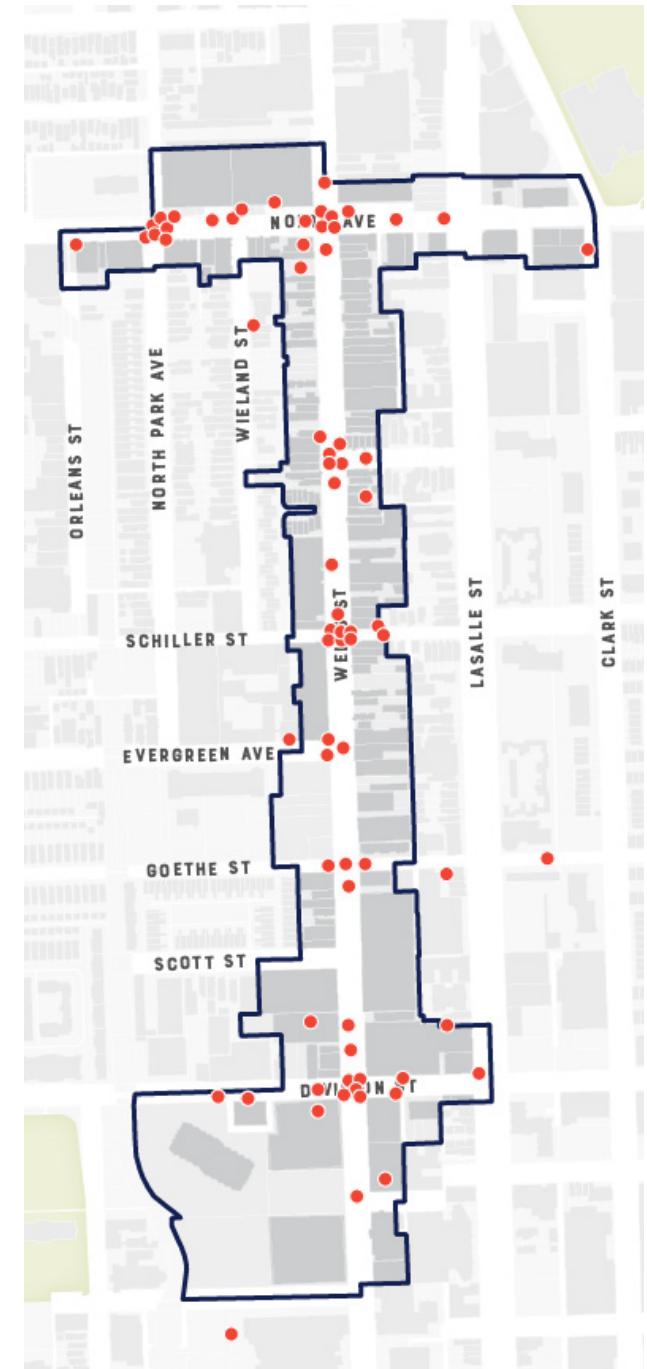


Figure 18: Pedestrian Safety Click- Map

OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

While the majority of open space improvements ranked high, pocket parks and alley activations, along with urban plazas, were the most favored. Participants voiced there need for easily accessible gathering spaces.

The green space associated with the Franklin Fine Arts Center, Burton Place Park, and the Old Town Park plaza were identified as areas of improvement from a design and/or accessibility viewpoints.



"Reimagining the street as a pedestrian promenade instead of an exclusive auto thoroughfare is what Wells Street needs."

-SURVEY RESPONDENT



Figure 19: Public Space Click-Map

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

When asked what elements of Wells Street's existing streetscape do you like the most, historic brick facades, the gateway arches, street trees, and street lamps were preferred. Streetscape characters with expanded amenities, mature trees, and pockets of seating and landscape areas ranked the highest.

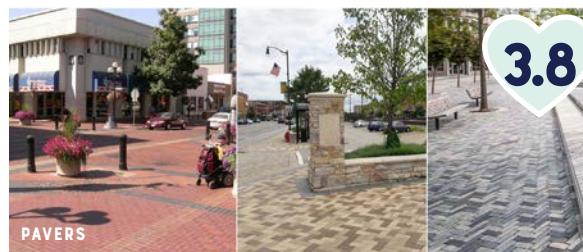
While all streetscape elements scored high with an average of 3/5, streetlights, planters, bollard lighting and pavers, were the most preferred.



STRING LIGHTS



3.9



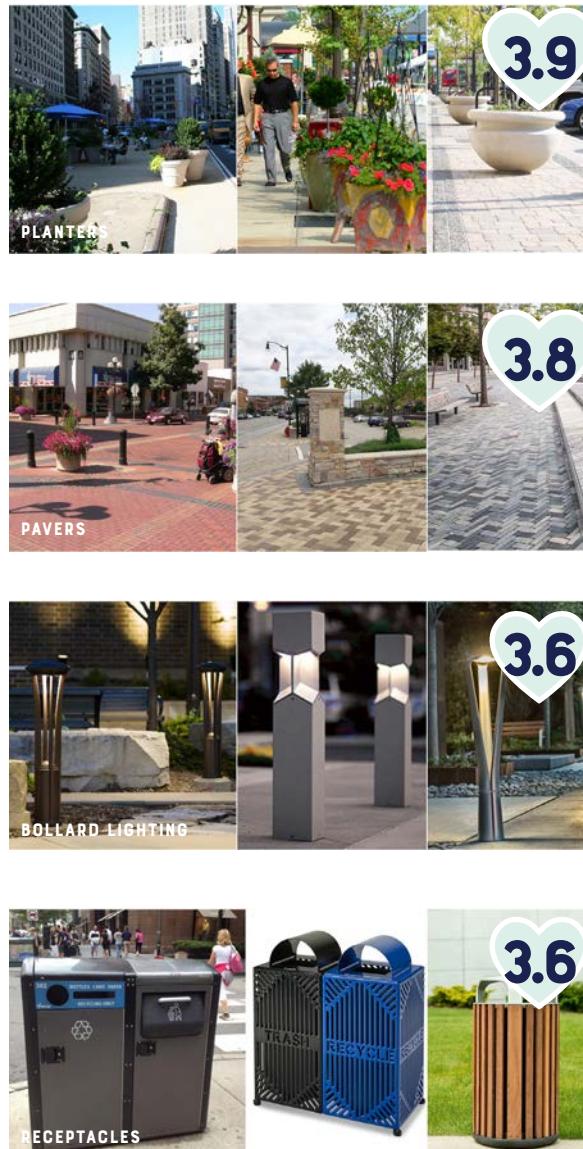
3.8



3.6



3.6



"We should preserve and mimic elements that are charming, like the gateway signs and eclectic style! If we want to fix the street that's ok but make sure it works with the area's character."

-SURVEY RESPONDENT

VISUAL PREFERENCE

SIGNAGE/WAYFINDING IMPROVEMENTS

50% of respondents identified a need to improve signage and wayfinding along the Wells Street Corridor. Traditional yet colorful signage with a high level of detail rose to the top. Participants favored directional signage and wayfinding banners the most.



PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

Food trucks and pop-ups were the most favored placemaking initiatives, followed by art installations and murals. Participants voiced the need for a wide variety of “quick-hit” activations that would bring activity to the District, throughout the day.

Participants noted placemaking opportunities throughout the entire District, with a focus on existing open spaces, such as Franklin Fine Arts Center and Burton Place.

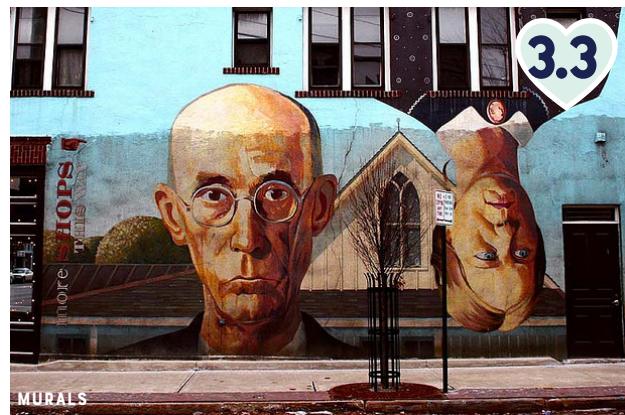
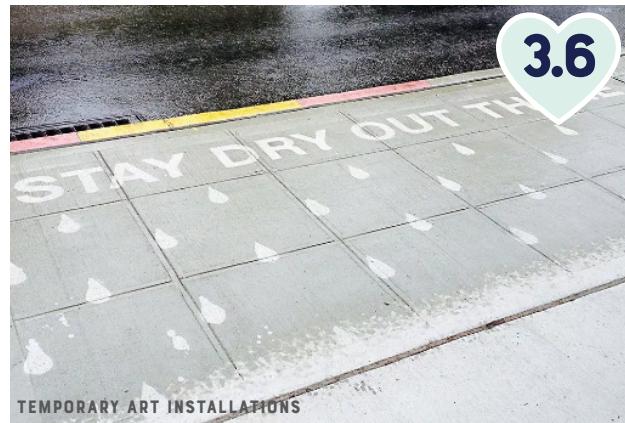


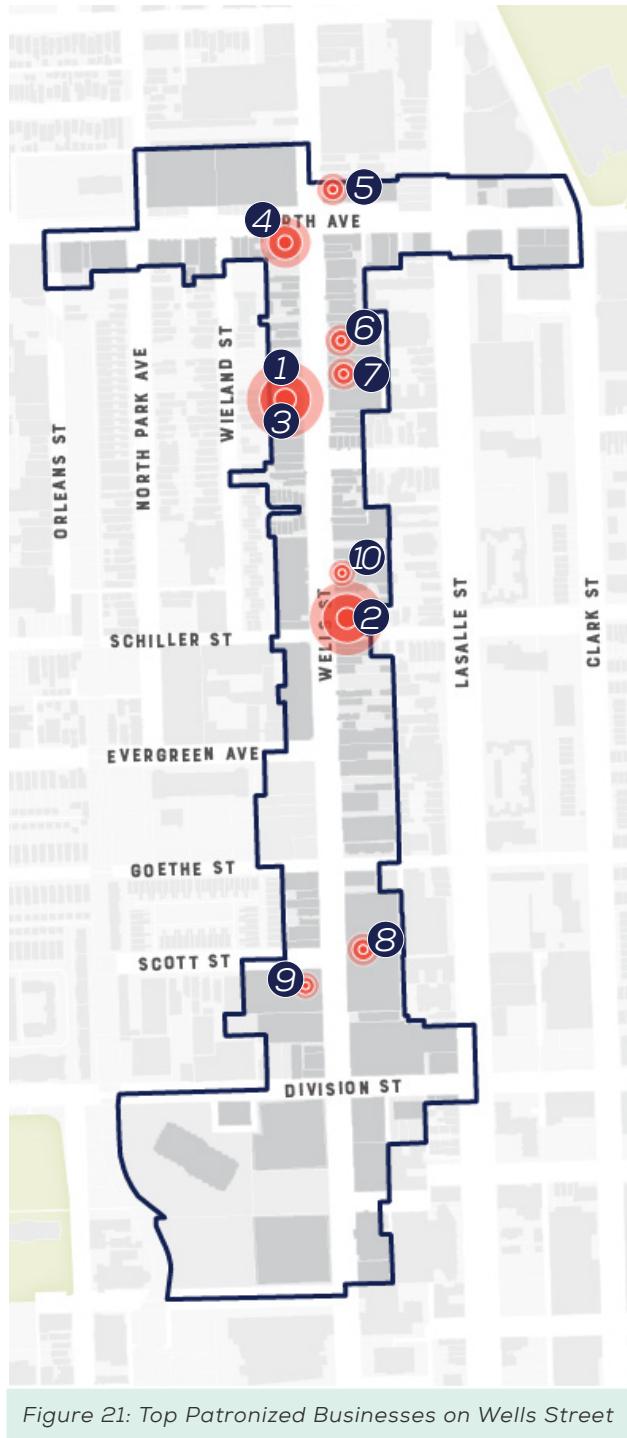
Figure 20: Public Space Click-Map

BUSINESS MIX

VISUAL PREFERENCES

A high interest in business attraction strategies, for a diversity of business types, was a common theme throughout the survey. Specialty shops received the highest score of 4.9/5. Outdoor dining, authentic restaurants, Mom and Pop shops, and fine dining also ranked high. In general, participants showed great interest in daytime economy and business types.





SURVEY PARTICIPANTS NOTED THE BELOW BUSINESSES AS SPOTS THEY FREQUENT THE MOST ALONG WELLS STREET:

1. Spice House
2. Orso's
3. Topo Gigio
4. Foxtrot
5. Walgreens
6. Kamehachi
7. The Vig
8. Plum Market
9. Starbuck's
10. Jeni's Ice Cream

PARTICIPANTS EXPRESSED INTEREST CERTAIN TYPES OF BUSINESSES ALONG WELLS:

ART GALLERY SPECIALTY SHOP
HIGH END BOUTIQUE
BODEGA FINE DINING
 BREAKFAST **CAFE** ANCHOR RETAIL

PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO IDENTIFY WHAT THEIR PREVIOUS AND CURRENT WORKING SITUATIONS ARE:

Pre-COVID, 62% of respondents worked from an office space, which dropped to 8% during the pandemic. Notably 25% of respondents were already working from home pre-COVID. Unemployment increased from 6% to 8% during the pandemic, according to survey participants.



62%

PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO IDENTIFY OTHER COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS THAT THEY FREQUENT.

Participants frequent West Loop (25%), Lincoln Park (23%), and Gold Coast (23%) the most, as dining alternatives to Wells Street. Andersonville (6%), Wicker Park (6%), and Lakeview (6%) had a smaller response rate. River North and Lincoln Square were anecdotally noted as well.





WELLS STREET TOMORROW

Survey participants were asked to craft their own vision statements for the future of Wells Street Corridor. Overarching themes are summarized in the form of keywords to the right. Direct quotes, in response to Wells future, are provided in the section below.

"Attract visitors and tourist alike because of its unique flavors and beautiful architecture"

"Wells is a unique destination - pop-up events or food trucks would be a great addition!"

"Need live music options - outdoor areas, people want to sit outside and hear live music!"

"Give residents reasons to stop for coffee, shop for groceries, maybe a pharmacy and a place to dine out. Keep it clean and safe and fill the empty storefronts."

"A more permanent sense of cultural history to foster community pride and engagement and a unified understanding of Old Town's past and a dream for its future."



PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO RANK DIFFERENT INITIATIVES FOR THE WELLS STREET CORRIDOR PLAN, FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST IN PRIORITY LEVEL

While the majority of initiatives scored high, Business Attraction and Retention (75%) and Sidewalk and Streetscape Improvements (72%) were the highest in priority, according to survey participants. Improved Walkability and Pedestrian Safety (63%) and New & Improved Open Space (60%) scored higher than other initiatives.

