



**SCOTT E. WAGUESPACK**

Alderman, 32nd Ward - City Council of Chicago

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April 2, 2024

Commissioner Ciera Boatright  
Department of Planning and Development  
121 N. LaSalle St.  
10th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: Support for Amendment of Planned Development 728

Dear Commissioner,

I am in support of the amendment to the “Costco” Planned Development #728 at 2746 N. Clybourn. The amendment revisions include expansion of the existing fueling facility, expansion and renovation of the Costco building and parking lot, construction of a new stand-alone bank building and acquisition of the C&W Auto Shop property located adjacent to the existing PD for additional parking on the Planned Development site.

Thank you for your department’s assistance with this matter. Please contact my office with any questions.

Sincerely,

Scott Waguespack  
Alderman 32nd Ward

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**Friends of the Chicago River**



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April 15, 2024

Chairwomen Flores  
Chicago Plan Commission  
City of Chicago  
121 N. LaSalle St.  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

**RE: Plan Commission Approvals for 700 W. Chicago Ave. and 2746 N. Clybourn Ave.**

Dear Chairwoman Flores:

Friends of the Chicago River's mission is to protect and restore the Chicago-Calumet River system for all people, water, and wildlife. We review all river edge developments from both a local and river system-wide perspective to ensure that each new development is based in natural-systems focused urban design principles that value the river system as a healthy, biodiverse, climate resilient ecosystem with equitable, open access for all.

The 700 W. Chicago Avenue and the 2746 N. Clybourn Avenue developments were both reviewed by our professional staff and the City of Chicago's River Ecology and Governance Task Force (which we co-facilitate with the Department of Planning and Development and the Metropolitan Planning Council). The resulting comments and questions that were provided to the development teams are attached to this letter. We want to reemphasize the key points below for both developments as they undergo their review and final approval process, these developments should:

- All buildings and landscape should focus on environmental best practices and nature-positive engineering approaches to reduce the environmental impact on communities and the river.
- Maximize the use of nature-based solutions to provide wildlife microhabitats and stormwater filtration before runoff reaches the river across the development site.
- Provide a clear strategy for river edge access and circulation to ensure the riverfront is welcoming continuously connected during all phases of the development.

We hope to see many of these river friendly best practices incorporated for the two developments as they move into their next phases of detailed design and construction, and we welcome the opportunity to continue to stay in touch about these sites. Our [Developer Resource Guide](#) provides additional details about our priority river edge design strategies.

Please feel free to contact our planning director, Adam Flickinger at [aflickinger@chicagoriver.org](mailto:aflickinger@chicagoriver.org) or (312) 939-0490, ext. 15 with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Margaret Frisbie  
Executive Director

**To: Costco Wholesale**  
**From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group**  
**Date: 08.19.22**

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group appreciates the opportunity to review and provide input on Costco Wholesale's proposed site amendments to 2746 N Clybourn Ave, as presented on August 2, 2022. The presentation provided Task Force members with an overview of the proposed changes, including building expansion, new parking layouts, and renovations to an existing riverwalk originally installed prior to the passage of the Chicago [River Design Guidelines](#).

Following the development team's presentation, Task Force members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide general feedback. Task Force members then discussed thoughts and reactions amongst themselves after the development team was excused from the meeting. The comments in this letter summarize the group's written and verbal input.

### **Context of the proposed development**

Costco Wholesale is proposing three phases of redevelopment, upgrade and expansion of an existing gas station, expansion of the existing warehouse building and associated parking, along with other site improvements. In compliance with the River Design Guidelines, the project would also include improvements to an existing riverwalk installed in 2002 adjacent to the North Branch of the Chicago River. Proposed improvements include planting additional shade trees, upgrading light fixtures, fence repairs, and replacing invasive plantings with native species. The proposed changes to the site require approval as an addendum to the existing Planned Development #728.

### **Development review working group recommendations:**

- **Use an alternative solution to comply with River Design Guidelines 30' setback requirement**  
The existing riverwalk does not comply with the current requirement of a 30' setback across its entire length. Requesting the development team to meet this requirement as part of the proposed renovations would be unnecessarily burdensome, but other strategies should be taken into consideration to ensure the proposed riverwalk renovations meet the spirit of the design guidelines.

The four new parking stalls shown on sheet L1.1, as provided by the development team, could be removed from the proposal and remain as greenspace adjacent to the existing riverwalk. Unpaved space should not be removed from the current configuration as it serves to provide additional relief for users and wildlife and provides balance where some portions of the riverwalk are narrower than the 30' setback requirement.

Additional considerations could include potential future river access for recreational users, the installation of floating planted islands, or 'softening' the seawall edge in order to provide additional habitat for wildlife species in accordance with River Design Guidelines best practices.

- **Review the planting plan to maximize native species, and balance shading/screening with high-value natural habitat**  
The development team shared a preliminary planting plan that is to be updated as the proposal moves forward and with feedback from the Task Force. Task Force members are supportive of the plan to expand native plantings and pollinator habitat on the site, but careful consideration should be given to what native species are proposed to replace current invasive species. Careful consideration needs to

be given to maintenance after removal of invasive species. A thorough maintenance plan needs to be developed with follow through that has not occurred since the initial installation of the riverwalk.

Acknowledging the need for shading and screening, the planting plan could be completed in phases to avoid defoliating an entire stretch of the river edge at this location. Non-native plants and invasive species should be replaced with native plants. Non-native juniper should be replaced with native juniper (many species of which are fast growing), and arborvitae, red osier dogwood, or similar shrubs can also be used to create privacy. Non-native evergreen species should be replaced in kind with native evergreen species. New native plantings should not over rely on cultivars in order to provide high-value habitat for insects and migratory bird species.

- **Improve circulation and signage to maximize accessibility for both Costco shoppers, employees, and the general public**

The existing riverwalk currently connects to Lathrop Homes via an under-bridge connection at the north end of the site and terminates at Clybourn Avenue via a five foot sidewalk along the edge of the Costco parking lot. The development team noted that new crosswalk striping would be installed to connect shoppers to the river walk by way of the front entry path. The proposal could also consider how riverwalk users are accessing the Costco segment from Damen Avenue. New signage, striping, or other traffic calming measures should be installed to indicate shared road use if the primary access point for the riverwalk from Damen Ave is through the Costco parking lot. The development team also noted that the existing sidewalk connection from the river edge to Clybourn Avenue, along the southern edge of the site will be maintained.

- **Additional feedback regarding minor site improvements**

Any new fixtures (benches, trash cans, lighting) should comply with the river design guidelines. New light fixtures should be directed toward the path and should be shielded from being cast on the river/into the night sky. The development team should submit a maintenance plan for the updated riverwalk including strategies for stormwater retention and ongoing removal of invasive species.

Thank you for taking the time to present to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback in the design process and look forward to the ongoing coordination as the project moves on to future phases. We hope that implementing the above recommendations can be mutually beneficial for the development team, community residents, and the river itself. We welcome the opportunity for feedback, offer our services in the future, and look forward to your responses and collaboration.

Sincerely,

River Ecology Governance Task Force  
Development Review Working Group

**To: 700 West Chicago Avenue Development Team**

**From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group**

**Date: October 12, 2023**

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group received a presentation about the 700 West Chicago Avenue development proposal on October 3, 2023. The presentation provided Task Force participants with an overview of the proposal including current river edge landscape concept plans to comply with the Chicago River Design Guidelines and North Branch Framework Plan. Following the development team's presentation there was a 'Question & Answer' session that allowed Task Force participants to ask clarifying questions and provide general feedback verbally and via an online form. The following summary is representative of the group's verbal and written input.

### **Our understanding of the 700 West Chicago Avenue site plan proposal**

Onni Group owns both this site and the site at 901 N Halsted (previously reviewed by the Task Force) and is working on an amended Waterways Planned Development (PD1399), with a goal to create a cohesive master plan across both sides of the river. Goals for this development include a desire to reconnect the surrounding community to the riverfront and to emphasize this area as a river gateway. The proposed development is primarily a residential plan (over 2,400 units), with several towers (the highest reaching 650'), below grade parking, and supporting retail/commercial uses. The riverfront proposal consists of 1.99 acres of open space and amenities, including a variety of terraced landscape features, outdoor seating, potential water taxi stop, amphitheater, a 16-foot multi-use trail, and access points at Halsted Street, Jefferson Street, and Chicago Avenue. Plans for an extensive native planting palette, bird friendly glazing, floating wetlands, and other river edge landscape elements were presented. The development would occur over three phases, with the first phase being at Halsted and the river, on the western side of the site.

### **Questions, comments, and considerations from the Task Force's discussion:**

- **Stormwater Approach:** We acknowledge that the stormwater management plan has not yet been detailed for this project, but we encourage the future plans to incorporate innovative BMPs to capture, filter, and absorb stormwater to protect the river's health. The Task Force participants, aligned with the goals of the Chicago River Design Guidelines and other City standards, emphasize green infrastructure and other nature-based stormwater strategies. These include rain gardens, bioswales, pollinator gardens, and green roofs. Rain gardens can also serve to expand habitat for insects, birds and other river wildlife. We also recommend that the owner have a strategy for securing trash receptacles and collecting litter that can blow or be washed into the river during storms. Floatable plastics and other waterborne pollutants continue to be a challenge for our waterways and can be captured with filtering storm drains and other practices.

- Task Force questions related to the stormwater approach:
  - How will stormwater be captured, filtered, and released on the site?
  - What portions of the site's run-off will be filtered and discharged to the river?
  - What portions of the site's run-off will *not* be filtered and discharged to the river? (we know that generally roof water is allowed, but we are unclear what portions of the proposed buildings will be considered "roof area" for example the parking structures with roadways above)
  - The landscape consultant mentioned a desire to use stormwater BMPs where possible. Where will those features be located and how will they be incorporated into the riverfront landscape design?
  - How will floatables, litter, and other waterborne pollutants be captured from the run-off before it reaches the river?
- **Riverfront Programming:** Through past community engagement efforts, we know that residents overwhelmingly prefer the creation of new riverfront passive park spaces, with a naturalized aesthetic, and opportunities for respite and recreation. This is in contrast to all riverfront areas becoming entertainment districts. Many programmed riverfront elements were discussed as part of the development's landscape and we would like to better understand the mix of uses proposed. We recommend a balance between active and passive uses, with an emphasis on welcoming public space that anyone can enjoy without purchasing a product or service. Task Force members do not think that an outdoor music performance venue, in the amphitheater space, would be appropriate for this residential use site. However, if the proposed amphitheater is intended to be more of a passive use space, it could be a great public amenity for conversations and relaxation.
  - Task Force questions related to the riverfront programming approach:
    - Can more details about the programming of the riverfront space be provided to understand the proposed uses of the different areas of the open space?
    - What parts of the riverfront will be open to the public vs. for residents only and/or leased for restaurant outdoor cafe use?
    - How specifically is the amphitheater space intended to be used? Is it more passive (like the South Bank development) or more performance focussed like the downtown riverwalk?
    - Because of the proposed density of the development, will there be studies conducted to understand how the riverfront will be shaded by the towers?
- **Circulation and Access:** We ask that the developer reconsider the strategy for access and circulation of the site for each phase of the development. The underbridge connection to the south at Chicago Avenue will be an excellent new riverfront access connection, but there were a few riverfront access connections that seemed less clear. The goal of the Chicago River Design Guidelines is to provide riverfront access in a way that is

welcoming to everyone, without a perception that you have to live, work, or be visiting a commercial business on the property. From the guidelines “*Access points to the multi-use path within the riverfront should be highly visible and strategically located.*” The connections as shown in the renderings from upper Chicago Avenue to the riverfront seem unclear and hidden under buildings, as is the Halsted Street connection. We do not consider elevator-only access points, particularly those located within the lobby of a building, to be welcoming access. Additionally, the Task Force would like to better understand how bicycle circulation will be coordinated with other modes on the site.

- Task Force questions related to the riverfront access and circulation:
  - How will the riverfront be accessed during each proposed phase of development? How can the riverfront be maintained as accessible during all phases (i.e. no river trail dead ends)?
  - How is bike usage anticipated on the site?
  - Can more information about plans for mitigating conflicts between bicycles and pedestrians on the site be provided?
  - How will bikes circulate the ramps and level changes?
  - What is planned for signage to ensure that travel through the development to access the rivertrail and riverfront amenities is clear?
- **Native Vegetation/River Edge Trail:** The green landscaped buffer along the river with small seating nodes is a design feature that the Task Force thought was very positive. These areas have potential to provide both habitat and the ability to filter runoff before it reaches the river. We encourage the planting scheme in this area and throughout the site to include dense multi-layering of native vegetation, with particular attention paid to understory shrubs that birds and other wildlife need.

### **Greater community engagement about this development**

Lastly, we would also like to emphasize that the REGTF does not represent the perspective of the broader community or other local stakeholders, but rather a vision for improved rivers citywide. In the spirit of transparency, we feel that the Alderperson and/or DPD should engage other relevant stakeholders and community residents about the proposed changes to this site.

### **Concerns that we heard from local neighborhood-based organizations representing River North, Near North, and River West include:**

- Concerns about the collective impact of the high density residential development on this site and neighboring sites in comparison to the planned infrastructure and open space improvements. The Task Force shares this concern. One of the goals of the North Branch Framework Plan is to provide riverfront open space in proportion to the density of the development.

- Concerns about increased traffic related to the densification of this district. A traffic study, that takes into account all the proposed/existing nearby developments, was requested.
- Coordination between bike, car, and pedestrian traffic circulation for the whole district including the planned Bally's Casino to the south.
- Potential for noise disturbances along the river with some of the proposed commercial uses.

Thank you for taking the time to present to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback in the planned development process and look forward to the ongoing coordination as the project moves on to future phases. We hope that implementing the above recommendations can be mutually beneficial for the development team, community residents, and the river itself. We welcome the opportunity for feedback, offer our services in the future, and look forward to your responses and collaboration.

Sincerely,

River Ecology Governance Task Force  
Development Review Working Group