

To: QTS Data Center

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

Date: October 29, 2024

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group received a presentation about the QTS Data Center expansion concept on October 22, 2024. The presentation provided Task Force participants with an overview of the proposal including how the current site expansion plans can advance the river system and comply with neighborhood plans (i.e. Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization's grant awarded Canal Origins Park project and McKinley Park Development Council's South Branch Connectivity Project: 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 QTS Data Center (2800 South Ashland Ave.) site plan proposal

Planned development No. 553 is adjacent to river edge park, Canalport Riverwalk along the South Branch of the Chicago River. This original planned development predated the Chicago River Design Guidelines and due to PD 553 not being directly adjacent to the river along with the Chicago Park District owning the river edge park, it will not go through the Chicago River Design Guidelines review process. The proposed expansion will add an additional data center, a new landscaped plaza, pedestrian improvements along Ashland Avenue, a screen wall to face the river's edge, and potential new public wayfinding to locate nearby Chicago Park District properties. The team is also aiming to acquire bird protection points from the Sustainable Development Policy with protective film and bird-friendly lighting.

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

- **Accommodate pedestrian safety at Ashland Ave.**

The Working Group desires to see an enhanced connection on the proposed sidewalk path along Ashland Avenue. Regarding the southernmost crosswalk shown on slide 26, it is recommended to move the path slightly south, to be in front of the property's signage. Currently there are utilities in the sidewalk along Ashland Avenue that prevent ease of movement for pedestrians, along with issues of slow crosswalk traffic signals. The improvements should reflect ADA accessibility standards to allow all visitors to access the path and adjacent public parks. This is a key crossing location for two river edge trails, and the proposed improvements can help to make it safer for users of the trails.

- **Increase stormwater management and vegetation**

The Working Group would like to see more detailed stormwater management plans to understand how stormwater will be filtered and managed on-site. The Working Group

desires to see a reduction in overall impervious cover, increase to all native plantings, and a higher percentage of tree coverage to capture and store runoff. With too much impervious coverage, this site will contribute to the urban heat island effect. Increasing tree coverage where possible along with having a robust tree maintenance plan is desired. The parking lot could greatly benefit from using permeable pavers and additional tree plantings and native vegetation.

- Task Force questions related to the stormwater approach and landscape plans:
 - How will stormwater be captured, filtered, and released on the site?
 - How is long-term tree health being achieved?
- **Adjust planting pallet and native plant coverage on-site**

The Working Group recommends having full native plant coverage in vegetated areas. Listed below are some recommended substitutes provided by Working Group members for the listed landscape planting species on slide 17.

 - Replace *Nepeta cataria* with *Agastache foeniculum*, *Geranium maculatum*, *Ruellia humilis*, and/or *Viola pedatifida*
 - Replace *Buxus sinica* var. *Insularis* and *Syringa meyeri* with *Ceanothus americanus*, *Viburnum acerifolium*, *Rhus glabra*, *Aronia melanocarpa*, *Juniperus communis* var. *depressa*, *Rosa arkansana suffulta*, and/or *Rubus allegheniensis*
 - Replace *Sesleria autumnalis* with *Bouteloua curtipendula*, *Andropogon gerardii*, *Sorghastrum nutans*, and/or *Schizachyrium scoparium*
 - Replace *Achillea* with *Coreopsis palmata*, *Ratibida pinnata*, *Zizia aptera*, and/or *Rudbeckia hirta*
 - Replace *Allium Lusitanicum* with *Allium Canadense* and/or *Allium Cernuum*
- **Future perforated screenwall, river wayfinding improvements, and partnership**

The Working Group appreciated the proposed perforated screenwall and plans to have a design reflective of the surrounding community and local ecology. We hope to see this element move forward with more input from the community regarding details of the design. The Working Group also is in favor of additional river wayfinding signage on the site to locate the adjacent Chicago Park District properties: Canalport Riverwalk and Canal Origins Park. These two river edge parks are often hidden gems for local residents and the larger Chicago community and we hope to see this coordination with the Park District advance to bring more awareness to these public amenities. The Working Group would also desire to see the QTS team, since they are the direct neighbor, play a role in helping support long-term stewardship, maintenance, and improvements to the adjacent Canalport Riverwalk park space by partnering with the Chicago Park District and local Park Advisory Councils, and community organizations.

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