



# CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION

Department of Planning and Development

**Northwest Region**

**Proposed Adoption Presentation – Harlem Avenue Visioning Study**

**Wards: 29 / Ald. Taliaferro and 38 / Ald. Sposato**

**Community Areas: Montclare and Dunning**

06/20/2024

# CORRIDOR STUDY AREA

Boundaries: 2-mile stretch along Harlem Ave from Irving Park Rd (North) to Grand Ave (South)

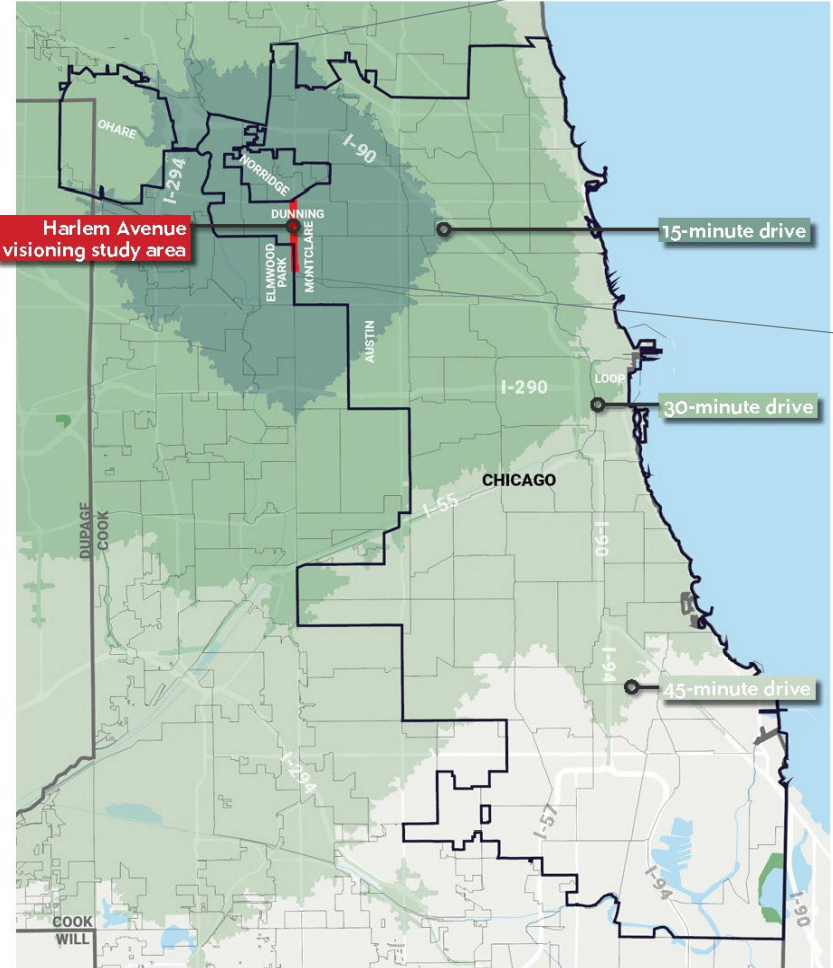


Figure 1. Harlem Avenue visioning study regional context

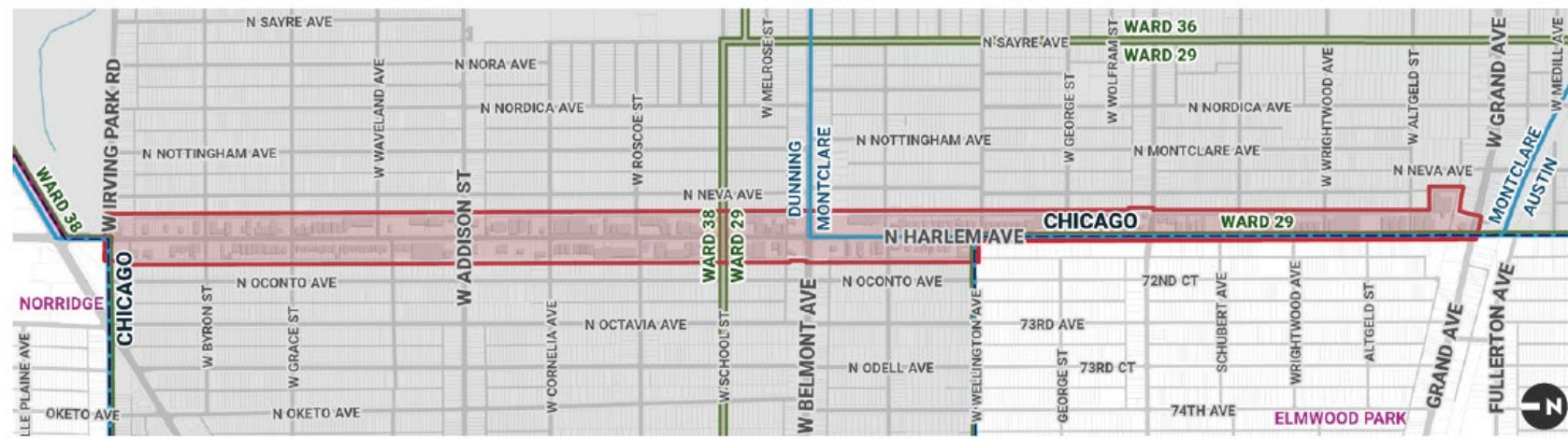
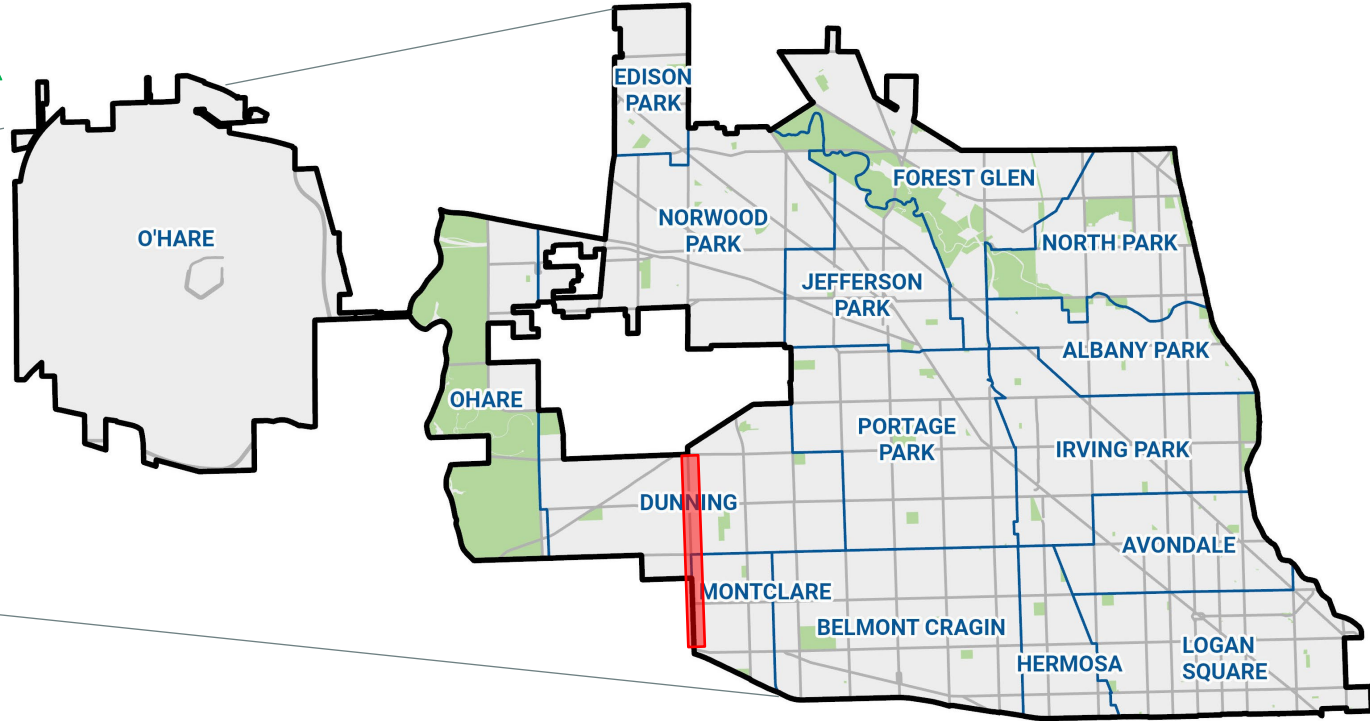
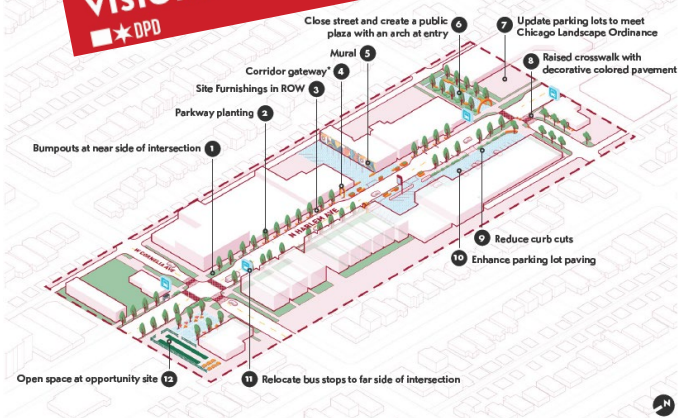
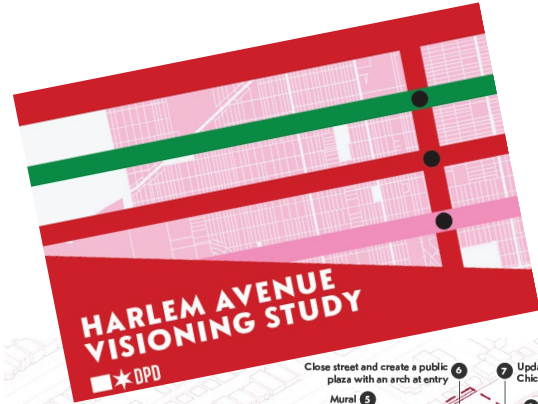


Figure 2. Map of Harlem Avenue visioning study area

- HARLEM STUDY AREA
- CHICAGO BOUNDARY
- CHICAGO COMMUNITY AREA
- CHICAGO WARDS
- COOK COUNTY MUNICIPALITY

# DELIVERABLES



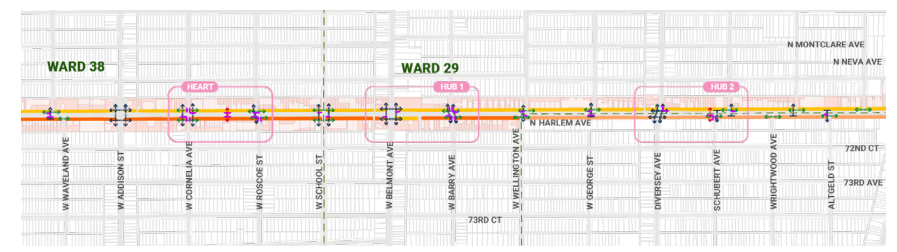
## CORRIDOR IDENTITY AND BRANDING

The brand identity for Harlem Avenue should speak to the people and culture of Harlem Avenue in a way that honors the present and future residents of this neighborhood and their collective values of community, collaboration, and connection while paying homage to the corridor's history. The brand will be implemented on all signage, wayfinding, and marketing materials.

The Harlem Avenue brand identity drew inspiration from mid-century Italian graphic designers who have had contemporary twists on traditional forms mixed with the values of connection, celebration, and awe while, expanded to include Chicago blues and other colors to represent the diverse population found along Harlem Avenue today.

### OVERALL CORRIDOR: SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

	Near Term (0-3 Years)	Longer Term (3-10 Years)
Seasonal displays	Install seasonal displays at the Community Heart and Hubs. These displays could include temporary holiday installations, light displays, or art that reflect the changing seasons. <b>CDOT   Business Service Organization*</b>	
Light pole banners	Install vinyl banners on light poles along the entire two-mile corridor. These banners provide a sense of continuity and reinforce the unique character of the corridor. <b>CDOT   AlamedaCorps   Business Service Organization*</b>	Identify community desired locations where metal banners can be added to light poles. <b>CDOT   AlamedaCorps   Business Service Organization*</b>
Bus shelters	Coordinate the use of bus shelter wall panels for events, community announcements, and wayfinding. Community groups, business service organizations, and non-city entities can request to post signage on bus shelter wall panels as long as they make the request directly with JCDecaux at least three weeks before the desired posting date. For city messaging, requests go through the Finance Department. <b>CDOT   JCDecaux   Business Service Organization*</b>	Install new bus shelter styles and coordinate corridor branding into the final design. <b>DPD   CDOT   JCDecaux   Business Service Organization*</b>



## 01 Focus Area Recommendations

## 02 Gateway Visioning + Corridor Branding

## 03 Implementation Framework

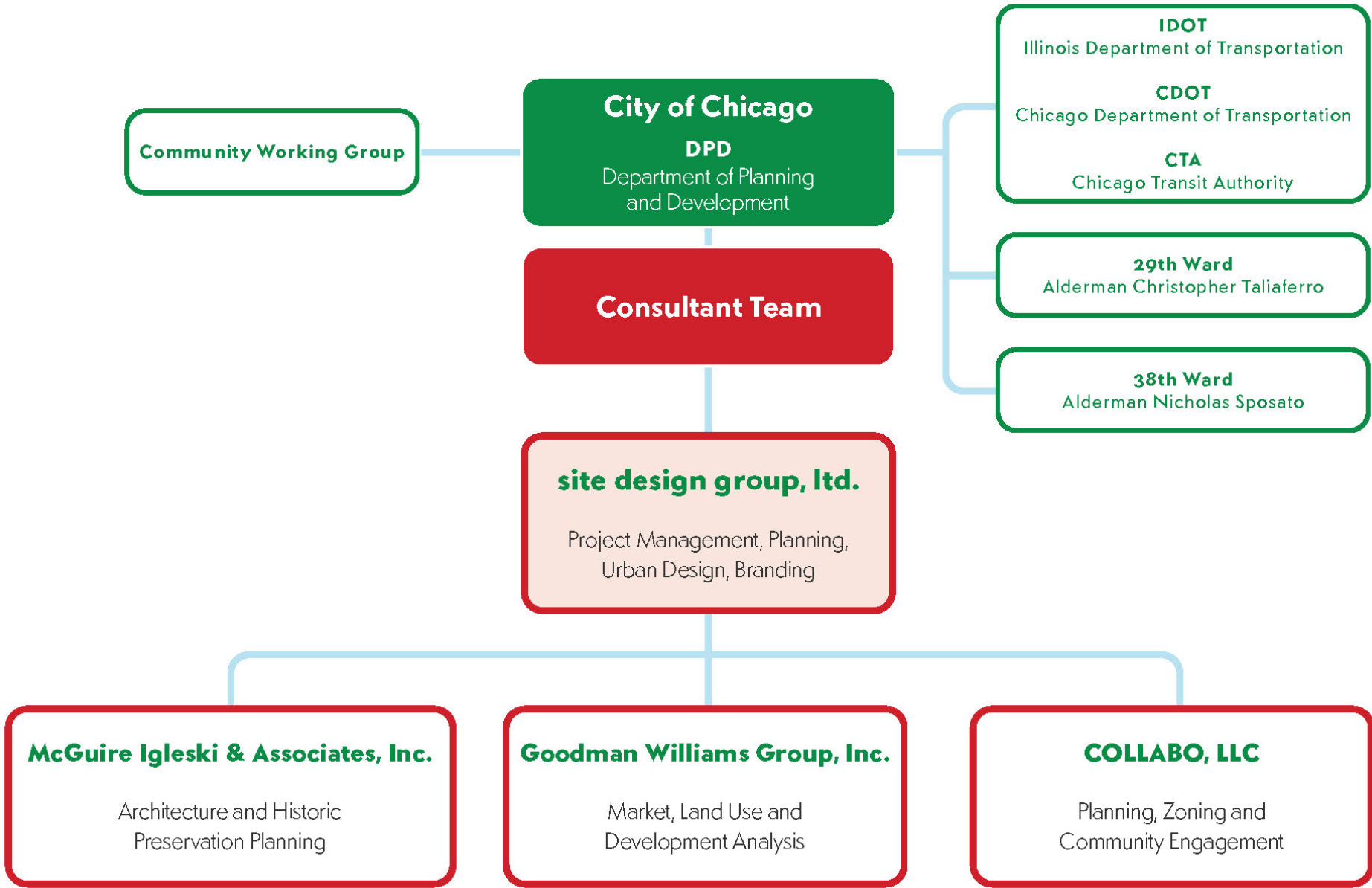
The final report will also include: Demographics and market analysis, history of the corridor, existing zoning and regulations, existing conditions analysis, existing building recommendations, public realm recommendations and development scenarios for focus areas, recommended short-term and long-term public realm improvements, future traffic considerations, gateway illustrative visions, best practices, corridor branding and a building database.

# STUDY GOALS

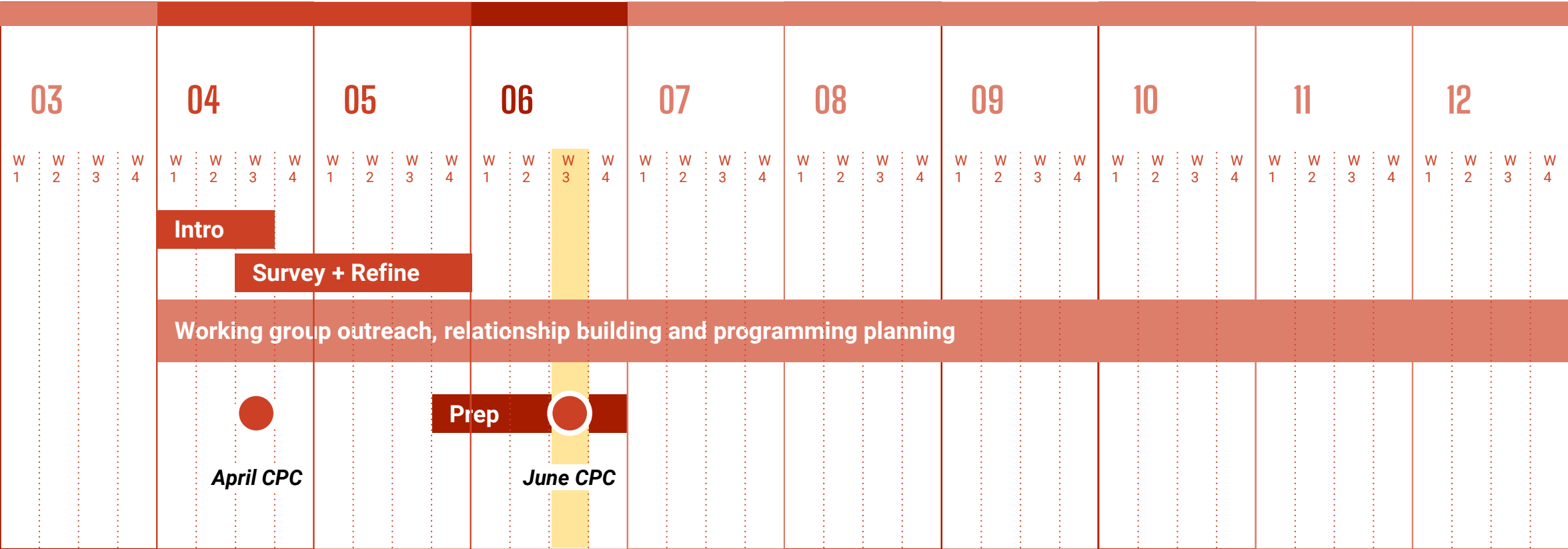
- 01 Create a vision for public improvements along Harlem Ave.
- 02 Build an identity for the commercial with a brand
- 03 Strengthen the small business corridor with an established brand

- 04 Outline a framework for implementation (short-term and long-term goals)
- 05 Identify opportunities for open space, street events, streetscape and redevelopment
- 06 Identify potential partners for collaboration

# THE STUDY TEAM

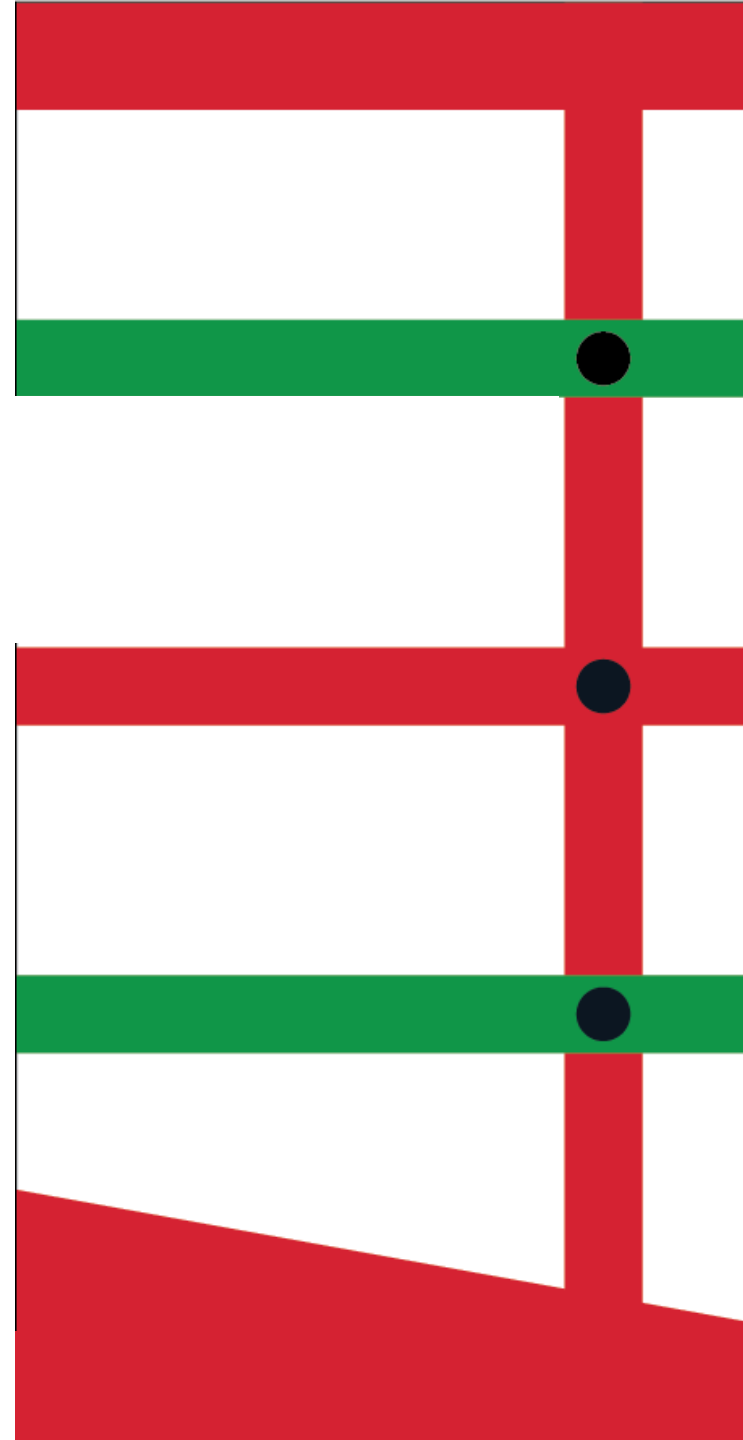


# PROJECT SCHEDULE



 We are here

# ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



# HARLEM AVENUE VISIONING STUDY

## SURVEY RESULTS



JUNE 2024

### DESCRIBING HARLEM AVENUE TODAY



**"Revitalizing the Harlem Avenue area would serve as another proud Chicago destination for all those who live, work and grew up there, as well as drawing visitors to the great Italian restaurants, shopping, and nearby neighborhoods."**

### PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

**87%**

of respondents said creating a more attractive street environment was important or very important.

Respondents identified the most dissatisfaction with...



landscaping/parkways



places to sit



trash receptacles



trees

"I would love to see the area more pedestrian friendly and space for events as well as more businesses to attract locals to shop and gather here as a community"

"I think traffic restriction and additional pedestrian friendliness will help make this corridor a destination"

**85%**

of respondents said improving the safety and comfort for walking was important or very important.

Negative factors to the walking experience



the number of cars



the quantity of crosswalks



the quality of sidewalks

"Less traffic congestion"

"There is too much traffic on Harlem Ave, the ambulances can't get thru at times"

**82%**

of respondents said improving traffic congestion for people driving was important or very important.

# SURVEY RESULTS

### CREATING A NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

**68%**

of respondents said creating a consistent neighborhood brand and identity for the study area was important or very important

THE FOUR IDEAS TO HELP CREATE AN IDENTITY ALONG HARLEM AVENUE



**1ST**  
decorative light pole banners



**2ND**  
community gateway Identifier



**3RD**  
murals



**4TH**  
sidewalk art

"I would like the area to have some sort of signage to identify the neighborhood like other areas in the city."

"The neighborhood would love to see an Italian flag archway to signify our Italian-American heritage."

### PUBLIC OPEN SPACES AND EVENTS

**64%**

of respondents said that they would like to see additional open public open spaces for community events

TOP THREE PROGRAMMING OR PUBLIC EVENTS IDEAS



festivals/live music



farmers markets



Italian/cultural events

"Summer Festivals, farmer's market, and outdoor concerts"

**63%**

of respondents said that they would like to create more spaces for people to sit and gather

"Cultural events, art fairs, community events celebrating Dunning/Montclare"

"Food vendors / Taste of Dunning"

Italian-themed family friendly events

### WHAT ELSE WE HEARD

"Improvements to the bus routes [are needed]. Wait times are too long"

The businesses need improvement, the area needs identity, and we need to attract more things.

"The businesses are very dedicated and I want them to have recognition and get more business"

"I love the idea of this vision! I would love to see Harlem Ave become a focal point of the neighborhood"



# ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

## OVERVIEW

The study included an initial working group site visit walk and four working group meetings to gather feedback. The working group participants consisted of representatives from the City of Chicago departments and sister agencies, the Village of Elmwood Park, and the Illinois Department of Transportation; elected officials; local business owners from HALIBA; property owners; and residents.

1 Working Group Site Walk

4 Working Group Meetings

39 # of Working Group Participants



Figure 5. Initial working group site walk



Figure 6. Working group meeting 1



Figure 9. Working group meeting 3



Figure 10. Working group meeting 3



Figure 7. Working group meeting 2



Figure 8. Working group meeting 2



Figure 11. Working group meeting 4



Figure 12. Working group meeting 4

## Chicago's Other Little Italy: Northwest Side Italian Hub Could Finally Get Official Recognition



Tony and Gino Bartucci Sr. pose for a portrait at Piazza Italia in the 3400 block of North Harlem Avenue in Dunning on May 1 2024.  
Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

JEFFERSON PARK, PORTAGE PARK, NORWOOD PARK

Pasta Fresh, Bartucci, Palermo Bakery, Caputo's, Nottoli, Forno Rosso, Rex, Cafe San Francesco 🙌

I live here and it needs so much love, the food and culture is great but it's hidden being such a high commute road, could be easily walkable.

Although I'm from the Southside. Some of my favorite restaurants are on Harlem Ave. Geo's Pizza, Forno Rosso, Luke's, Mr Beef, Franksville, Breakfast House, and Twins Gyros. Other places off Harlem Ave that I thought were great, Frank's Pizza on Belmont, Alpine sandwiches, Johnny's, and Jim & Pete's.

# PRESS RELEASES

BarTucci is my favorite Italian restaurant. All homemade pasta from Pasta Fresh, next door, owned by the same family ❤️



Liked by laurensedivy1102 and 1,552 others

chicagotribune A long-running effort to turn a stretch of Harlem Avenue on the Far Northwest Side into a walkable showcase for Italian American businesses and culture like Little Italy's Taylor Street is inching forward.

The graphic design features a background of a light pink grid pattern. A prominent dark red diagonal shape cuts across the bottom left. A thick green horizontal bar is positioned in the upper middle section, and a thick red horizontal bar is below it. Three black circles are arranged vertically on the right side, overlapping the green and red bars. The text 'HARLEM AVENUE VISIONING STUDY' is located in the bottom left corner.

**HARLEM AVENUE  
VISIONING STUDY**

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

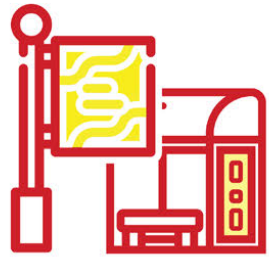


## 1 PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

The study envisions a future for Harlem Avenue as a thriving mixed-use corridor that harmoniously caters to the needs of both pedestrians and vehicles. Over time, the street has been designed to prioritize vehicular traffic. To effectively shift the focus towards pedestrians, several key improvements are necessary. Placing greater emphasis on the public sidewalk within the Right-of-Way (ROW) will be crucial, which can be achieved by strategically reducing the widths of on-street parking and driving lanes. Reclaiming space for pedestrian use will allow for the creation of protective buffers between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Additionally, this reallocation of space will contribute to the overall beautification of the corridor, fostering a more vibrant and inviting atmosphere.

### Goals:

- Improve pedestrian safety and circulation by adding traffic calming measures, identifying locations of pedestrian crossing concerns, and adding new light poles.
- Improve CTA bus safety, operations, and bus stop accessibility.
- Strengthen the business corridor by making the area more inviting to pedestrians by enhancing public improvements and streetscape infrastructure.
- Enhance the public streetscape by incorporating green infrastructure and making landscape improvements as outlined in the Chicago Landscape Ordinance.
- Build strong partnerships within a multijurisdictional area.



## 2 CORRIDOR IDENTITY

A consistent brand and design approach is needed to commemorate the history of Italian business presence along the corridor, drive investment, and define an identity.

### Goals:

- Define the identity of the corridor.
- Develop a consistent brand and design approach considering the cultural history and people that live within the community today.
- Develop redevelopment strategies considering short and long-term interventions for improvements.
- Improve signage and wayfinding along the corridor.



## 3 COMMUNITY GATHERING

To foster a vibrant and welcoming public realm, the Harlem Avenue visioning study proposes the creation of signature spaces known as "The Community Heart" and "The Community Hubs." These strategically located focus areas will serve as anchors for neighborhood activity, providing spaces for visitors, businesses, and residents to gather, connect, and celebrate. The Heart and Hubs will be easily accessible via public transportation and situated around currently active business nodes, intersections with redevelopment potential, and opportunity sites for multipurpose open space. The key to the success of these focus areas is the emphasis on creating ample public space and inviting gathering areas.

### Goals:

- Create new open spaces, plazas, and multi-purpose areas.
- Identify existing underutilized spaces that can be used for temporary activations.
- Program these spaces with vibrant events, gatherings, and markets for the community and visitors alike.

# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

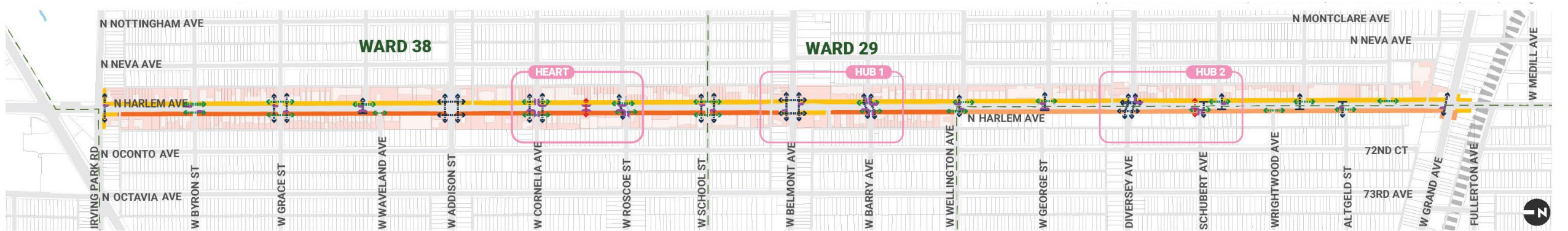


Figure 32. Harlem Avenue corridor overall pedestrian experience improvement opportunities



Figure 33. Harlem Avenue corridor overall vehicular experience improvement opportunities

# RIGHT-OF-WAY TYPOLOGIES



**Figure 42.** Residential ROW with trees in sodded parkway planters

The use of native plants can increase habitat and visual interest in the neighborhood.



**Figure 43.** ROW less than nine feet with no trees

For narrower sidewalks where trees are unable to be planted, freestanding planters can be introduced to enhance the streetscape and add visual interest to storefronts.



**Figure 44.** Commercial ROW between nine and twelve feet with trees in grates

For sidewalks between nine and twelve feet, trees can be planted in tree grates.



**Figure 45.** Commercial ROW over twelve feet with trees in curbed parkway planters

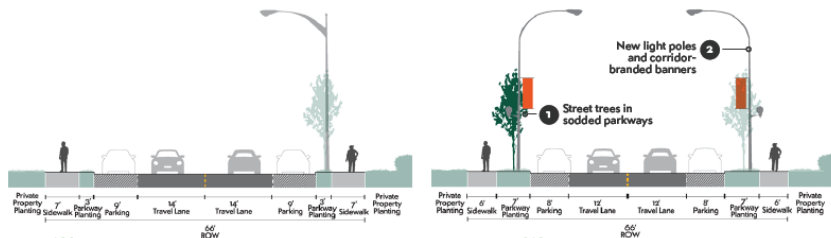
For sidewalks over twelve feet, trees can be planted in a curbed parkway planter.

## CIRCULATION AND SAFETY

The corridor currently has four main ROW typologies. The following cross-sections on pages 28-31 depict typical existing conditions of those typologies and the future vision. The existing cross section

dimensions are shown approximate and shall be verified in the field. The future vision for the roadway is to create consistent travel lane widths at twelve feet wide, consistent parking and bumpouts at eight feet, plant trees where possible in areas that do not currently meet the Chicago Landscape Ordinance, and add light poles.

### 1 RESIDENTIAL



**EXISTING**  
Typical residential typology with five feet wide parkway planting areas and six feet wide sidewalks.

**FUTURE VISION**  
Consistent twelve feet wide travel lanes, eight feet wide parking lanes, seven feet wide parkway planting areas to meet the Chicago Landscape Ordinance, and six feet wide sidewalks.

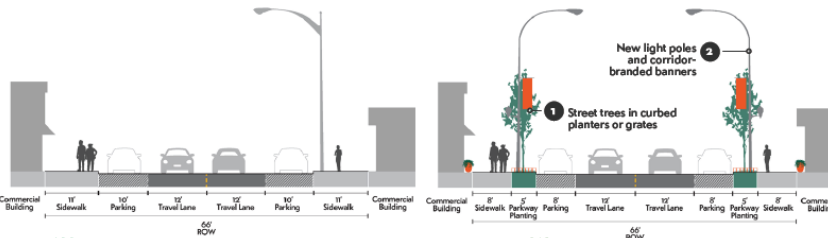
**Figure 34.** Typical residential Harlem Avenue corridor ROW typology

## FUTURE ENGINEERING EFFORTS

Due to the existing, and likely future traffic volumes, two conceptual cross sections have been illustrated to study how both of these strategies would affect the existing roadway.

A future study would explore options that would benefit all users of the roadway from a safety and operational perspective. See Figure 93 and Figure 94 for reference. These cross-sections are not recommendations per this vision study, but for reference only.

### 2 COMMERCIAL



**EXISTING**  
Typical commercial typology with nine feet or wider sidewalks.

**FUTURE VISION**  
Consistent twelve feet wide travel lanes, eight feet wide parking lanes, five feet wide parkway planting areas to meet the Chicago Landscape Ordinance, and eight feet wide sidewalks, creating a more visually appealing and inviting streetscape.

**Figure 35.** Typical commercial Harlem Avenue corridor ROW typology

### 3 LOCAL INTERSECTION

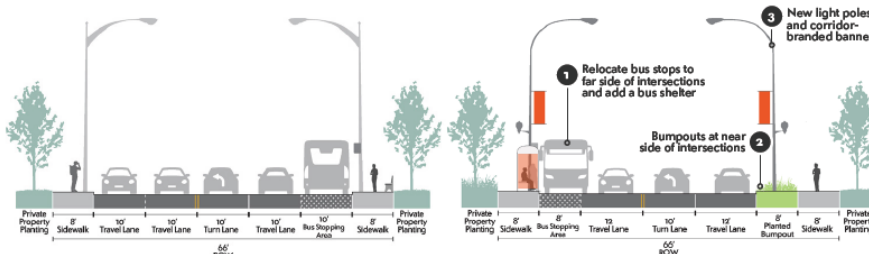


**EXISTING**  
Typical local intersection typology with nine feet or wider sidewalks.

**FUTURE VISION**  
Consistent twelve feet wide travel lanes, eight feet wide bumpouts on the near side and bus stops on the far side, thirteen feet wide sidewalks, which can accommodate pedestrian traffic and bus stops at intersections. This will improve safety for pedestrians crossing the street and make bus operations more effective.

**Figure 36.** Typical local intersection Harlem Avenue corridor ROW typology

### 4 MAJOR INTERSECTION

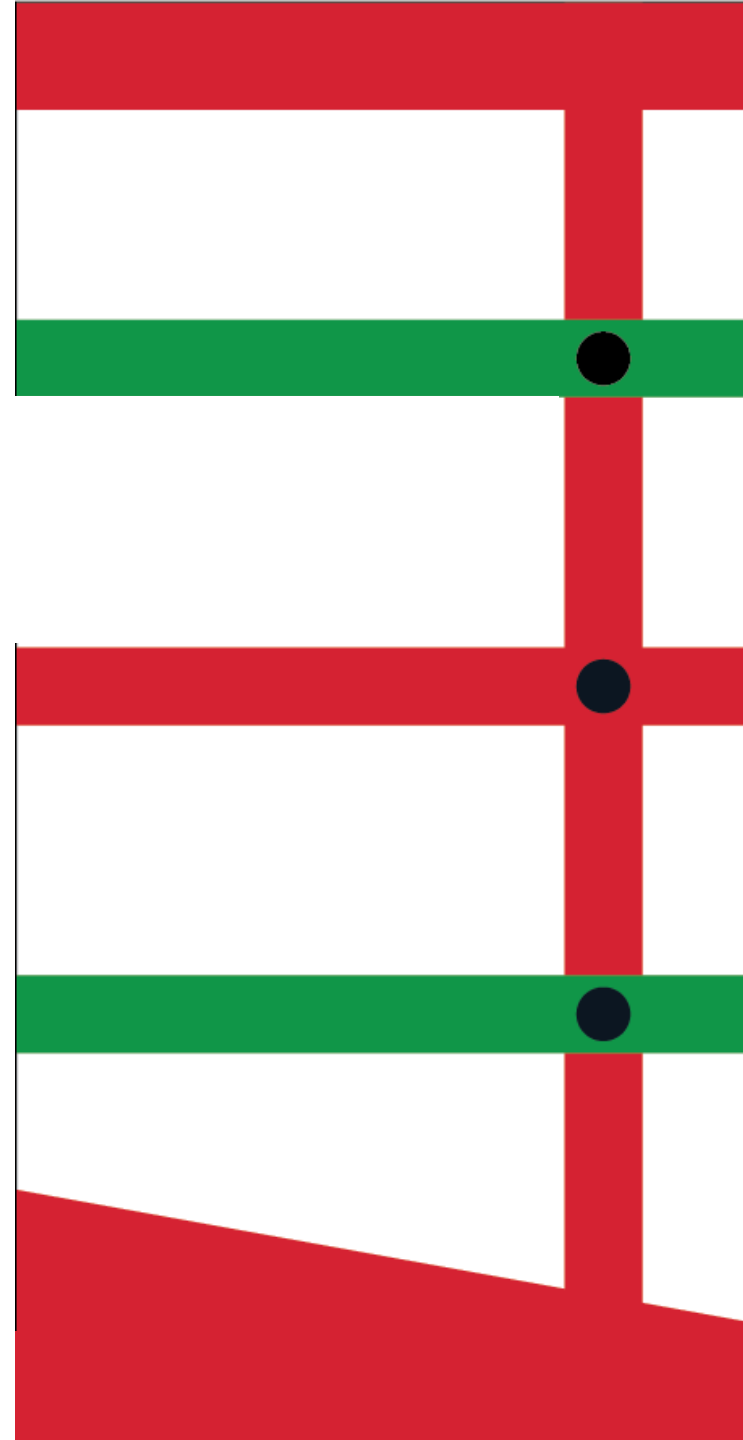


**EXISTING**  
Typical major intersection typology with sidewalks less than nine feet.

**FUTURE VISION**  
Consistent twelve feet wide travel lanes, ten feet wide left turning lane, eight feet wide bumpouts on the near side and bus stops on the far side, and eight feet wide sidewalks. This will improve safety for pedestrians crossing the street and make bus operations more effective.

**Figure 37.** Typical major intersection Harlem Avenue corridor ROW typology

**BRANDING**



# CORRIDOR IDENTITY

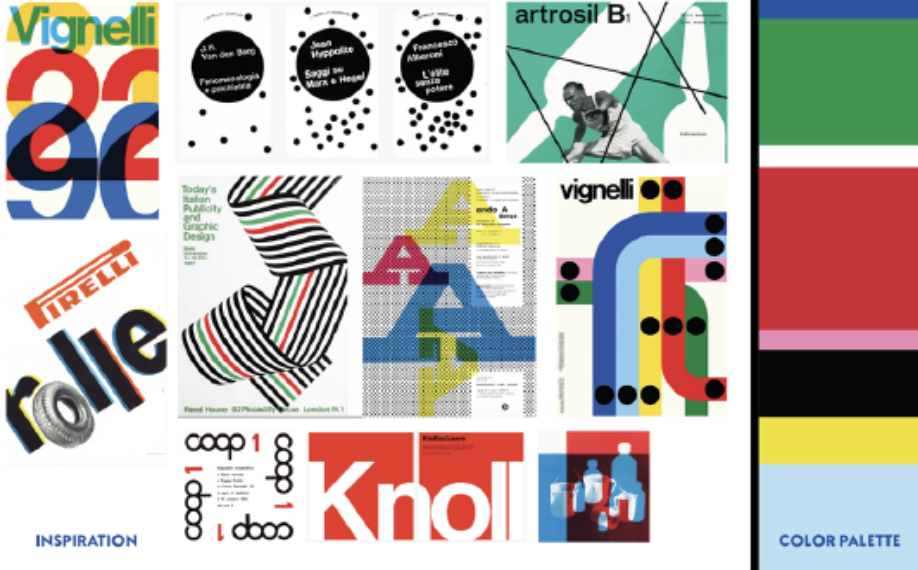
- Speaks to the people and culture which celebrates the past, present, and future
- Signals the entry to a special place
- Assists to market the area, supports existing businesses and attracts new businesses
- Flexibility of branding for focus areas, two Chicago community areas, and the corridor
- Provides short-term and long-term gateway identifiers for implementation



Figure 47. Harlem Avenue Corridor branded light pole banner options

**HARLEM AVENUE**

LOGOS - FONT: SONAR SANS



INSPIRATION

COLOR PALETTE

Figure 46. Harlem Avenue Corridor branding fonts, inspiration and color palette



# SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

1992 Honorary street designations by former Ald. William J.P. Banks

530 N Harlem – 4000 N Harlem as “Chicago’s Little Italy”

2500 N Harlem – 4000 N Harlem as Harlem Avenue Little Italy Business Association

Potential honorary street designation boundaries:

- Addison to Roscoe (38)
- Roscoe to Belmont (29)
- Schubert to George (29)



Figure 57. Street wayfinding (Source: DPD)



Figure 58. Gateways (Source: Wikipedia)



Figure 59. Light pole banners (Source: CDOT)



Figure 60. Bus shelter wall panel for announcements, community communication, and events signage (Source: DPD)



Figure 61. Seasonal displays at the Heart and Hubs (Source: Flickr)

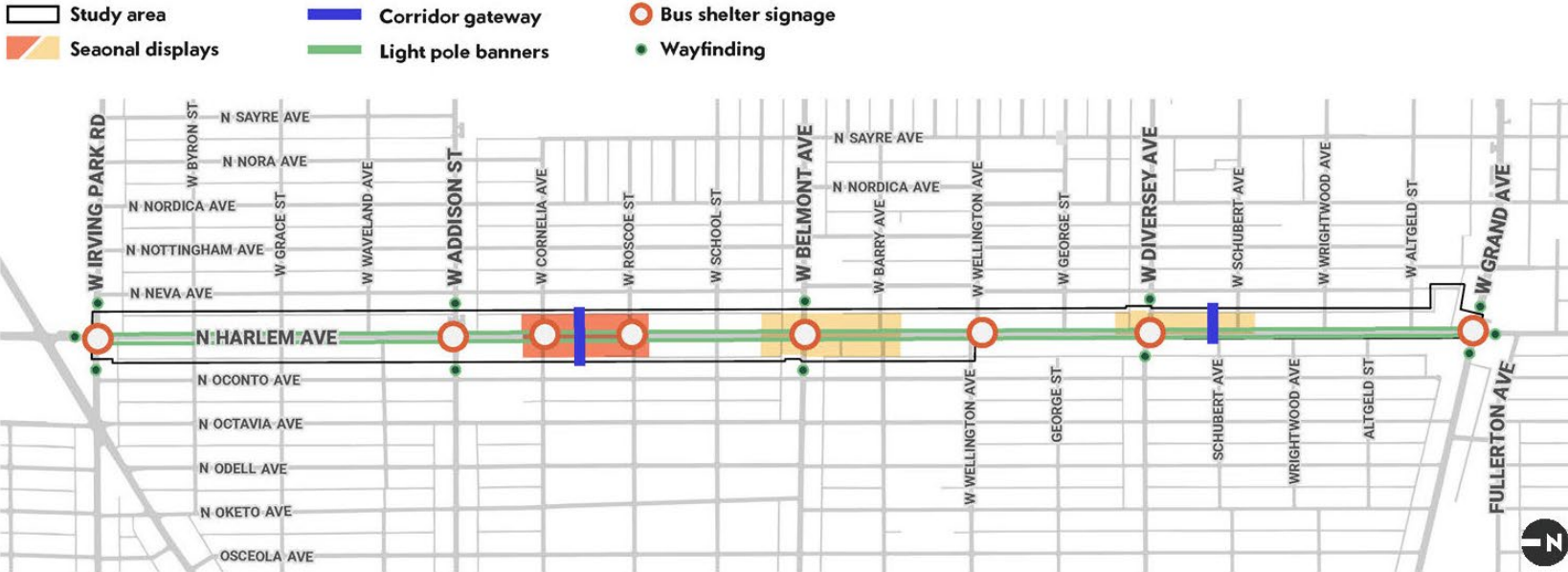


Figure 62. Signage and wayfinding recommendations

# SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

## GATEWAY VISIONS

Creating a distinctive identity for the Harlem Avenue corridor involves establishing gateway identifiers that draw attention to key areas like business centers and areas for community gatherings, and signifying the entrances to the Community's Heart and Hubs. These identifiers should be visually compelling, visible from a distance, and possess landmark quality. The Visioning study includes near term and longer term design recommendations for gateways. For the near term solution, murals are recommended to be implemented on walls of private property, with approval and coordination with property owners. For the longer term solution, either vertical gateways or pedestrian arch gateways are recommended to be implemented within the ROW within the pedestrian space. These are longer term solutions as a gateway identifier would require coordination and approval from IDOT and CDOT. The Working Groups preference is the pedestrian arch gateway. Feasibility of the gateway locations and design shall be completed in a future design study

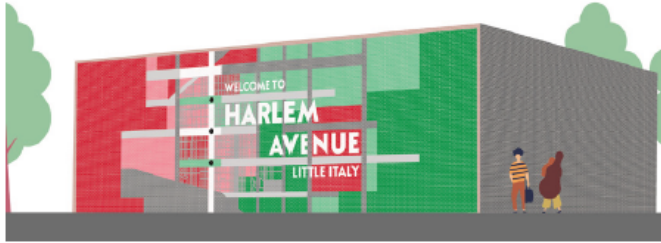


Figure 81. Near term: Murals

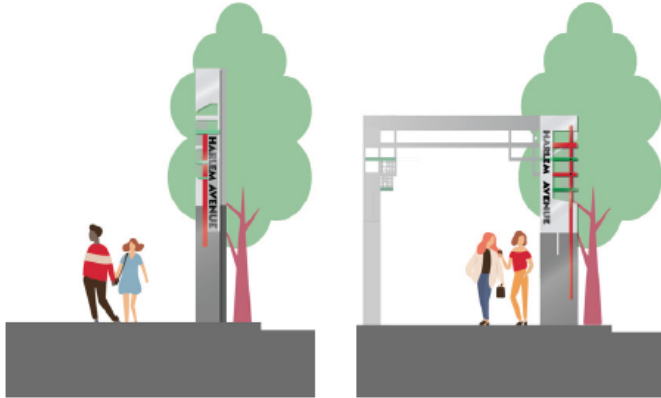


Figure 82. Longer term: Option A: Vertical Gateways

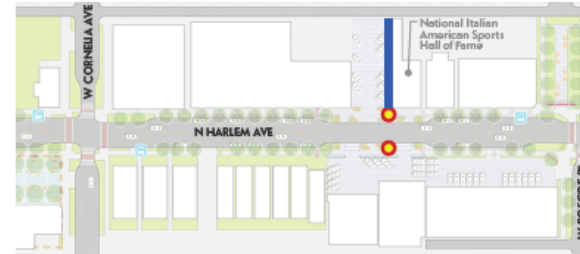
Figure 83. Longer term: Option B: Pedestrian Arch Gateways

### THREE DESIGN OPTIONS FOR GATEWAY IDENTIFIERS:

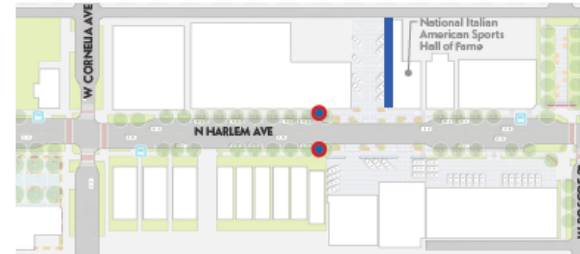
1. Near term: Murals
2. Longer term: Option A: Vertical Gateways
3. Longer term: Option B: Pedestrian Arch Gateways

There are two options for the north and south gateway locations:

### North Gateway



**Option 1** - Placing two vertical gateways midblock between Cornelia and Roscoe avenues at the south side of the midblock bumpout. Providing a mural on the north side of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame building.



**Option 2** - Placing two pedestrian arch gateways midblock between Cornelia and Roscoe avenues at the north side of the midblock bumpout. Providing a mural on the north side of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame building.

### South Gateway

- PEDESTRIAN ARCH GATEWAY
- VERTICAL GATEWAY
- MURAL



**Option 1** - Placing two vertical gateways on the north side of Schubert and Harlem avenues. Providing a mural on the north side of the M C Foods building, and on the south side of the Harlem Cafe building.

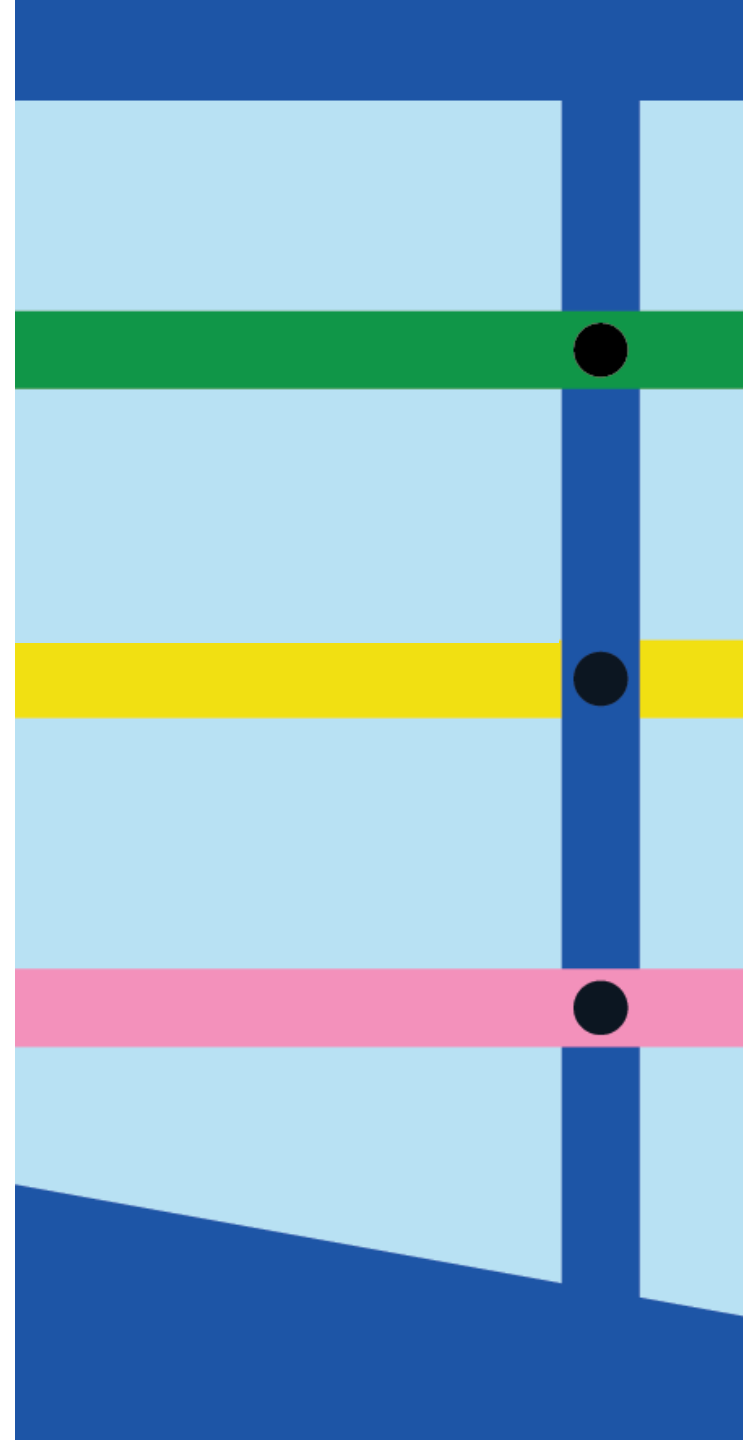


**Option 2** - Placing two pedestrian arch gateways south of the Harlem Cafe building. Providing a mural on the north side of the M C Foods building, and on the south side of the Harlem Cafe building.



# HARLEM TODAY

# HARLEM TOMORROW



# COMMUNITY HEART

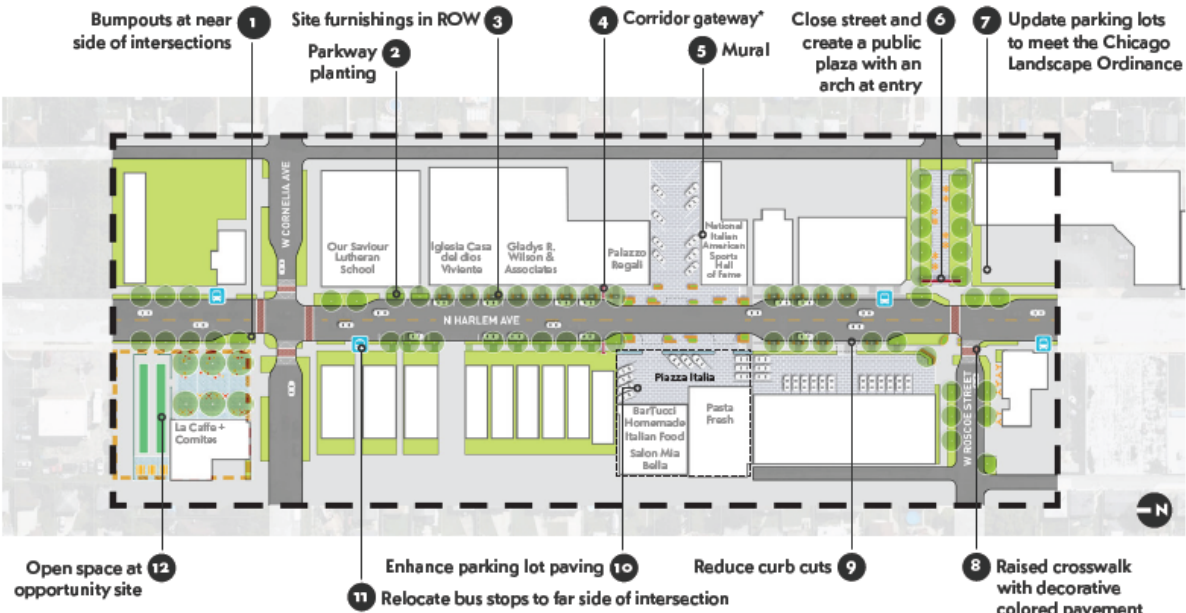
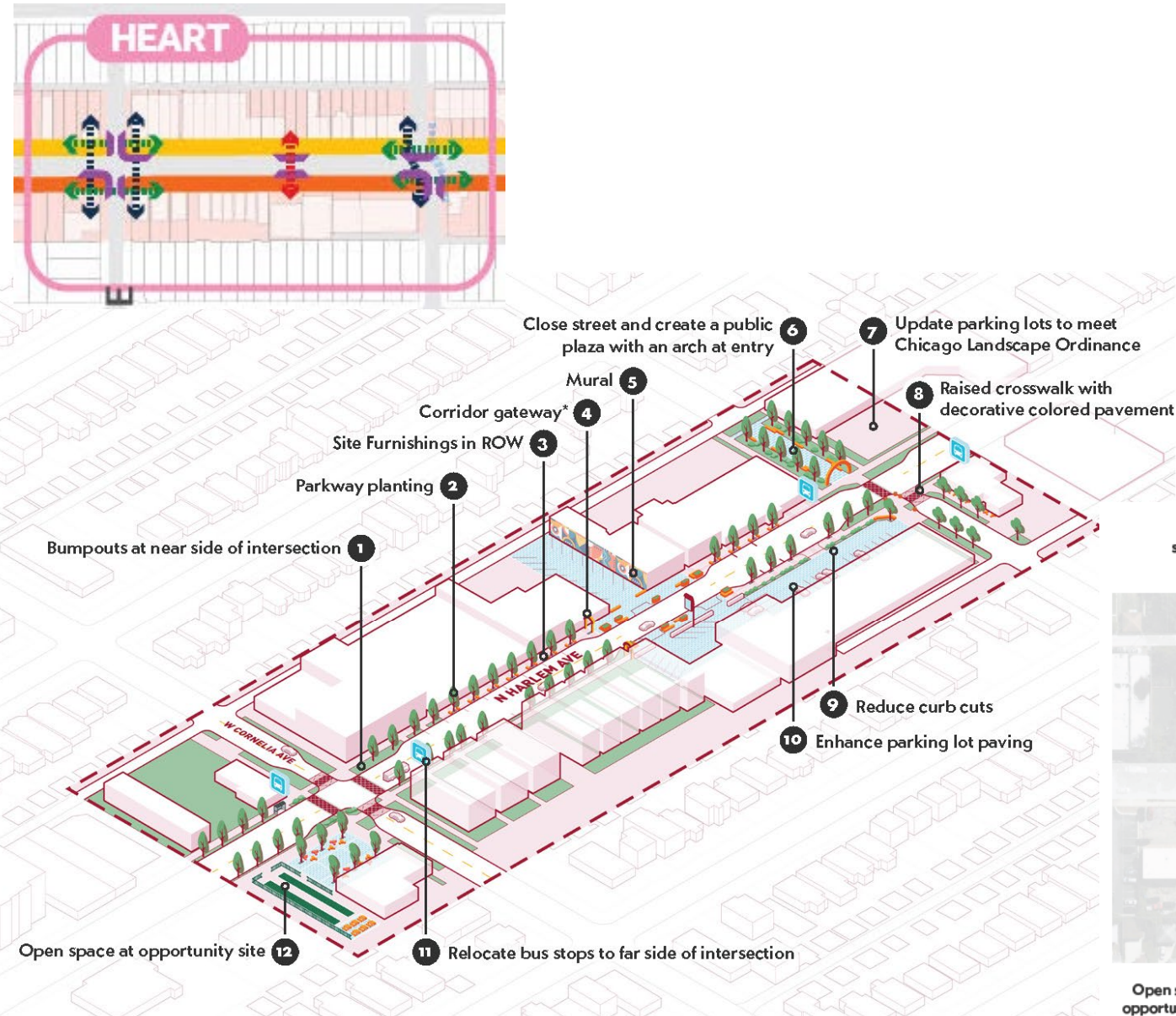


Figure 66. Community Heart axon

\*Axon is depicting Option B: Pedestrian Arch Gateway. For gateway options refer to pages 50-51.

Figure 65. Community Heart plan

# COMMUNITY HUB 1

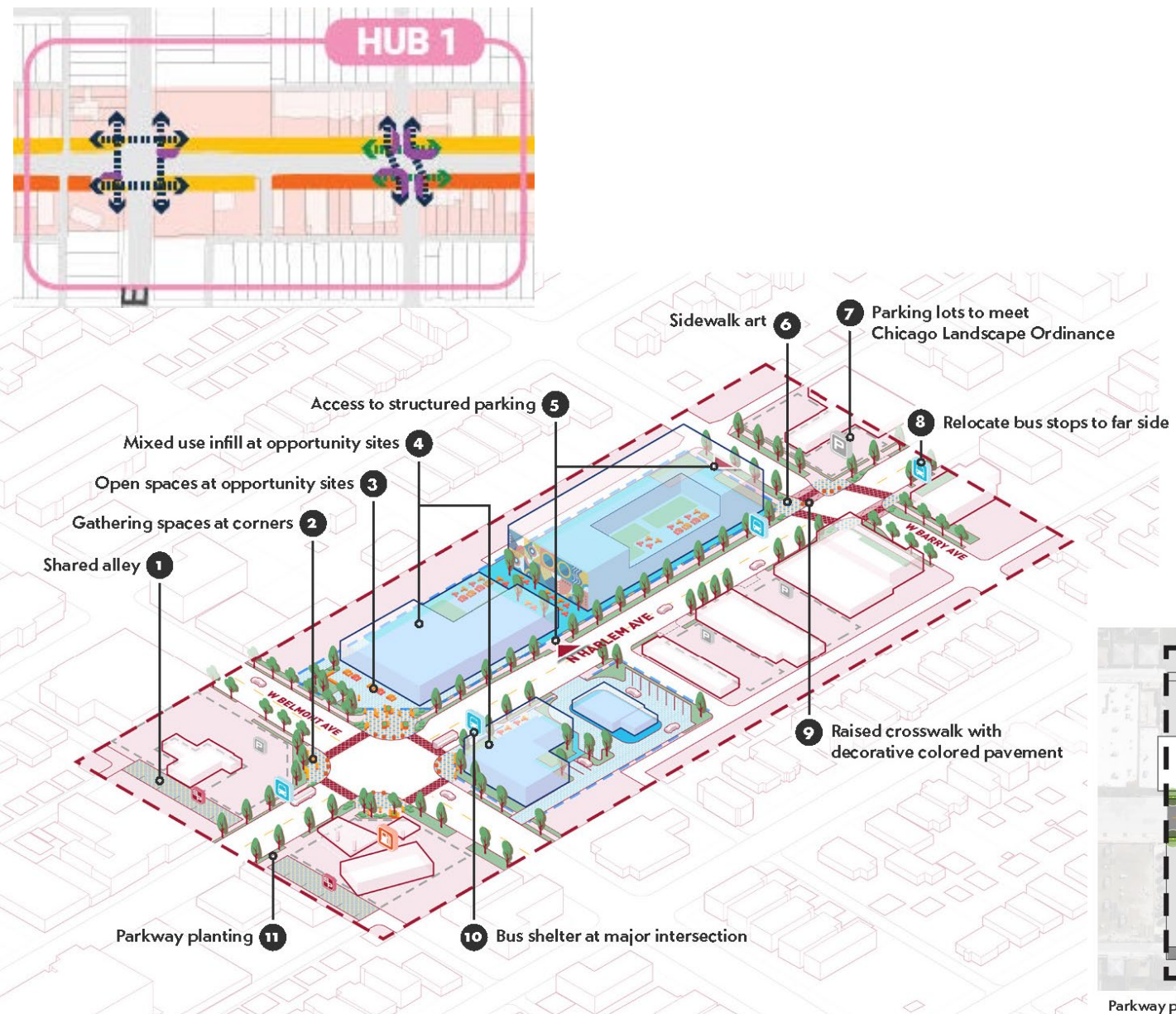


Figure 72. Community Hub 1 - Belmont axon

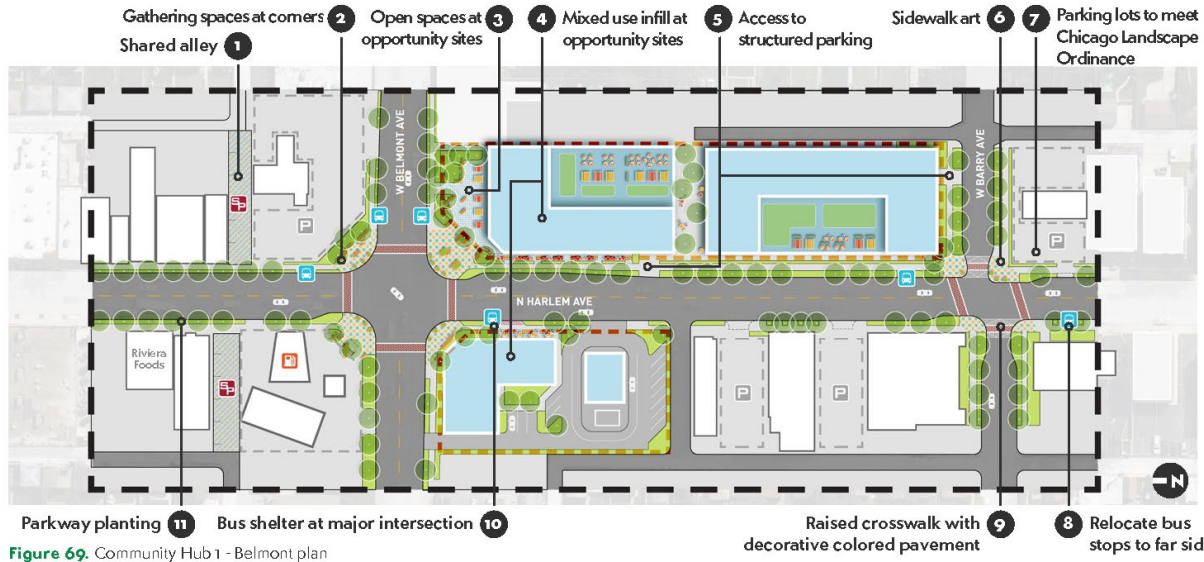


Figure 69. Community Hub 1 - Belmont plan

# COMMUNITY HUB 2

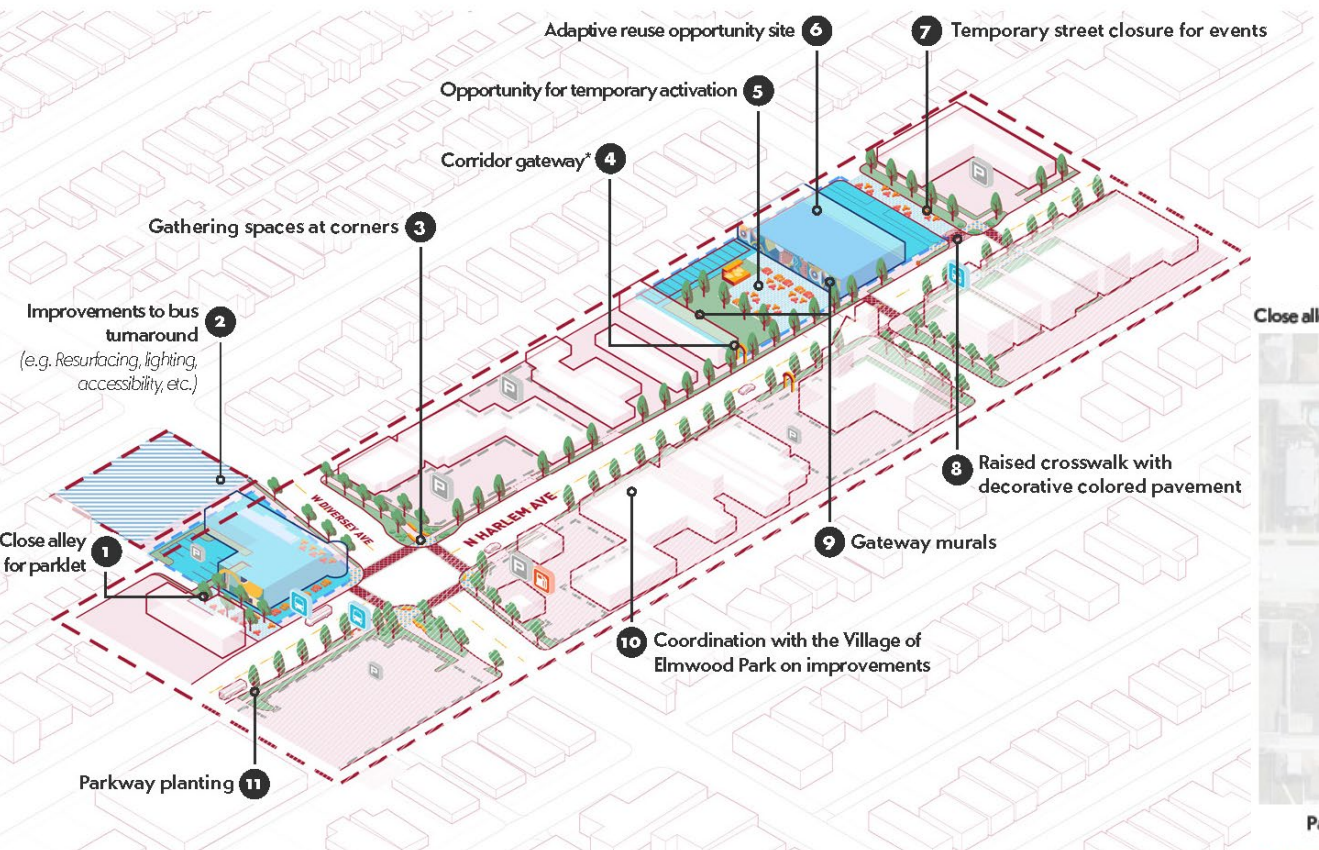


Figure 78. Community Hub 2 - Diversy Avenue axon



Figure 75. Community Hub 2 - Diversy plan

# COMMUNITY HEART & HUBS

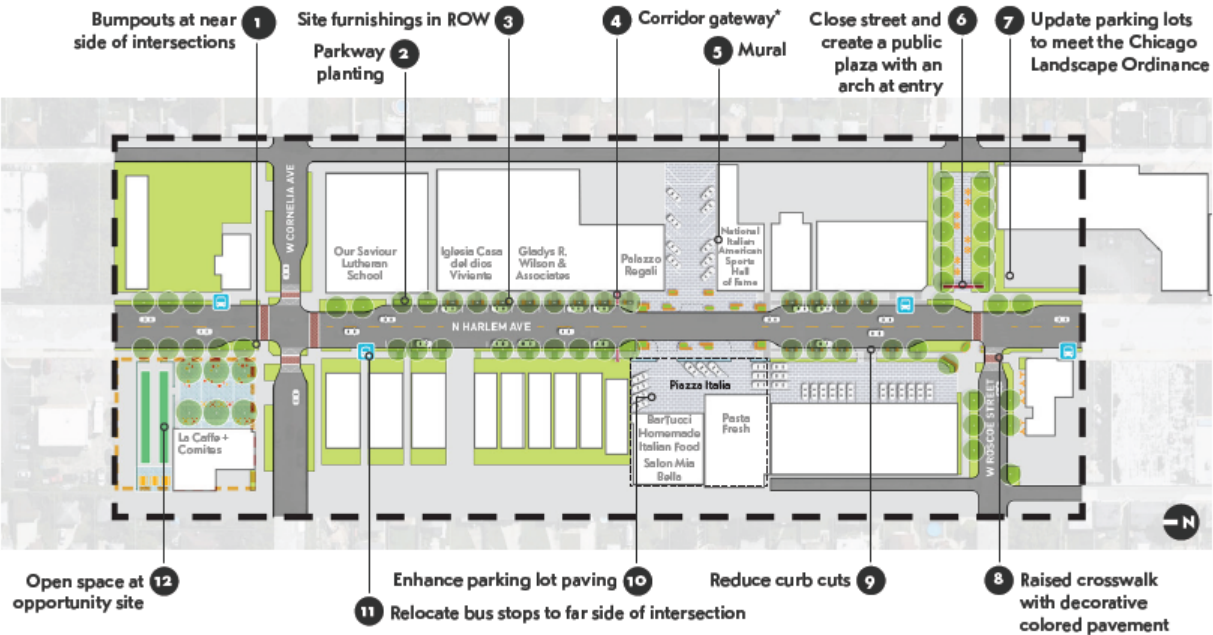


Figure 65. Community Heart plan

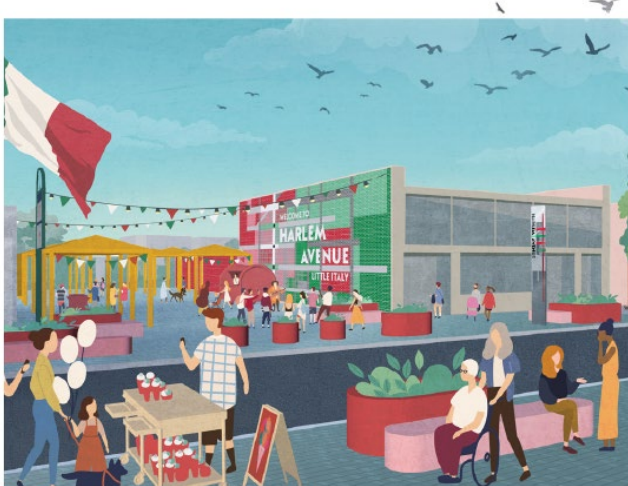


Figure 68. Community Heart perspective



Figure 80. Community Hub 2 - Temporary activation space and opportunity



Figure 69. Community Hub 1 - Belmont plan



Figure 75. Community Hub 2 - Diversey plan



**THANK YOU**

