

Greektown

STRATEGIC PLAN

CITY OF CHICAGO - SPECIAL SERVICE AREA #16

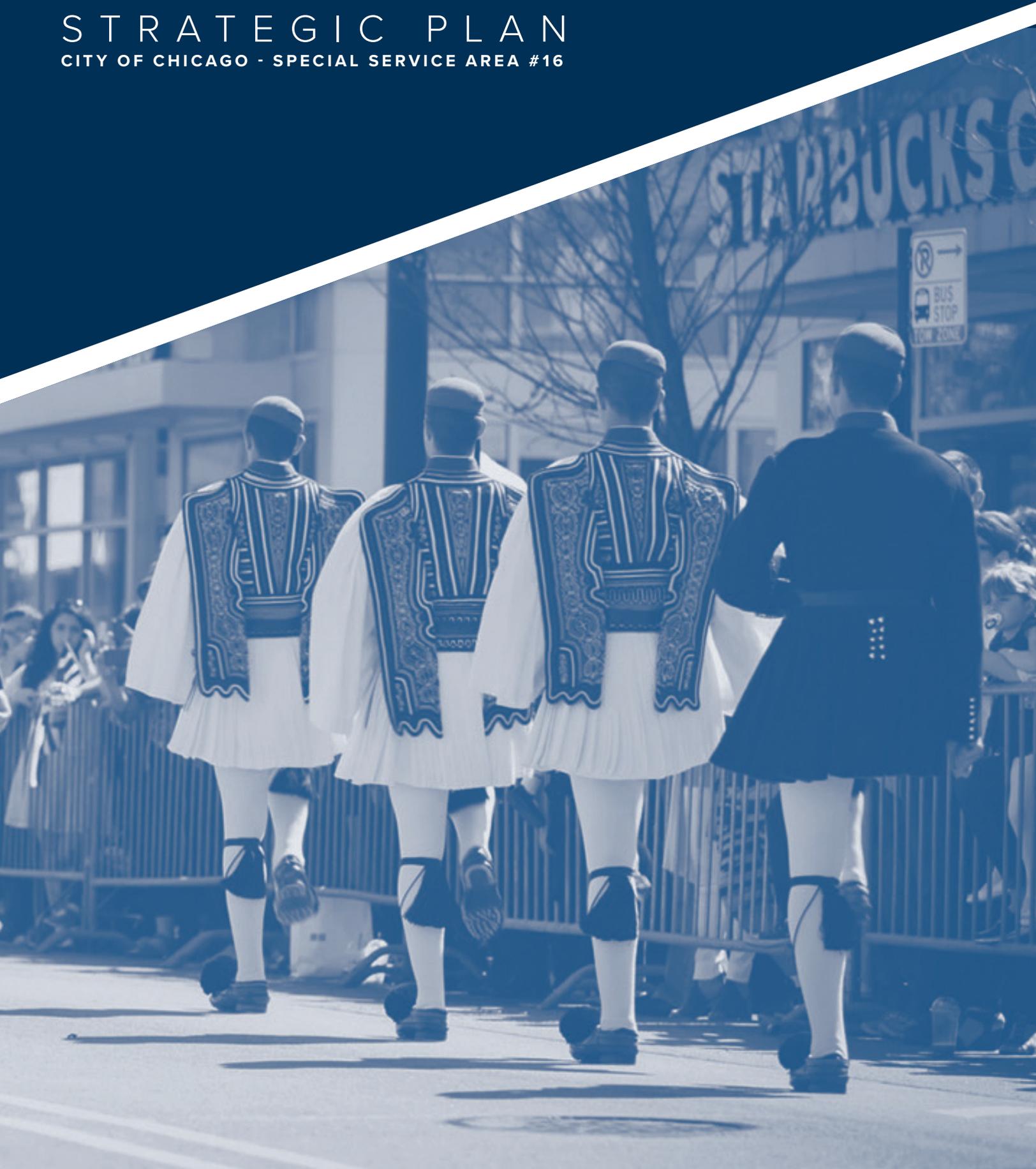




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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

***This Strategic Plan** was prepared by dedicated group of local stakeholders concerned with the preservation, authenticity and revitalization of the Greektown commercial area – a legacy cultural district within the Chicago metropolitan area long associated with its concentration of Greek restaurants and businesses. Greektown today remains a bustling, vibrant commercial district with several successful Greek dining establishments – a constant reminder of the enterprising Greek immigrants that first established their businesses along Halsted Street many decades ago – along with an expanding number of services, supermarkets, and independent businesses that serve the growing West Loop neighborhood.*

In addition to ongoing festivals and events that highlight Greektown businesses, the Greek cultural presence in the neighborhood was enhanced with the opening the National Hellenic Museum's new Halsted Street facility in 2011. As a legacy commercial district in the City of Chicago, Greektown is strategically positioned to take advantage of growth in the West Loop and to capitalize on its unique history, culture and business base to evolve as a dynamic neighborhood offering a unique Greektown experience for residents and visitors alike.



Opportunities & Challenges

Greektown's Opportunities

Chicago, as an ever-dynamic and evolving city, provides an appropriate backdrop and setting to revitalize and reinvent a future Greektown that offers a range of new cultural and economic activities to both city and West Loop residents, the Chicago Greek-American community, and visitors to the district. Chicago continues to attract multi-national corporations to an ever-expanding Loop and more than 230,000 people now live in the Chicago central area bounded by Lake Michigan, the Stevenson Expressway to the south, Ashland Avenue on the west, and North Avenue on the north. Taken by itself, the Loop would comprise the second largest city in Illinois. As the economy has strengthened since the Great Recession of 2008, developers have capitalized on the strong demand for urban living, especially by the millennial generation who desire ready access to employment centers and cultural amenities. In the West Loop, approximately 39 residential developments have been constructed between Halsted Street and Ashland Avenue since 2010, providing convenient living opportunities to not only the Loop and its attractions but also to the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Illinois Medical District and the United Center. In addition, more than 55 million people visited Chicago in 2017 with a seven percent surge in hotel occupancy from 2016. Chicago's increasingly robust cultural scene – theaters, outdoor events and festivals, performing arts venues and museums – has been cited as a key factor in making Chicago a top international travel destination.

With these trends in mind, Greektown can be re-energized and reinvented as a compelling commercial area and cultural destination in the Chicago region – a destination that combines a connection to Greektown's cultural richness with hospitality, tourism and effective promotion and business development. Its reinvention can be accomplished by building on Greektown's legacy as a place for fine Greek dining – with new offerings and innovative approaches to the Greek cuisine – by providing a more diverse array of retail services, by enhancing Greektown as a place for both people and entrepreneurship, and by creating new avenues for cultural enrichment with the National Hellenic Museum as the anchor cultural institution. Such efforts will build Greektown's appeal not only as a vibrant commercial district that attracts the everyday patron and visitor alike but also as a workplace and increasingly desirable residential neighborhood. Special Service Area #16 and the West Central Association can capitalize on the opportunities by leading partnerships and facilitating the actions necessary for making Greektown a compelling, exciting place for all patrons and visitors.

Greektown's Challenges

However, today's Greektown and the greater West Loop neighborhood has experienced significant change as the once industrial landscape west of Halsted Street has transitioned to a vibrant residential enclave of converted industrial buildings and new apartment complexes. In recent years, commercial redevelopment along Halsted north of Madison Street, and the emergence of the Fulton Market dining and entertainment district at Randolph Street, have led to increased competition and rent pressures on Greektown restaurateurs and merchants. The first generation of Greektown Halsted Street entrepreneurs are also retiring, leading to new business closures as no succession plans were pursued. At one time, Greektown hosted eleven Greek restaurants in the district; presently there are only four. Other Greek-owned businesses, including a bakery and grocery store, have also left Greektown in recent years. As a result, the concentration and diversity of Greek businesses that once gave Greektown its strong cultural identity has diminished.

Greektown's challenges are not unique and are experienced by other legacy cultural districts in Chicago and across the United States. Other districts, such as Little Italy and Koreatown, for instance, have experienced the loss of anchor ethnic businesses and restaurants as the first-generation immigrants that settled in the adjacent neighborhoods have moved on to the suburbs or other Chicago neighborhoods as they prospered and sought upward mobility. For both Little Italy and the original Greektown, the neighborhood residential neighborhood blocks were largely impacted by the construction of the University of Illinois-Chicago campus during the early 1960s. However, the commercial areas for Little Italy and Greektown have survived due to stronger ethnic cohesion and social ties among the businesses to their dispersed customer bases within the Chicago metropolitan area.



Planning Process

In 2017, the Special Service Area #16 Board of Commissioners, along with its service provider organization, the West Central Association (WCA), embarked on a year-long planning process to create the Greektown Strategic Plan to guide planning and revitalization efforts for the Greektown commercial area along Halsted Street between Van Buren Street on the south to Madison Street on the north. The Strategic Plan provides specific goals and recommendations regarding Greektown's future business mix, streetscape and urban design environment, marketing and promotion activities, parking and transportation, and other development opportunities. In turn, the Strategic Plan also seeks to highlight the commercial district's rich culture and history and make Greektown a destination for international, regional, and local visitors.

The Lakota Group, a Chicago-based planning and urban design firm, was engaged by the SSA Board and the WCA to guide the Strategic Plan's development. Three other firms assisted Lakota in this assignment: Duncan Associates and Sam Schwartz Engineering, both based in Chicago, and the Community and Land Use Economics Group located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The planning process involves two distinct phases: a "State of the District" review of existing Greektown conditions and trends, including its market strengths and physical streetscape and building appearances, and a Strategic Plan phase, where planning goals, recommendations, and initiatives were created in consultation with the SSA Board of Commissioners and Greektown stakeholders.

The planning process has included the following tasks and activities:

PHASE 1: STATE OF THE DISTRICT

Initiated in December 2017, the State of the District phase comprised a series of community engagement activities, including focus group interviews with key Greektown stakeholders and a Greektown “speak-out” event, and an assessment of existing SSA activities and initiatives related to Greektown. Relevant West Loop planning documents and studies were also reviewed for their relevance to Greektown. Key activities included:

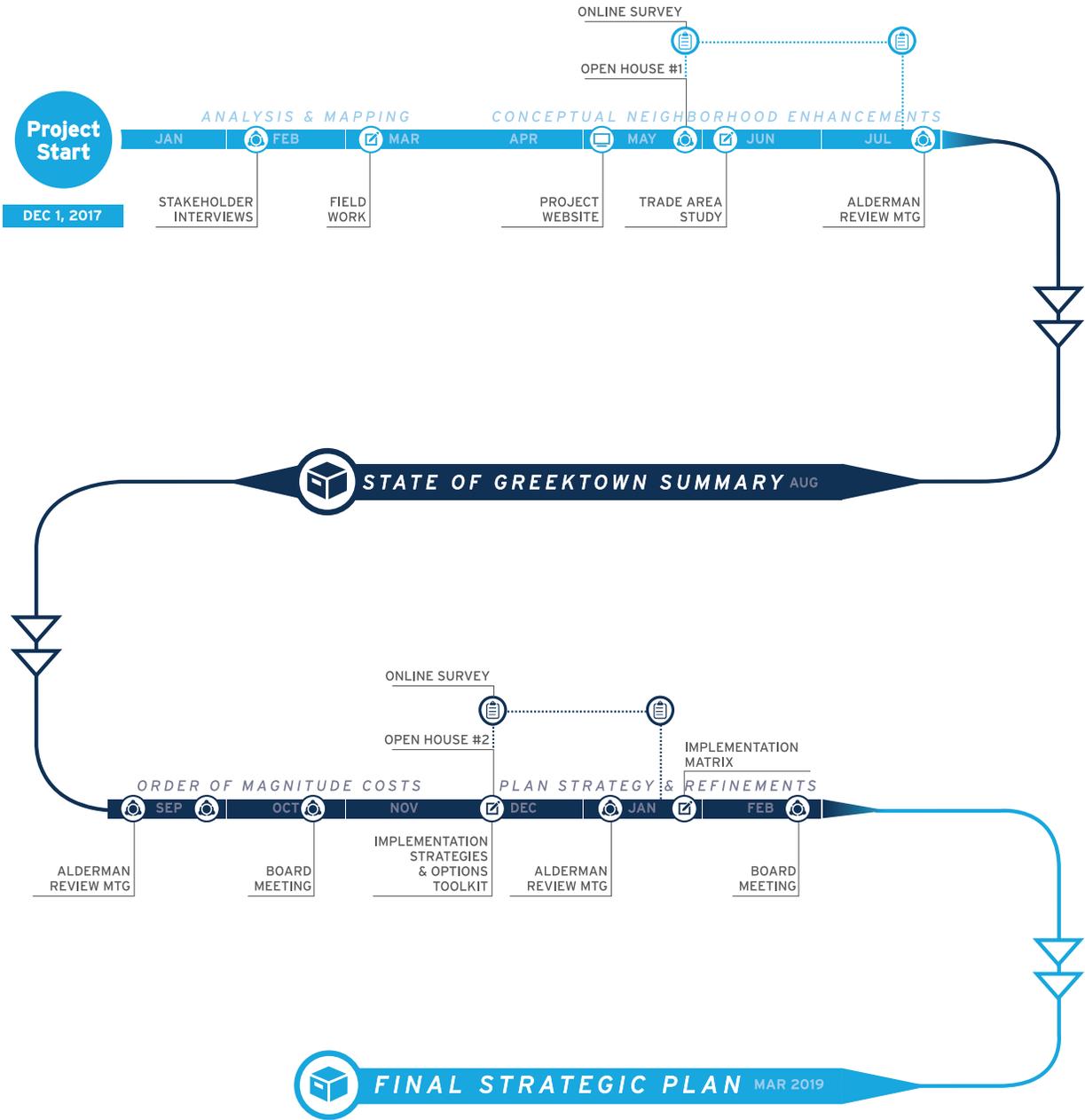
- **Project Start Meeting (December 1, 2017).** The Special Service Area Board of Commissioners and the West Central Association conducted a project start meeting with The Lakota Group to discuss key planning goals and objectives, Greektown community engagement activities, and project schedule and timeline.
- **Field Work (February-March 2018).** Lakota visited Greektown during the months of February and March 2018 to photograph and document existing conditions, including buildings and storefronts, parking, streets and streetscapes, and other public spaces.
- **Stakeholder Listening Sessions (February 8-9, 2018).** Listening sessions were conducted with key Greektown stakeholders – restaurateurs, business owners, residents, SSA commissioners, City of Chicago officials, among others – to gain insight on Greektown’s planning issues, opportunities, and constraints.
- **Greektown Community Open House (May 24, 2018).** A community “Speak-Out” event was conducted with approximately 50 Greektown stakeholders and residents in attendance, providing input on Greektown planning issues through interactive exhibits and questionnaires. Speak-out proceedings are summarized in the community engagement section of this Strategic Plan.
- **Online Questionnaire (May –July 2018).** Portions of the Speak-Out exhibits and questionnaires were re-formatted and incorporated as an online survey to gather opinions, thoughts, and ideas regarding Greektown’s future with Greektown business owners and residents. Results of the online survey are summarized in the community engagement section of this Strategic Plan.
- **State of the District Report (August 23, 2018).** The State of the District report was prepared and delivered to the SSA Board of Commissioners and the West Central Association for review.

PHASE 2: STRATEGIC PLAN

Initiated in September 2018, the second phase of the planning process involved the creation of planning concepts and strategies that address Greektown urban design, business development and SSA operating issues. The concepts were presented for stakeholder feedback and comment at a community open house in December 2018. Afterward, the concept and strategies were revised and incorporated as part of the Draft Strategic Plan, submitted the Greektown SSA Board of Commissioners on December 18, 2018. Key activities included:

- **Greektown Neighborhood Open House (December 5, 2018).** Greektown and West Loop stakeholders participated in a second neighborhood open house to provide feedback on draft planning strategies, presented as individual exhibits. Proceedings from the workshop are summarized in the Strategic Plan’s community engagement. Both the first and second open houses were conducted in the evening at the Crown Plaza Hotel, 733 West Madison Street in Greektown.
- **Final draft (March 28, 2019).** A final draft of the Strategic Plan was prepared for the SSA Commission revision and approval.

PLANNING PROCESS





CHAPTER TWO

Greektown Past and Present



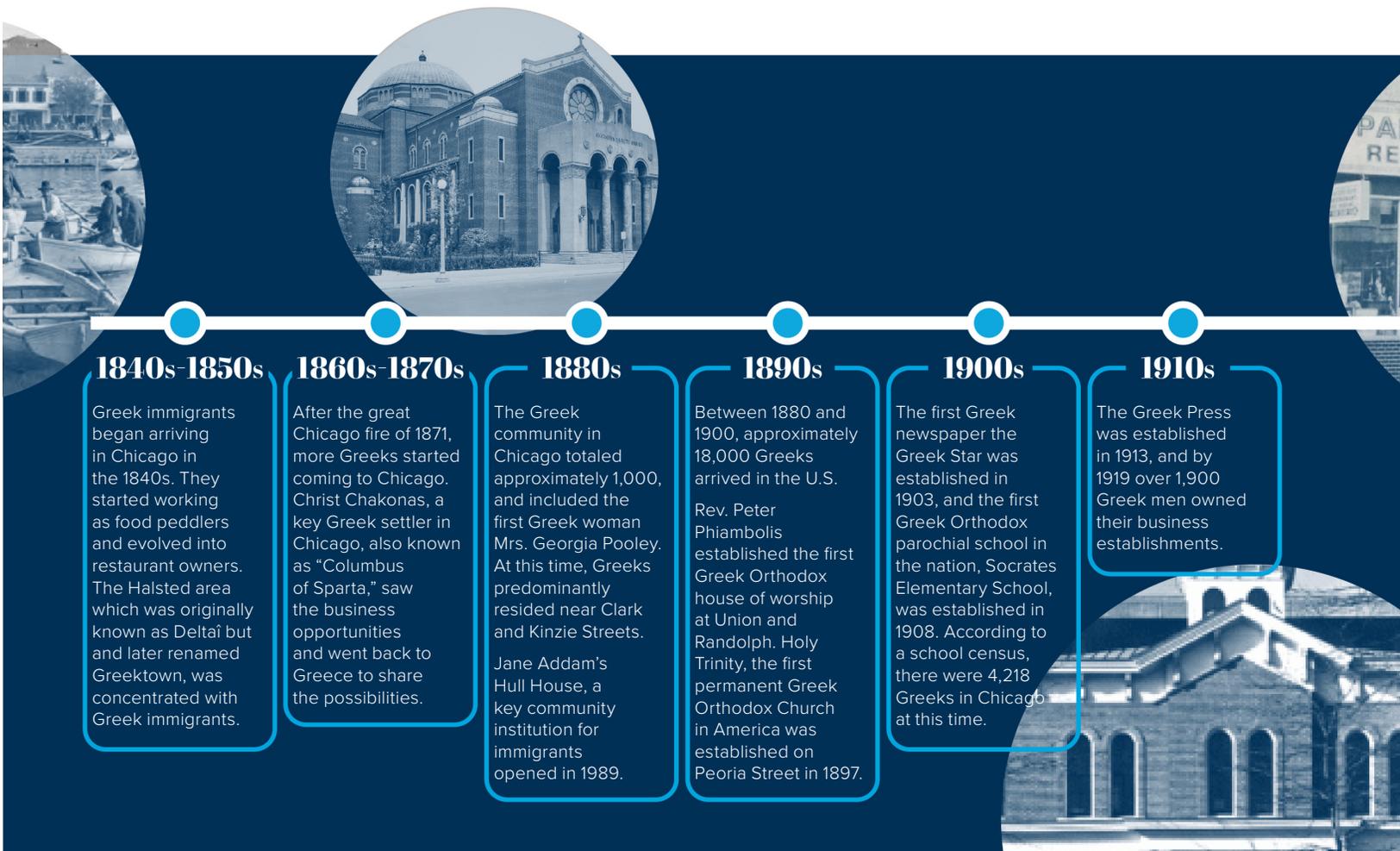
Greektown Chicago History

The sea is everywhere in the Greek mainland landscape and it is only fitting, according to historical accounts, that Greek mariners would arrive in the 1840s to the bustling port of Chicago along Lake Michigan to work on the freight ships exporting goods to the frontier cities of a westward-expanding America. As the number of Greeks grew in Chicago over succeeding decades, they would open shops, fruit distribution businesses, cafes and restaurants and settle near the wholesale Fulton and South Water Street markets and then later in the neighborhood blocks on the Chicago's Lower West Side near Halsted and Harrison Streets and Blue Island and Ashland Avenues.

The allure of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 would attract more Greeks to Chicago resulting in the formation of Greek fellowship societies and the first permanent Greek Orthodox Church on Peoria Street in the flourishing Greektown community. Successive waves of Greek immigrants to Chicago during the first decades of the 20th century would bolster an already vibrant

Greek enclave with its social and economic ties established between Greek newcomers and Greek churches, schools, professional societies, and businesses. By the 1920s, Greek business owners would become renown in the city for their exceptional restaurants, confectionaries, and coffeehouses. In the decades prior to World War II, Greektown would have three grocery stores, a half-dozen bakeries and more than a dozen restaurants.

After World War II, another wave of Greek immigrants – many displaced by the Civil War in Greece – would arrive in Chicago, settle with relatives, and become the vanguard of a new generation of entrepreneurs in a new Greektown commercial area, not along the Lower West Side portions of Halsted Street but to the blocks north of Congress Parkway and the newly constructed Eisenhower Expressway. The Expressway, as well as the construction of the new campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago during the 1950s and 60s, resulted in loss of the Greektown residential neighborhood and the displacement and dispersion



A horizontal timeline graphic with a white line and blue circular markers. Above the line are three circular images: a boat on the left, a large church in the center, and a storefront on the right. Below the line are six blue-bordered boxes, each containing text for a specific decade. The background of the bottom half of the page is dark blue with a faint image of a building.

1840s-1850s
Greek immigrants began arriving in Chicago in the 1840s. They started working as food peddlers and evolved into restaurant owners. The Halsted area which was originally known as Delta but and later renamed Greektown, was concentrated with Greek immigrants.

1860s-1870s
After the great Chicago fire of 1871, more Greeks started coming to Chicago. Christ Chakonas, a key Greek settler in Chicago, also known as "Columbus of Sparta," saw the business opportunities and went back to Greece to share the possibilities.

1880s
The Greek community in Chicago totaled approximately 1,000, and included the first Greek woman Mrs. Georgia Pooley. At this time, Greeks predominantly resided near Clark and Kinzie Streets. Jane Addam's Hull House, a key community institution for immigrants opened in 1889.

1890s
Between 1880 and 1900, approximately 18,000 Greeks arrived in the U.S. Rev. Peter Phiambolis established the first Greek Orthodox house of worship at Union and Randolph. Holy Trinity, the first permanent Greek Orthodox Church in America was established on Peoria Street in 1897.

1900s
The first Greek newspaper the Greek Star was established in 1903, and the first Greek Orthodox parochial school in the nation, Socrates Elementary School, was established in 1908. According to a school census, there were 4,218 Greeks in Chicago at this time.

1910s
The Greek Press was established in 1913, and by 1919 over 1,900 Greek men owned their business establishments.

of Greek-Americans to other parts of the city and far-flung suburbs, including Oak Park, Berwyn, Skokie, Des Plaines and Park Ridge. However, this new generation would open the restaurants that established the new Greektown along Halsted Street as the destination for authentic Greek food, including Diana's Opaa, which opened in 1961, and the Parthenon later in 1968 – the restaurants largely credited for introducing flaming saganaki into Greek cuisine. In later years, the Greek Islands, Roditys and Santorini would open and become part of the core Greektown dining establishments; in the 1990s and 2000s, Artopolis and Café Meli would open their doors, offering new interpretations of Greek food with other European and American culinary influences. Apart from the restaurants, bakeries and grocery stores would maintain a continue presence in Greektown up until recent years. The Athenian Candle Company, first opened in 1922 and located at the southwest corner of Jackson Boulevard and Halsted Street, remains Greektown's oldest and continually-operated business in Greektown.

In 1993, the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center was founded and located in a facility along Michigan Avenue in the Loop, later to relocate to Greektown in 2004. In 2011, the Museum opened its current building as the National Hellenic Museum with a mission to preserve and promote the Greek immigrant experience and culture. The Museum provides a wide range of cultural and educational programs from Greek language classes to lectures and field trips; it also maintains a significant collection of Greek-American artifacts and oral histories regarding the Greek-American experience. Apart from its permanent and rotating exhibitions, the Museum also organizes events that celebrate major events in Greek history – such as Oxi Day every October, an annual “Trial” that involves local judges and attorneys on cases emanating from ancient Greece with latter-day consequence and interpretation, and the Kouzina annual fundraising event that highlights the Greek cuisine from local chefs. The Museum stands as a new anchor for Greektown alongside its restaurants and businesses that have stood the test of time in an ever-evolving Greektown and West Loop community.

1920s
The Chicago Herald and Examiner reported that Greeks were operating more than 10,000 stores with aggregate sales of \$2 million per day. In 1923, Chicago was made a diocesan center of the Greek Orthodox Church in America with jurisdiction over the Midwestern states.

1930s-1940s
Chicago had become home to approximately 30,000 first- and second-generation Greek Americans. Under pressure from the Greek community, CPS began instructing programs in Greek and other languages. These programs were discontinued in 1961.

1950s-1960s
During the 1960s, Greektown was displaced by the Eisenhower Expressway and the new UIC campus, forcing a move a few blocks north. While Greeks relocated throughout Chicago, the business community remained intact.

1970s-1980s
Most of the current restaurants and businesses opened between 1970 and 1990, and in 1989 the neighborhood held its first Taste of Greektown.

1990s
With the Democratic National Committee coming to town, the City of Chicago invested heavily in Greektown with streetscapes, façade, and public art improvements. The US Census counted 70,000 people in metropolitan Chicago claiming Greek ancestors.

2000s
The Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center opened in Greektown in 2004. By 2011, it rebranded as the National Hellenic Museum and relocated to a new 4,000 square foot building now home to more than 17,000 artifacts. Greek ancestry estimates range from 90,000 to 125,000.

Greektown Special Service Area #16

First authorized in 1996 by the Chicago City Council, Greektown Special Service Area #16, managed by the West Central Association as the designated service provider agency, delivers a wide range of additional services and physical improvements to the Greektown commercial district. There are currently 73 active Special Service Areas in the city. An SSA is funded by a special tax assessment paid by the property owners in the designated SSA district, which can finance a variety of commercial district management activities, including marketing and special events, trash and snow removal, security needs, sidewalk and public space maintenance, and streetscape projects and building improvements initiatives. In addition to the service provider agency, the City of Chicago also requires a separate, mayor-appointed SSA commission to be established to oversee and recommend an annual budget and work plan. Illinois municipalities can establish SSA's under Section 35 ILCS 200, Article 27 of the Illinois Property Tax Code. Since 1996, the Greektown SSA has funded a number of initiatives, including an extensive streetscape program along Halsted Street from Van Buren to Monroe Streets. It also funds ongoing maintenance of the streetscape, public art initiatives, a trolley service between Greektown and the United Center, holiday decorations and several special events, such as the annual Greek Independence Day Parade. In 2017, the SSA engaged a private communications firm to provide regular and ongoing marketing of Greektown events and businesses through social media and other advertising activities. A façade rebate and rehabilitation program has also been established to encourage building, storefront, and signage improvements in the district.



Greektown Planning and Land Use Context

The following section provides an overview of Greektown’s planning context, including adopted plans documents and studies that pertain to Greektown and the greater West Loop neighborhood. Greektown land uses and zoning are also described in this section.

Prior Plans

The City of Chicago and its Department of Planning and Development (Chicago DPD) have prepared several land use and community plans for the West Loop and the adjacent Central Area to Greektown to the east. The following is a summary of relevant planning documents.

Near West Area Land Use Plan (2000)

Prepared by Chicago DPD, the Near West Side Area Land Use Plan provides a series of planning goals and strategies for an 88-block area bounded by Lake Street on the north, Ashland Avenue to the west, the Eisenhower Expressway (Interstate 290) on the south and the Kennedy Expressway (Interstate 90) on the east. The Plan’s central objective was to provide a rational land use framework for accommodating future development while maintaining the Near West Side’s “mixed-use, low-density character.” Other key planning objectives include addressing physical and streetscape conditions within the West Loop; encouraging the adaptive use of historic commercial and industrial buildings; facilitating appropriate infill development that introduces new commercial, residential and cultural uses; and, “cleaning” and “greening” the Near West Side’s “edges” along the expressways. Several community organizations participated in the Plan’s development, including the Greektown Special Service Area Commission, the Greektown Chamber of Commerce and the West Central Association.

The Land Use Plan identifies Greektown as a key sub area gateway into the Near West Side featuring a concentration of Greek businesses and restaurants, low to mid-rise buildings with attractive architecture, easy access to CTA transit and the interstate expressways, and an attractive streetscape with decorative pavement, lighting and plantings. The Plan recognizes that development pressures within Greektown will increase and likely focus along the east side of Halsted Street given the presence of several large surface parking lots and underutilized land mainly owned by the Christian Industrial League at Halsted and Monroe Streets. The parking lots and the Industrial League land have since been redeveloped.



One key Land Use Plan recommendation is to expand Greektown’s “footprint” to Sangamon Street on the west and north to Randolph to better link the these growing commercial and residential areas with the Greektown restaurant cluster. Such an expansion would provide for additional shared parking opportunities, increased pedestrian activity, and an extended Greektown identity. The expanded footprint could be achieved through a more extensive streetscape and wayfinding program connecting Randolph Street to Greektown destinations and parking facilities. Other recommendations include the establishment of a free shuttle service for visitors linking downtown hotels and cultural attractions to Greektown restaurants and adding a “Greektown” sign to the Halsted Blue Line CTA transit stop.

Central Area Plan (2003)

Adopted by the Chicago Plan Commission, the 2003 Central Area Plan was the first significant planning effort for Chicago’s Loop since the mid-1950s – an effort recognizing the Loop’s residential, commercial and mixed-use growth potential. The Plan’s guiding land use framework proposes, among other objectives, extending “the high-density office core into the West Loop around transit stations and the Chicago River,” supporting a “diverse collection of livable neighborhoods and special places,” and “promoting and strengthening the Central Area’s world-class cultural assets.” Although Greektown is not specifically discussed in the Central Area Plan, it envisions Loop expansion westward to the east side of Halsted Street along the Kennedy Expressway with new high-rise commercial and residential development on available parking lots and underutilized land – land that has been mostly redeveloped since the Plan’s adoption. In addition, parks constructed at different locations over the Kennedy would help both physically and visually link Greektown with an expanding Loop area to the east. The Central Area Plan’s implementation chapter recommended the extension of the Loop’s Downtown Mixed-Use zoning classification to the east side of Halsted Street.



Central Area Action Plan (2009)

As an update to the 2003 Central Area Plan, the 2009 Central Area Action Plan provides a series of specific planning goals related to land use and urban design, transportation, open space and economic development in Chicago's expanding Loop area along with specific capital improvement initiatives. Like the 2003 Plan, Greektown is not specifically addressed although it is considered part of the Central Area "Near West" planning subdistrict discussed in the Action Plan. Capital improvement projects related to Greektown include Kennedy Expressway corridor enhancements, such as new pedestrian bridges linking Greektown over the Kennedy, and continued study of capping the Expressway to install new parks and open space.

West Loop Design Guidelines (2017)

Prepared by Chicago DPD, the West Loop Design Guidelines seeks to address particular building and urban design issues as a result of continued growth and development in the West Loop area, such as the loss of the existing character and scale, the density and height of new buildings, solar access, the lack of open space, and the monotony of new development design. The Design Guidelines are meant to serve as a reference document for investors and developers planning a project located within the West Loop boundaries from Halsted Street on the east, the Eisenhower Expressways to the south, Lake Street on the north, and Ogden and Ashland Avenues on the west. Guidelines are included for specific issues related to tall buildings, site needs, streetscape and urban design, and alleyways and parking. Key design guidelines are focused on maintaining a consistent building streetwall on all streets, providing appropriate building height transitions from tall buildings to the existing building fabric, concentrating height along wider streets, ensuring compatibility with adjacent architecture, and orienting parking facilities within new developments away from main roadways and transportation corridors.

A Future for the Near West Side (2016) & the West Loop Neighborhood Plan (2018)

A Future of the Near West Side plan prepared by the West Central Association in association with the Metropolitan Planning Council, and the West Loop Neighborhood Plan, sponsored by the Neighbors of West Loop community organization, are primarily focused on land use, transportation, parking and quality of life issues related to the residential, commercial and industrial blocks west of Halsted Street. Both plans seek to address the impacts of projected growth in the area, especially in regard to parking and the maintenance of neighborhood character and design. Greektown is not specifically addressed in both plan documents.

Cultural Districts in Chicago

Greektown is one of several "legacy" cultural district or neighborhoods in Chicago – neighborhoods with a distinct, long-time association, identity or relationship with a specific ethnic or racial group, such as Chinatown, Pilsen, Bronzeville and Little Italy. Chinatown and Pilsen, for instance, still retain vibrant neighborhoods and commercial areas serving to some extent as port of entries for Chinese or Mexican immigrants to Chicago. Greektown and Little Italy, on the other hand, still maintain their related commercial areas although the residential areas disappeared through redevelopment or the migration of immigrant groups to the suburbs. The following section profiles several Chicago cultural districts, including their major stakeholders, organizations and assets, in an effort to gain a better understanding how such cultural districts are managed and planned.

Argyle Street / Little Saigon

Argyle Street – sometimes known as “Asia on Argyle” – is part of the Uptown Special Service Area #34, bounded by Sheridan Road on the east and Broadway on the west. Argyle Street is also part of the West Argyle Street Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. Argyle Street first developed as an Asian district in the early 1970s as the Hip Sing Association, a secret fraternal society, moved its Chicago offices to Argyle Street in 1971; in 1979, the Asian-American Small Business Association helped to spur the development of an enclave for Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Japanese businesses through a variety of business development initiatives. Today, this four-block commercial area is home to a number of southeast Asian restaurants, gift shops, retail, and groceries, managed by SSA #34, the Uptown United organization, and the neighborhood’s chamber of commerce. The SSA underwrites the weekly Argyle Night Market, which draws up to 45,000 over a nine-week period in the summer, and Lunar New Year Parade, which marks the Chinese New Year every February. In 2016, the Chicago Department of Transportation underwrote the installation of a “shared street” along Argyle, which involved the elimination of curbs and the installation of new paving and street enhancements designed to improve the commercial district’s pedestrian environment. The newly-designed streetscape has provided opportunities for open sidewalk cafes, an enhanced pedestrian experience, and more active street festivals and programs.



Chinatown

Located on the south side of Chicago from 18th Street to the Stevenson Expressway between Clark and Canal Streets, the Chinatown neighborhood is home to a diverse collection of Chinese business establishments, including restaurants, gift shops, grocery stores, and Chinese medicine stores. Business owners and residents are predominately of first or second generation Chinese-Americans. Chinatown is noted today for its plethora of public art and memorials, public spaces, and the sweeping rooflines of its Chinese vernacular architecture. Landmarks within the neighborhood include the Chinatown Gate, Pui Tak Center Building, Chinatown Mural, Nine Dragon Wall, Ping Tom Memorial Park, Chinatown Square and the Zodiac Sculptures, and the Chinese American Veterans Memorial. The Chinese American Museum of Chicago also finds its home in Chinatown. Chinatown's Special Service Area #73 was recently adopted in 2017 incorporating parcels and commercial properties principally along Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue. The Chicago-Chinatown Chamber of Commerce designated as the SSA service provider organization. The Chamber organizes a number of festivals and events, including a Dragon Boat Race, Tour of Chinatown, Chinese New Year Parade, Charity Night, Summer Fair and other activities. Parking in Chinatown is provided through on-street spaces and two large surface parking lots. With validation from participating restaurants, parking is \$2.00 for three hours.



Pilsen

Recently named “One of the Coolest Neighborhoods in the World” by Forbes Magazine, Pilsen is located 4.5 miles from downtown Chicago on the lower west side. The neighborhood, once home to German, Irish, and Czech culture and immigrants, is now home to a vibrant cultural scene focused on Latino cultural heritage and features Mexican-American art, food, traditions, and more. The neighborhood is also home to the Mexican Museum of National Art. Pilsen does not have an SSA, though there have been attempts to establish one by The Resurrection Project, a coalition of local churches and neighbors for community development, and the Greater Pilsen Economic Development Council in past years (the most recent attempt was 2013). According to their website, The Resurrection Project has turned \$30,000 seed capital into community investments of more than \$346 million, and includes student housing, affordable housing, small business services, financial wellness programs, a home purchase program, foreclosure prevention counseling, safety, health, education programs, community organizing, and immigration services.



Little Italy

Like Greektown, Little Italy is a legacy cultural district in Chicago, tracing its history to the Eastern European settlement of the city's Lower West Side during the 1860s and 1870s. As with the Greeks, Italian immigrants concentrated near the burgeoning Hull House neighborhood along Halsted Street, and along Taylor Street to Ashland Avenue that would become Little Italy's commercial district and port-of-entry. By 1930, Chicago's foreign-born Italian population reached 73,000 with Little Italy serving as the most significant Italian enclave. By the 1950s and 1960s, similar to the fate of the Greek immigrant neighborhood within the Lower West Side, the construction of the University of Illinois at Chicago and other urban renewal projects displaced many Italian immigrants to other parts of Chicago and the suburbs. Today, Little Italy is considered part of the larger University Village neighborhood and is managed by the West Central Association as the local chamber of commerce. The Little Italy commercial area does not currently have a Special Service Area. Little Italy maintains a number of Italian restaurants and related businesses; a number of special events, including Little Italy Fiesta, are organized to attract area residents and visitors.



Greektown Context

Greektown is located within Chicago’s West Loop and Near West Side, once an industrial area, now a dynamically growing residential area with several commercial corridors: Halsted, Randolph and Lake Streets, and Ogden and Ashland Avenues. Residential growth has been attributed to the adaptive use and conversion of many former industrial buildings and the construction of new apartment and condominium towers throughout the area. Greektown comprises the far southeastern portion of the West Loop along Halsted Street, which connects Greektown with the Fulton Market Innovation District along Randolph and Lake Streets to the north. On the far western end towards Ashland and Ogden Avenues is Union Park, Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, and, just a few blocks west of Ashland, the United Center complex, home of the Chicago Blackhawks and Bulls. To the west of Greektown along Van Buren Street is the University of Illinois at Chicago’s College of Urban Planning and Public Policy. The University’s main campus is located to the south of the Eisenhower Expressway at Halsted and Harrison Streets.

Greektown Special Service Area

The Greektown Special Service Area comprises the Halsted Street commercial blocks between Madison Street on the north to Van Buren to the south extending one block to the east and west of Halsted. The district contains a mix of traditional commercial buildings of varying heights constructed from the 1880s to the 2010s, all forming a continuous streetwall presence with ground-level storefronts. More recent developments include the Arkadia Tower at 765 West Adams Street, a 33-story apartment building constructed in 2014; Mariano’s Fresh Market, 40 South Halsted Street, developed in 2013; and, the National Hellenic Museum at the northeast corner of Van Buren and Halsted Streets, which opened in 2011. The Van Buren apartment tower, located across the street from the Museum at the northwest corner of Halsted and Van Buren, is slated to open in the fall of 2018; the tower occupies a site that once housed several Greek businesses in a commercial building destroyed by a fire in 2010.

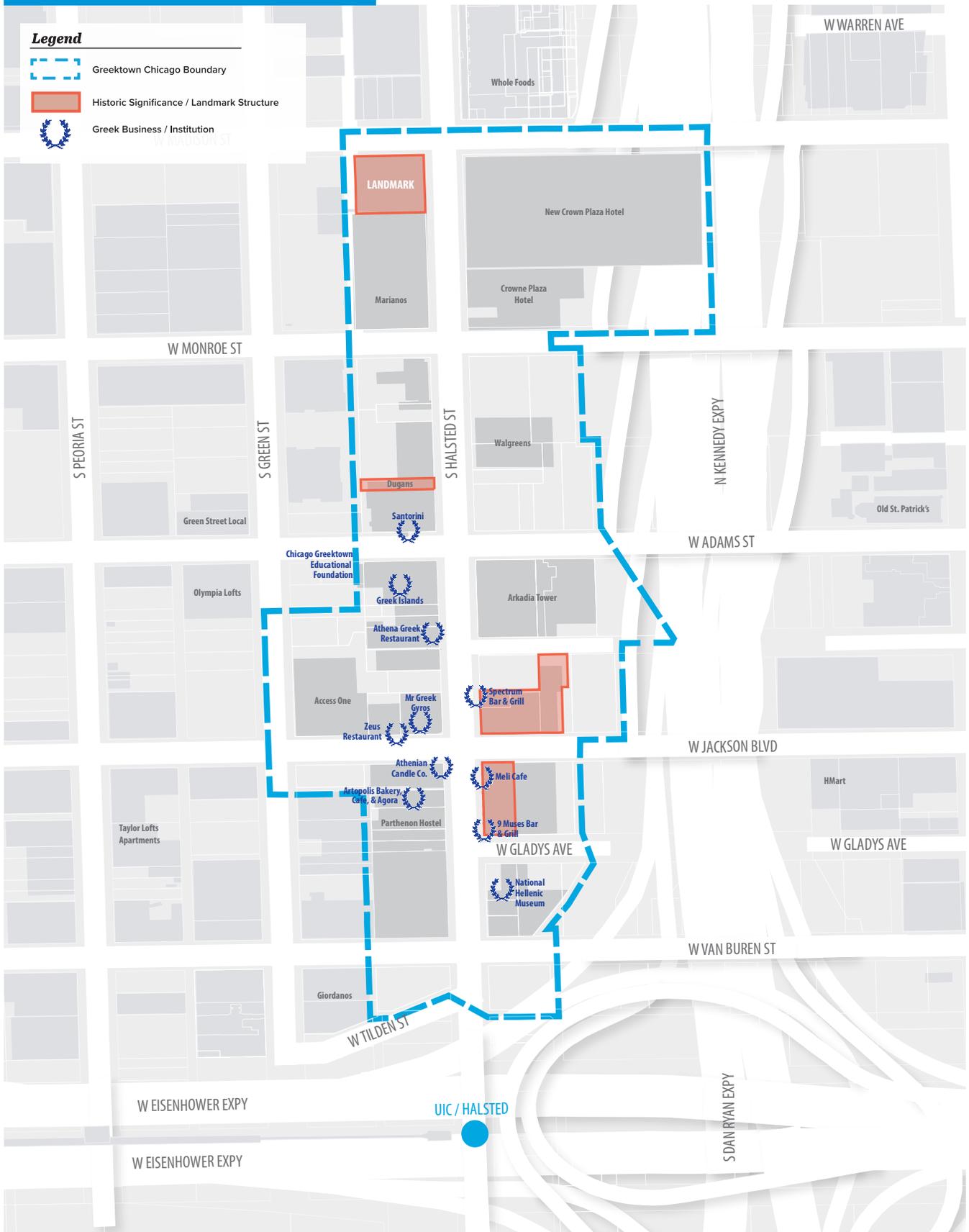
Amongst Greektown traditional commercial building stock are historically and architecturally significant buildings identified by the Chicago Historic Resources Survey, completed by the City of Chicago in 1995. The survey identified three buildings as significant: 120 South Halsted (constructed circa 1810s), 235-239 South Halsted (circa 1880s), 301-305 South Halsted (circa 1890s). These buildings have the potential to be designated as City of Chicago Landmarks. The former Mid-City Trust and Savings Bank Building, designed by noted architect Horatio R. Wilson in 1912, located at 2 South Halsted Street at Madison, now vacant, was designated a City of Chicago Landmark in 2012. Greektown’s core of Greek restaurants are all housed within the district’s historic commercial buildings.



Greektown Context Map

Legend

-  Greektown Chicago Boundary
-  Historic Significance / Landmark Structure
-  Greek Business / Institution



Zoning and Susceptibility to Change Analysis

The following provides an overview and a technical evaluation of Greektown's existing zoning classifications, including existing land use, and parcel dimensions. This evaluation also informs a susceptibility to change analysis for each parcel – determining the likelihood that Halsted Street parcels may redevelop at some point in the future based on what existing zoning would permit in terms of height and density.

Zoning

Currently, Greektown is mainly zoned under two classifications: DX-7 with parcels located mainly on the east side of Halsted – especially those along the Kennedy Expressway – and DX-5 for parcels along the Halsted Street's west side. The DX classification refers to Downtown Mixed-Use District, which is intended to promote and accommodate residential, commercial and institutional development. The difference between DX-5 and DX-7 is the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) that governs the height and massing of new development – DX-5 permits a maximum floor area ratio of five, DX-7 seven. Two parcels, one located at the southeast corner of West Jackson Boulevard and Green Street one block west of Halsted Street, and other one-half block north of previous parcel along Green Street, are zoned DS-3, Downtown Service, a zoning classification intended to maintain and promote essential neighborhood commercial service businesses. The DS-3 classification allows a FAR of three.

Apart from the base zoning classification, zoning bonuses are allowed in certain areas of Greektown, parcels mainly located within 1,320 feet of a Chicago Transit Authority or Metra-operated transit station. This transit-oriented development (TOD) bonus only applies in Greektown to the two parcels designated with DS-3 zoning classifications.

Susceptibility to Change

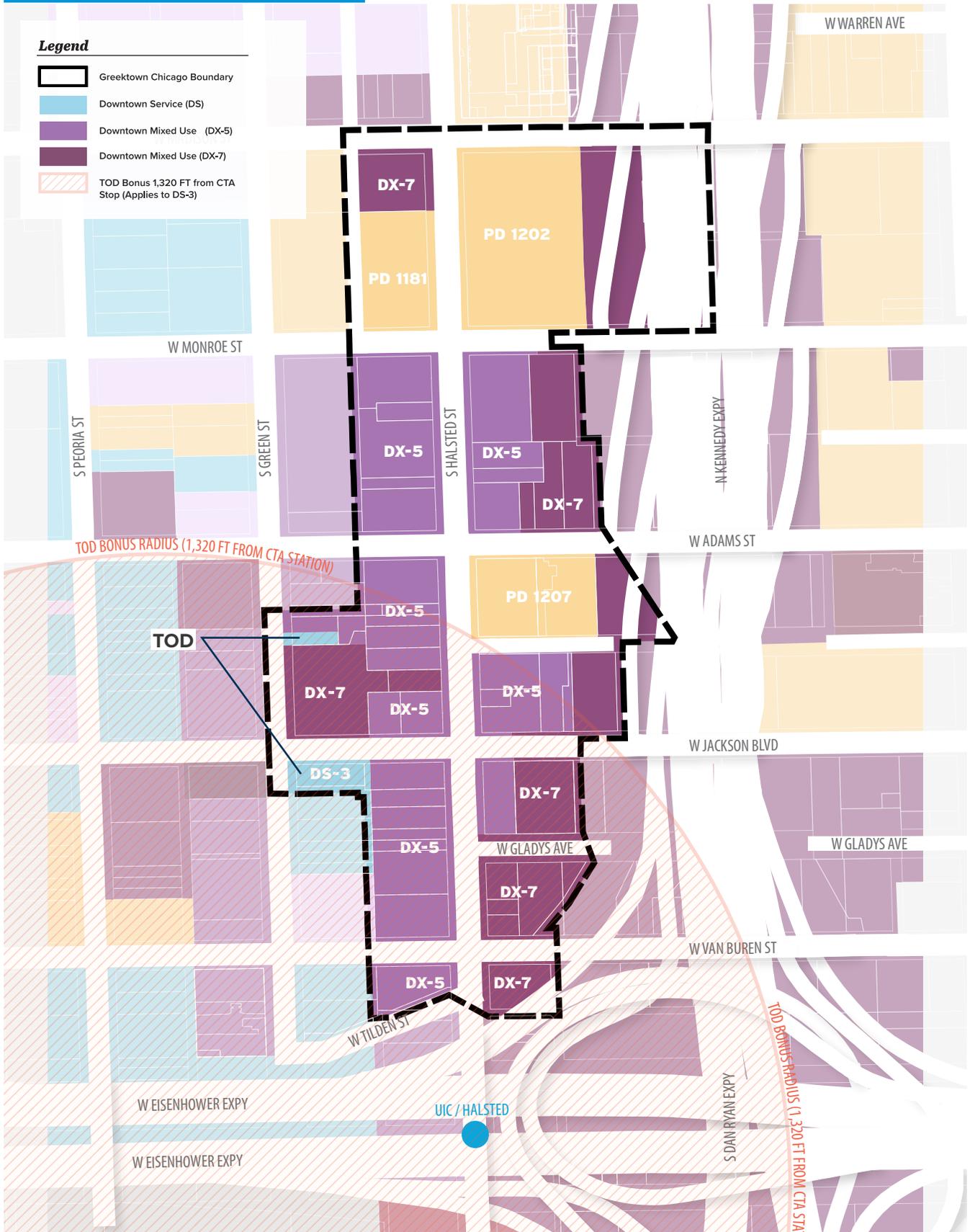
As mentioned above, properties within the Greektown SSA were evaluated according to the potential for redevelopment based on existing parcel building heights and permitted zoning allowances. Property ownership patterns can provide key insight into a district's susceptibility to change. Properties that are non-owner occupied principally function as investments for their owners; therefore, these properties tend to possess a higher likelihood of sale, redevelopment or alteration, especially when market forces have strengthened as they have over the last decade.

The maps and illustrations on pages 22-25 present a susceptibility to change assessment for all parcels within the Greektown commercial district. Generally, the west side of Halsted Street contains parcels that range from low to moderate susceptibility given the predominance of three to four story traditional commercial buildings with the DX-5 zoning that permits a FAR of five – therefore it is unlikely that most parcels would be redeveloped in the near future. However, there are exceptions on the west side with a parcel at the southwest corner of Halsted and Van Buren Street and two smaller ones at the northwest corner of Jackson Boulevard and Halsted where one-story buildings could potentially be redeveloped although the parcels are relatively small. On the east side, several parcels that once were surface parking lots have already been redeveloped. However, the current Walgreens parcel could potentially be redeveloped for higher density given its large parking lot, along with two smaller parking lot parcels just south of Quincy Street at Halsted.

Greektown Zoning Map

Legend

-  Greektown Chicago Boundary
-  Downtown Service (DS)
-  Downtown Mixed Use (DX-5)
-  Downtown Mixed Use (DX-7)
-  TOD Bonus 1,320 FT from CTA Stop (Applies to DS-3)



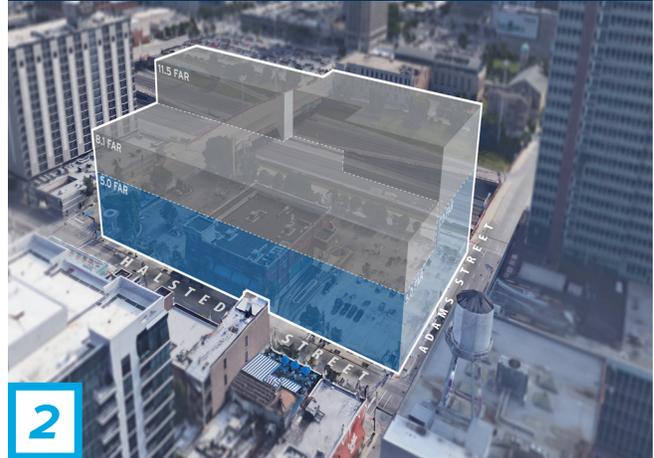
SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

HALSTED STREET - EAST

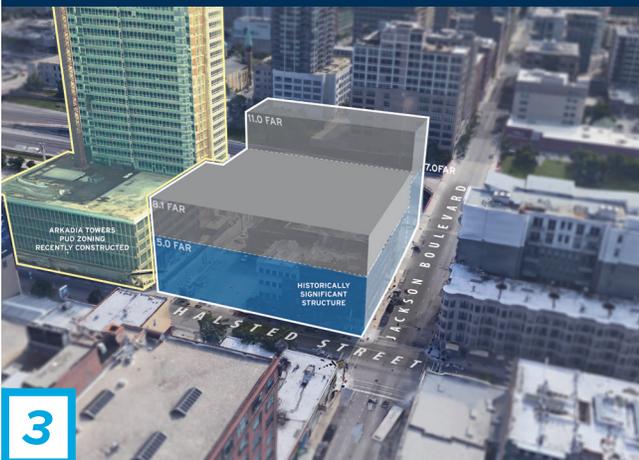
Between Monroe (N) and Adams (S)



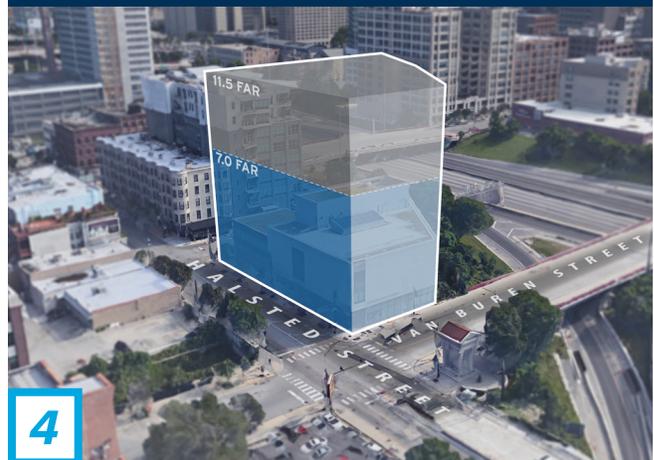
Between Madison (N) and Monroe (S)



Between Adams (N) and Gladys (S)



Between Gladys (N) and Van Buren (S)



Between Jackson (N) and Gladys (S)



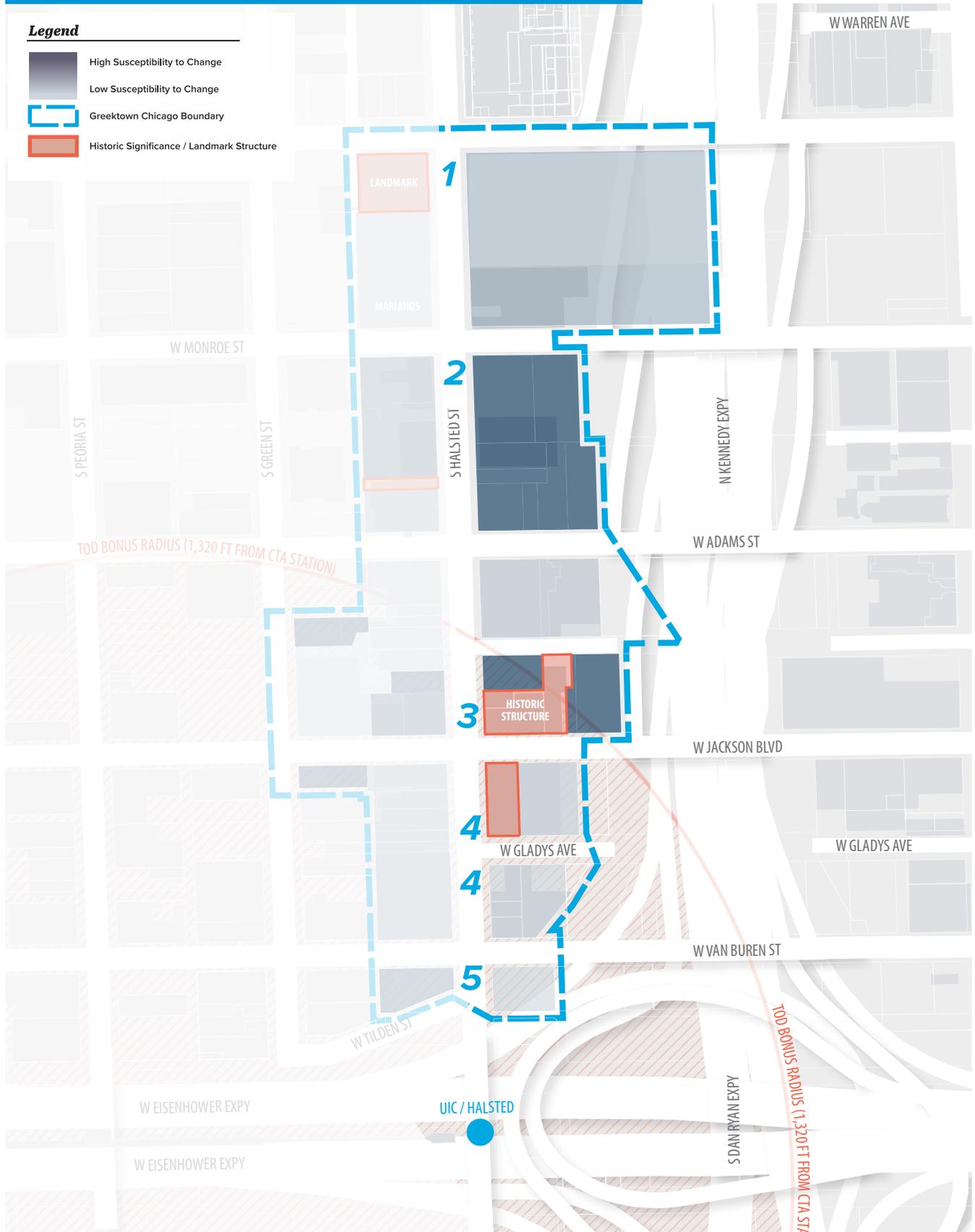
South of Van Buren



Susceptibility to Change on Halsted - EAST

Legend

-  High Susceptibility to Change
-  Low Susceptibility to Change
-  Greektown Chicago Boundary
-  Historic Significance / Landmark Structure



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

HALSTED STREET - WEST

Between Monroe (N) and Adams (S)



Between Madison (N) and Monroe (S)



Between Adams (N) and Jackson (S)



Between Gladys (N) and Van Buren (S)



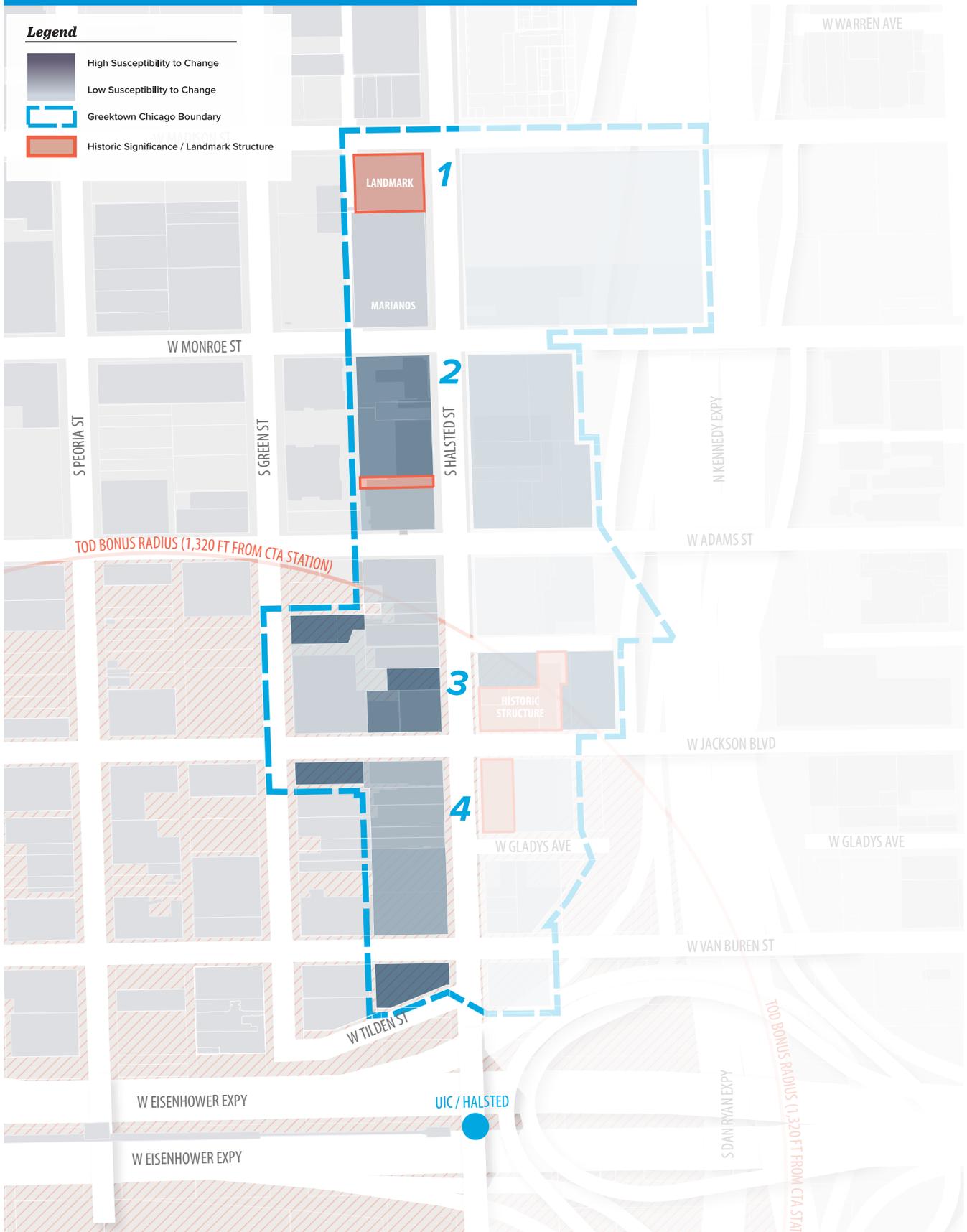
Between Jackson (N) and Gladys (S)



Susceptibility to Change on Halsted - WEST

Legend

-  High Susceptibility to Change
-  Low Susceptibility to Change
-  Greektown Chicago Boundary
-  Historic Significance / Landmark Structure



Greektown Business and Market Trends

There are current 109 businesses within the Greektown Special Service Area of which 12 are Greek restaurants and bars and three are Greek-related retail businesses. In total, Greek related businesses comprise 16 percent of the total number of businesses in the Special Service Area. Other businesses include 16 non-Greek related bars and restaurants, professional services and other retail businesses.

It is a natural phenomenon in major U.S. cities that ethnic neighborhoods and commercial areas change over time – Greektown is not the only ethnic commercial district to face an existential question after time and the diaspora of its immigrant population base. Neighborhoods are dynamic, and they become, in a sense, different places with each successive influx of new residents, whether they are new ethnic and racial groups or a demographic segment like Millennials. With several remaining Greek businesses, it is natural to ask the question: What makes Greektown, Greektown?

Greek businesses, though small in number today, remain a defining characteristic of Halsted Street in the West Loop. Of the 40 percent of all businesses in the Greektown SSA can be categorized as retail, restaurant, educational or cultural, fewer than half businesses are identifiably Greek. Still, they carry the district's identity in some way. The remaining Greek businesses are family-owned. For many of them, there is no successor generation preparing to step in and carry the businesses forward. With the lack of clear succession planning, the survival of Greektown's identity in its Greek businesses is fragile.

Strengths and Differentiation

Greektown is most identified with its restaurants, and restaurant dining is a strong driver of sales. As a handful of chain businesses has moved in or near Greektown – Starbucks, Walgreens, Mariano's, Whole Foods, and others – they have changed Greektown's character, particularly at its northern end near Madison Street.

Within the West Loop, restaurants and drinking establishments generate a sales surplus of \$222 million above the estimated restaurant spending by West Loop residents. However, much of this surplus is not being captured in Greektown – it is likely due to restaurant and bar sales just north of Greektown in the Fulton Market Innovation District. These trendy restaurants attract Millennials and tech workers living in the West Loop, and they serve as a regional destination, particularly for younger, trendsetting market segments. As a further indicator of Fulton Market's leading-edge character, the district will soon be home to Google's first permanent brick-and-mortar retail store in the country.

The experience offered in Greektown is entirely different. On the positive side, it is traditional and authentic, and some customers appreciate its "retro" character. At the same time, some Greektown businesses can be viewed as dated and tired. The traditional nature of Greektown's restaurants still holds appeal for some suburban Greek families but it does not match the lifestyle preferences of the West Loop's booming young residential population. If Greektown is to become re-energized, it needs to be reimagined.



Transportation and Parking

Greektown is easily accessible through public transportation via the CTA Blue Line at the UIC-Halsted stop. The CTA Number 8 Halsted bus traverses through Greektown along Halsted Street, and several bus routes connect with Halsted Street from the east and west including bus Number 126 (along Jackson/Monroe) and Number 20 (along Madison/Washington). In addition, the Number 19 United Center Express bus operates express from Halsted Street to the United Center before and after selective events. Greektown is also easily accessible in vehicle from the Eisenhower (Interstate 290) and Kennedy (Interstate 90/94) Expressways, as well as the city street grid.

Bicycle Facilities

Halsted Street is identified by the City as a Crosstown Bike Route which means it traverses through a range of land uses and leads to major destinations. Currently, Halsted Street has some shared lane pavement markings (sharrows) but not a consistent treatment for cyclists from the north end of the study area to the south. Bike parking (U-shaped racks) is provided along Halsted Street.

Parking

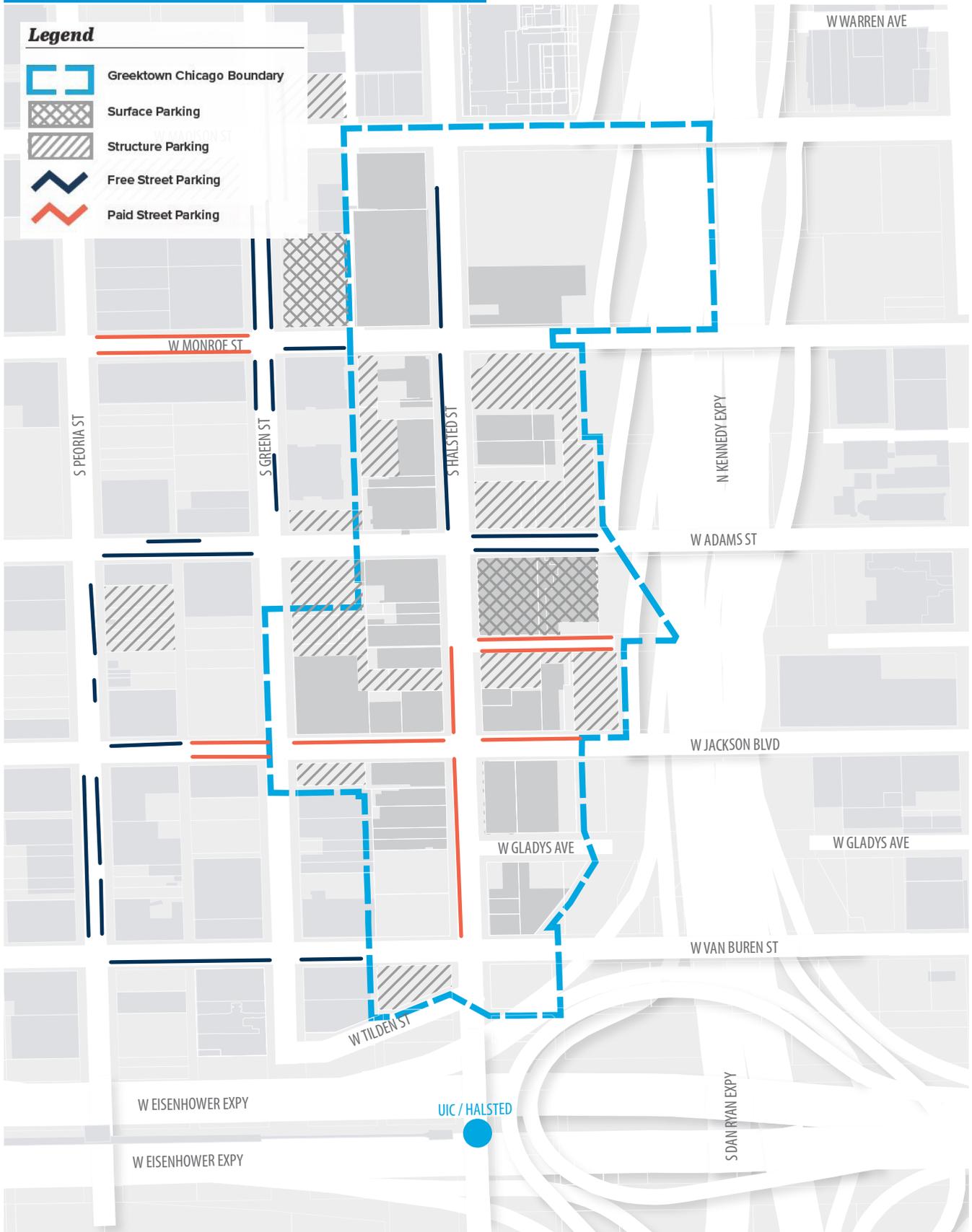
Parking is a commonly cited concern for visitors and the business community in Greektown. As surface lots have developed, easily available and visible surface parking options have decreased. The visiting public does not know where they can find parking due to the redevelopment of remaining surface lots during the last decade. Street parking on Halsted Street and the cross streets, mostly metered, is in high demand and full during peak dining times. Street parking that is not metered is also mostly full, likely used by residents and visitors for long-term parking. Arkadia Tower is the only public parking garage generally available to Greektown patrons, which is located near the southern portion of Greektown between Adams and West Quincy Street



Greektown Transportation Map

Legend

-  Greektown Chicago Boundary
-  Surface Parking
-  Structure Parking
-  Free Street Parking
-  Paid Street Parking



The Neighborhood Speaks

The Greektown Strategic Plan was designed to be stakeholder-supported and neighborhood-led so that the Strategic Plan planning process can achieve a high level of ownership. The community engagement process involved interviews and listening sessions with key Greektown stakeholders, two neighborhood open houses, and an online survey to gather a broad range of input on Greektown’s future. The following summary describes the public input opportunities and the key issues that emerged during the community engagement process.

Neighborhood Open House

A Neighborhood Open House was organized for May 24, 2018 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on Halsted Street in Greektown. Approximately 30 people attended, including local business owners, residents, and Greektown patrons. The Open House was organized around a series of stations and interactive exhibits focused on streetscape and urban design, future business mix, parking and transportation, and marketing and special events. The stations are summarized below.

Visual Preference Survey

Participants provided input on a variety of images illustrating various streetscape and public improvement initiatives. The images were organized around the following design topics:

- Public Art and Murals
- Streetscape Enhancements
- Storefront and Building Improvements
- Signage and Branding
- Business Development

The top images for each category are displayed on page 32. In general, participants preferred a more enhanced pedestrian experience, including outdoor café seating, accessible public art, pedestrian scale buildings, and Greek-themed and -branded streetscape elements.

Greek Business Mix

Participants identified how important maintaining “Greek” businesses within the SSA is to them by placing a dot along a scale of “not important at all” to “very important.” Ninety percent (90%) of respondents said maintaining “Greek” businesses is somewhat to very important to them.

Budgeting Exercise

Participants ranked the importance of various SSA initiatives by allocating funds to each improvement. At the open house, participants were given \$10.00 and could allocate their \$10.00 to various initiatives based on the “cost” associated with each item. Costs were based on the anticipated level of effort for each initiative. Costs for each initiative included:

- Marketing and Special Events Initiatives (\$2.00)
- Business Development Initiatives (\$2.00)
- Urban Design and Streetscape Initiatives (\$4.00)
- Placemaking Initiatives (\$3.00)
- Transportation Improvement Initiatives (\$4.00)
- Building Improvement Initiatives (\$2.00)
- Special Service Area Operations (\$1.00)

The top three priority initiatives were:

- *Transportation Improvement Initiative (4.69/5)*
- *Special Service Area Operations (4.69/5)*
- *Building Improvement Initiatives (3.91/5)*

Stakeholder responses:

“I would like to see the bars, restaurants and other local businesses continuing to keep the culture alive.”

“Hopefully we’ll revive Greektown with many opportunities to attract people and make it family friendly. Outdoor markets and other attractions relating to our culture and heritage.”

“Greektown is changing so much and I think it needs more specialty Greek stores like a Taverna with live music and mesedes.”

“We need to preserve Greektown as a clean and hip urban area of the city where people other than Greeks want to visit and feel safe in.”

“I would like to see more greek culture based businesses. A grocery store that can make it, or maybe a clothing store. I think easier parking would make a big difference.”

“We should preserve Greektown as a place where Greek culture and businesses are prominent. Where people of heritage congregate and share their culture with the larger community. A place where Greek language and traditions continue to thrive.”

Gladys Street Plaza

A conceptual design for potential plaza-festival space along Gladys Street east of Halsted was exhibited for public comment. The concept displayed a curb-less street featuring permeable pavers, and seatwalls. The street could be closed off for special events and accommodate vendor tents and movable chairs and tables. Catenary lights and public art provide interest within the space both during the day and at nighttime. Participants ranked the concept on a scale of 1 (I don’t like this) to 5 (I love this). The average weighted score was 3.85, indicated that most participants accept the concept.

Online Survey

Following the open house, an online community survey was posted to the West Central Association website between May and July 2018. The survey generated 189 respondents. Findings from the survey echoes those from the neighborhood open house in that respondents preferred the funding of initiatives related to parking and transportation, streetscape, building enhancements, and SSA operations.



VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

HIGHEST RANKING VISUALS IN ORDER

Gary Drostle Mosaic Road Paving



Outdoor Seating Areas



Sehenswürdigkeiten Storefront



Gateway Signage



Public Market / Food Hall / Agora



BUDGETING EXERCISE

HIGHEST RANKING INITIATIVES IN ORDER

Transportation Improvement Initiatives



Special Service Area Operations



Building Improvement Initiatives



Issues & Observations

The following is a summary of key issues and observations for Greektown as identified by Greektown stakeholders during the planning process.

Issues

- **Loss of Greek restaurants and other related businesses** – Due to retiring business owners, loss of available buildings and rent pressures, Greektown’s number of distinctive Greek restaurants, bakeries and other stores have declined in recent years, diminishing Greektown authenticity and cultural depth.
- **Need for more cultural programming and events** – Cultural activities and festivals are primarily sponsored through the National Hellenic Museum and the Greektown Special Service Area. More events that build traffic to Greektown businesses are needed throughout the year.
- **Doing business in Greektown** – Prospective business owners may not be attracted to Greektown due to the lack of available ground-floor spaces, increasing rents and the lack of on and off-street parking facilities.
- **Streetscape needs maintenance and enhancement** – Greektown residents and stakeholders expressed the need for maintaining the existing streetscape and enhancing in places to promote a more comfortable and safer pedestrian environment.
- **Development pressures and competition** – Development pressures extending westward from the Loop and northward from the Fulton Market Innovation District may displace additional Greektown businesses due to redevelopment and rising property taxes and land rents. The Fulton Market area is significant competition to Greektown restaurants.
- **Lack of organizational capacity** – Greektown’s Special Service Area lacks sufficient staff to undertake a more comprehensive revitalization program for Greektown, other than the marketing and promotion activities it currently manages and coordinates.
- **Greektown safety** – While there is a lack of serious crime in Greektown, local stakeholders have commented on the need to enhance security and a feeling of safety, especially along Greektown’s side streets.
- **Lack of gathering space** – Greektown currently lacks a formal gathering space for events and festivals, as well as sufficient sidewalk space for outdoor dining.

Observations

- **Greektown legacy businesses** – Greektown still retains a number of its legacy Greek restaurants and businesses in which to build a stronger and more diversified retail and dining and entertainment cluster.
- **The National Hellenic Museum** – The National Hellenic Museum can become an anchor destination for visitors and patrons by offering more cultural activities and events and cross-marketing with Greektown merchants and other Chicago cultural institutions.
- **Greektown events** – The Taste of Greektown along with new events and traffic-building activities can help bring West Loop residents, suburbanites and visitors to Greektown on a regular basis.
- **Central location with excellent access** – Greektown is located within a growing West Loop neighborhood and is served by the CTA and two nearby interstate expressways – more Greektown patrons will likely arrive to the district by walking and mass transit in the future.
- **Greektown Special Service Area** – The Greektown SSA has sufficient resources to implement new programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing building appearances and in facilitating new business start-ups in addition to its ongoing work in streetscape maintenance and organizing and supporting various events and festivals in Greektown.
- **Existing buildings** – Greektown is fortunate to have many of its traditional building stock intact that provides spaces for small businesses and contributes to Greektown’s authentic visual character.
- **Growing international tourism** – Chicago has become a premier destination for international tourists, especially from European countries – a market that is expected to grow in the coming years.
- **Strong regional connections and dedicated stakeholders** – Greektown is still a destination for many Greek-Americans living in the great Chicago metropolitan area and there are many neighborhood stakeholders who want to maintain Greektown’s cultural identity and relevance.



CHAPTER THREE

Strategic Plan

***This Strategic Plan** represents the results of a year-long collaborative planning process between the Greektown Special Service Area, businessmen and restaurateurs, West Loop residents, the City of Chicago and other stakeholder partners to create a compelling vision and key priority projects and initiatives essential for promoting and maintaining a successful Greektown commercial district. Greektown's vision statement below captures stakeholder aspirations and values regarding Greektown's long-term revitalization and development.*



Strategic Plan

Greektown – a Chicago legacy district and rich in history and culture – is a thriving neighborhood commercial area offering a diverse array of retail, services, cultural events and entertainment activities. A mix of restaurant and dining formats, including those that specialize in authentic and contemporary expressions of the Greek cuisine, remain the heart of the Halsted Street business make-up. Apart from dining and entertainment, new Greektown retailers and specialty businesses complement the restaurants in meeting the everyday consumer needs of West Loop residents. Greektown’s physical environment and streetscape provides for a comfortable and safe walking environment with spaces for social interactions and neighborhood gatherings. The National Hellenic Museum is Greektown’s anchor institution serving as the center for cultural activities and as a compelling destination for Chicago residents, the greater Greek-American community in the region, and the growing number of international visitors. Greektown’s success stems from its effective collaboration between property owners and merchants, neighborhood residents, institutions and the Greektown Special Service Area.

The Strategic Plan is based on four key planning goals – an overarching statement of intent that guides decision-making for the Special Service Area and its implementation partners.

Goal 1: / Enhance Greektown as a Compelling Cultural Destination

Greektown will become a primary destination in the Chicago metropolitan area for experiencing Greek and Mediterranean cuisine, culture and other dining and entertainment venues. This can be achieved by developing new events, celebrations, and festivals that appeal to West Loop residents, suburbanites and visitors, and forging and expanding collaborations with the National Hellenic Museum and other relevant organizations to promote Greektown’s goods, activities and activities. Such efforts will help strengthen Greektown’s cultural associations and ensure opportunities for visitors and patrons to become engaged with the commercial district’s offerings, as well as the deeper meaning and spirit of the Greek culture.

Goal 2: / Make Greektown a Destination Place

Greektown’s public spaces – streets, sidewalks lighting – were the subject of extensive improvements more than a decade ago. Although such improvements unified Greektown’s appearance, additional efforts are needed to support Greektown’s identity and desired level of activity, such as additional spaces for outdoor dining and for festivals and neighborhood gatherings. The pedestrian realm also needs enhancement to encourage a safe and comfortable walking environment. A new level of investment in Greektown’s public spaces will help improve gateways and wayfinding, and storefronts and signage. A new plaza and “people spots” along Halsted Street will help meet a long-desired need for a public gathering space in the heart of the Greektown commercial district.



Goal 3: / Maintain Greektown as a Vibrant Business District

Greektown will become a primary destination in the Chicago metropolitan area for experiencing Greek and Mediterranean cuisine, culture and other dining and entertainment venues. This can be achieved by developing new events, celebrations, and festivals that appeal to West Loop residents, suburbanites and visitors, and forging and expanding collaborations with the National Hellenic Museum and other relevant organizations to promote Greektown's goods, activities and activities. Such efforts will help strengthen Greektown's cultural associations and ensure opportunities for visitors and patrons to become engaged with the commercial district's offerings, as well as the deeper meaning and spirit of the Greek culture.

Goal 4: / Promote Greektown as a Prosperous & Collaborative Neighborhood

Greektown should be regarded as more than just four blocks of Halsted Street between Madison and Van Buren – it is part of larger growing and bustling Near West Loop neighborhood. Greektown's future success will largely rely on strengthened partnerships and collaborations between the Special Service Area Commission, the West Central Association, and different stakeholder groups to solve problems and manage specific initiatives. Apart from the needed partnerships, the SSA will need to expand its own capacity to facilitate change, implement projects, and communicate and engage with Greektown stakeholders to achieve the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives. Forging new partnerships with entities that have yet to participate in the Greektown revitalization process, including businesses, nearby institutions, and West Loop residents, is a high priority.

Each strategic planning goal is followed below by a series key actions and implementation steps needed to achieve the planning goals sets forth in this Strategic Plan. Additional implementation actions, including magnitude of costs for various urban design and streetscape initiatives, are included in Chapter 4.

Goal 1

***Enhance Greektown as
a Compelling Cultural
Destination***

KEY PLANNING ACTION ITEMS:

- #1 Develop a year-long calendar of Greektown events and promotions.*
- #2 Cross-promote events and activities between the Special Service Area, Greektown businesses and the National Hellenic Museum.*
- #3 Create a Greektown neighborhood market.*
- #4 Establish a Greektown Artist-in-Residence Program.*
- #5 Create a Greektown culinary program.*
- #6 Expand and diversify Greektown marketing efforts.*
- #7 Encourage live performances and other forms of entertainment.*

1

Develop a year-long calendar of Greektown events and promotions.

The annual Greek Independence Day Parade in March and the Taste of Greektown in August are two Greek-themed events designed to portray and promote the Greek culture to Chicago residents. A carefully-programmed calendar of recurring annual events and promotion activities should be maintained and expanded upon to promote Greektown as a place for experiencing Greek culture, neighborhood gathering, as well as shopping and spending in Greektown businesses. New promotion activities can also draw new visitors to Greektown and build on collaborations between the Greektown business and cultural communities. A full-year Greektown promotions calendar should be developed that includes a mix of indoor and outdoor events and festivals, retail-oriented activities that benefit the Greek restaurants and businesses, and ongoing image-building campaigns, social media and advertising efforts.

New types of promotion events to consider include:

- Greektown Winter Farmers Market (February- March) – held at the National Hellenic Museum, the Crowne Plaza Hotel or other location)
- Valentine’s Day Restaurant Event (February)
- Greektown Food Symposium (March) – two-day food symposium with talks, demonstrations and group discussions about innovations in the Greek and Mediterranean cuisine.
- Spring Light Show at the National Hellenic Museum (April-May)
- Greek Dance in Street Monthly Event (June-August)
- Summer Farmer’s Market (June – September)
- Fall Farm to Greek Table Dinner Event (September) – an outdoor event that highlights innovations in the Greek cuisine using locally-sourced ingredients.
- Fall Light Show at the National Hellenic Museum (September-October)
- Annual St. Nicholas Day-Christmas Parade alongside Christmas Tree Lighting event (December)

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

To expand Greektown promotion programming, partnerships within the neighborhood and other key stakeholders within the Chicago area should be expanded and explored to create lasting perennial events that attract visitors and patrons on an ongoing basis. Key implementation steps include:

- Form a standing Greektown Marketing and Promotion Committee within the West Central Association to assist in planning and coordinating existing and new events.
- Develop a preliminary calendar of potential promotion activities and identifying potential partners.
- Identify funding sources to new events, including sources from the City of Chicago, corporate donors, and foundations.
- Review and assess the effectiveness of Greektown promotions on a yearly basis.
- Fine-tune social media and communications strategies with its public relations and communication professionals to promote events and reach target audiences.

2

Cross-promote events and activities between the Special Service Area, Greektown businesses and the National Hellenic Museum.

Cross-promotion activities between Greektown businesses is an effective means to strengthen and enhance customer patronage and Greektown’s brand awareness as a neighborhood business district and a dining and entertainment destination. Cross-promotion activities can also extend to and involve the National Hellenic Museum so that it can leverage its own cultural events to build a wider audience for its programs. Such activities can also help the National Hellenic Museum create a “Museum community” for visitors and West Loop residents to join rather than just being a place to visit once every so often. The Greektown SSA can help facilitate cross-promotion efforts by convening businesses to participate in such promotions, through funding and underwriting such activities, evaluating their effectiveness in generating sales and patronage, and in increasing visitorship and memberships at the National Hellenic Museum. Potential cross-promotion activities could include:

- Offering a Greektown restaurant as a venue to host local West Loop and community and philanthropic events.
- Inserting special promotional offers or coupons in local business shopping bags.
- Organizing joint interviews with local media – for instance, a television broadcast highlighting a Greektown restaurant might also include a neighborhood business that showcases its products and services.
- Sharing information on special deals and offerings between businesses on joint e-mail messaging.
- Providing free food and drink samples to other local Greektown businesses.
- Using the National Hellenic Museum as a venue for Greektown special events and other West Loop community activities and gatherings.
- Sending regular Greektown event updates that include notices of upcoming exhibits and activities at the National Hellenic Museum.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Cross-marketing opportunities will require close collaborative efforts between the SSA, Greektown businesses, and the National Hellenic Museum to organize, fund and implement. Engaging businesses in cross-promotion activities that have not participated in Greektown events will serve to connect customers among the variety of businesses found in the district. Key implementation steps include:

- Plan and coordinate new cross-promotion activities as part of the yearly Marketing and Promotion Committee event calendar development.
- Conduct an annual planning session with Greektown businesses and the National Hellenic Museum to discuss potential cross-marketing activities.
- Identify and secure funding sources for cross-marketing projects.
- Evaluate cross-promotions on an annual basis.

3

Create a Greektown neighborhood market.

Farmers markets in the City of Chicago provide access to seasonal produce, flowers, prepared foods and other goods directly to neighborhood residents. Establishing a Greektown neighborhood market would enable Greektown restaurateurs and business owners to promote and sell their goods and access a larger pool of potential customers within the West Loop looking for sustainably-sourced Greek foods and products. There could be two options in establishing a Greektown neighborhood market: incorporating one as part of the Green City Market at Mary Barthelme Park at Peoria and Adams Street just outside of the SSA boundaries or as a new stand-alone market located in a newly-designed plaza space at Gladys and Halsted Street.

Green City Market at Mary Barthelme Park

The Green City Market operates from June through October every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and is Chicago's largest year-round farmers market outside the Loop. The market is already well-established and could provide an opportunity for Greektown businesses to test and market their products to West Loop residents and visitors to the Green City Market.

Greektown Street Market

An alternative to the Green City Market, the Greektown SSA could establish a weekly seasonal farmers market in a newly-designed plaza space at Gladys Street east of Halsted (see Action 14). As with the Green City Market, the Gladys Street market would feature goods from both Greek-themed business located within Greektown or from other neighborhoods and communities in the Chicago area. A Greektown market has the potential to create additional pedestrian traffic, as well as stimulate greater demand for Greek or Mediterranean-related restaurants and businesses over the long-term. Entertainment, cooking demonstrations, and arts and craft booths could also be included as part of the market.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Establishing a Greektown Street Market will first require determining the level of support and interest among Greektown businesses and West Loop residents and a thorough business plan that outlines start-up costs and overall budget, number of potential vendors, competition from other markets, management and staffing structure, and marketing needs. Given the time needed to develop a critical mass of vendors, it may be more feasible as a first step to start-up the Greektown Market as part of the nearby Green City Market at Mary Barthelme Park. Key implementation steps include:

- Conduct a survey and complete a business plan to determine level of support and feasibility for establishing a Greektown Street Market.
- Form a special SSA committee to oversee market management and staffing.
- Establish a working relationship with the Green City Market to encourage participation of Greektown vendors and other Greek-themed businesses from outside of Greektown.
- Design and complete installation of the Gladys Street pedestrian plaza or secure a temporary space.
- Conduct a yearly evaluation of the Greektown Street Market.

4

Establish a Greektown artist-in-residence program.

Greektown stakeholders expressed strong interest in promoting the presence of the arts to placemake the neighborhood with new public art installations, enhance Greektown cultural relevance, and spur the start-up of art galleries and other art-related businesses. An artist-in-residence program could be an effective mechanism in which to provide artists the space, time, resources and support to create new work, as well as engage in activities and local conversations about the Greek-American experience in Chicago. An artist-in-residence program typically sponsors an artist to live in a neighborhood or community for one or two years and is commissioned to produce artwork or to teach. A Greektown program would support a Greek or Greek-American artist to create art that could be installed in Greektown or displayed in the National Hellenic Museum. The sponsored artists could also provide lectures or classes at the Museum or lead discussions or art unveilings in one of the Greektown restaurants or businesses.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Greektown stakeholders have stated that many Greek or Greek-American artists currently live in the suburbs and could be recruited to participate in a Greektown residency program if the right studio space and other resources were furnished and provided. A regional, nationwide or international solicitation of prospective resident artists could be conducted through a formal application process. Ideally, such a program should involve the National Hellenic Museum to leverage their educational programming and marketing efforts. Key implementation steps include:

- Initiate research efforts in establishing an artist-in-residency program and create a business plan for sponsorship and operation.
- Locate a suitable studio space and secure operational funding through grants or donations.
- Market and cross-promote the artist-in-residence program to Greektown partners and stakeholder businesses and organizations.

CASE STUDY

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Artist-in-Residence Program

The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, founded in 1973, administers several arts residency programs designed to help promote the creation of artistic work in Lower Manhattan, New York in exchange for providing temporary studio spaces for local artists. The residencies are for nine-months in duration and are open to artists across all disciplines – painting, sculpture, fabrication, and the media and literary arts. The program has resulted in the production of public art pieces and the production of other works reflecting the cultural influences of the artists themselves.

5

Create a Greektown culinary program.

A formal culinary program that provides basic and advance instruction in Greek and Mediterranean cooking to chefs and mature cooks alike can help advance Greektown as a center for gastronomic learning in the Chicago region. It also may encourage innovations in the Greek cuisine that could spark new restaurant openings. Existing Greektown restaurants could also be engaged in providing the instruction kitchens and space, or a partnership could be established with an established culinary institute, such as the Culinary Arts School at Kendall College or the Illinois Institute of Art, both located in Chicago. A week-long cooking institute could also be organized as a lead-up to the National Hellenic Museum annual Kouzina event.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A Greektown culinary program should involve the existing Greektown restaurants in some capacity, ideally with their kitchens serving as teaching space, and their chefs and cooks as instructors. It is understood that such involvement would require the restaurants and chefs to be available off-hours. A formal affiliation with an existing institution offers the availability of classroom as well as kitchen space, although such instruction may likely be provided off-site from Greektown. Additional implementation steps include:

- Create a culinary program business plan that outlines space needs, potential instructors and institutional partnerships, start-up and operating costs, and fundraising needs.
- Conduct an information meeting with Greektown restaurateurs to determine level of interest and participation in the culinary program.
- Seek corporate sponsorships or grant support.
- Market and cross-promote the culinary program with institutional partners, the National Hellenic Museum, area Greek-Orthodox churches and other Hellenic organizations, West Loop neighborhood groups, and various Chicago culinary training institutes.



6

Expand and diversify Greektown marketing efforts.

The Greektown SSA is already engaged in marketing Greektown businesses and events through various social media and advertising activities. Given that the Chicago tourism market is expected to continue increasing in the years ahead, and the concurrent need to make Greektown a relevant cultural destination for Chicago-area Greek-Americans, a highly coordinated and wide-ranging marketing strategy is needed using a variety of marketing tools. Greektown has cultural activities, programs, events, and institutions that should be more widely-promoted and celebrated. Such initiatives could include:

- Developing a regular e-mail newsletter to the Greek Orthodox churches and Hellenic organizations in the region regarding Greektown events and activities.
- Developing and disseminating a Greektown video to various online Chicago-area and national tourism marketing platforms and venues.
- Creating maps, brochures, and podcasts about Greektown businesses, Greektown history, the National Hellenic Museum, and special events that can be easily downloaded from the Greektown SSA website.
- Purchasing advertisements in key tourism and Greek-American publications and websites.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The Greektown SSA should use its Marketing and Promotion Committee and its communications firm to prepare a comprehensive marketing plan that goes beyond its existing level of social media activities. Additional implementation steps may include:

- Seeking advice from various tourism entities, including the Chicago and Illinois Offices of Tourism, on how to coordinate and enhance Greektown tourism efforts.
- Meeting with various Chicago-area Greek organizations and entities to determine possible marketing opportunities.
- Creating a more comprehensive marketing program that incorporates advertising, online marketing and social media, and other activities.
- Measuring tourism levels in collaboration with Greektown businesses and the National Hellenic Museum on an annual basis.

7

Encourage live performances and other forms of entertainment.

To drive new pedestrian traffic and to enliven the Greektown atmosphere during the spring, summer and fall months, the Greektown SSA could partner with a Chicago theater company to stage live performances of Greek plays in vacant storefront windows at night, or in the windows of the Hellenic Museum. Live music, whether Greek or other music forms, could be performed outdoors at designated locations near Greektown restaurants and the National Hellenic Museum. Outdoor performances could also be held in a potential Gladys Street pedestrian plaza.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Live performances can be a relatively inexpensive way to draw people to Greektown and its businesses, as well as promote Greektown businesses and the Greek culture. Several Greektown stakeholders have noted that Greektown once had several Greek nightclubs that have since closed. Offering low-cost means to experience live theater and music would help fill the gap for the entertainment in the Greektown commercial district. Specific implementation steps include:

- Developing through the Marketing and Promotion Committee a working list of musicians and musical ensembles.
- Working with the National Hellenic Museum and other local museums and institutions to create special package deals for Greek-related live performance events offered in Greektown.
- Reaching out to regional Greek-American organizations and groups to market and promote Greektown as a potential location for their annual festivals and events.





Goal 2

***Make Greektown a
Destination Place***

KEY PLANNING ACTION ITEMS:

- #8 Develop a more comprehensive Greektown signage and wayfinding program.*
- #9 Enhance Greektown gateways with identification elements.*
- #10 Install temporary or permanent “café spaces.”*
- #11 Improve Greektown intersections.*
- #12 Extend Greektown streetscape to additional blocks within the Special Service Area.*
- #13 Establish and maintain a Greektown storefront and signage program.*
- #14 Placemake Greektown with wall murals and other forms of temporary and permanent public art.*
- #15 Design and construct a Gladys Street public plaza or shared street space.*
- #16 Employ digital projection mapping as a Greektown placemaking method.*
- #17 Activate vacant storefronts with pop-up art and cultural displays.*

8

Develop a more comprehensive Greektown signage and wayfinding program.

There are currently limited wayfinding signage elements to help visitors navigate to Greektown and to key destinations, including the National Hellenic Museum and available parking. Additional wayfinding elements can not only help patrons and visitors navigate to and within Greektown, but they can enhance Greektown's identity and reinforce its sense of place within the West Loop neighborhood. Additional wayfinding elements should include identity and directional signs, as well as information kiosks at strategic locations, such as at the Blue Line and bus stations within and adjacent to Greektown.

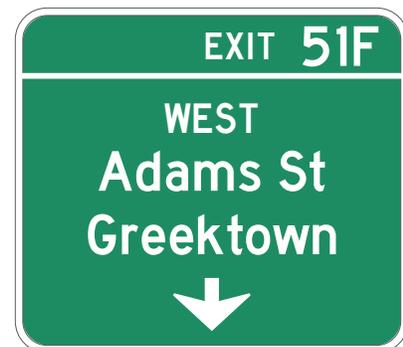
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The Greektown Special Service Area should form a Design and Public Improvements Committee that can oversee the design and implementation of a Greektown-wide wayfinding program. New wayfinding signage should incorporate the Greektown brand logo to ensure a consistent Greektown image and identity; wayfinding signage can also include an interpretive element that tells the story of Greektown buildings and businesses. Key implementation steps include:

- Preparing a wayfinding signage plan that proposes a complete wayfinding signage family design and location map for wayfinding installation.
- Coordinating with local businesses and property owners, and all regulatory bodies including the CTA, and CDOT and IDOT on signage standards and wayfinding placement and installation.



SMALL DESTINATION SIGNS



GUIDE SIGNS



LARGE DESTINATION SIGNS



PEDESTRIAN KIOSK

9

Enhance Greektown gateways with identification elements.

Greektown's gateway areas provide a unique opportunity to better distinguish its commercial district while also improving connectivity with adjacent neighborhoods. Additional identification elements in the form of public art can further strengthen the recognition of the Greektown neighborhood and provide content and interpretation of the neighborhoods social and cultural histories. While the temple gateway structures have already been installed at various locations in Greektown, additional gateway enhancements can be accomplished through improved lighting, landscaping, and installing the Greektown brand logo and other design features to the new Interstate 90-94 underpasses adjacent to Greektown.



BEFORE

- 1 Branded overpass with Greek key and Greektown logo overlaid onto blue background.
- 2 Mosaic tiles along sidewalk along bridge railing.

AFTER



IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

As with the wayfinding signage program, the Design and Public Improvements Committee could develop a gateway enhancements plan that outlines various gateway improvements. Other key implementation steps include:

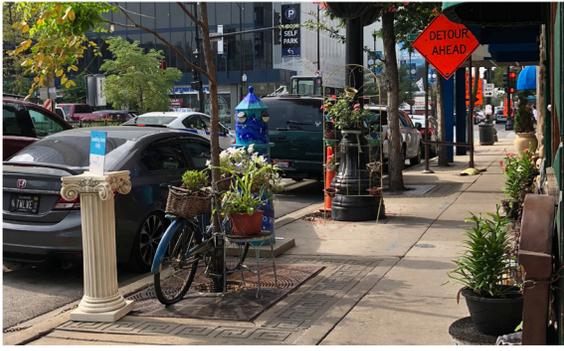
- Coordinating with local business and property owners, as well as CDOT and IDOT to develop gateway and identification elements for Greektown.
- Considering the relocation of existing obelisk monuments to other locations as new gateway features.



10

Install temporary or permanent “café spaces.”

In most instances, Halsted Street lacks sufficient sidewalk space for outdoor dining activities. In lieu of such space, several restaurants have resorted to installing retractable storefronts to create some sense of an outdoor ambience within the restaurant interiors. While retractable storefronts should continue to be encouraged, creating additional opportunities for outdoor dining should be pursued, including, temporary “café spaces” or “people spots” installed in a parking space adjacent to the restaurant. Café spaces can be designed using a variety of materials, features and amenities for restaurant patrons in formats that can be easily assembled and dissembled when needed. More permanent café spaces can be constructed in side alleys or parking areas, such as the parking lot adjacent to the former Rodity’s Restaurant. Such spaces can serve to increase pedestrian activity in Greektown and foster walkability along Halsted Street. Ideal locations for temporary people spots include Dugan’s, Meli Café, and the Ambassador House.



BEFORE



- 1 Temporary people spot/outdoor cafe seating with painted pavement, and moveable seating and planter boxes.
- 2 Street tree investments.

AFTER | TEMPORARY

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The Chicago Department of Transportation maintains a set of design standards for the installation of people spots in Chicago's neighborhood commercial districts – these guidelines should serve as the starting point for how they can be designed, installed and used in Greektown. Other key implementation steps include:

- Identify Greektown restaurants that may want to construct and use a temporary or permanent café spot.
- Consider development a café space incentive program through the SSA's Design and Public Improvement Committee.
- Work with developers, the local alderman's office, and Chicago DPD on a case-by-case basis to allow deeper front or side building setbacks to accommodate outdoor dining and seating areas for new developments along Halsted Street and other areas in Greektown.



10

Alternative Café Spot along a side wall.



BEFORE



- 1 Outdoor cafe / people spot
- 2 Street tree investment

AFTER



11

Improve Greektown intersections.

Greektown stakeholders often cited the need to improve Greektown’s pedestrian environment, especially at intersections where sidewalk space is limited. This can be achieved through the installation of curb extensions or “bump-outs” that can increase pedestrian visibility through improved sight lines and decreased pedestrian exposure to vehicles by shortening the cross distance. In addition, curb extensions can serve to reduce vehicle turn speeds by physically and visually narrowing the roadway. Crosswalks can also be visually enhanced through special pavement treatments, which can add a visual distinction in the roadway signaling a driver to down.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Installing curb extensions and crosswalk treatments along Halsted Street and other intersections will require approval from both IDOT and the Chicago Department of Transportation. Other implementation steps may include:

- Working with IDOT and CDOT on securing preliminary approvals for Halsted Street curb extensions and crosswalk enhancements.
- Designing the curb extensions and crosswalk improvements as part of a streetscape program.



BEFORE

- 1 Pedestrian bumpout using pavement markings, bollards, and planters.
- 2 Branded pavement treatments on crosswalks
- 3 Branded Streetscape elements such as planter
- 4 Mural
- 5 Clearly delineated bike lanes

AFTER





12

Extend Greektown streetscape to additional blocks within the Special Service Area.

Greektown's current streetscape program, which consists mainly of regularly-spaced trees with a Greek key design treatment surrounding the tree gate as well as new light standards, was installed primarily along Halsted Street from Van Buren to Monroe Streets. While the streetscape does visually unify this stretch of Halsted Street, the side streets and the one block of Halsted Street from Monroe to Madison Streets were not included in the original streetscape program and could benefit from streetscape enhancements. Including these blocks would help bind together the entire Special Service Area with a consistent, branded appearance that better connects Greektown with other West Loop neighborhoods.

Extending the streetscape also provides the opportunity to explore other enhancements, including the potential for flowerbeds and planters, curb extensions, and special pavement treatments. In some places, the Greek key tree grate surrounds need reconstruction or possible replacement – a new streetscape program could help provide more durable alternatives.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

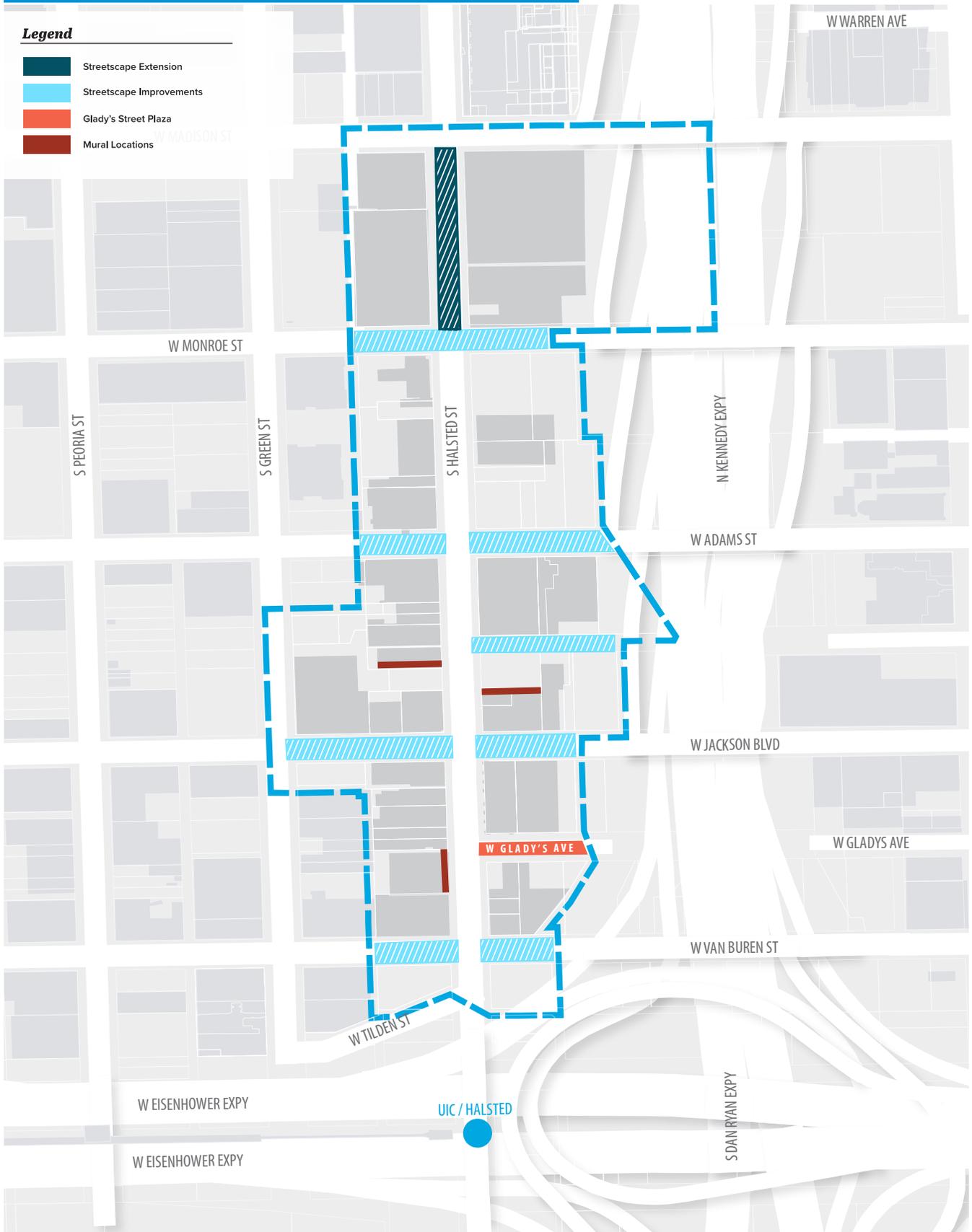
Key implementation steps for extending the Greektown streetscape program include the following key action steps:

- Consultation with CDOT and IDOT regarding streetscape design requirements and approvals.
- Creation of a streetscape design plan and determination of preliminary cost estimates.
- Development of construction drawings and determination of final project costs.
- Implementation of streetscape mitigation plan, including marketing and promotion activities and wayfinding signage that helps Greektown businesses survive the period of streetscape construction.
- Work with local property owners to coordinate maintenance and establish a sense of community ownership for new improvements.

Greektown Streetscape Extension Map

Legend

- Streetscape Extension
- Streetscape Improvements
- Gladys's Street Plaza
- Mural Locations



13

Establish and maintain a Greektown storefront and signage program.

Maintaining and encouraging attractive storefront design and signage is a principal means in which Greektown can convey a sense of cultural identity and authenticity to visitors and patrons. In the past year, the SSA has established a façade and signage grant program available to Greektown property and business owners. Given that the majority of Greektown buildings and their upper facades facing Halsted Street are in good condition, the grant program should be focused on rehabilitating and enhancing ground-level storefronts and signage that promote and reinforce a Greektown identity while encouraging up-to-date, innovative designs. Façade grant monies should also be used to preserve other character-defining features of historic Greektown buildings, such as upper-story windows, storefront cornices and lintels, window hoods and arched openings, and roof-level cornices.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A priority implementation step is to establish a Design Committee composed of SSA commissioners, qualified architects, graphic designers and sign makers, as well as Greektown business owners and West Loop residents to undertake the review of grant applications. Other steps may include:

- Offering design assistance to applicants to prepare schematic drawings of proposed façade and storefront improvements.
- Organizing an annual information meeting with Greektown businesses on the façade grant program.
- Developing other printed and online marketing materials regarding the program.
- Preparing a list of qualified architects, sign and awning makers that could be distributed to grant applicants.
- Establish storefront improvement awards to recognize businesses who have utilized the façade grant program and implemented improvements.



14

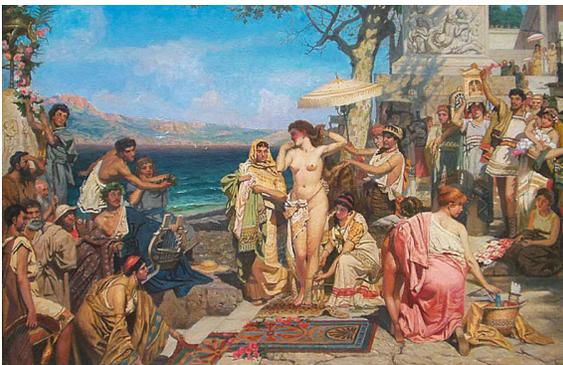
Placemake Greektown with wall murals and other forms of temporary and permanent public art.

In the last years, the Greektown Arts and Space Committee has installed temporary public art pieces to enliven the Halsted Street streetscape and to engage the Greek-American artist community. In 2017, the Greektown SSA, in partnership with local artists and other non-profit organizations, organized a ten-piece installation of individually designed and painted dinghy boats highlighting the association between the Greek people and seafaring. In 2018, the SSA also organized an outdoor exhibit of 16 painted lighthouses that continues the theme of Greece and the sea. These temporary installations should continue as part of a Greektown placemaking program that builds on Greektown's sense of place. Space for more permanent displays of public art and sculpture within the SSA boundaries is rather limited, however. To compensate for this, wall murals could be installed on various prominent building side facades to promote Greektown's identity, add color and vibrancy to the commercial district, and involve local artists in creative expression. Other forms of more permanent types of public arts that could be installed in Greektown include painted crosswalks, landscape treatments and plantings on side walls, decorative or ornamental fencing, and sculptural pieces integrated in buildings and parking lots.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Permission from building and business owners for walls murals and other public art types installed on building surfaces and parking areas will need to be secured. In some cases where commercial billboards occupy suitable wall surfaces, permission will be needed from the billboard company and property owner for temporary murals. Other key implementation steps include:

- Identify property owners that are willing to participate in a wall mural program and create a list of experienced wall art painters.
- Consider a partnership with the Chicago Public Art Group to engage local West Loop residents and the greater Greek-American community in the design and installation of a wall mural or public art piece.
- Prepare a calendar of upcoming temporary art installations and secure participation from Greek-American artists, Hellenic institutions and area non-profit organizations.
- Contact billboard companies to determine short-term lease costs for provisional wall murals.
- Encourage murals or other forms of public art as part of any Greektown façade or building rehabilitation program.



15

Design and construct a Gladys Street public plaza or shared street space.

Greektown stakeholders have long desired a permanent public space to host events and neighborhood gatherings despite the existing constraints of a highly built-out environment and the lack of open space near and adjacent to the Halsted Street commercial corridor. A “shared street” concept, where the street is designed in ways that accommodate both vehicles and pedestrian users, could potentially be employed at Gladys Street east of Halsted – an area that is already cordoned off for use during the annual Taste of Greektown event. A shared street at this location could be designed with brick pavement pavers, no curbs, special lighting, public art, and various landscaping treatments; the street could then be closed temporarily for Greektown events, a farmer’s market and for activities associated with the National Hellenic Museum. Vehicle access to parking for the Museum, as well as the adjacent residential and restaurant uses can be maintained with dedicated travel lanes towards the eastern end of Gladys Street at the Kennedy Expressway embankment.

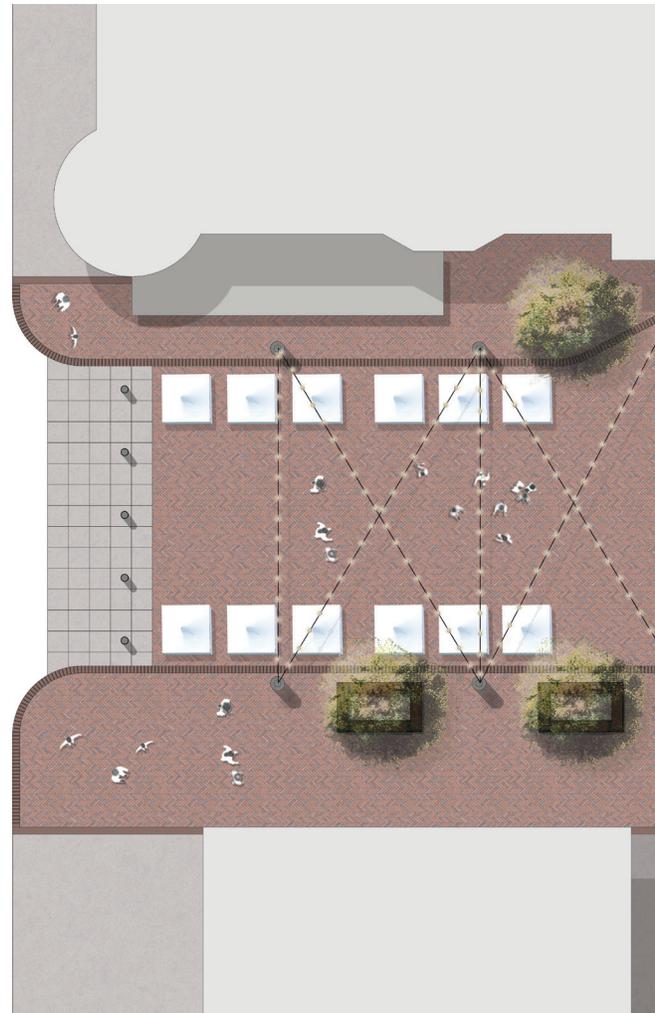


BEFORE

- 1 Shared street with brick pavers.
- 2 Removable bollards
- 3 Seat wall planters
- 4 Farmers Market temporary tents
- 5 Elevated art sculpture
- 6 Removable chairs and tables
- 7 Tivoli lights
- 8 Enclosed trash dumpsters

AFTER

S HALSTED ST.



IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A key step in creating the Gladys Street shared street plaza space is to fund the development of a concept plan and full construction drawings. Additional implementation steps include:

- Securing agreements with the National Hellenic Museum and adjacent businesses and residential towers on when the plaza space can be used, protocols on notifying parties when events occur, and coordinating temporary wayfinding signage on directing traffic around Gladys Street during events.
- Preparing a budgeting and funding plan for design and construction.

W JACKSON BLVD.





BEFORE



- 1 Shared street with brick pavers.
- 2 Removable bollards
- 3 Seat wall planters
- 4 Farmers Market temporary tents
- 5 Elevated art sculpture
- 6 Removable chairs and tables
- 7 Tivoli lights
- 8 Enclosed trash dumpsters

AFTER



16

Employ digital projection mapping as a Greektown placemaking method.

Given the space constraints for installing new public art and spaces in Greektown, digital projection mapping or media projections could be used as an effective placemaking tool and in branding Greektown as a compelling visitor destination. Digital media projections are immersive three-dimensional videos that are projected onto landmark buildings and interior spaces; the digital videos are produced with suitable software, such as Autodesk Max, Adobe After Effects, or Cinema 4D, and projected with the use of high-lumen video projectors, powerful sound systems, and media servers. In Greektown, the upper facades of the National Hellenic Museum could be a suitable canvas for nighttime digital projection shows – shows with Greek themes incorporating images from ancient Greek history, significant places in Greece, or the faces of prominent Greeks and Greek-Americans, for instance. Such shows could be displayed during Greektown festivals and events or during important Greek holidays.

An alternative to digital project mapping is to illuminate the interior or exterior sides of the Museum’s glass curtain wall at nighttime with different colors. This can help enliven the Museum’s appearances at nighttime when it is closed to visitors.



BEFORE

1 Digital projection mapping

AFTER



IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The major implementation expense is the purchase and maintenance of the digital projection equipment and the production of projection shows if pursued by the Special Service Area. The SSA can also commission a private company for the rental of projection equipment and the production of the digital shows. Other key implementation steps include:

- Collaborate and consult with the National Hellenic Museum or other Greektown building owners on the creation of a business plan and calendar for digital projection shows.
- Seek sponsorships for commissioning digital media artists and the production of digital projection shows.
- Develop a list of “digital curators” available for the creation of “Greek-themed” project shows.



17

Activate vacant storefronts with pop-up art and cultural displays.

Vacant storefronts contribute to a sense of inactivity within a commercial district. While these storefronts await future tenants, they can easily be transformed as “pop-up” cultural exhibit spaces or displays for local artists. An accurate inventory of vacant storefronts should be developed and maintained for future use as pop-up spaces.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

An SSA Design Committee could work with Greektown property owners to identify vacant spaces and connect them with local artists. The National Hellenic Museum could also be involved in displaying exhibits, posters, and advertisements for its own exhibits and Museum events. Other implementation steps may include:

- Creating a vacant storefront inventory that could be updated on an ongoing basis.
- Preparing a vacant storefront “pop-up” kit that contains materials, portable art work, furnishings and other materials that could be easily transported to vacancies when they occur.

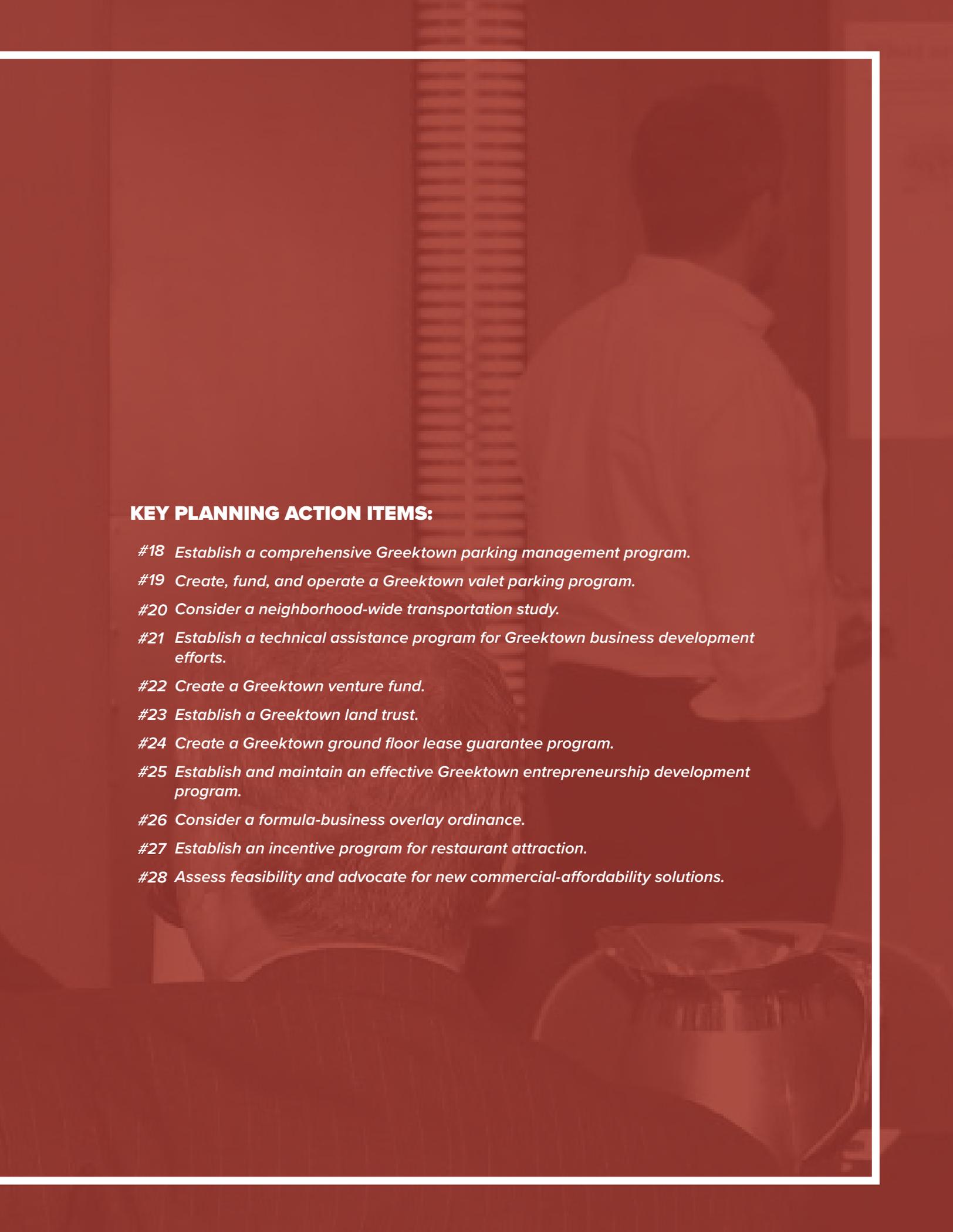




A woman with short, curly hair is speaking into a microphone. She is wearing a dark top and has her hand near her chin. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a meeting or conference setting with other people and a whiteboard. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

Goal 3

***Maintain Greektown
as a Vibrant Business
District***



KEY PLANNING ACTION ITEMS:

- #18 Establish a comprehensive Greektown parking management program.*
- #19 Create, fund, and operate a Greektown valet parking program.*
- #20 Consider a neighborhood-wide transportation study.*
- #21 Establish a technical assistance program for Greektown business development efforts.*
- #22 Create a Greektown venture fund.*
- #23 Establish a Greektown land trust.*
- #24 Create a Greektown ground floor lease guarantee program.*
- #25 Establish and maintain an effective Greektown entrepreneurship development program.*
- #26 Consider a formula-business overlay ordinance.*
- #27 Establish an incentive program for restaurant attraction.*
- #28 Assess feasibility and advocate for new commercial-affordability solutions.*

18

Establish a comprehensive Greektown parking management program.

Parking needs in Greektown should be addressed comprehensively with the aim to securing shared off-street parking resources where possible, communicating the available supply of public parking for out-of-town visitors and metering all prime on-street parking throughout Greektown to discourage long-term parking in free spaces by employees and residents. Additional off-street parking lots will be difficult to secure in the future given that Greektown has nearly reached full build-out; however, where opportunities exist, they should be pursued for use by all Greektown visitors and patrons. A potential off-street parking lot could be developed on land located just west of Halsted Street, south of Van Buren and just north of the Eisenhower Expressway embankment.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The SSA could establish a parking management committee that would oversee the following implementation action steps:

- Feature parking options on the Greektown website, including spaces within the Arkadia Tower and the Park One lot, as well as information on what parking zones are available using the in using the ParkChicago or other smartphone parking apps.
- Incorporate parking signage into a Greektown wayfinding signage package to direct visitors to parking spaces, lots and garages.
- Facilitate conversations with Greektown businesses about sharing parking resources to increase the pool of parking open to the public.
- Work with the City of Chicago and the Laz Parking Company to meter all prime street parking throughout Greektown.
- Investigate potential for developing a Greektown surface parking lot at the far southwest corner of Van Buren and Halsted Streets.

19

Create, fund, and operate a Greektown valet parking program.

Currently, several of the Greektown restaurants offer a valet service for patrons. A Greektown valet program available to all Greektown businesses could also help alleviate the parking concern of other Greektown destination businesses. The main benefit of a Greektown-wide valet program is that operating costs could be spread among many businesses; it can also help to reduce the perception that there is no available parking and alleviate traffic congestion for visitors circling around Greektown searching for parking. It should be noted that SSAs in Chicago are currently not permitted to fund and operate parking valet programs, including the ownership and use of off-street lots for valet purposes. However, the Greektown SSA should discuss with the City and the Aldermanic Office to determine what additional research and data gathering would be needed to justify a departure from this policy for Greektown. The Greektown SSA and the West Central Association should prepare a discussion paper of why parking is a critical issue for Greektown, the economic impact of loss of the off-street parking lots, and the options it would like to pursue. Alternatively, the West Central Association could manage the valet program using different funding sources, including pooled funds from merchants and property owners.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Initiate discussions with the Greektown businesses that already fund their own valet services to gauge interest in participating in district-wide program.
- Develop a Request for Proposal to prospective firms interested in operating a Greektown valet service.
- Consider a pilot version of the program – perhaps for one year – that may be limited to just the restaurant businesses and the National Hellenic Museum. The program could be expanded in later years with additional participation from other Greektown businesses.



20

Consider a neighborhood-wide transportation study.

Since traffic circulation and parking issues extend well beyond the commercial district along Halsted Street and are compounded by other surrounding land uses and activities such as UIC, schools, offices, parks, and entertainment venues, Greektown should consider participating in a study of circulation and parking issues throughout the West Loop neighborhood. A parking and circulation study would help to determine the short and long-term parking supply needs of both the Greektown SSA and West Loop community, provide the SSA with reliable data regarding current and future parking demand, and develop specific steps to explore funding parking partnerships and valet services.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The Greektown SSA and the West Central Association should work with the Aldermanic Office and other West Loop entities to determine the level of support for a neighborhood transportation study. Other partners should include the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Police Department, and any other large employers or traffic generators in the West Loop. Other actions may include:

- Form a West Loop-wide steering committee that can oversee and supervise the transportation study.
- Prioritize and advocate for improvements to the West Loop transportation system, including initiatives that address Greektown parking issues and needs.



21

Establish a technical assistance program for Greektown business development efforts.

As noted before, the recent closures of three of Greektown most well-known restaurants have underscored the concern the district's cultural depth and identity has been diminished. The closures have been attributed to retirements and deaths of the original operators and rising lease rents. A Greektown SSA business development program could help to facilitate new business start-ups and work with existing businesses on sale and succession planning. Specific forms of technical assistance may include:

- Information and assistance navigating City of Chicago regulations and permitting processes.
- One-on-one technical assistance with a business development consultant contracted by the Greektown Special Service Area – focused on business plan development and operational management, lease negotiations, marketing, and financial management.
- Referrals to other local technical assistance providers at the City of Chicago, Cook County and the State of Illinois.
- Identifying sources of small business start-up financing.

A technical assistance program can help create economic opportunity for businesses in Greektown whether it supports new Greektown entrepreneurs or helps existing businesses remain competitive in a complex and changing regional and global marketplace. A key focus of business development efforts is addressing succession in family-owned businesses in Greektown, a particularly challenging issue in Greektown. Providing advice on business succession planning, recruiting potential buyers, or potentially converting a small business or proprietorship to a cooperative or other form of ownership should be a priority. This advice is best offered in discrete one-on-one consultations. Several outside training institutes provide specialize trainings to SSA managers and economic development officials on facilitating business successions and could be a resource for the Greektown Special Service Area.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A Small Business Development Committee should be established to develop, guide and administer a Greektown business development program. Additional implementation action steps include:

- Creating and publicizing an annual series of low-cost educational lectures and trainings delivered by outside consultant groups and service providers specialized in business development.
- Forging partnerships with local lenders and micro-lending organizations to develop a guaranteed loan program for Greektown small business loans. Guidelines may include lower down payments, flexible overhead requirements, and no collateral loans.

22

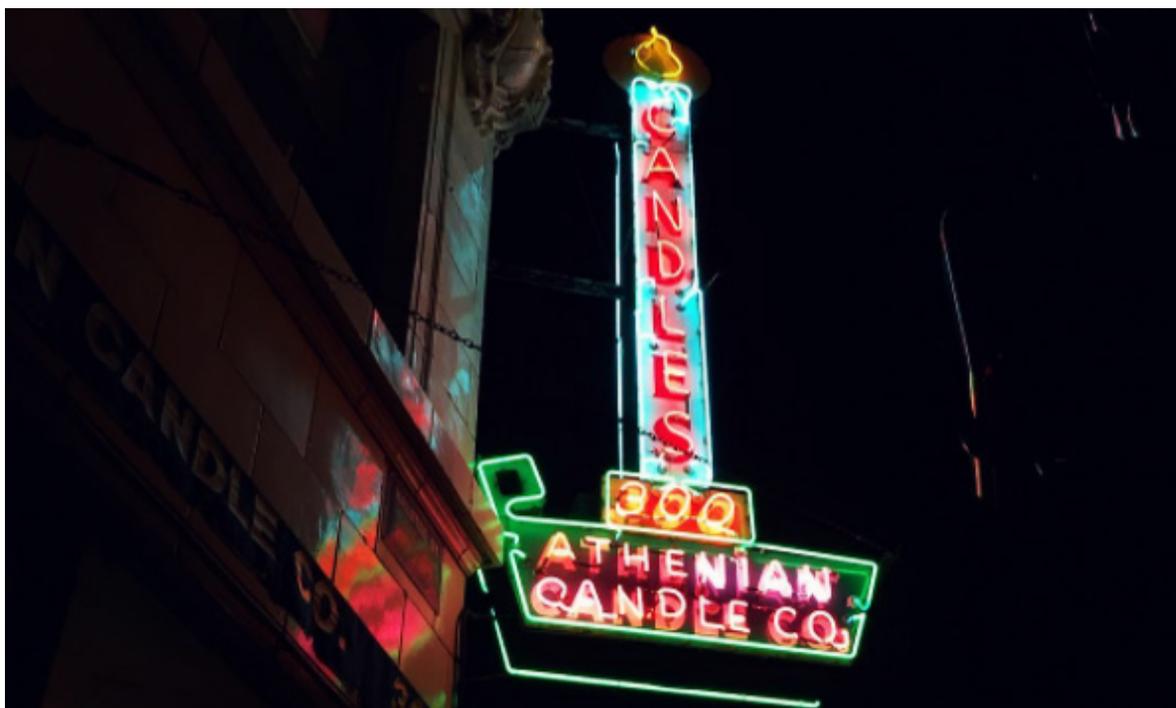
Create a Greektown venture fund.

Grants and contributions from foundations, corporations, institutions, and “angel” investors could be secured to initiate a venture fund for small business capitalization and expansion. A venture fund could be used to underwrite the purchase of kitchen equipment, often the largest expense in the start-up of new restaurants. The venture fund could be administered by the West Central Association and targeted to the opening of new Greek-themed businesses or other businesses serving the West Loop market. A venture fund can also be used in combination with any existing incentive programs that may be developed and administered by the SSA and the West central Association.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A key implementation step is to identify potential investors and donors to a Greektown venture fund. Other important implementation action items may include:

- Determining potential partners in the funding, administration and marketing of a venture fund.
- Establishing eligibility criteria and formulating a formal venture application and application process.



23

Establish a Greektown land trust.

A land trust can be a potential tool to help maintain an urban neighborhood's business character, especially in an intense development environment such as the West Loop. A land trust is an entity that purchases and holds properties for the neighborhood's benefit. Essentially, the land trust separates the value of the land from the value of the building, typically allowing the building to be owned separately, where the building's owner can benefit from any rise in value, while eliminating the incentive to sell the lot.

Land trusts have traditionally been used to facilitate affordable homeownership in neighborhoods where rising rents are causing residential displacement. More recently, a few land trusts have been used in commercial districts. In Little Havana, Miami, the South Florida Community Land Trust has explored options to purchase commercial property as the Miami real estate market has overheated in recent years. The Land Trust is undertaking this with a \$750,000 grant from Citibank and other funds. Greektown's SSA and the West Central Association could purchase properties for the public-benefit purpose of reducing displacement. This option would have to be approved by the City of Chicago. Alternatively, as the South Florida Community Land Trust has done, a grant or other sources of funding, including angel investors, could be pursued.

As an option, a Greektown Land Trust could also pursue the negotiation and purchase of condominium space at the ground floor level in existing buildings and new developments as a means to provide more affordable rent space for start-up businesses and independent business operators.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

An SSA Small Business Development Committee could explore the feasibility and interest in using a land trust program in Greektown. Key implementation steps may include:

- Seeking determination of eligibility in using SSA funds to seed or fully-establish a land trust; if not feasible, the SSA could begin to explore alternative funding sources.
- Prepare a list of potential investors and participants in a land trust and prepare a business plan for land trust creation.
- Identify one or two priority parcels for acquisition.
- Cultivate relationships with developers and building owners regarding the potential purchase of ground-floor space as retail condominiums.

24

Create a Greektown ground floor lease guarantee program.

Lease guarantee programs are used in commercial market to assist with business start-ups. The Greektown SSA or the West Central Association may be able to offer lease guarantees as a way to mitigate property owner reluctance to lease to independent business tenants and to lower the leasing barriers for independent businesses. Property owners will prefer credit tenants over independents due to the guaranteed long-term revenue.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

An SSA Small Business Development Committee could explore the feasibility of creating a lease guarantee program. Other Key implementation steps may include:

- *Confirming with Greektown commercial building owners if lease guarantees would help in securing ground-floor tenant leases.*
- *Determining the funding resources that would be needed to establish a program potential capital sources if SSA funds are not eligible for use.*



25

Establish and maintain an effective Greektown entrepreneurship development program.

A vibrant Greektown that maintains its cultural identity and depth will require active efforts in entrepreneurship development – an effort that will go hand-in-hand with an effective business development technical assistance program (see Key Planning Action #20 above). A key goal is to broaden the Greek or Mediterranean-themed business mix, potentially with:

- Restaurants of all Mediterranean cultures, including Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Lebanese, Turkish and others.
- Mediterranean grocery products and prepared foods, including specially-sourced or locally-produced foods that are differentiated from offerings at nearby Whole Foods or Mariano's.
- Restaurants that offer innovative takes on the Greek cuisine with Greek fusion dishes, for example.
- High-quality, self-serve eating places selling only specialty items such as Greek yogurt, olive oils, and other products.
- Art galleries with Greek and other Mediterranean art and pottery.

Two potential ways in which new Greek-themed businesses could be developed include a business start-up competition, with a cash prize for the winning business plan(s). Such a competition could be paired with the National Hellenic Museum's annual Kouzina program where the program winner is awarded a cash prize geared toward opening a new Greektown restaurant. A second option is to secure space in a Greektown building to serve as incubator space for new businesses. The incubator space could be furnished with a complete kitchen to foster the development of new restaurants, bakeries, and other food businesses.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Entrepreneurship development efforts should be led by an SSA Small Business Development Committee pursuing the following implementation actions:

- Market the SSA's business development program and services to prospective Greektown entrepreneurs and investors, in area Greek publications, and on the Greektown SSA website.
- Maintain an accurate list of available Greektown storefronts to market to potential entrepreneurs.
- Meet regularly with area commercial brokers to provide updates on Greektown's business development efforts.
- Meet with suburban Greek business operators to determine the interest and feasibility of establishing a presence in Greektown.
- Collaborate with the National Hellenic Museum on a Kouzina business competition prize.
- Scout and secure a location for a Greektown business incubator space.

26

Consider a formula-business overlay ordinance.

The Greektown SSA could consider proposing a formula-business ordinance that limits the number of chain businesses in the Greektown district. Such an overlay has been used in other cities as a way to preserve a business and cultural identity in districts that are approaching a “tipping point” toward the generic retail and restaurants. Typically, they are written to permit a set number of chain businesses, using the existing number as a baseline. For a new chain business to enter, one must close or move.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A key implementation action is to determine aldermanic and City of Chicago support for such an ordinance. Other key implementation steps include:

- Cultivating support from Greektown property owners and SSA Commissioners for such an ordinance.
- Gathering examples of formula-business ordinances from other cities, including San Francisco, California.

27

Establish an incentive program for restaurant attraction.

Restaurants are central to Greektown’s identity, but several have closed in recent years and the cluster needs to be strengthened. In a targeted effort to attract new restaurants, an incentive fund can be used to defer loan payments for new restaurants investing in kitchen equipment. This deferment can provide time for restaurants to become established before having to repay debt on their kitchen installation.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Key implementation step is to secure a funding source. Other key actions steps may include:

- Interviewing several restaurateurs in Greektown and elsewhere in Chicago to determine if, as part of a package of services, this incentive would be a motivating factor to a potential operator.
- Determining if SSA funds, other City of Chicago funding sources, or private funding could be directed toward interest payments for targeted business recruitment in Greektown.
- Developing a set of program guidelines and incentive program application.

28

Assess feasibility and advocate for new commercial-affordability solutions.

In addition to the incentive and business development initiatives recommended in this section, the Greektown SSA and the West Central Association could advocate for other measures implemented in other cities to slow business displacement due to rising rents and redevelopment. For instance, the City of Seattle is considering several initiatives as part of its Commercial Affordability Initiative convened by the Mayor of Seattle. Like Greektown and Chicago, Seattle's booming economy is placing pressures on real estate markets, causing significant rises in retail rents. One of the impacts of this is the loss of independent businesses as commercial space becomes unaffordable to them. Several ideas from this initiative could be adapted to Greektown and the West Loop in Chicago, though most would require advocacy at the City or Cook County levels. These ideas include:

- Commercial affordability tax abatement – Greektown could advocate for a multi-year commercial property tax abatement to property owners with qualifying small businesses as tenants. Criteria could include local ownership, size restrictions, or retail condominiums.
- Property tax assessment methodology – the Cook County property tax assessment methodology for retail spaces could be changed, assessing properties based on a building's income, rather than its market value. This would provide an incentive for property owners to maintain rents at affordable levels. It could, however, have an unintended consequence of enabling property owners to let spaces go vacant.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Adopting special tax-based solutions for commercial space affordability will require long-term advocacy and the involvement of the City, Cook County, and many different organizations and entities throughout the City of Chicago. The Greektown SSA and the West Central Association can begin advocacy work by pursuing the following implementation actions:

- Meet with the Aldermanic Office and other City officials and convene other SSAs to discuss the need for a citywide study committee on tax-based affordability strategies.
- Through the study committee, determine a lead organization and entity that would conduct advocacy initiatives over the long-term.
- Participate in ongoing advocacy activities.

Goal 4

***Promote Greektown
as a Prosperous
& Collaborative
Neighborhood***

KEY PLANNING ACTION ITEMS:

- #29 Employ a full-time Greektown SSA manager.*
- #30 Establish volunteer working committees to implement and manage Strategic Plan action items.*
- #31 Organize Greektown open houses and mixers to familiarize West Loop residents with Greektown businesses and institutions.*
- #32 Extend the Greektown brand to enhance neighborhood identity.*
- #33 Maintain a Strategic Plan progress page on the Greektown Chicago website.*

29

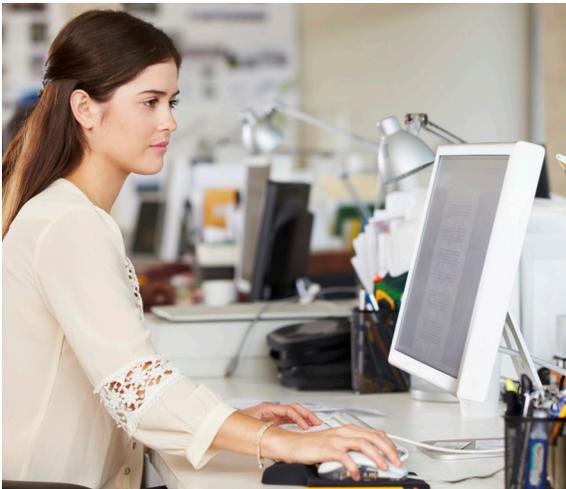
Employ a full-time Greektown SSA manager.

The West Central Association's service boundary is quite extensive, covering the Near West Side and other areas that compete with Greektown, including Fulton Market Innovation District at Randolph and Halsted Street. Additional staff resources are needed to facilitate and manage Greektown business development and urban design initiatives, especially those that require extensive coordination between Greektown stakeholders, the City of Chicago, the local Aldermanic office, the National Hellenic Museum, and other important organizations, agencies, and institutions. Special service managers are commonplace among several large SSA districts in Chicago as a way to provide more hand-on services to SSA stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The Greektown SSA will have sufficient financial resources in coming years to support an SSA manager position. Key implementation steps include:

- Reserving an SSA budget line item for a Greektown SSA Manager and seek approval from the City of Chicago during the annual budgeting process.
- Prepare a Greektown SSA Manager job description.
- Hire the SSA manager and conduct yearly performance evaluations.



30

Establish volunteer committees to implement and manage Strategic Plan action items.

Working SSA committees are proposed in various Strategic Plan action items as a means to facilitate project implementation, organize events, and assist the SSA manager in soliciting stakeholder involvement, organize events, and organizing outreach efforts to the broader Chicagoland Greek-American community. Generally, working committees should be organized around business development, design improvement, and market and promotion activities. Recommendations on the number of working committees and their respective roles and responsibilities is provided in the Implementation chapter of this Strategic Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Initially, the Greektown working committees should consist of current members and volunteers of the Greektown SSA and the West Central Association. Over time, the committees can expand with additional volunteer involvement from other Greektown stakeholders, the West Loop neighborhood, and from other areas of the Chicago region. Other key implementation actions may include:

- Prepare and adopt annual work plans for both standing and ad-hoc committees that conform to the overarching SSA work plan submitted to the City of Chicago.
- Market and advertise committee volunteer opportunities on the Greektown website, in Greektown website, and the Facebook pages of other Chicago area Hellenic organizations.
- Host yearly committee volunteer orientation sessions.
- Recruit additional volunteers through a volunteer exchange program with the National Hellenic Museum, area Greek Orthodox churches, and other associated organizations as a way to encourage existing volunteer pools to work together on Greektown activities and initiatives.



31

Organize Greektown open houses and mixers to familiarize West Loop residents with Greektown businesses and institutions.

The Greektown SSA and the West Central Association should engage West Loop residents on a regular basis with open houses and mixer events held at Greektown businesses and the National Hellenic Museum. During the warmer months of the year, the mixers could be held outdoors in a temporary café spot or at the Gladys Street shard street plaza.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Key implementation action steps may include:

- Establishing a Greektown SSA Outreach Committee that can set a calendar of mixer events and recruit volunteers.
- Identify interested businesses and institutions willing to host and help organize open houses during the year.



32

Extend the Greektown brand to enhance neighborhood identity.

The Greektown SSA recently developed and adopted a visually engaging brand logo, used on most marketing materials, flyers, signage, as well as the Greektown SSA website. Branding opportunities should be expanded with Greektown business owners offering branded promotional and collateral materials to patrons and visitors. The brand logo could also be used in kiosks, public art installations, and as part of a Greektown trolley graphic wrap.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

A Greektown SSA Marketing and Promotion Committee could take the lead in expanding the use of the Greektown brand logo. Key implementation steps may include:

- Develop a comprehensive brand strategy that consider different versions of the Greektown brand for different marketing and promotional needs.
- Involve Greektown merchants in the design and production of in-store promotion and collateral materials.



33

Maintain a Strategic Plan progress page on the Greektown Chicago website.

The development of the Greektown Strategic Plan provided a unique opportunity for residents, stakeholders, and business owners to participate in the planning process. A progress page highlighting success in implementing the Strategic Plan should be incorporated as part of the Greektown SSA website. With this page, Greektown stakeholders can stay informed and engaged in Greektown enhancement efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

An Outreach Committee could work with the SSA communication form to undertake the following action steps:

- Adding a progress page to the Greektown website.
- Creating a list of priority initiatives and planning actions and show measurable progress of their implementation.
- Distributing regular progress updates through social media and e-blasts.





CHAPTER FOUR

Plan Implementation



Implementation Program

This Greektown Strategic Plan provides a framework for key actions aimed at maintaining and promoting Greektown’s economic vibrancy and cultural meaning. The following section provides more information and guidance regarding Strategic Plan implementation, including future staffing and operation of the Greektown Special Service Area and cost estimates for key urban design projects and other Strategic Plan initiatives. Other key aspects of Strategic Plan implementation, as well as a summary chart of all Strategic Plan action items are also presented in this section.

Special Service Area Operations

The majority of Strategic Plan action items reference standing or ad-hoc volunteer committees to lead or advance action item implementation. These committees should be staffed by volunteers from the SSA Commission, the West Central Association, other Greektown organizations, as well as people from throughout the Chicago area with an interest in maintaining Greektown as a vibrant cultural district. Ideally, each committee should prepare its own annual work plan that outlines one to three specific action items or initiatives to be undertaken during a given year. The roles of the committees can be more specifically defined within the West Central Association by-laws or rules of operating procedures.

Committees

Four committees should be established by the SSA and the West Central Association – Marketing and Promotion, Arts and Space, Design and Public Improvement, Small Business Development, and an Ad-Hoc Parking Committee. Their respective roles and responsibilities are described below.

Marketing and Promotion Committee

The focus of the Marketing and Promotion Committees is on planning, coordinating and producing special events, retail promotions and other marketing activities. Promotion activities provide opportunities for shoppers, visitors, and residents alike to experience the diversity of activity in a commercial area. In Greektown, promotion activities also have the potential to fulfill important social functions in bringing people together from within the West Loop neighborhood and beyond. A mix of events, from festivals to retail promotion and marketing campaigns that bring visitors and patrons to Greektown on a regular basis should be a key goal. The SSA should continue to engage private marketing, communication and other entities in the planning and execution.

Design and Public Improvement Committee

A Design and Public Improvement Committee would be responsible for facilitating urban design and streetscape projects, building rehabilitation, and storefront and signage enhancements. Other aspects of the Committee’s work may include:

- Provides design assistance services to property owners regarding building maintenance and rehabilitation projects.
- Assists the SSA and other relevant agencies regarding enhancements to Greektown’s public spaces, streetscape, district signage, and other capital improvements.

- Works with the Marketing and Promotion Committee on the graphic design and branding of Greektown marketing initiatives.
- Provides consultation with property owners, developers and investors on City of Chicago permits and regulations.
- Undertakes outreach initiatives to build awareness of Greektown incentives.

Arts and Space Committee

Already established, the Arts and Space Committee can continue to lead public art and placemaking efforts in Greektown. The Committee can also forge a working relationship with the National Hellenic Museum, Chicago-area artists, and other cultural institutions to implement other arts-related recommendations presented in the Strategic Plan.

Small Business Development Committee

Strengthening existing businesses and attracting new restaurants, retail stores, and services would be key functions and roles for the Small Business Development Committee. Other responsibilities would include:

- Supports and implements small business development initiatives that encourage new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activity.
- Conducts active recruitment efforts.
- Researches and promotes incentives that support new business activity.
- Serves as a liaison to the SSA, the City and other entities regarding business development initiatives.
- Assesses market potential and needs for certain types of retail and commercial ventures that could be supported in NOTO.

Ad-Hoc Parking Committee

An Ad-Hoc Parking Committee would study, plan and address Greektown parking issues on an as-needed basis, including those suggested in this Strategic Plan. The Committee could also advocate the plan and participate in the start-up of a Greektown district-wide valet program.

Special Service Area Manager

A high-priority Strategic Plan recommendation is the appointment of a Special Service Area manager. An SSA manager would be the principal on-site staff person responsible for managing all aspects of SSA operations, representing the Greektown community to the City and the West Loop community, and a facilitator of Strategic Plan projects and initiatives. An effective manager should also be able to guide the SSA as its goals and objectives evolve over time. Many Chicago SSAs employ full-time managers and typically become part of the staff of the service provider organization. Specific duties of the SSA manager may include:

- Coordinating the activity of the SSA Board of Commissioners and working committees, ensuring that communication among committees is well established.
- Assisting committee volunteers with project implementation.
- Managing all administrative aspects of SSA operation, including record keeping, reports required by the City of Chicago, reports to other funding agencies, and supervising employees or consultants.
- Becoming familiar with all Greektown business owners, persons, and groups directly and indirectly involved in the commercial district.
- Developing and conducting on-going public awareness and education programs designed to enhance appreciation of Greektown's assets.

The majority of Strategic Plan action items reference standing or ad-hoc volunteer committees to lead or advance action item implementation. These committees should be staffed by volunteers from the SSA Commission, the West Central Association, other Greektown organizations, as well as people from throughout the Chicago area with an interest in maintaining Greektown as a vibrant cultural district. Ideally, each committee should prepare its own annual work plan that outlines one to three specific action items or initiatives to be undertaken during a given year. The roles of the committees can be more specifically defined within the West Central Association by-laws or rules of operating procedures.

Future District Development

With the exception of a few small land parcels, Greektown is largely built out as a neighborhood business district. However, given existing zoning and permitted Floor Area Ratios (FARs) along Halsted Street, several parcels will be under development pressure in the near to mid-term. Parcels most susceptible to redevelopment include the east Halsted Street block between Madison and Monroe, the site of the current Walgreens store, and portions of the west blocks of Halsted Streets between Van Buren and Adams Street. The zoning along these blocks is primarily Downtown Mixed-Use (DX-5 and DX-7). The Walgreens store site is likely the most susceptible to redevelopment given the permitted FAR along the east side of Halsted Street. With the absence of any downzoning or other types of development control in the Greektown SSA boundary, redevelopment could occur on the other parcels as well over time.

In the event of redevelopment activity, the Greektown SSA should be proactive with developers and the Aldermanic Office to discuss and negotiate benefits to the district, including shared parking agreements, streetscape and urban design enhancements, and potential ground-floor condominium or set-aside retail spaces.

Significant Buildings

Three buildings along Halsted Street have been rated as potentially significant architecturally and historically by the City of Chicago in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey completed in 1995. Further research and evaluation by the City of Chicago Commission on Chicago Landmarks would be needed to determine their potential eligibility as Chicago Landmarks or individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register, maintained by the National Park Service, is an inventory of buildings and places worthy of preservation. Designation as a Chicago Landmark or listing in the National Register permits a building to be eligible for certain tax benefits and incentives, including the Cook County Class L program, which reduces property tax assessment levels for a period of twelve years, as well as the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits.

The significant properties include:

- 120 South Halsted Street
- 236-239 South Halsted Street
- 301-315 South Halsted Street

239 South Halsted



120 South Halsted



301 South Halsted



City landmarking could help to reduce development pressure on these properties, making the ground floor spaces relatively more affordable for small businesses. Through the Class L program, landmarking could also lessen steep rises in property taxes over the near-term. The Greektown SSA should discuss the potential for landmark designation with eligible property owners, the Aldermanic Office, and the Commission on Chicago Landmarks.

Former Mid-City Trust and Savings Bank Building

The former Mid-Century Bank Building at 2 South Halsted Street (southwest corner of Madison and Halsted Streets) designated a Chicago City Landmark in 2012, remains vacant at the time of this Strategic Plan. A reconstructed roofline cornice was recently installed through a grant from the City's Adopt-a-Landmark Program. While future building reuse plans were not determined during the planning process, the Greektown SSA could advocate for reuse plans that would spur other business development activities along Halsted Street. The building would likely be suitable for a hotel or apartments, which would help to bring visitors and patrons to Greektown. Artist live/work spaces could also be considered for the upper floors. Active restaurant or retail uses should be considered for the first floor.

Business Development Resources

Several sources of business development technical assistance are available to Greektown businesses. Although not an exhaustive list, the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois offer the following programs and services:

- *Business Education Workshops.* These training sessions are offered regularly on a wide range of topics, such as using social media, digital marketing and advertising, accounting, and preparing for Chicago's new food code.
- *Illinois SBDC.* The Illinois Small Business Development Center provides assistance in business plan development, assistance in preparing loan application materials, and loan facilitation through private lenders for loans up to \$250,000. The City has also gathered a network of micro-lenders for businesses that are not able to access traditional bank loans. These loans are all under \$50,000 and more flexible underwriting standards.
- *Restaurant Start-Up Guide.* Produced by the City of Chicago, the Restaurant Start-Up Guide is focused primarily on helping restaurateurs navigate the City's licensing, permitting, and inspection processes. The City has set up inter-departmental teams to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and delays to restaurant start-up.
- *Business Development Competition.* The City of Chicago Treasurer's Office offers a \$5,000 grant prize in a business plan competition open to all startup and existing small businesses in Chicago.

Cultural Districts and Legacy Business Programs

Several cities across the country have worked with local neighborhoods to establish “cultural districts” – places that have high concentrations of cultural facilities and activities, as well as arts-based businesses and entertainment uses. Cultural districts are established to help revitalize neighborhood commercial districts, assist in the support of local cultural organizations, and brand a neighborhood for its unique identity and historic significance. Cities with cultural district programs often provide designated neighborhoods with a specialized set of services and programs, including business development incentives and marketing assistance, among others.

One such program, developed by the City of San Francisco is its Legacy Business Registry, established in 2015, which works to save longstanding, neighborhood-serving businesses that are critical cultural assets. The Registry provides educational, promotional, and financial assistance to “Registered Legacy Businesses” to help ensure their continued viability and success. Under the program, a business seeking to become a “Registered Legacy Business” must be nominated by a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors or the Mayor and approved by the City’s Small Business Commission in accordance with the following criteria:

- The business has continuously operated in the city for at least 30 years or for at least 20 years if the Small Business Commission finds that the business has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, the business would face a significant risk of displacement.
- The business has contributed to the neighborhood’s history or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community.
- The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms.

Through the City’s Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund, registered businesses may receive grants of \$500 per full-time employee per year, while landlords who extend the leases of such businesses for at least 10 years may receive rent stabilization grants of \$4.50 per square foot of space leased per year. As of January 2019, there were 160 businesses on San Francisco’s Legacy Business Registry.

While the City of Chicago does not administer a cultural district or legacy business program, there is a growing need in Chicago to address business displacement in neighborhoods of cultural identity and value, such as Greektown. A legacy business program can help to keep Greektown’s remaining anchor businesses, such as the Athenian Candle Company and the Greek Islands, from being displaced, for instance. The Greektown SSA, the West Central Association, along with other neighborhood SSAs should advocate to the City a need for a formal cultural district and legacy business initiative.

Facade and Storefront Improvements

The Greektown SSA and the West Central Association will be implementing a façade rebate program aimed at encouraging building and storefront improvements throughout the district. As noted previously, most traditional Greektown commercial buildings may not need extensive façade rehabilitation work. Therefore, future building enhancements should focus on storefront improvements, entryways and signage. The following are general guidelines for the appropriate treatment of Greektown building exteriors and storefronts.

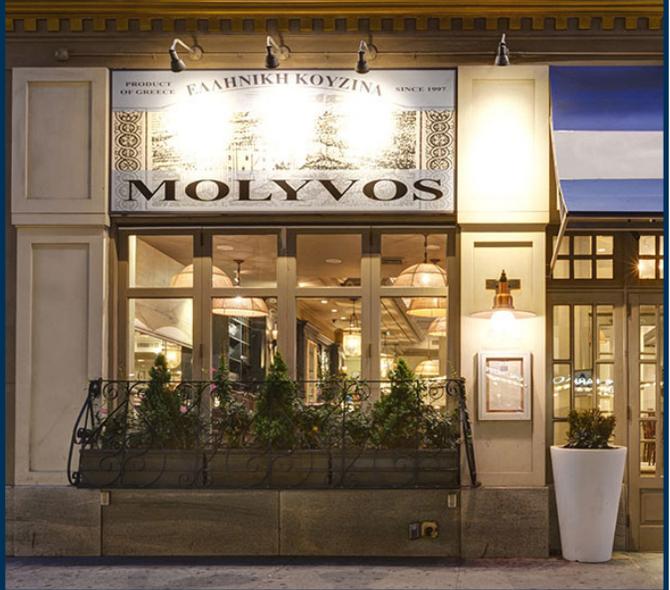
Storefronts

Good design in neighborhood commercial districts starts with good storefronts, which is the portion of the building with the main entrance to the interior commercial space facing the sidewalk and wide expanses of glass meant to display goods and merchandise. Traditional commercial storefronts typically have four components: bulkheads or kneewalls that support the storefront window glazing, the storefront display windows cast iron columns that frame the storefront and entrance (if an older commercial building), and the transom windows above that are designed to filter light into the interior storefront.

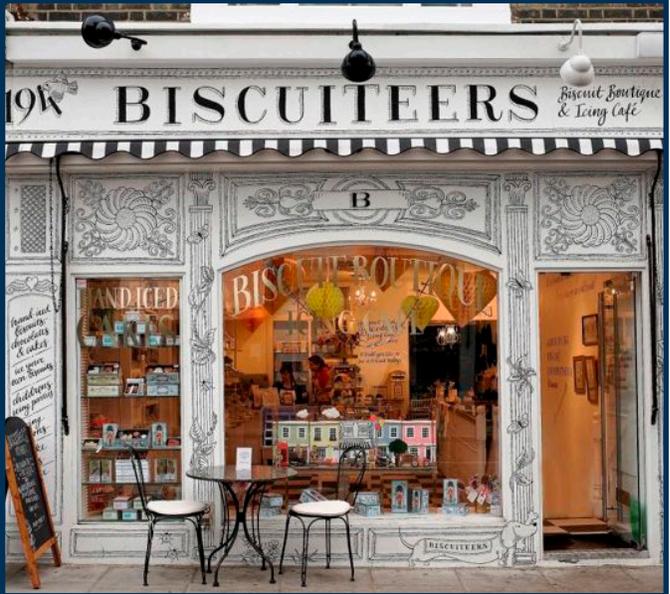
Key recommendations regarding Greektown storefronts include:

- Where older, historic storefronts exist, maintain the overall pattern of kneewall, storefront display, columns and transom windows.
- Restore storefront windows to original size if they have been covered.
- Rehabilitate and maintain original storefront materials such as terra cotta, cast iron, copper and stone used for knee walls, columns, and display window framing.
- When replacing storefront materials, use a similar or compatible material that matches color, texture and durability of the original materials.
- Avoid the use of aluminum-framed storefronts or doorways unless a storefront has to be entirely reconstructed. Enameled panels, unpainted wood, artificial siding and wood shingles should also be avoided.
- If a storefront has to be reconstructed, ensure the new storefront includes the traditional pattern of kneewall, storefront display and transom configuration.
- Retractable storefront and French casement doors are appropriate, especially for restaurant uses, as long as they rest between a knee wall and the transom area.
- Avoid the installation of historical and architectural features that are inappropriate to the building's style or period of construction.
- Color tile can be incorporated in knee walls and columns as an added decorative element to storefronts.
- Security grates on storefront exteriors should be discouraged.
- Tinted glass should be avoided in storefront glazing.

Storefronts



Storefronts



Signage

Appropriate signage in Greektown can come in several forms, including signs mounted to walls, projecting and blade signage, signs suspended from canopies, awning signs, and window lettered signs. Regardless of the form, signage should be high quality, expressive of a business brand image, and designed and manufactured with high quality materials. Neon signage can also be considered as long as it complements the storefront design and the building's overall architectural style. Signage should not obscure storefront and architectural features.

Key recommendations regarding Greektown signage include:

- Remove obsolete signs and signage hardware when not expected to be reused.
- Reuse and restore historic signs.
- The size, shape and style of signage should be similar or complement surrounding buildings and businesses.
- Use signage materials consistent and compatible with those found on building.
- Flat signs should be placed above a storefront transom or window area but below the upper story window band.
- Back-lit or light box signs, flashing lights, LED displays, or digital light boards should be avoided. Channel lighted signs may be used if the channel letters are in scale with the storefront and building.
- Goose neck or direct light lamp types should be encouraged for nighttime signage lighting.
- Neon lights will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Color and creativity are encouraged for all signage in Greektown.

Awnings

Awnings are important design features that add color and visual interest to neighborhood commercial buildings. Historically, awnings were added to help regulate the temperature inside the storefront and protect merchandise from sunlight exposure rather than for decorative purposes. Awnings should reinforce and be compatible with the storefront's overall design, as well as fit snugly within the storefront window or door openings. Awnings can be fixed or retractable and are generally sloped away from the building.

Key recommendations regarding Greektown awnings include:

- Awning signage should use minimal words and information. Signage may be incorporated on the awning valence as well.
- Awnings should be made of canvas or similar durable fabric. Plastic materials are discouraged.
- Awnings should extend at least 30" plus from the storefront to provide a sense of depth.
- Straight sloped awnings are preferred – bubble-shaped awnings are discouraged.
- White or light colors are discouraged, which can get dirty easily.

In addition to these recommendations, applicants to the Greektown façade rebate program must meet all applicable City of Chicago building and signage regulations.

Signage



Awnings

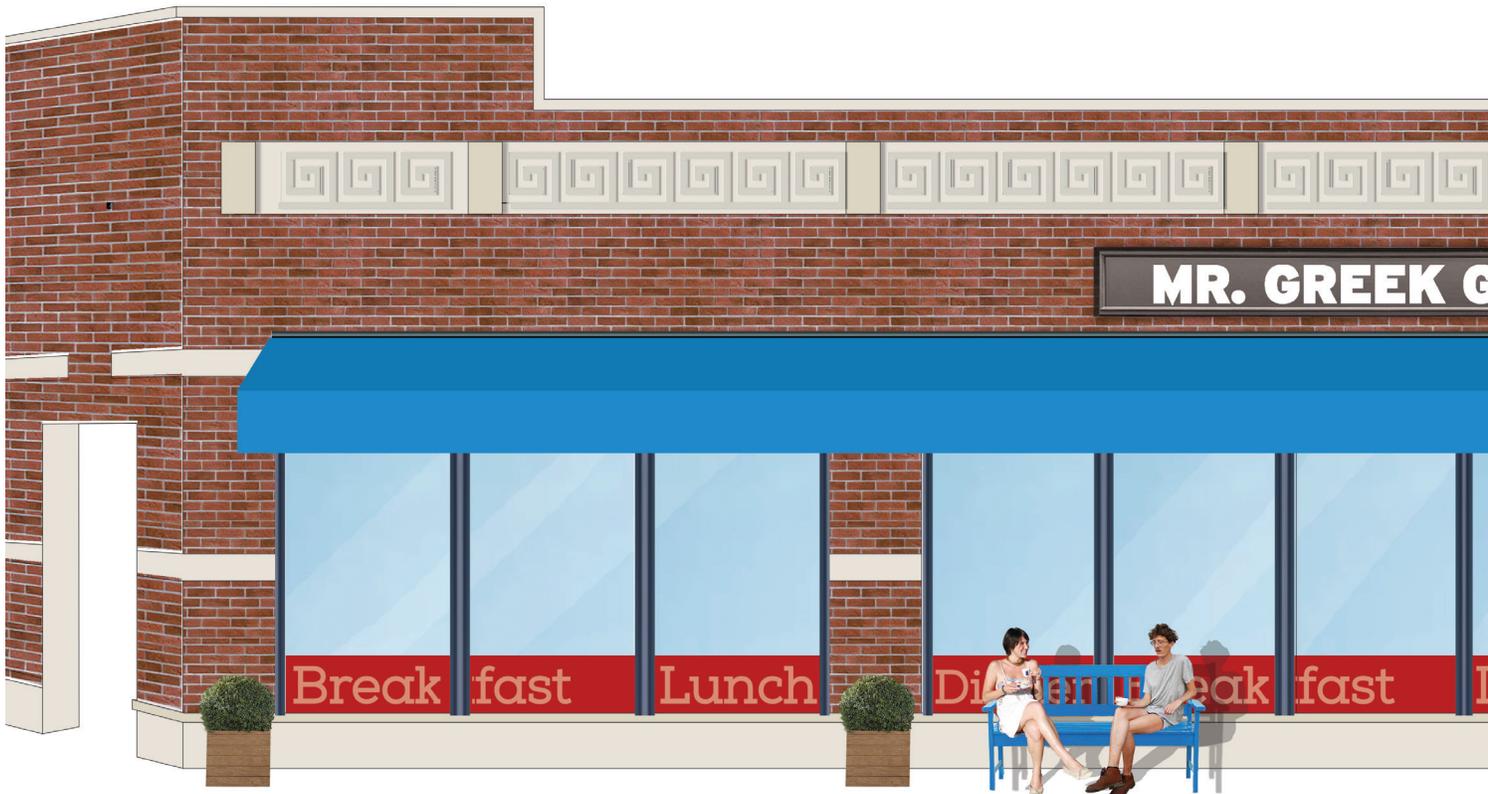


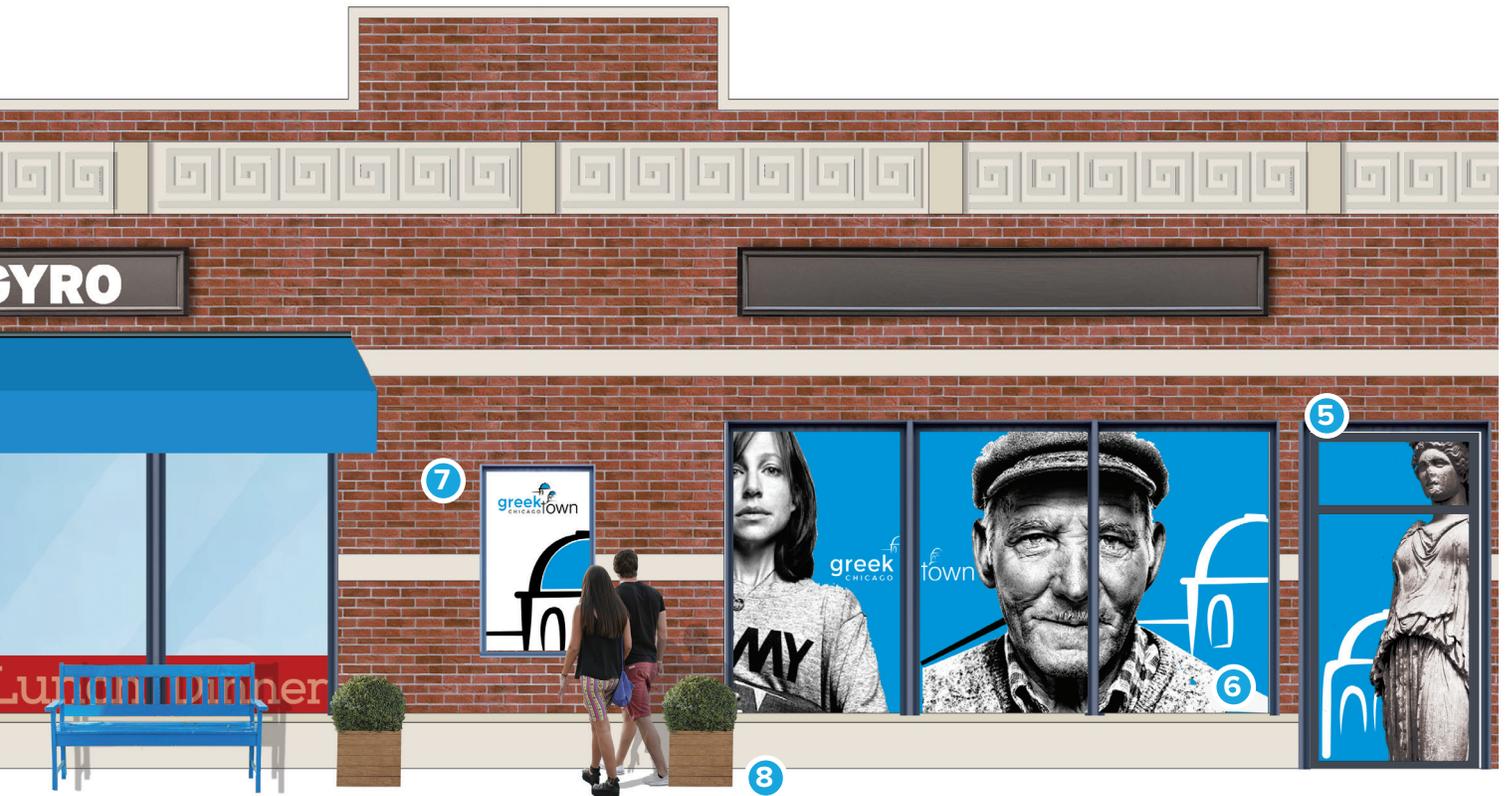


BEFORE

- 1 Facade material cleanup
- 2 Add ornamented cornice where applicable
- 3 Increase retail transparency and use thinner mullions
- 4 Unified Signage
- 5 Branded awning
- 6 Vacant retail space treatment/branded with photos from Greece
- 7 Information poster about Greektown SSA
- 8 Planters

AFTER





Urban Design Cost Opinion

The following is a summary cost opinion for major streetscape and urban improvements proposed in this Strategic Plan. The opinion is presented as a general assessment of a project's level of costs; further cost and budget refinements will be needed once more specific project design decisions are made by the SSA and other partners.

Streetscape Initiatives				
INITIATIVE	COST UNIT	COST EST.	SUPPLIER	
I. Streetscape Extensions				
1. Streetscape Extensions				
A. Streetscape design (SD, DD, & CD)	-	\$150,000		
B. Improvements include: street trees, tree grates or planters with ornamental fence, paver parkways, street lighting, and site furnishings (bike racks, benches, etc).	Linear Foot (LF)	\$1,200 to \$1,600	-	
AVG. TOTAL (4,820 LF)		\$5,784,000 to \$7,862,000		
C. Movable planters + trash receptacles	Each	Review planters and receptacles concepts		
C. Curb extension / bump-out	Each	\$10,000 to \$15,000		
D. Green / vegetated curb extension / bump-out	Each	\$15,000 to \$35,000		
2. Gladys Street Plaza				
A. Plaza design (SD, DD, & CD)	Each	\$75,000		
B. Design includes: herringbone brick pavers, removable bollards, art sculpture, over-hanging tivoli lights, movable chairs and tables and farmers market tents.	Square Foot (SF)	\$45 to \$75		
AVG. TOTAL (16,000 SF)		\$795,000 to \$1,275,000		
3. Permanent people's spot				
A. People spot design (SD, DD, & CD)	Each	\$10,000		
B. Design includes: curbs and barrier/fencing, memorable seating, and planters.	Square Foot (SF)	\$40-80		
AVG. TOTAL (8'x40' SF)		\$22,800 - \$35,600		
4. National Hellenic Museum light shows/projections				
A. Video mapping design	-	\$7,500 to 15,000		
B. Projector	Each	\$30,000	Lumitrix	
C. Installation and retrofit to existing poles	Each	\$6,500		
AVG. TOTAL (4 projectors)		\$153,500 - \$161,000		

Action Item Implementation Summary

The following is a summary cost opinion for major streetscape and urban improvements proposed in this Strategic Plan. The opinion is presented as a general assessment of a project’s level of costs; further cost and budget refinements will be needed once more specific project design decisions are made by the SSA and other partners.

Goal #1: Enhance Greektown as a compelling cultural destination.

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
<i>#1: Develop a year-long calendar of Greektown events and promotions.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a preliminary calendar of potential promotion activities • Identify funding sources for new events • Review and assess effectiveness of Greektown promotions • Fine-tune social media and communications strategies to promote events and reach target markets. 	Short-Term and Ongoing	SSA Marketing and Promotion Committee, Greektown Merchants, NHM, WCA, Aldermanic Office, Marketing Professionals.
<i>#2: Cross-promote events and activities between the Special Service Area, Greektown businesses and the National Hellenic Museum.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and coordinate new cross-promotion activities as part of the yearly Marketing and Promotion Committee event calendar development. • Conduct an annual planning session with Greektown businesses and the National Hellenic Museum to discuss potential cross-marketing activities. • Identify and secure funding sources for cross-marketing projects. • Evaluate cross-promotions on an annual basis. 	Short-Term and Ongoing	SSA Marketing and Promotions Committee, Greektown Merchants, NHM, WCA, Aldermanic Office, Marketing Professionals.
<i>#3: Create a Greektown neighborhood market.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a survey and complete a business plan to determine level of support and feasibility for establishing a Greektown Street Market. • Form a special SSA committee to oversee market management and staffing. • Establish a working relationship with the Green City Market to encourage participation of Greektown vendors and other Greek-themed businesses from outside of Greektown. • Design and complete installation of the Gladys Street pedestrian plaza or secure a temporary space. • Conduct a yearly evaluation of the Greektown Street Market. 	Mid-Term	SSA Marketing and Promotions Committee, Green City Market, Greektown Merchants, NHM, WCA, Aldermanic Office.

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
<p><i>#4: Establish a Greektown Artist-in-Residence Program. design (schematics to construction documents)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate research efforts in establishing an artist-in-residency program and create a business plan for sponsorship and operation. • Locate a suitable studio space and secure operational funding through grants or donations. • Market and cross-promote the artist-in-residence program to Greektown partners and stakeholder businesses and organizations. 	<p>Mid-Term</p>	<p><i>Greektown Arts and Space Committee, WCA, NHM, Corporate Sponsors, Artists, Other Regional Partners</i></p>
<p><i>#5: Create a Greektown culinary program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore potential affiliations with Chicago-area culinary programs. • Create a culinary program business plan that outlines space needs, potential instructors and institutional partnerships, start-up and operating costs, and fundraising needs. • Conduct an information meeting with Greektown restaurateurs to determine level of interest and participation in the culinary program. • Seek corporate sponsorships or grant support. • Market and cross-promote the culinary program with institutional partners, the National Hellenic Museum, area Greek-Orthodox churches and other Hellenic organizations, West Loop neighborhood groups, and various Chicago culinary training institutes. 	<p>Mid-Term</p>	<p><i>Greektown SSA, WCA, NHM, Culinary Training Institutes, Hellenic Organizations, West Loop Neighborhood Groups.</i></p>
<p><i>#6: Expand and diversify Greektown marketing efforts.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a comprehensive marketing plan. • Seek advice from various tourism entities, including the Chicago and Illinois Offices of Tourism, on how to coordinate and enhance Greektown tourism efforts. • Meet with various Chicago-area Greek organizations and entities to determine possible marketing opportunities. 	<p>Short-Term and Ongoing</p>	<p>SSA Marketing and Promotions Committee, Greektown Merchants, Hellenic Organizations</p>
<p><i>#7: Encourage live performances and other forms of entertainment.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop through the Marketing and Promotion Committee a working list of musicians and musical ensembles. • Work with the National Hellenic Museum and other local museums and institutions to create special package deals for Greek-related live performance events offered in Greektown. • Reach out to regional Greek-American organizations and groups to market and promote Greektown as a potential location for their annual festivals and events. 	<p>Short-Term and Ongoing</p>	<p>SSA Marketing and Promotions Committee, WCA, NHM, Greektown Merchants, Hellenic Organizations, Other Cultural and Entertainment Groups</p>

Goal #2: Greektown as a Distinctive Place and Experience

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
<p><i>#8: Develop a more comprehensive Greektown signage and wayfinding program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a wayfinding signage plan that proposes a complete wayfinding signage family design and location map for wayfinding installation. • Coordinate with local businesses and property owners, and all regulatory bodies including the CTA, CDOT and IDOT on signage standards and wayfinding placement and installation. 	<p>Short to Mid-Term</p>	<p>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, WCA, CDOT, IDOT, CTA, Aldermanic Office</p>
<p><i>#9: Enhance Greektown gateways with identification elements.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a gateway area enhancement plan. • Coordinate with local business and property owners, as well as CDOT and IDOT to develop gateway and identification elements for Greektown. • Consider the relocation of existing obelisk monuments to other locations as new gateway features. 	<p>Mid-Term</p>	<p>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, WCA, CDOT, IDOT, CTA, Aldermanic Office</p>
<p><i>#10: Install temporary or permanent “café spaces.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Greektown restaurants that may want to construct and use a temporary or permanent café spot. • Consider development of a café space incentive program through the SSA’s Design and Public Improvement Committee. Work with developers, the local alderman’s office, and Chicago DPD on a case-by-case basis to allow deeper front or side building setbacks to accommodate outdoor dining and seating areas for new developments along Halsted Street and other areas in Greektown. • Work with developers, the local alderman’s office, and Chicago DPD on a case-by-case basis to allow deeper front or side building setbacks to accommodate outdoor dining and seating areas for new developments along Halsted Street and other areas in Greektown. 	<p>Short to Mid-Term</p>	<p>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, WCA, CDOT, IDOT, Greektown Merchants, Aldermanic Office</p>
<p><i>#11: Improve Greektown intersections.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure permission from IDOT and CDOT. • Work with IDOT and CDOT on securing preliminary approvals for Halsted Street curb extensions and crosswalk enhancements. • Design the curb extensions and crosswalk improvements as part of an overall Greektown streetscape program. 	<p>Mid to Long-Term</p>	<p>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, WCA, CDOT, IDOT, Greektown Merchants, Aldermanic Office</p>

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
<p><i>#12: Extend Greektown streetscape to additional blocks within the Special Service Area.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with CDOT and IDOT regarding streetscape design requirements and approvals. • Creation of a streetscape design plan and determination of preliminary cost estimates. • Development of construction drawings and determination of final project costs. • Implement streetscape mitigation plan, including marketing and promotion activities and wayfinding signage that helps Greektown businesses survive the period of streetscape construction. • Work with local property owners to coordinate maintenance and establish a sense of community ownership for new improvements. 	<p>Mid to Long-Term</p>	<p><i>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, WCA, CDOT, IDOT, Greektown Merchants, Aldermanic Office</i></p>
<p><i>#13: Placemake Greektown with wall murals and other forms of temporary and permanent public art.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek permission from Greektown building and business owners for mural installation. • Identify property owners that are willing to participate in a wall mural program and create a list of experienced wall art painters. • Consider a partnership with the Chicago Public Art Group to engage local West Loop residents and the greater Greek-American community in the design and installation of a wall mural or public art piece. • Prepare a calendar of upcoming temporary art installations and secure participation from Greek-American artists, Hellenic institutions and area non-profit organizations. • Contact billboard companies to determine short-term lease costs for provisional wall murals. • Encourage murals or other forms of public art as part of any Greektown façade or building rehabilitation program. 	<p>Short-Term to Ongoing</p>	<p><i>Greektown Arts and Space Committee, WCA, NHM, Corporate Sponsors, Chicago Public Art Group, Artists, Other Cultural Institutions</i></p>
<p><i>#14: Design and construct a Gladys Street public plaza or shared street space.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare concept design and construction drawings. • Secure agreements with the National Hellenic Museum and adjacent businesses and residential towers on when the plaza space can be used, protocols on notifying parties when events occur, and coordinating temporary wayfinding signage on directing traffic around Gladys Street during events. • Prepare a budgeting and funding plan for design and construction. 	<p>Mid to Long-Term</p>	<p><i>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, WCA, CDOT, IDOT, Greektown Merchants, NHM, Aldermanic Office</i></p>

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
<p><i>#15: Employ digital projection mapping as a Greektown placemaking method.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore digital projection equipment purchasing costs. • Collaborate and consult with the National Hellenic Museum or other Greektown building owners on the creation of a business plan and calendar for digital projection shows. • Seek sponsorships for commissioning digital media artists and the production of digital projection shows. • Develop a list of “digital curators” available for the creation of “Greek-themed” project shows. 	<p>Mid-Term</p>	<p><i>SSA Design and Public Improvements-Promotion Committee, WCA, NHM, CDOT, IDOT, Corporate Sponsors Aldermanic Office, Other Cultural Institutions</i></p>
<p><i>#16: Establish and maintain a Greektown storefront and signage program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer design assistance to applicants to prepare schematic drawings of proposed façade and storefront improvements. • Organize an annual information meeting with Greektown businesses on the façade grant program. • Develop other printed and online marketing materials regarding the program. • Prepare a list of qualified architects, sign and awning makers that could be distributed to grant applicants. • Establish storefront improvement awards to recognize businesses who have utilized the façade grant program and implemented improvements. 	<p>Short-Term and Ongoing</p>	<p><i>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, Greektown Merchants.</i></p>
<p><i>#17: Activate vacant storefronts with pop-up art and cultural displays.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a vacant storefront inventory that could be updated on an ongoing basis. • Prepare a vacant storefront “pop-up” kit that contains materials, portable art work, furnishings and other materials that could be easily transported to vacancies when they occur. 	<p>Short-Term and Ongoing</p>	<p><i>SSA Design and Public Improvements Committee, Greektown Merchants, Area Brokers, Cultural Institutions</i></p>

Goal #3: Greektown as a Vibrant Business District.

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
<p><i>#18: Establish a comprehensive Greektown parking management program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature parking options on the Greektown website, including spaces within the Arkadia Tower and the Park One lot, as well as information on what parking zones are available using the ParkChicago or other smartphone parking apps. • Incorporate parking signage into a Greektown wayfinding signage package to direct visitors to parking spaces, lots and garages. • Facilitate conversations with Greektown businesses about sharing parking resources to increase the pool of parking open to the public. • Work with the City of Chicago and the Laz Parking Company to meter all prime street parking throughout Greektown. • Investigate potential for developing a Greektown surface parking lot at the far southwest corner of Van Buren and Halsted Streets. 	<p>Short-Term and Ongoing</p>	<p>SSA Ad-Hoc Parking Committee, Greektown Merchants, Building Owners, City of Chicago, Aldermanic Office, Laz Parking, ParkChicago</p>
<p><i>#19: Create, fund, and operate a Greektown valet parking program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore feasibility of using SSA funds for a district-wide valet program. • Initiate discussions with the Greektown businesses that already fund their own valet services to gauge interest in participating in district-wide program. • Develop a Request for Proposal to prospective firms interested in operating a Greektown valet service. • Consider a pilot version of the program – perhaps for one year – that may be limited to just the restaurant businesses and the National Hellenic Museum. The program could be expanded in later years with additional participation from other Greektown businesses. 	<p>Short to Mid-Term</p>	<p>SSA Ad-Hoc Parking Committee, Greektown Merchants and Building Owners, City of Chicago, Aldermanic Office</p>
<p><i>#20: Consider a neighborhood-wide transportation study.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a West Loop-wide steering committee that can oversee and supervise the transportation study. • Prioritize and advocate for improvements to the West Loop transportation system, including initiatives that address Greektown parking issues and needs. 	<p>Short-Term</p>	<p>SSA, WCA, City of Chicago, Aldermanic Office, West Loop Organizations, Business and Property Owners, Other Agencies and Partners</p>
<p><i>#21: Establish a technical assistance program for Greektown business development efforts.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and publicize an annual series of low-cost educational lectures and trainings delivered by outside consultant groups and service providers specialized in business development. • Forge partnerships with local lenders and micro-lending organizations to develop a guaranteed loan program for Greektown small business loans. Guidelines may include lower down payments, flexible overhead requirements, and no collateral loans. 	<p>Short-Term</p>	<p>SSA Small Business Development Committee, City of Chicago, Other Agencies and Partners</p>

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
#22: Create a Greektown venture fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine potential funding partners in the funding, administration and marketing of a venture fund. Establish eligibility criteria and formulating a formal venture application and application process. 	Short to Mid-Term	SSA Small Business Development Committee, WCA, Corporate Donors, Private Investors
#23: Establish a Greektown land trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek determination of eligibility in using SSA funds to seed or fully-establish a land trust; if not feasible, the SSA could begin to explore alternative funding sources. Prepare a list of potential investors and participants in a land trust and prepare a business plan for land trust creation. Identify one or two priority parcels for acquisition. Cultivate relationships with developers and building owners regarding the potential purchase of ground-floor space as retail condominiums. 	Mid to Long-Term	SSA Small Business Development Committee, WCA, Corporate Donors, Private and Institutional Investors
#24: Create a Greektown ground floor lease guarantee program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm with Greektown commercial building owners if lease guarantees would help in securing ground-floor tenant leases. Determine the funding resources that would be needed to establish program potential capital sources if SSA funds are not eligible for use. 	Short to Mid-term	SSA Small Business Development Committee, WCA, Greektown Building Owners, City of Chicago, Developers, Financial Institutions
#25: Establish and maintain an effective Greektown entrepreneurship development program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market the SSA's business development program and services to prospective Greektown entrepreneurs and investors, in area Greek publications, and on the Greektown SSA website. Maintain an accurate list of available Greektown storefronts to market to potential entrepreneurs. Meet regularly with area commercial brokers to provide updates on Greektown's business development efforts. Meet with suburban Greek business operators to determine the interest and feasibility of establishing a presence in Greektown. Collaborate with the National Hellenic Museum on a Kouzina business competition prize. Scout and secure a location for a Greektown business incubator space. 	Short-Term and Ongoing	SSA Small Business Development Committee, WCA, Greektown Building Owners, Area Brokers, NHM, Other Agencies and Partners
#26: Consider a formula-business overlay ordinance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate support from the Aldermanic Office, the City of Chicago, Greektown property owners and SSA Commissioners for such an ordinance. Gather examples of formula-business ordinances from other cities, including San Francisco, California. 	Mid to Long-Term	SSA Small Business Development Committee, WCA, Greektown Building Owners, Area Brokers, Aldermanic Office, City of Chicago

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
#27: Establish an incentive program for restaurant attraction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing several restaurateurs in Greektown and elsewhere in Chicago to determine if, as part of a package of services, this incentive would be a motivating factor to a potential operator. • Determining if SSA funds, other City of Chicago funding sources, or private funding could be directed toward interest payments for targeted business recruitment in Greektown. • Developing a set of program guidelines and an incentive program application. 	Short to Mid-Term	SSA Small Business Development Committee, WCA, City of Chicago, Other Agencies, Corporate and Institutional Sponsors
#28: Assess feasibility and advocate for new commercial-affordability solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the Aldermanic Office and other City officials and convene other SSAs to discuss the need for a citywide study committee on tax-based affordability strategies. • Through the study committee, determine a lead organization and entity that would conduct advocacy initiatives over the long-term. • Participate in ongoing advocacy activities. 	Mid to Long-Term	SSA WCA, Aldermanic Office, City of Chicago, Cook County, Other Agencies, Other SSAs and Non-Profits Organizations

Goal #4: Greektown as a Prosperous, Collaborative Community Key Planning Actions

ACTION ITEM	KEY TASKS	TIME FRAME	PARTIES
<p><i>#29: Employ a full-time Greektown SSA manager.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserve an SSA budget line item for a Greektown SSA Manager and seek approval from the City of Chicago during the annual budgeting process. Prepare a Greektown SSA Manager job description. Hire the SSA manager and conduct yearly performance evaluations. 	Short-Term	SSA Commission, WCA
<p><i>#30: Establish volunteer working committees to implement and manage Strategic Plan action items.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and adopt annual work plans for both standing and ad-hoc committees that conform to the overarching SSA work plan submitted to the City of Chicago. Market and advertise committee volunteer opportunities on the Greektown website, and the Facebook pages of other Chicago area Hellenic organizations. Host yearly committee volunteer orientation sessions. Recruit additional volunteers through a volunteer exchange program with the National Hellenic Museum, area Greek Orthodox churches, and other associated organizations as a way to encourage existing volunteer pools to work together on Greektown activities and initiatives. 	Short-Term and Ongoing	SSA Commission, WCA
<p><i>#31: Organize Greektown open houses to familiarize West Loop residents with Greektown businesses and institutions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Greektown SSA Outreach Committee that can set a calendar of mixer events and recruit volunteers. Identify interested businesses and institutions willing to host and help organize open houses during the year. 	Short-Term and Ongoing	SSA Commission, WCA, Corporate Sponsors, NHM, Other West Loop Organizations and Institutions
<p><i>#32: Extend the Greektown brand to enhance neighborhood identity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a comprehensive brand strategy that considers different versions of the Greektown brand for different marketing and promotional needs. Involve Greektown merchants in the design and production of in-store promotion and collateral materials. 	Short-Term and Ongoing	SSA Marketing and Promotion Committee, Greektown Businesses, Corporate Sponsors.
<p><i>#33: Maintain a Strategic Plan progress page on the Greektown Chicago website.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add a progress page to the Greektown website. Create a list of priority initiatives and planning actions and show measurable progress of their implementation. Distribute regular progress updates through social media and e-blasts. 	Short-Term and Ongoing	SSA Commission, WCA





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