

CITYFRONT CENTER, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS:
THE DESIGN AND APPROVAL PROCESSES

by

WYLLYS THOMSON BAIRD
B.A., Urban Studies and Photography
The Colorado College

and

ANNE ELIZABETH WINKLER
M.B.A., Accounting and Finance
University of Texas at Austin

B.B.A., Finance
Emory University

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Signature of Author _____

Wyllys Thomson Baird
Department of Urban Studies
July 29, 1988

Signature of Author _____

Anne Elizabeth Winkler
Department of Urban Studies
July 29, 1988

Certified by _____

Michael Wheeler
Visiting Prof., Dept. of Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____

Michael Wheeler
Chairman
Interdepartmental Degree Program in Real Estate Development

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ABSTRACT

Cityfront Center is a 60-acre site at the juncture of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, at the northeastern boundary of the central business district in Chicago, Illinois. The entire project was zoned under a single plan for development in only 18 months from the time the master plan was presented to the city for approval. The development and design guidelines established for this project have been heralded as precedent-setting for future developments.

An analysis of the master planner's design and Chicago's review and approval processes was conducted to understand how this project could receive its approvals in a far shorter time period than would be possible in other major metropolitan cities such as Boston, New York, and San Francisco. The project was also studied to determine how the lessons learned during the design and approval of Cityfront Center may be transferred to other projects both in Chicago and in other cities.

Key participants in the approvals process, including the joint venture partners, Chicago Dock and Canal Trust and Equitable Life Assurance Society, as well as designers, public planners and civic interest groups, were consulted in the evaluation of the design and approval of Cityfront Center. Developers and planners were also questioned for comparison and contrast of Chicago's approvals process with those of other cities. Primary research was augmented with newspaper and periodical articles and materials submitted to the Planning Department of the City of Chicago for review and approval.

The research showed that cities such as Boston and San Francisco are much more involved in the initial planning and review of projects. Chicago's process also does not include

detailed design review for aesthetics found in these other cities. These differences reflect the pro-development attitude of Chicago's city government, the greater authority given to the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the San Francisco Planning Department, and the more lenient as-of-right zoning governing the City of Chicago. Nonetheless, the design of projects in Chicago appear to be of a quality equal to that of many other cities due to the strong and long-standing architectural heritage established in Chicago. The guidelines established for Cityfront Center have already been used as a model in planning the redevelopment of other areas near Chicago's central business district. The usefulness of the project's 60-acre master plan as applied to future developments may be limited due to the large size of Cityfront Center and its ownership by a single entity.

Thesis Supervisor: Michael Wheeler
Visiting Professor, Department of
Urban Studies and Planning

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The public approvals process for new developments in cities such as Boston, New York, and San Francisco is widely regarded as being restrictive, very subjective, and sometimes inconsistent. Development negotiations typically involve a myriad of public and private interest groups and are complex, controversial, and charged with emotion. Yet despite the time and energy invested by all parties, the results do not necessarily represent a consensus of opinion nor good design, in the eyes of both architecture critics and the public. A protracted and complicated review and approvals process does not guarantee the design and quality of a project. The issues are too subjective to be solved by answers that are absolutely "black or white." Bill Martin, a past planner with the City of Chicago, believes it is "an impossible task" for a city to attempt to completely control the aesthetic issues of a new development. He explains the dilemma: "To [be able to control all aspects of design] would be saying that, somewhere out there, there is a group of people able to dictate what's correct and say, 'yes, that is the way a building should be designed.'"

If Boston, New York and San Francisco represent the highly (some would say overly) regulated extreme of the approvals process, then Houston represents the opposite end of the spectrum with almost no regulation at all. This thesis

examines Cityfront Center, a large planned development located in Chicago. Chicago's more balanced and reasonable review process comes closer to representing the zoning philosophy of most American cities. The cities with intense design review and highly restrictive zoning seem to approach planning for urban development from an adversary perspective. By contrast, Chicago seems to approach planning from a more cooperative, consensus-oriented perspective.

Cityfront Center is located on 60 acres of privately held land, just northeast of Chicago's central business district, at the juncture of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan. When completed, the 22 million square foot project will mix hotel, office, retail, and residential uses on one of Chicago's premier waterfront sites. In only eighteen months the joint venture developers of this project negotiated and received public approvals for the master planned development. The approvals process was time and cost efficient and produced a result that seems to please most all parties involved in the project. The master plan and development guidelines designed for the site lay the ground work for a potentially stunning project and have already set a precedent for the design of other projects in Chicago.

Cityfront Center is a particularly interesting project because:

The approvals for so large and sensitive a site were obtained in a surprisingly short period of time.

Notwithstanding the absence of rigid municipal design controls, the project has been widely praised by architects and planners.

Alexander Cooper, a New York architect who lacked a personal knowledge of Chicago and its political context, was nevertheless able to successfully design the master plan for the project.

Unlike the highly regulated cities, the Chicago Planning Department delegated most design decisions to the developers' private planners.

The Cityfront Center experience stands in stark contrast to development disputes that often delay projects in cities such as Boston, New York, and San Francisco. This thesis studies the developers' strategies to secure approvals and analyzes why they were successful. The questions that have guided the analysis are:

Why was such a large tract of downtown development property able to be zoned for a PD in eighteen months?

Did the planned development review of Cityfront Center work fairly and efficiently in protecting both the public's interest as well as the developer's interest?

How did the design and strategy for approval adopted by the developers aid or hinder the project's progress?

In evaluating the design and approval of Cityfront Center, we visited the site and spoke to representatives of the city, community groups and joint venture. We also asked developers, architects, and planners to compare and contrast the Chicago approval process with that of other cities. In all we interviewed twenty-four people, a list of whose names

is included in the bibliography. Newspaper and periodical articles, as well as documents published by and submitted to the City of Chicago, were used to augment our primary research.

Chapter Two of this thesis is historical in nature; it introduces the reader to the history of Chicago in general and the Chicago Dock and Canal site (Cityfront Center) in particular.

Chapters Three, Four and Five are descriptive in nature. Chapter Three, Chicago Dock - Equitable Venture Strategy explores the strategic approach assumed by the joint venture partners in developing a master plan for the site. It looks back on the lessons learned from the past and how those lessons were applied to developing a master plan. This chapter identifies some of the key hurdles that needed to be overcome in the design of the master plan and discusses how the developers went about solving those problems.

Chapter Four, The Design and Approvals Process, discusses the master plan and the value of an experienced urban master planner. It delves into the formation of the development guidelines and how the civic organizations were involved in the design and approvals process. The chapter helps to identify the issues that were of particular interest to the civic groups.

Chapter Five, Internal Design Guidelines, continues from

Chapter Four's discussion of design guidelines established by the City of Chicago. The developers also established internal design guidelines which are divided into two sections. Section One speaks primarily to public issues such as the installation of infrastructure improvements and open spaces. Section Two of the standards addresses the design of the individual buildings which will be built within the project. These internal standards were created to set a distinctive tone and atmosphere for the project.

Chapter Six, *An Assessment of the Design and Approval Process*, is analytic in nature. This chapter discusses private planning in a public arena and the issue of public design review. It assesses the transferability of the developer's and master planner's approach, that is, its applicability to other sites in Chicago and elsewhere. The chapter continues with an analysis of the Chicago approvals process and the merits of that process. The chapter concludes with the issue of quality of Chicago design and architecture and how it relates to the review process.

At this time, the Cityfront Center development is proceeding along the parameters prescribed and delineated in the master plan and PD. With a glut of office space and a generally overbuilt market in Chicago today, the pace is a bit slower than originally anticipated. With an expected twenty

year build-out, however, it is difficult to say that the project is behind schedule this early in its development. The joint venture partners have now amicably gone their separate ways. Each is pursuing the development of its share of the project, and each is negotiating with potential developers for individual sites. It appears that the development will have a wide array of uses under construction within the near future. Only as the project begins to grow in size and diversity can the effects of the review process, the master plan, the planned development ordinance, and the design guidelines can be fully assessed.

CHAPTER TWO
HISTORY OF THE SITE

The history of the Chicago Dock and Canal Trust (the Trust) is as colorful and rich as the history of Chicago itself. Only 350 residents lived in the City of Chicago when it incorporated in 1833 due to low, swampy lands and biting winter winds which blew off Lake Michigan. Nonetheless, the city's strategic location as a transportation link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River fueled its prosperity. William B. Ogden, having arrived in Chicago from New York in May, 1835, saw the area's potential for growth and established himself in the real estate business, buying, selling, and managing properties for himself and eastern clients. In 1836, Ogden had the distinction to be elected the city's first mayor, although he chose to serve only one term.

During the 1840's and 1850's, particularly after the completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, Chicago emerged as an important transfer point between the various regions of the United States. A reciprocity agreement with Canada also significantly increased the number of Canadian ships in the Chicago harbor. Finished goods from the east were sent to Chicago to be exchanged for midwestern wheat and southern

cotton, sugar, and molasses. Aided by the midwestern expansion of the rail system, lumber from Wisconsin and Michigan was shipped down Lake Michigan for distribution to settlers of the Plains states. These developments convinced Ogden of the importance of owning and improving the property and shipping facilities at the juncture of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan. With these goals in mind, Ogden established the the Chicago Dock and Canal Company in 1857.¹

To insure the future of his endeavors, Ogden retained the counsel of a rising young state politician and practicing lawyer, Abraham Lincoln. Due to their lobbying efforts, the Illinois legislature passed a Special Act in February, 1857, granting a broad and extraordinary corporate charter to the Chicago Dock and Canal Company. This charter empowered the new company to "enclose, make and protect . . . wharves, docks, moles, [and] piers. . . for the safety and accommodation of boats and vessels." The company could erect buildings and sell land, and it was also given the power of condemnation for any additional lands it determined were necessary for its purposes.

The site which Ogden was interested in owning was known as "the Sands," Chicago's first vice district, "the vilest and most dangerous place in Chicago" as reported by the Chicago Tribune in April, 1857. Attempts to clean up this area had failed as ownership of the land just north of the Chicago

River had been disputed for years due to claims made by sailors, fishermen and other squatters who had established themselves over time. Therefore, despite the powers granted in its charter, the Dock and Canal Company would not only have to take legal possession, but also physical possession of the site, if it was to stake its claim. ²

Ogden bought property from those inhabitants of the Sands who would sell and notified the others that their homes would be torn down, regardless of whether they left or not. On April 20, 1857, a representative for Ogden, the sheriff, armed with writs of eviction, thirty policemen, and a posse, entered the Sands and demolished the buildings of those who still refused to vacate. ³ Nine buildings were torn down by noon and a "mysterious" fire, which broke out in the afternoon, destroyed all the remaining buildings. In clearing out the area, Ogden would, in effect, be responsible for the first "redevelopment" of the site, the next to take place more than 100 years later.

The outbreak of the Civil War disrupted the economy and halted Ogden's plans for development of his land. In 1867, after the close of the war allowed for a resumption of normal trade activities, plans were drawn up for the extensive construction of piers, slips, and breakwaters along the lake and riverfront boundaries of the property. However, only one of these slips - Ogden Slip - was ever constructed; although

much larger originally, it provides a major water feature even today in the Cityfront Center redevelopment plan.⁴

By 1889, the eleven million tons of cargo passing through Chicago Harbor had made it one of the busiest ports in the world. The city of Chicago prospered from this trade, having grown to more than a half-million residents. The Dock and Canal Company also prospered, as marked by extensive development on their waterfront property. Factories and warehouses five to seven stories in height were constructed all along the riverfront and Ogden Slip. The industries represented various enterprises but most common were railroad, lumber, and candy operations.

The most significant project on the site was the construction of three furniture warehouses, collectively known as the Pugh Warehouse, so named for James Pugh whose Furniture Exhibition Company leased the buildings. At completion, the Pugh Warehouse, later renamed the North Pier Terminal Building and now North Pier Chicago, spanned more than 1,650 feet along the Ogden Slip, making it the largest combined warehouse and docking facility in the world.⁵ Although portions of the warehouse have been demolished, it is the site of a major redevelopment effort by Broadacre Development Company and will play a focal part in the new Cityfront Center.

During the early 1900's, the volume of cargo traffic in the Chicago Harbor declined precipitously, falling from the

peak of eleven million tons of cargo passing through the harbor in 1889, to less than half, five million tons, only twenty years later. A number of factor accounted for this dramatic decline. The growth of the steel industry to the south of Chicago had resulted in the construction of a larger, more readily accessible harbor in the Lake Calumet region. The narrowness and shallowness of the Chicago River, the numerous rotating bridges crossing the River throughout the city, and the lack of pier facilities along Lake Michigan added to the plight of the harbor. In addition, construction costs were rising, as were real estate taxes. As a transportation hub, the ruling on the Panama Canal Act of 1912 by the Interstate Commerce Commission prohibiting railroads from operating ships on the Great Lakes was also burdensome. Harborfront businesses subsequently felt the effects of the Great Depression beginning in the 1930's.⁶

The Depression halted not only business activity, but affected a project embarked upon by the City of Chicago to connect the north and south portions of Lake Shore Drive across the Chicago River and through the eastern portion of the North Pier Terminal Building. By 1931, the City could no longer sell bonds to continue and all work stopped. William O. Green, President of the Dock and Canal Company, noted in the 1933 Annual Report that the bridge "stands in the same condition as a year ago, of little or no use to anyone."

Even with the eventual completion of the "Boulevard Link" by the Roosevelt's Public Works Administration, the connection was of little use to the Company. The roadway contained two right-angle "S curves" (one at the southeastern corner of the Dock and Canal property) which produced many accidents. Also, the elevated road created a physical and psychological barrier to the water and did not provide convenient points of ingress and egress for the site.

Having survived the decline of the Chicago Harbor and the Depression, the 1940's and 1950's were marked as a period of stability and of waiting for that time when, in President Green's vision, ". . .the character of the occupancy of at least a part of the Company's property can be developed for a higher use than warehouse or factory, and a consequent increase in rent." As early as 1926, Green had voiced his concern that the changing composition and declining level of harborfront activity would eventually require that alternates be found for the property to replace the storage and manufacturing then on the site.⁷

In 1962, the directors reorganized the company as one of the first real estate investment trusts (REITs) created under newly enacted federal legislation. The main advantage of the reorganization was that it avoided "double taxation" on earnings by allowing the REIT to pass on income directly to shareholders without paying corporate income taxes.

Through this reorganization, Chicago Dock and Canal Trust, under its new name, was now positioned to participate in the nationwide commercial and multi-family construction boom which was taking place in the early 1960's. In addition, the rapid growth of the North Michigan Avenue commercial corridor to the immediate west of the Dock and Canal site and the growth of the Streeterville high-rise residential area to the north of the site set the stage for redevelopment plans to take shape.⁸

Nonetheless, redevelopment of the site would be slow. Despite claims by architect Harry Weese that Dock and Canal has been "sitting on . . . acres of the best real estate in the country" and that it has taken far too many years to "colonize the most exciting piece of land in this city, or any city,"⁹ there were a number of significant obstacles to surmount before the property could shed its industrial character and participate in the growth of the area.

Most important, there were too many better office sites downtown and residential sites in the Streeterville area (to the north) for the Dock and Canal land, with its existing industrial uses, to be readily marketable.¹⁰ The buildings on the property could not all be demolished at the same time nor did long-term leases roll over simultaneously. Moreover, as the rental from these building leases was the primary source of income to the Trust, their demolition made it necessary for

the Trust to accept foregone revenues in the short-term in order to be able to prepare for future redevelopment.¹¹ In addition, there were a number of small parcels which would have to be purchased before the property could be developed under a comprehensive plan.

The site sat on a virtual island, making access difficult. Already on a true peninsula created by the Chicago River, Lake Michigan and the Ogden Slip, accessibility to the site was further hampered due to the elevated development and roadway systems already firmly established in much of the central business district of Chicago and surrounding the site to the west (development along Michigan Avenue), the south (Illinois Center), and the east (Lake Shore Drive).

The Trust took its first step toward realizing its redevelopment goal with the lease of three acres to the partnership of William Hartnett, Charles Shaw, and FLUOR Properties. In 1968, the partnership completed Lake Point Tower, a 70-story building, known as the tallest apartment building in the world. Lake Point Tower was quickly rented and grew in prestige, so other developers considered developing on sites in the Dock and Canal Trust.¹² This interest, however, triggered concerns from the citizens and city of Chicago that views of the lake would be lost and the lakefront privatized. In response, the Lakefront Protection Ordinance (LPO) was passed, banning any construction east of

Lake Shore Drive which would result in structures taller than the thoroughfare itself. Cityfront Center is still under the jurisdiction of this ordinance.

Throughout the 1960's, the small lots needed to complete the Trust's overall plan were purchased. Leases coming due were not renewed. The Trust, being "land rich and cash poor,"¹³ demolished buildings as they had available funds. By 1972, 15 buildings and 22 acres had been cleared. To the surprise of the Trust, the conversion of much of the land into interim parking lots generated almost as much income as that of the former leases due to increased growth in the area.

In the early 1970's, the City of Chicago developed plans for the extension of Columbus Drive over the Chicago River and through the Dock and Canal site to Illinois Street. With the completion of this extension in October, 1982, a portion of the isolating "peninsula's" negative effects would be mitigated and the site would finally have access to areas south of the river. During the Cityfront Center approvals process, the joint venture would seek additional public funds for major infrastructure improvements to further prepare the site for redevelopment. However, Mike Pepper, Project Manager of the Dock and Canal/Equitable Venture, stated later that, in the end, "the City had already thrown in their money on the Columbus Street Bridge which opened up the site to the city."

In June, 1983, the Chicago Dock and Canal Trust joined with The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States (Equitable) to form the Chicago Dock-Equitable Venture (CDEV). The Dock and Canal Trust contributed all its land holdings along the Chicago waterfront directly north of the Chicago River. Equitable contributed the Equitable and Mandel buildings (located between the Dock and Canal site and Michigan Avenue) in addition to making a cash contribution to enable the partnership to move ahead with the planning. The agreement resulted in the Dock and Canal Trust owning a 62 percent share of the venture while Equitable owned a 38 percent interest. The joint venture was formed to create a comprehensive master plan, to better facilitate the planning and approval processes, and to improve the resulting development of the combined lands which would be called Cityfront Center.

Despite the joint venture, the Trust retained an indirect interest in its land and, in addition to sharing the development risk, would benefit from Equitable's experience as a real estate investor and developer. Through the association with Equitable, the joint venture created an additional source of cash flow to the Trust from its share in the income from the Equitable and Mandel buildings to see the venture through the planning and approvals processes. Also, the Trust now had an important potential means of access from Michigan

Avenue.¹⁴ From Equitable's point of view, the venture gave them joint ownership and development interest in all the Trust's land, particularly the prime office site to the west of the Mandel building which is soon to be the new headquarters of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC).

Before its association with Equitable, the Dock and Canal Trust had retained Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) to design a master plan for the development of their site. Their design called for thirty million square feet, "a tremendous amount of buildable area," according to Jack Guthman, attorney for the joint venture. "If separate builders owned each parcel, you could build that much [under existing zoning], but there would be no market for it." The plan also called for an extension of the elevated structures seen elsewhere in the North Loop area. SOM's plan was never acted upon.

After the joint venture was established, Tishman Speyer Properties was brought in as the master developer. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill continued its association with the project, now in the capacity of master architect. Tishman Speyer recommended the New York planning and architectural firm of Cooper, Eckstut Associates (now Cooper, Robertson + Partners) to design the development's master plan.

Alex Cooper's expertise was particularly valuable to the joint venture as he was creating a solid reputation as a master planner, having designed the plans for Battery Park

City and the Times Square/Forty-Second Street redevelopment in Manhattan, Embarcadero Center in San Francisco and served as the planning and architectural consultant to the Rockefeller Center Development Corporation. When asked for reaction's to Cooper's master plan for Cityfront Center, interviewees' reactions have been swift and almost unanimous. Most often called "sensitive" to the site and its surrounding context, Cooper "has a great sense of space"¹⁵ and brought "a whole new perspective to the planning process."¹⁶

The development team developed their master plan and then approached the city planning department for its reactions. The developers were told that publically-issued development guidelines would be necessary before the joint venture would be allowed to apply for its amended zoning. In a best case scenario, the city would have previously drafted guidelines for the area being developed with the goal of addressing the public concerns for open space, transportation, phasing and density. Ideally, these guidelines would have been available to and used by the private planners in designing a master plan or individual parcel within that area. As Bill Martin, a city planner during the Cityfront Center approval process explains, the city can only speculate where development will go next:

When dealing with a Plan for Development [PD], it's best to add a step beforehand and get the issues on the table. . .[But,] often times in Chicago, planning is reactionary. You try to beat out the developer [by already having development guidelines established], but they beat you [by developing where

the planning department is not expecting it.]

Although the basis for the city's development guidelines would be Cooper's already-designed master plan, the developers were not allowed to proceed until the planning department drew them up. The publication of these guidelines, however, did provide the forum for public discussion and review, an important issue to Elizabeth Hollander, Commissioner of Planning and Neighborhood Development for the City of Chicago. "She is cognizant of and sensitive to what the interest groups think."¹⁷ The draft development guidelines were issued in December, 1984 and created discussion from a myriad of Chicago civic interest groups. Their concerns centered primarily around the issues of: access to Michigan Avenue through an existing, well-known public plaza, funding for infrastructure improvements, traffic and parking, water circulation in Ogden Slip, and the lack of design for du Sable Park, the major park at the juncture of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan. (See Chapter Four for further details on the approvals process and community reaction.)

In April, 1985, the city produced a revised version of the Chicago Dock-Equitable Venture development guidelines which reflected the compromises reached among the CDEV, the city, and the community interest groups. Cooper's master plan, together with the city's development guidelines, provided the basis for the Residential-Business Plan of

Development, the official document amending the existing zoning on the CDEV site. (In Chicago, a Plan for Development is required for the development of any site in the central business district which is greater one acre, with more than 200 linear feet of riverfront, or subject to the provisions of the Lakefront Protection Ordinance.) On November 11, 1985, Chicago's city council approved Cityfront Center as one of the nation's largest planned development projects.

In December, 1985, within a month of the approval of Cityfront Center's Planned Development Ordinance, Equitable and the Trust dissolved the joint venture due to differing objectives. While Equitable was experienced in real estate development and committed to the long-term, "in-house" development of the project, Chicago Dock and Canal, with its ongoing concern with the availability of cash flow, saw the opportunity to pull cash out of its long-time, illiquid investment by selling or leasing sites to others for development. Characterized as having a greater appetite for risk and being less conservative than the Trust,¹⁸ and "with more than \$20 billion of real estate assets under management, Equitable wanted to concentrate on the commercial side, where risks and rewards were greater."¹⁹ Charlie Gardner, President of the Dock and Canal Trust acknowledged, "We have different investment motivations."²⁰

Another concern to the Trust was the "financial

requirements to the west of Columbus Drive." An extensive roadway system designed for transportation, service, and docking access had been in place for years to the west of Columbus and, to allow for the roadway, the Equitable, Mandel, Tribune and Wrigley buildings it served were all constructed thirty-five feet above grade. With this design already in place, all new buildings west of Columbus would necessarily be built in this same manner. "Frankly, [the infrastructure requirements and the intensive design and landscaping of Cityfront Plaza in front of the NBC Tower] represent an initial expenditure that is large in relation to the trust's financial resources."²⁰ The investment was "too much for Dock and Canal to 'play.'"²¹

With the dissolution of the joint venture, the Trust retained all land east of Columbus Drive and a 62% undivided interest in the Equitable Building. Equitable retained the remaining interest in the Equitable Building as well as its original interest in the Mandel Building and the land on which it sits. In addition, Equitable received the property on which the NBC Tower is being built and all other lands owned by the Trust to the west of Columbus Drive. The infrastructure improvements on the divided parcels total \$75 million and are split relatively equally between the two entities. The main advantage of its division to the Trust is that their required infrastructure improvements can be phased

as development occurs and will more closely match its stream of cash flow. (Most of Equitable's capital investment is being completed now with the construction of the NBC Tower.) Equitable continues to engage the services of Alex Cooper, while the Trust has retained Lohan Associates, a Chicago based architectural and planning firm, to implement the master plan and act as consultants on the design of future buildings proposed by prospective developers of their property.

According to Cooper, that his plan. . .

survived the partnership's 'divorce' is perhaps the best testimony that it is based on a workable staging concept, with the flexibility and resilience necessary for the multiyear²² buildout that all large-scale plans require.

As Mike Pepper explained, "From the outset, we wanted to create something that would survive. Even now, very few of the original players are still around and, in the end, you have to look to the written words."

In addition to the development of Cityfront Center, Dock and Canal was also embarking in a new direction via real estate acquisitions outside Cityfront's boundaries and particularly outside the city of Chicago. The Trust's intent was to diversify its portfolio and reduce its risk. Its efforts would also prove to be focal in the Trust's ability to finance its portion of Cityfront Center's infrastructure cost, primarily the extension of McClurg Court south to the river, which would be required immediately. The program began with

the 1983 tax-deferred exchange of the Trust's land interest under Lake Point Tower (allowing it to be condominiumized) for ownership of the Palmolive Building located on North Michigan Avenue (commonly referred to as the Playboy Building as the Playboy Club was located there for many years).

After nearly fifty years of trouble arising from the now infamous "S curve" in Lake Shore Drive south of the Chicago River, reconstruction of the thoroughfare, completed in 1986, further enhanced access to the Dock and Canal site from the east, just as the extension of Columbus Drive had improved access from the south. Dock and Canal also received \$3.1 million from the State of Illinois for its portion of the land upon which the reconstruction was built, allowing the Trust to continue its diversification efforts by acquiring Kipling Plaza, a shopping center in Denver, Colorado.

In 1986, the Trust also disposed of its interests in the Palmolive Building through an exchange in which it acquired Lincoln Garden, an office complex in Tampa, Florida and One Michigan Avenue, an office building in Lansing, Michigan. Waterplace Park, an office complex in Indianapolis, Indiana was acquired in an exchange transferring the historical North Pier Terminal to Broadacre Development Company for rehab and conversion into retail and loft office use.

David Tinkham, Director of Finance for Dock and Canal explained that acquisition of these properties via

tax-deferred exchanges was critical to keep the Trust from paying the considerable capital gains taxes associated with parcels which had been held over 130 years were now being sold off for development. "You liquidate the REIT every time you do it [ie. pay taxes]." Also, as Amy Hecker outlined, the idea was for the buildings to help finance the infrastructure. With strong operating properties, the Trust could refinance, use the proceeds to fund the installation of the Cityfront streets, and let the cash flow from the properties repay the mortgages over time. An ingenious strategy for an entity that is "land rich and cash poor."

The major portion of the first phase of infrastructure, the extension of several primary streets, is complete. The Trust is completing its work on the first phase with the installation of the public plaza at the end of McClurg Court, where the street turns to run along the river. The Dock and Canal land is ready for development. Broadacre Properties is rehabbing the historic North Pier Terminal for retail and loft office use and installing a portion of the improvements around Ogden Slip. The Trust also has several sites under option for a hotel and residential apartments and condominiums.

Equitable Real Estate is developing a 40-story tower on their land to be the new headquarters of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). A portion of Cityfront Plaza is being constructed in conjunction with NBC Tower, the remainder

to be completed after the Mandel-Lear Building is torn down in April, 1989.

Cityfront Center is off and running. But how did the joint venture team create a master plan acceptable to the city and obtain its necessary city approvals? These are the issues which will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

CHICAGO DOCK - EQUITABLE VENTURE STRATEGY

At the inception of the joint venture between Chicago Dock and Canal and Equitable Life Assurance Company, the development team set out to put together a plan which would best facilitate the public approvals and marketability of the project. Retaining the urban design services of Cooper, Eckstut Associates, led by Alexander Cooper, would prove to be a major component of that plan. Well-known and respected for his master plans of Battery Park City and the redevelopment of 42nd Street at Times Square in Manhattan, Alexander Cooper had a well-defined approach to master planning:

Design is the creation of value. For large-scale projects, a design that wins speedy approvals (saving time and money); creates an identity and address (adding value); integrates different but adjacent uses; and is able to respond, through phased development, to future changes (whether₂₃ delays or market shifts) . . . is essential.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

The first step in Cooper's strategy for obtaining necessary approval was the creation of a plan which met the agenda of the City of Chicago. The development team also studied Illinois Center, a project the city obviously did not want to see again. "Illinois Center was clearly in people's minds; the community groups looked [south] across the

river."²⁴

Illinois Center is large-scale multi-use development project built on the air rights over 80 acres of Illinois Central railroad tracks and Lower Wacker Drive. The project is "a catalogue of just about everything it is possible to do wrong in a major downtown development."²⁵ Its extensive infrastructure was planned during the 1960's and built during the 1970's, largely with federal funding. The design resulted in a "baffling" multi-level transportation and service system, "a cavelike lower-level roadway that is one of the most dismal vehicular gateways ever designed." The buildings are boxy, glass structures of the "Miesian Era", an "uninspired collection of high rises."²⁶ Retail shops are contained in an underground "maze where you can't feel or see sunlight."²⁷ The public "sees high walls [from the street] and doesn't know what's going on inside."²⁸

During the 1960's the design of Illinois Center may have been the "right thing to do," but as a result of its infrastructure, the project is "locked in" and has been unable to adapt to changing market and public demand. The infrastructure has created elevated pedestrian ways and major roadway barriers which separate the public from the river and limited landscaping in the plazas. ("Trees should be planted in the ground, not in pits."²⁹) Designed primarily for ease of maintenance, the public spaces have been described as

"cold, hostile, [and] brutal." Illinois Center was "designed all for [perceived] value to the developer, not for enlightened, [public] reasons."³⁰

Most important and controversial to the City of Chicago and its residents is the fact that there is no guiding plan for Illinois Center against which development proposals for specific buildings within the complex may be reviewed. The city has no specific timetable to which it can hold the developers accountable for the improvements on a five-acre park which they promised the city. The developers claim their obligation is not in effect until all development in Illinois Center is completed. Yet, architect Harry Weese, in describing this "high-rise jungle," claims that "thirty years after the railroad freight service moved out of the front yard, a waste of junk box cars, weeds, and dead trees remains."³¹

Although the comparison was easy and CDEV clearly wanted to avoid this earlier project's misadventures, the joint venture chose to learn from and yet not to capitalize on what is now perceived as the mistakes made by the developers of Illinois Center. Even the city planners will admit, "Today, Illinois Center often gets a 'bad rap.'"³² Illinois Center "was an acceptable form in the 1970's. Large, [unprogrammed] public gathering places were the thing to do."³³ (This was also the era when Boston's controversial

City Hall was built with its vast, empty plaza, built as a large gathering place without much thought to warmth or invitation to those who would use it.) "The Chicago River was not nearly as clean then as it is today. The public wanted to turn its back to it."³⁴ As a result, the developers were careful not to belittle the design of the earlier project. "We didn't 'use' Illinois Center [in obtaining our approvals]. You must do your best deal and don't compare it to others' mistakes."³⁵

SIMPLICITY

Alexander Cooper explains his method in designing a master plan, "From the beginning we focus on making things beautiful, desirable, and marketable--all of which appeals to the private developers." He also feels accountable to the public at large and "if you're oriented that way, you're going to be convincing to [the city] about what's right to do. After all, they're trying to please the general public, too." At the crux of his designs is an "irrational commitment to doing things simply."³⁶ Cooper was successful in making his intent clear, for, when asked why Cooper's plan "works" at Cityfront Center, Phil Levin, Director of Zoning for the City of Chicago quickly responded, "the simplicity of it."

Brian Shea, Director of Design for Cooper, Robertson + Partners, describes the design process for any large scale project as the "creative synthesis of all kinds of

information." The designers work to understand the nature of the site and the factors which contribute to its central character including the architectural characteristics of the area, adjacent uses, density, and traffic circulation. Cooper was also interested in reinforcing and enhancing the city's public structure of streets, plazas, and open spaces. In considering a plan for Cityfront Center, Shea remarked that "the greatest problems with [Chicago] today seem to be in those areas where development strayed from the Burnham Plan," the original master plan for the City of Chicago, developed in 1909 by Daniel H. Burnham. Therefore, the idea was to study the area in which Cityfront Center was located in order to make the development "a part of that place."

Many of those interviewed in fact commented that Cooper's plan "didn't turn its back on the city," but instead built upon the site's surrounding uses. City planners and community leaders contrasted his plan with those of Illinois Center, Renaissance Center in Detroit, and early designs for Battery Park City in New York, which tried to create a separate isolated, self-sufficient environment for its workers and residents. One critic called the earlier plans for Battery Park City, "lonesome . . . 'pods' of buildings sealed off in fact and in spirit from neighboring Manhattan."³⁷ Cooper explained his redesign of Battery Park City:

Battery Park City as it was originally conceived was an overbearing, unintelligible megastructure. . . .

[With our redesign], we were determined to learn from what had gone before, to make it less eccentric and more familiar. . . We made every design decision to make it more like New York rather than less.³⁸

Cooper brought much of his vision for Battery Park City to bear on his design for Cityfront Center. Both projects make extensive use of a waterfront esplanade. As in New York, the new streets in Cityfront Center are an extension of the city's existing, well-defined grid system. Cooper's land use plan for Cityfront Center extends the successful retail and commercial district at Michigan Avenue east to a natural juncture at Columbus Drive. The area east of Columbus Drive to the lake is a logical extension of the residential Streeterville area which stretches along the lakeshore to the north. Mike Pepper, the project manager, explained, "We're not creating anything new, [but looking to] see how people solved problems before."

OPEN SPACES

Alexander Cooper "is something of a heretic. He thinks, for instance, that building design is of secondary importance to how the public spaces in a city are arranged."³⁹ Cooper starts with a master plan for parks and open spaces and then considers the placement and intended uses of the buildings, an idea counter-intuitive to many planners and developers. "It's the spaces that endure over time in cities and that create the identity, the addresses, and the value. The buildings will

come and go."⁴⁰ Central Park in New York, Grant Park in Chicago, Palisades Park in Santa Monica, and the Public Gardens and river esplanade in Boston are examples of this concept at work.

Cooper's design for Chicago's Cityfront Center was to cluster the open spaces into a few, distinctive "places" rather than disperse them over the entire 61 acres as tiny open spaces. "The term 'vest pocket parks' as created in the past [on each individual parcel to obtain a higher FAR] is being generous."⁴¹ Commissioner Hollander contrasts Cooper's plan to the Harris Bank Building Plaza in Chicago, a tiny windswept area whose fountain bathes pedestrians and is a "totally functionless space."

On a site visit, Cooper took note of the impressive view corridor from Lake Michigan across the site to the Tribune and Wrigley Buildings on Michigan Avenue. The Ogden Slip picks up the reflection of the Tribune Building in its waters, similar to the reflecting pool at the base of the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C. This became an important site feature for Cooper and the city as well. The building massing of his master plan calls for the retention of that view corridor and the design of the new NBC Tower ingeniously allows for that. NBC needed a 60,000 square foot footprint for its studios, a difficult request for a downtown office building. By designing a three-story building with a 60,000 square foot

footprint and then creating a tower which rises from only a portion of that footprint, the view was preserved and all parties involved were satisfied.

FLEXIBILITY AND COMMITMENT OF DEVELOPERS

The buildout of Cityfront Center is expected to take twenty years. Because market conditions will change over that period of time, as it has with Illinois Center, the developers wanted flexibility among the square footage and types of permitted uses for each building. The city and community groups wanted assurances that the impacts of such a large-scale use would be resolved and that public amenities would be provided as promised. "This tension between the need for flexibility from the private sector and the need for resolution from the public sector is perhaps the central design challenge for large-scale projects."⁴²

So how do you successfully develop a 60-acre parcel with little dissent? In the opinion of Planning Commissioner Hollander, it takes "a real commitment to planning by the owners." Cooper's response to the inherent tension between the public and private sectors was to "deal with issues the public cares about, showing that the developer and designer understand the place and the polity and are willing to balance profit with public interest."⁴³ "We identify with the values of both the private and governmental developers, and this makes accommodation possible."⁴⁴

The issue of common goals among the city, the public, and the CDEV was heightened as the CDEV's land holdings were so large. The joint venture's "interests do merge with those of the city. . . .An individual owner just wants to maximize the value of his site. With CDEV, each building that's a success improves the value of the rest of the land."⁴⁵ Another significant benefit of Cityfront Center being held under single ownership is that it allowed for a comprehensive master plan to be designed, the plan's costs to be assessed, and a means for future implementation to be devised. It is more difficult to assign and collect an assessment for public amenities when multiple owners are involved.

The joint venture addressed the issue of its commitment to public improvements by first meeting and then exceeding the requirements of the Lakefront Protection Ordinance with regard to the width of the mandated public walkway along the river and the number of points of public access to the waterfront along the eastern half of the site. The same principles of public access were voluntarily carried to the western portion of the site where the Lakefront Protection Ordinance is not in effect. Also, a sizable portion of the promised public improvements are being installed even before buildings are constructed and ready for occupancy.

Equitable is currently constructing approximately half of Cityfront Plaza, a gathering place for a group of future

office buildings. (The remainder is to be completed after the Mandel building is torn down.) The Dock and Canal Trust is now completing approximately \$10 million dollars in infrastructure improvements, including the extension of McClurg Court and other streets and a portion of the first phase of the public riverfront improvements. The Trust is working with the Municipal Sanitary District to construct a fountain at the juncture of McClurg Court and the river to commemorate the 100th anniversary of that organization, founded to redirect the flow of the Chicago River from Lake Michigan and protect the city's water supply. After residential development is underway, a park site at the juncture of Lake Michigan and the Chicago River (Point Du Sable Park) will also be improved and dedicated to the Chicago Parks Department. Obviously these improvements enhance the marketability of the project, but in addition the "improvements to the site by [Dock and Canal and Equitable] will benefit the public for years to come."⁴⁶

PHASING

Due to the size and scope of Cityfront Center, development will take place over twenty years or more and buildout will be phased. Each phase must be able to stand alone as a complete, liveable, and marketable entity in and of itself. This strategy insulates any single stage and the project as a whole from later changes in the market. At

Cityfront Center, this has been accomplished through separate commercial areas and small residential neighborhoods.

The second consideration in phasing is the need to match construction costs with available cash flows. Creating an elegant "address" cannot insure the success of a project if expenses are not kept in line. This is particularly true of early upfront costs required before the receipt of revenues to offset them. The projection of tremendous upfront expenses were a part of what befell the early plans for Battery Park City. However, the city and community groups were interested in seeing that public improvements are made early in the project's phasing thus avoiding situations like Illinois Center where the amenities are never provided or are continuously delayed.

The Cityfront Center developers and the city planners had these issues in mind when they devised a schedule requiring improvements to Cityfront's riverfront esplanade and Du Sable Park (at the southeastern tip of the project) to be made in stages as buildout of the development progresses. Simply stated, the development guidelines established a schedule that sets "trigger levels" for public improvements. As development progresses to these levels, implementation of the public amenities begins. In this manner both the public and the developer benefit. Community groups and city planners are assured the public improvements will be made while the

developers are not saddled with huge initial costs.

NEGOTIATION STRATEGY

The City of Chicago was zoned under a comprehensive zoning ordinance in 1958. Although Chicago is known as the home of the skyscraper, in the late 1950's, it was slowly coming out of a twenty year slump in which no new highrises had been built. The city wanted to promote downtown development and, as a result, zoned most of the downtown area with a generous floor area ratio of sixteen.⁴⁷ When the CDEV applied for a PD to redevelop the Dock and Canal area, the as-of-right zoning for the Cityfront Center site allowed up to 55 million square feet of office and residential space. Early proposals drawn up by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) called for a total density of 30 million square feet. The CDEV development team knew these markets could not support this much new space. Nonetheless, many developers would have approached the city with a request for more FAR than they needed in order to use it as a concession point during negotiations. The Cityfront developers, however, adopted a strategy of "reasoned FAR" and did not ask the city for more FAR than they wanted. The result is a site considerably less dense than Illinois Center. "Similar planning [to Illinois Center] would have been inappropriate to the [Cityfront Center] site. There were clear signals for less FAR than Illinois Center."⁴⁸

The developers looked instead to designing an area that "worked, one that offered mixed-uses and relief from density. In this case, the team felt that "less was more." "We did what we thought was right here. I don't believe [false demands] are the way to approach municipalities."⁴⁹ Mike Pepper, the project manager, believes this strategy worked to their advantage, "We weren't the [type of] developers out there asking for more square footage."

INFRASTRUCTURE

An area where the joint venture saw value in making concessions was regarding the considerable infrastructure needed to make the site viable. The improvements included streets (some elevated as much as thirty-five feet above grade and, therefore, much more expensive), sidewalks, and a sewer system connecting directly to the Municipal Sanitary District's lines. The developers had approached the city with a plan similar to tax increment financing where the incremental tax revenues from the development would finance the bond payments. The joint venture would make the bond payments in the early years until the development generated the tax revenues to cover the debt on the bonds. The public, as heard through the civic interest groups and newspaper editorials voiced its concerns on this issue, concerns that the bonds would syphon needed tax revenues from school and Municipal Sanitary District projects needed elsewhere in the

city.

The joint venture did eventually "bite the bullet" and "accept the inevitable, but we did it on our own terms."⁵⁰ While CDEV accepted their need to pay for the improvements, they also insisted the city accept the developers' need to do the work privately (per city specifications). This was important to the developers as they felt they could do the work far less expensively and in a more timely manner than was possible through the public bidding and contracting process. (Timing also worked in favor of the joint venture as interest rates were falling and it was possible to obtain private financing for the first phase of the infrastructure at rates similar to the proposed public bond financing.) The tradeoff for privately funding the infrastructure expense was that it allowed them to be cost efficient and to move ahead without waiting on city bond financing which may or may not have been available in each year it was needed. By agreeing to privately finance the infrastructure improvements, the developers also helped to remove the project from any negative political changes in the City Council or Chicago political climate. (Assuming a twenty year buildout, there will be five Mayoral elections and ten City Council elections.)

The joint venture created a final strategy, worthy of closer review. This is CDEV's plan for internal design guidelines which will work in conjunction to the guidelines set

forth by the City of Chicago and is discussed further in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DESIGN AND APPROVALS PROCESS

THE MASTER PLAN

In order to design a master plan for Cityfront Center, Cooper and his planners set out to understand the joint venturers' program, the physical site itself with its opportunities and constraints, and the important issues the plan would need to address. The planners did what any good urban designers would do to begin the master planning of a parcel of land. They studied the site itself and the context in which the site was located. They studied the areas of Illinois Center which had not "weathered" well over the twenty years since it was designed. The team also met with city engineers to understand traffic and infrastructure issues.⁵¹ Once they had a clear grasp of the CDEV site, the planners began meeting with the Planning Department which was just beginning to consider comprehensive planning for the area in which Cityfront Center was located.

Cooper visited the site with Planning Commissioner Hollander and City Planner Bill Martin. During this site tour, the group discussed the issues which would be important to the city, including the treatment of the lakefront and river edge, water circulation in the Ogden Slip, and the potential syphoning of retail trade from the Michigan Avenue

retail area away to Cityfront Center. Cooper also pointed out several issues which should be important to the city, such as the view corridor from the Ogden Slip to the Tribune and Wrigley Buildings. Through this investigative process, Cooper established the necessary ground work from which to create his plan.⁵²

After this initial investigation, Cooper began a three-step analysis which he feels is important for any large development.⁵³ Cooper used his preliminary findings to establish "design principles" or broad goals for the site. These concepts included estimates of overall density and type, general location, and square footage of each use within the site (ie. commercial, retail, hotel, and residential). From these design principles, the planners developed a number of "options" for the various areas within the site. These conceptual plans studied the placement of streets and public spaces and the development of individual land parcels within the entire site. The idea was to study the conceptual plans to determine which options could be accommodated in an overall program. Cooper and the developers decided upon the best options for each parcel. These were combined into an overall master plan which was presented to the city as the basis for approval of the residential and commercial plan for development.

COOPER'S EXPERTISE

What made Cooper's plan special and unique? City planners, community groups, and the joint venture team have all commented on the wisdom of Cooper's plan to aggregate the public amenities and focus the buildings around them rather than having tiny, "postage stamp" open spaces at each building within the development. Amy Hecker applauds Cooper's treatment of Ogden Slip as an amenity and the human scale to which he has designed the buildings surrounding it. The riverwalk was given more attention and focus than any other development along the Chicago River.

The Cityfront Center site had many natural amenities (primarily the water features) with which to work but the site was severely hampered by the infrastructure which "towered" over it on its east and west boundaries. Earlier plans for Cityfront Center had simply continued the elevated infrastructure established by Michigan Avenue and Lake Shore Drive across the entire site. The cost of the infrastructure would have been prohibitive and in addition Cooper felt that the residential areas especially should be at ground and waterfront level. David Tinkham was particularly impressed by Cooper's treatment of the eastern portion of the site. His placement and design of Columbus Park allows for the substantial grade level change from the elevated area east of Columbus Drive to the natural grade level west of Columbus

Drive. Cooper's skill appears to lie in his ability to weave his design into the fabric of an existing neighborhood and to also deal with the opportunities and limitations of a particular site.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

At the time the developers presented the master plan to the planning department, the city planners had been concentrating their efforts on the Near North downtown area with the expectation that new development would occur there next. As a result, the Cityfront Center area, further to the north and east and away from the central business district, had not yet been carefully studied by the city planners. Nonetheless, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the city planners insisted on the creation of public guidelines for Cityfront Center before they would allow the joint venture to apply for a Plan for Development (PD).

Development guidelines had been established for earlier Chicago projects (including Illinois Center), but they spoke only to the broad issues of general land use and overall density. The approval of Cityfront Center came at a time when the planning department of Chicago, together with planning departments in other U.S. cities, began to redefine its venue to include urban design and the issues of open space, public sector improvements, environmental impact, phasing, infrastructure, and transportation.⁵⁴ The city's goal was to

establish development guidelines to "ensure that the public interest is protected in any development large enough to affect the adjacent community."⁵⁵ These guidelines put future Cityfront City developers on notice with regard to those issues which were important to the city.

Development guidelines were an important issue on the agenda of Elizabeth Hollander, the Commissioner of Planning and Neighborhood Development, who had been recently appointed by Mayor Washington. This, coupled with the planning department's move to direct the urban design of new projects, resulted in the creation of precedent-setting guidelines for the Chicago Dock-Equitable Venture. Its guidelines are much more detailed and broader in scope than anything previously drafted and are important for a number of reasons.

Chicago has a number of large parcels which are held by single owners and, due to growth in the areas, will soon be ready for redevelopment. Notably, the American Medical Association (AMA) owns a tract located just to the northwest of Cityfront Center across Michigan Avenue. Since the 1800's, Chicago has been a major Midwestern railway hub for agricultural and industrial goods. Due to the decline in this mode of transportation, Chicago has a number of large parcels of land held by railroad companies which will soon be ready for redevelopment. Cityfront Center, also held under a single partnership at the time of its approvals, sets a precedent for

the establishment of design controls on these land parcels.

The City of Chicago is making a strategic effort to address important land use and urban design issues in the developing areas surrounding the Central Business District and in the densely-developed areas along the lakefront. The guidelines for Cityfront Center "set the precedent" for a part of this effort, the shaping the River North Urban Design Plan, "the City's first attempt to establish design guidelines for an existing community with diverse ownership patterns."⁵⁶ The River North Plan, in turn, will be used as a model for other Central Area plans including those for the West Loop, the South Loop and the Central Business District. With guidelines in place, developers within these areas will know what is be expected of them, the review and approval processes can be expedited, and development delays can be kept to a minimum.

While objective development standards provide a framework for new projects and provide the community with assurances of quality and products to be developed, it is important to keep the guidelines flexible enough to allow for changes in architectural styles, technology, and market forces. "Even the word, 'guidelines,' suggests flexibility."⁵⁷ It is for this reason that the Chicago City Council does not approve development guidelines. The approval of the City Council would give the guidelines the force of law and would require that they be amended to adjust for any changes market forces

would require. The amendment process through the City Council would be too difficult and open up the entire project for renegotiation. (This may explain why a number of community groups would like to see area guidelines subject to Council approval.) "Council approval is so laborious, you want to keep it out of that realm."⁵⁸

RESPONSE OF CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

The development guidelines for Cityfront Center, first issued in late 1984, offered the public an important opportunity to be heard. "It is extremely important to get feedback from the people. Some ideas are crazy as hell, [yet] some are valid."⁵⁹ Public response in Chicago is heard most often through a number of well-established, well-organized, and well-respected civic interest groups. As Phil Levine, Director of Planning for the City of Chicago explains, these groups are made up of "a hard core group of civic-minded individuals concerned with the downtown and its development. They [help] keep us in balance." Some of these groups consider their role to be that of "watchdogs," always mindful of the potential for "public vandalism by public officials,"⁶⁰ while others see themselves as civic advocacy groups with tempered, balanced goals, reflecting the varied interests of their constituents.⁶¹ A common theme in the formation of all the community groups is a desire "to have some chance to have influence" on decisions made by local and state governments.

While Cooper's plan was often described as "sensitive" to its surrounding area, no plan can be expected to completely satisfy everyone. Several groups, such as Friends of Downtown and Friends of the Parks, felt as though CDEV should have been even more aware of the surrounding communities and should have solicited comments from interested groups even earlier in the planning process. The joint venture "didn't bring the [civic] groups in at the outset and say, 'We have sixty acres, what percentage of open space should there be? Where should the parks be located?'"⁶² Others felt the CDEV developers "understood how to fit a large development into its surrounding context,"⁶³ and were more realistic in the extent to which they could influence developers' plans. Each group had objectives which were critical to them, but most groups were moderate in their demands. "It's only in rare cases where you have the luxury of going in and setting a vision and having someone else live up to it."⁶⁴ Without the civic interest groups having anything personally at stake, "there's also the question of what's appropriate for the interest groups to be demanding."⁶⁵

The development team feels they were diligent in soliciting and responding to the concerns of the interest groups. The guideline and PD review processes also gave the interest groups the opportunity to review and comment on the developers' plans. In the words of Amy Hecker, working with

the community is the "only smart thing to do because one must assume that this [project] is pretty complex and there will be disagreements. Why wait until the last minute? It [affects] the timing and antagonizes people." Jack Guthman, the venture's zoning counsel, commented, "We drive carefully. You don't have to run people over with a train. . . We want people to feel included. It's the right way to get the project done." Mitch Kardon of the Metropolitan Planning Council agreed, "I've got to give [Guthman] credit for trying to work with us."

In general, most of the community groups felt the CDEV master plan had merit. The concerns the community groups did have focused on a number of transportation and public amenity issues. A discussion of these issues follows:

A. Access to Cityfront Center from Michigan Avenue through Pioneer Court

In order to provide access to Cityfront Center from Michigan Avenue, Cooper's design called for the project's main entrance to be located through Pioneer Court, a bustling, well-known pedestrian plaza just north of the Chicago River between the Equitable and Tribune buildings. Many of Chicago's interest groups felt a roadway through Pioneer Court would "diminish the whole urban area - one of the world's greatest - and break the now unbroken and famous promenade from the south side of the Michigan Avenue bridge to Ohio Street."⁶⁶ The city planners and interest groups were also

concerned over the additional traffic which would be generated at this already heavily congested location across the street from the Wrigley Building.

City planners were also sensitive in looking to the future and the additional traffic which will be created by the eventual development of the American Medical Association's land to the west of Michigan Avenue. Illinois Street, an existing road to the north of the site, is a natural access point from the AMA site and, if Cityfront Center could be reached from this same street, it would be possible to create and signalize a major four-way intersection, allowing traffic to flow efficiently. (Traffic would be slowed significantly if a "jog" in the road from Illinois Street to Pioneer Court were necessary.)

The developers conceded to provide access to automobiles via Illinois Street, an existing road to the north of the site. This will not be as visible a main entrance to Cityfront Center as would be access from bustling Michigan Avenue, but traffic snarls will be reduced and the project will still have a ceremonial entrance through Pioneer Court. The joint venture's concession was due partially to difficulties in obtaining the necessary easements from the Tribune Company. The Chicago Dock - Equitable Venture and the Tribune Company share the easement over the street on which Pioneer Court is located. This gave the Tribune considerable

leverage over the CDEV and made access through Pioneer Court too expensive a proposition. Access from Illinois Street became the preferable alternative for both the Cityfront developers and the public.

B. Funding for Infrastructure Improvements.

Tishman Speyer Properties, the master developers of Cityfront Center, wanted the city to share in the cost of road and walkway improvements on the CDEV site. In a proposal similar to tax increment financing, the developers would pay back the bonds and the interest in the early years of the project, but as commercial and residential space was added to the tax rolls, the burden of repayment would shift to the city.

This was a highly controversial issue. The city and community groups were concerned that the money needed for Cityfront Center's infrastructure financing would divert funds from the overburdened school system. At the time, the Municipal Sanitary District, which was in the midst of extensive capital improvements to reduce flooding in the city, was also in need of tax dollars. What little infrastructure funds were available were tagged to go to the outlying neighborhoods first.⁶⁷ Mary Decker, executive director of the Metropolitan Planning Council, an organization dedicated to "initiating and promoting comprehensive programs and policies that help [the Chicago region] cope with . . . growth and

change" (MPC Brochure), outlined her organization's stance:

Our position as far as leveraging infrastructure is concerned is that the city should do it to cause development to occur in areas where it wouldn't naturally occur. But the . . . neighborhood couldn't be more ripe for development, and therefore the city's involvement should be limited.⁶⁸

In Planning Commissioner Hollander's words, "We cannot afford to mortgage the future tax base of the city."⁶⁹ The city made it clear to the developers that the approval of Cityfront Center was contingent upon private financing of the infrastructure.

The joint venture had always known this was a possibility and so had added the infrastructure costs to their worst case financial scenarios. (If the work were done privately, the joint venture would at least not have to worry that the city would not have bond funds available when Cityfront Center's infrastructure was needed.) However, if the partnership was to pay for the infrastructure, CDEV insisted that they do the work themselves. Tishman, Speyer properties, the master developer, estimated the cost would near \$150 million if the city were to do the work and the partnership were to pay for its cost, double what it was estimated to cost to handle the construction privately. The higher expected cost was due to union contracts and the interest carry for the longer time period the city would require to do the work. Private financing also ended the issue of timing and overseeing work over which the developers would have no control, a cost to

which it is difficult to assess a monetary value. The partnership was aided by the fact that interest rates were beginning to fall. This reduced the gap between the preferential rates on public bond financing and the rates the joint venture could secure through private financing and lowered the overall infrastructure expense.

C. The Treatment of Ogden Slip.

For aesthetic reasons and to increase the circulation of the water within Ogden Slip, the city was interested in the extension of the Slip south to the river through the addition of a north-south channel. As one member of the development team put it, "The site is already on a peninsula, how much more water do we need to bring to it?" City Planner Bill Martin, in fact, wanted to see the creation of an "island." From his viewpoint, Ogden Slip, as it stands now, is a . . .

stagnant body of water. Junk is pushed in and trapped at the end of the slip when the locks from the lake are opened. Connecting the slip [to the river] would have created natural circulation of the water.

The extension of the slip would have been costly and would have also required bridges to tie the "island" to the rest of the site. The issue was not critical to other city planners and studies showed that a mechanical system would make it possible to circulate water within the slip so the CDEV was not required to extend the slip south to the river.

Chicago architect Harry Weese also wanted to see the slip designated a national historic landmark. In the opinion of Weese, "It's part of the original plan of the city, and has historical connotations."⁷⁰ An historic designation might have limited the joint venture's plans to backfill the third of the slip that lies to the west of Columbus Drive had the joint venture applied for any federal funds with which to do the work. Filling the slip to the east of Columbus Drive made Cooper's land plan more workable, eliminated the need for costly bridges, and increased the amount of developable land on the site.

Weese had been successful in designating as historic landmarks the city's Orchestra Hall, the elevated train tracks in the downtown "loop," and Soldiers Field. He ran into major roadblocks on the designation of Ogden Slip for at least two reasons: (1) no property can be placed on the national register over the objections of the owner according to a 1981 revision in the landmarks law and (2) all landmarks placed on the national register must be tied to structures, therefore bodies of water cannot be designated. As a result, Ogden Slip was not declared a landmark and the western portion of the Slip has been filled.

D. The Upfront Planning of du Sable Park.

Du Sable Park, on the eastern edge of the site at the lake, will be the last public open space to be developed in

Cityfront Center. Nevertheless, the Metropolitan Planning Council, Open Lands Project, and Friends of the Park wanted the programming and plans for the park to be finalized at the time the PD was approved. In Jack Guthman's opinion, "There is not a willingness to accept the corporate response, no trust (on the part of the public)." With the uncertainties of all that will occur over the next twenty years of build-out, the development team felt that it was not practical to tie-down the park's design so far in advance of its completion. The development team felt strongly that it was not wise to commit to a specific design at the present time and thus planning for the design of the park has been left for the future when it can more responsibly meet the needs of the public.

E. Traffic and Parking.

Bill Martin, planner with the City of Chicago at the time and now with the Chicago Central Area Committee, explained that the 13,000 parking spaces required (per existing ordinances) would have been the equivalent of four levels of parking across all 40 developable acres. (The high water table and inherent problems in soil composition make underground parking structures extremely expensive and difficult to build.) In lowering the parking requirements for Cityfront Center, Martin felt the city was responsive not only to the need of making the development feasible but in allowing

the architects to design to a "human scale" without a wall of parking rising fifty feet above grade from the base of each building.

Nonetheless, the Metropolitan Planning Council felt a transit plan should be made a part of the developer's first annual progress report. "The development will add the equivalent of four Sears Towers in building space. . . and may so increase the demand on public transportation that major alterations in the system may be needed."⁷¹ Although this was not made a requirement in the approved PD, the joint venture did dedicate easements to allow for a future light rail "distributor" system to run from the commuter train stations through the site and on to Navy Pier.

F. Phasing and Ongoing Accountability

Cooper's plan calls for a continuous public esplanade/walkway along the Chicago River, a long-time goal of citizens' groups. A primary concern to the Metropolitan Planning Council, however, was the fact that the original development guidelines for the site recommended, but did not require, the joint venture to follow the city's recommendations for the timing of the riverfront improvements and the installation of other public open spaces. The revised guidelines do require that the riverfront be improved in phases which are tied to the build-out of the project. The riverwalk is to begin at the western boundary of the site

(where NBC Tower is currently being completed) and continue to the east as development progresses along this axis. The group was unsuccessful in seeing that the timing of Du Sable Park, as a part of the riverfront improvements, be accelerated.

There are still members of the community groups and architectural critics who judge Cooper's public spaces to be too programmed and without enough open, *green* spaces. In addition, the complaint that is still most often made of Cityfront's plan for open space is that the remaining pedestrian ways through the project are not clearly delineated and that the other public parks within the plan are not on timetables similar to that of the riverfront. The civic groups were unsuccessful in affecting any significant changes on these issues. Chicago Dock and Canal and Equitable are to be held accountable for compliance with the controls that were established. On an annual basis for the first five years, and thereafter as required by the Planning Commissioner, the owners of Cityfront Center are required to submit a report identifying the work undertaken as required in the Plan for Development.

The precedent-setting development guidelines for Cityfront Center were approved by the Planning Commission in April, 1985. The major issues regarding Cityfront's Plan for Development had been "hammered out" during review by the city planning department and the civic interest groups. As a

result, the Plan was unanimously approved by the Chicago Plan Commission in August, 1985 and forwarded to the the Chicago City Council for its approval. The Planned Development Ordinance (PD), controlling the CDEV's site of over 60 acres, was approved by the City Council in November, 1985, just eighteen months from the time the project's master plan was first presented to the City Planning Department. In the words of Elizabeth Hollander, "The groups came to a remarkable amount of concensus on a large parcel in a short amount of time."

CHAPTER FIVE
INTERNAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Presently, Cooper's master plan is only that, a plan, an outline, an intention. Yet, "Cooper wants to see his plan survive such that he can come back twenty-five years from now and know what the development will look like."⁷² Developers want plans upon which they can rely. Careful control and implementation will be necessary for Cooper's design to become a reality. Therefore, it was in both CDEV's and the city's best interest to establish control mechanisms such that, over a period of time, the various developers involved with the project would maintain the integrity of the master plan and create what CDEV and the city intended for the site.

The issues of long-term control and predictability are reasons the city has been interested in establishing development guidelines to govern all large areas of redevelopment. The Chicago Dock-Equitable joint venture has also established internal design standards as required by its PD. These standards exceed those of the city and organize a "framework for the continuing development of Cityfront Center, . . . while permitting each user or developer to express his own identity and meet his own objectives within the broader context."⁷³

The developers recognized the inherent conflict in

long-term planning: the need to be able to predict and rely upon established plans and guidelines and yet still be flexible to allow for changes in the marketplace. Therefore, the internal standards for Cityfront Center are not overly detailed; they speak primarily to maintaining a prescribed level of quality and are more general when dealing with issues of design. "It's yet to be seen whether we've left enough flexibility. However, you can build an incredible range of buildings and still be within the guidelines."⁷⁴

The internal design standards are organized into two sections. Section I has been reviewed and approved by the Chicago Department of Planning and applies to open space amenities, infrastructure and vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems. Section I has been developed jointly by the Dock and Canal Trust and Equitable and will be used on all the land associated with the PD. In comparison, with Illinois Center, "the city had no assurance of what would be built or even that it would be built; the [general parameters established in the] PD were the only assurances the city had of what the plan would be."⁷⁵

The Section II standards have been drawn up separately by the Trust and Equitable for the areas they individually own, and although their standards are similar, they are not identical. (The differences are due primarily to the fact that Equitable's tracts are commercial while the Trust's

parcels are primarily residential.) The Section II standards have been reviewed by the city's planning department but their approval is not required. Nevertheless, technically a project is not to be submitted to the city for building permits until a proposed project is in compliance with the internal standards.

Section II specifically speaks to the development of any individual parcel and is "intended to establish a self-policing structure for the evaluation of projects which shall be brought to [the owners] for review and approval." Section II outlines the form, materials, color lighting, signage, and landscaping of all buildings. The buildings are to be "in keeping with the long-established Chicago tradition" of tripartite division (distinctive buildings bases, shafts, and tops), natural stone, brick or pre-cast concrete, and naturally occurring colors. Buildings with facades predominantly of glass are discouraged and 40% limit on glass on the bases of the buildings. The result is the establishment of private guidelines similar to those a more strict city planning department might impose on a development.

Cooper, Eckstut Associates designed a similar set of guidelines for Battery Park City which have proved to very important to the success of that project. "Because the materials and the forms are drawn from familiar sources, the buildings exude an almost palpable feeling of welcome."⁷⁶

Ulrich Franzen, the designer of a residential project at Battery Park City explained, "The guidelines became the surrogate for a context. They created a level of sensitive design probably not otherwise available."⁷⁷ Donald Trump, concerned over gaining city approval of his project and impressed with the results of Battery Park City, hired Alexander Cooper to replace Helmut Jahn, designer of the "shiny and new," for the development of Trump's Television City on Manhattan's Upper West Side.⁷⁸

Although Equitable and the Dock and Canal Trust have designed internal standards, the true test will come in their implementation of those standards over time. Alex Cooper described the Battery Park City Authority, the overseeing authority for the project, as "brutally diligent" in order to achieve success through the use of their guidelines. Cesar Pelli, designer of Battery Park City's World Financial Center added, "The execution is the part of a project where things come unraveled. This is where you have to make the deals and the compromises."⁷⁹ Battles over the size and color of brick were so frequent that the Authority's staff joked about who was winning the "brick wars."⁸⁰ The difficulty is in maintaining the standards, even through difficult economic times. Amanda Burden, vice-president for planning and design at the Authority, described the dilemma,

If any one developer had got a break, all the others would have been compromised. One reason they

wanted to be here was that they'd be protected from somebody doing a worse building down the block.⁸¹

Battery Park City's Gateway Towers are stark concrete, prison-like structures built in the 1970's during New York's economically difficult times and before Cooper's guidelines were created for the project. The appearance of Gateway Towers in many ways prompted Cooper's guidelines which now direct the design within Battery Park City. Gateway Towers stand in sharp contrast to the rest of Battery Park City and are startling examples of what might have occurred over the rest of the development had design guidelines not been established and enforced. Another example of what might have happened is the Times Square redevelopment plan which Cooper helped to design. Since then, the plan has been "stripped" of some of the key architectural-design guidelines opening the way for compromises which may result in the approval of buildings of marginal design.

A primary concern for any potential developers will be the cost of implementing the internal design standards set for Cityfront Center. "It's fair to say that it will cost a little more to deal with the articulated bases and tops we're calling for."⁸² The design "extras" at Battery Park City added approximately ten percent to the buildings' total cost, according to Ellen Rosen, spokeswoman for the Authority.⁸³ The owners argue that while a building may cost more to be in

compliance with the guidelines, more value is created in each building because each building is better built and surrounded by buildings of equal quality. The argument continues that these buildings will command higher rents and in the long-term have greater value. Despite this potential for improved value, the owners of Cityfront Center will need to be conscious of potential "cost cutting" by developers to compensate for the added requirements that the internal design guidelines will cost. Narrow hallways and small apartments at Battery Park City attest to the fact that, "by putting more money into the skins of the buildings, the developers cut corners on the interiors."⁸⁴

The authority to enforce the design guidelines is the key. In Cooper's opinion, "Without an organization like [the Battery Park City Authority], guidelines are of questionable value."⁸⁵ Approval and rejection of plans for buildings within Cityfront Center will need to be firm, fair, and responsive and should be handled by a staff qualified in design review. Adherence to the Section II standards is not required by the City of Chicago Planning Department in the same way that adherence to the Section I standards is made a requirement. (Section I standards deal with public interest and safety issues such as open space and infrastructure standards.) This gives Equitable and the Dock and Canal Trust a measure of flexibility in their approvals. On the flip

side, the owners cannot necessarily look to the city for "strong arm" enforcement when developers want variances from the internal standards but they must maintain their standards on their own using their own "power." The city is in agreement in principal with Equitable and the Trust and does not want to issue building permits for any plans unacceptable to Equitable and Dock and Canal. Nonetheless, it will be primarily up to those entities to enforce their own Section II guidelines.

Equitable is establishing an aesthetic precedent for future developments on their site with their completion of the NBC Tower. "Dock and Canal will have the greater task of requiring developers to meet the design standards"⁸⁶ as no precedent-setting buildings have yet been constructed on their land. Battery Park City exemplifies the value of adherence to established and respected design guidelines. Time and the owners' willingness and ability to accept the long-term nature of the project will determine whether or not the same value is realized at Cityfront Center.

CHAPTER SIX

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DESIGN AND APPROVALS PROCESS

The Chicago Dock - Equitable Venture obtained the approval for the Cityfront Center master plan and plan for development in only eighteen months from the time the master plan was presented to the city for review. Not only were approvals swift in comparison to that of many other cities, but in the words of Mike Pepper, project manager for Cityfront Center, "It's unbelievable that thirty buildings could be zoned all at once in a sensitive area of Chicago." A study of Cityfront Center and the approvals process of Chicago raises a number of questions:

How would a public design of Cityfront Center have differed from CDEV's private design of the site?

Should city planning departments be involved in urban design and architectural design review? If so, at what stages and how deeply should they be involved in the review process?

Is the design and approvals process established at Cityfront Center transferable to other land parcels in Chicago and to sites in other metropolitan areas?

Why does it appear to be easier to develop in Chicago than a number of other major U.S. cities?

Has the economy and architectural design of Chicago suffered as a result?

This chapter will review the opinions of many of the

Cityfront Center players and the conclusions which may be drawn from the study of the design and approval process that has resulted in the Cityfront Center development guidelines, plan for development, and internal design standards.

PRIVATE PLANNING IN A PUBLIC ARENA

The development goals for a large parcel in a highly visible and densely populated area of a major metropolitan city are often determined by a city's planning and regulatory agencies. In the ideal case, public objectives would be established by the appropriate city regulatory agencies for a politically and economically sensitive development site, such as Cityfront Center. These goals would then be set forth in a zoning ordinance specifically governing that parcel or parcels of land. In contrast, the only regulations applicable to the CDEV site were the Lakefront Protection Ordinance and the city's original zoning ordinance established in 1958. In 1984, before the city planning department had had the opportunity to closely review the area and establish development guidelines, the Chicago Dock - Equitable Venture was ready to begin its plans for developing the Cityfront Center site.

As a result the CDEV joint venture, with the aid of the Alexander Cooper design team, privately embarked on establishing a master plan for the CDEV site--before development guidelines were established by any public agency.

One hypothesis that may be drawn is that private developers would have had goals and objectives different from those of public planning agencies and that as a result a private planning process would have created a design much different than one created by public planners.

It is surprising to note, then, that both city planners and Cooper's team felt that the plan for Cityfront Center would have been little changed if the city had been in charge of its master plan. Both sides do agree that a public plan devised by the city (and perhaps less sensitive to CDEV's development costs) would have called for more open space, but it is to be expected that a public agency will always ask for more public amenities than a developer will offer. Regardless, those interviewed in both the public and private sectors agree that the actual plan is a good one nonetheless.

A number of reasons were cited to explain how a private plan could be successfully approved with only minimal changes. During the design process, Alexander Cooper and his team worked with the city to identify those issues that the public planners felt were important to the city and the community. Although Cooper dedicated the time and effort necessary to create the design of the master plan, the city had input in much the same way it would have had if the guidelines had been drawn up by the city's planning department. Ed Smith,

Executive Vice President of Equitable, explained the design process, "With a piece of land so large and unique, it almost has to be an evolving process. You start with ideas, then talk with the city." He commented further that the city would have had to use the same evolving process the developers had used (ie. starting with ideas and then getting responses from developers and interested citizens). In a vacuum, the city could not have independently created guidelines for a given area without looking at alternatives and considering the private market. The city did exactly this in devising the River North guidelines: the planning department solicited responses to its first draft from the residents and businesses in the neighborhood.

Beth White of the Friends of the River also commented that, "Cityfront Center was a big enough site that everyone, [the developers, the city, and the community groups], could get something out of it." As discussed previously in Chapter Three, the interests of the developers and the city merged in many ways due to the long-term build-out of the project and the joint venture's need to maximize the value of the entire site.

PUBLIC DESIGN REVIEW

In recent years a number of cities have begun to review the architectural design of projects--in addition to reviewing engineering issues, density, and urban design. The most

notable of these cities are San Francisco and Boston, where in the words of Brian Shea, "they even want to approve cornice lines." San Francisco has gone to great lengths to set down specific design guidelines in writing. The Boston Redevelopment Authority (the BRA) is particularly powerful as a specially enacted state statute gives it the power to act as both the city's planning and development authorities for the city. With its powers of condemnation and responsibility for urban renewal, the BRA controls a great amount of land and, from that land, makes \$30 - \$40 million each year in leasing and permitting fees.⁸⁷ Its charter is unlike any other in the country; its considerable income supports a sizeable staff who are given assignments to study urban design issues, plan, and monitor the course of development in Boston, and closely review development proposals. The BRA's ability to generate substantial income has allowed it to expand its activities more than any other similar planning agency.

There appears to be a genuine commitment on the part of planning staffs in the cities that review architectural design that "good design" should happen in their cities. Many also believe that Boston's complicated and very restrictive approvals process has kept the city from becoming overbuilt. Comments have been made that answering to the Boston Redevelopment Authority (the BRA) can improve designs which

may be cost effective but are inappropriate for the context in which the building is to be constructed.

No project, with or without public review, is going to satisfy the design preferences of all critics. Susan Allen, past Assistant Director of the BRA, believes it is. . .

tough to say what [approval process] works. I know examples where [design review] really works but unfortunately it does not always work. A compromise does not always make for a better project.

(This statement seems to be borne out by the fact that recent Boston projects are not known for the quality of their architectural design despite stringent review.) One Boston architect also noted that the BRA derives a great deal of political and economic power from its detailed design review process and that its procedures are "ineffective and inefficient when the developer's risks and costs for approval are so high." The approvals procedure is ad hoc and "the BRA changes its mind all the time,. . . but to establish development or design guidelines would mean the Authority would lose some of its power."

The question arises as to how Boston and the BRA "get away" with such detailed and demanding design review and the stiff linkage fees which are required of most projects built in Boston? Why do developers continue to queue up for approvals in Boston? Many believe that Boston has a quality of life that is unique, and that the city benefits from a

great number of highly talented people involved in the planning process. The most compelling reason, however, seems to be the strong market which Boston has experienced over the past ten years. "When the golden goose [the strong market] is gone, the BRA will not be able to get all these concessions. It is a great luxury to the BRA now."⁸⁸

Ed Smith, with Equitable Real Estate, and Bill Martin, with the Chicago Central Area Committee and past planner for the City of Chicago, believe that cities like Boston and San Francisco may have a short-sighted view. "Cities have to be careful that the process doesn't become so difficult that it is virtually impossible to develop there. Their processes will have tremendous economic impacts."⁸⁹ Even in strong markets, when rents begin to rise, tenants will begin to look for alternative locations from which to lease space. Smith commented on the results San Francisco is already experiencing from their restrictive approvals process,

The focus in California has changed with regard to the relative economic importance of San Francisco and Los Angeles. A lot of that has to do with the restrictive growth philosophy of San Francisco.

Ed Smith also thought that the competitive marketplace was very effective in policing architectural design rather than handing that power over to city planning departments who are unfamiliar with the demands of the market. Developers are highly attuned to the desires of their users and what is appropriate for the market in their attempt to interest

tenants in leasing their buildings. Smith explained,

I don't know what a city could add to [to the design review] process to protect against a monstrosity of a building. The most critiqued building in Chicago is the State of Illinois Building where the state had control over design but there were no market constraints and the state did not have to design for what was appropriate to the market.

Despite the criticism of the State of Illinois Building, Martin applauds the diversity it and other buildings bring to the architecture of Chicago. He is concerned that design review by public agencies will result in a skyline of identical buildings that reflect the taste of the city officials in office at the time. "My main concern is that you don't want everything Adrian [Smith] or Helmut [Jahn]."

An argument can be made for the creation of design review committees to serve as a compromise between the absence of public design review and complete power for architectural review being held by city planning agencies. These committees typically serve in an advisory capacity and are citizen-based with professional planners and architects serving on them as well. Careful attention must be taken to appoint qualified persons and to establish a reasonable process with ground rules for design approval. Otherwise the process can become arbitrary and abusive; approval by the committee can become yet another unspecified and undetermined hurdle a developer must risk overcoming in order to gain approval for a project. Another problem can be a city's unwillingness, for whatever

reason, to turn over design review to an outside committee. A design review committee was ostensibly created several years ago in Boston, although its ability to function has been stymied politically. A Boston architect who wishes to remain anonymous feels the BRA has been dragging its feet in defining the role the design review committee is to play in the approvals process because it would diminish the wide net of power currently enjoyed by the BRA.

TRANSFERABILITY OF THE DESIGN AND APPROVALS PROCESSES ESTABLISHED AT CITYFRONT CENTER

Cityfront Center is an interesting case study in transferability of approval strategies and techniques. Alexander Cooper and the development team made use of lessons learned from earlier projects which were transferred to Cityfront Center. Not only was Illinois Center studied to determine which aspects of the project had not withstood the tests of time, but Cooper was able to use his experience at Battery Park City and other projects throughout the country to improve the design of Cityfront Center. His experience in other cities was valuable despite the fact he had never before done a major project in Chicago. Just as the designers of Cityfront Center had looked to previous projects to gain insights for their development, the lessons learned during the process of gaining of designing development guidelines for Cityfront Center were in turn used in the design of guidelines for other developing areas of Chicago.

As previously discussed in Chapter Four, Cityfront Center's development guidelines (established by Chicago's Planning Department) set a precedent for the planning of a number of large land parcels in Chicago held under single ownership, such as those held by the American Medical Association and various railroad companies. The guidelines for the development of Cityfront Center have also been successfully tailored to fit the planning needs of the River North area, although River North is an existing improved neighborhood and business community with diverse ownership and interests. In a continuing pattern, plans are underway for the Cityfront Center and River North guidelines to be refined and applied to planning other redeveloping areas near downtown.

Bill Martin explains that, while each community is different, there are always boilerplate urban design issues that are applicable to every plan. This enables the guidelines and procedures established at Cityfront Center to be applied to other areas of Chicago. Having learned from earlier planning experiences, the public planners took the design of the River North guidelines a step further than they took with the planning of Cityfront Center, much as the developers of Cityfront Center applied lessons learned from Illinois Center. (This was partially due to the diversity of ownership in the River North area.) Eighteen hundred

guideline workbooks were distributed within the River North neighborhood in order to solicit comments from the residents and businessmen in the area. The workbook was intended to give people ideas to consider and an opportunity to express their own views in a structured manner. After all, "people in the neighborhoods know the problems better than the planners. Planners would have to 'live' there day and night to understand all the issues."⁹⁰ So successful was the effort that the planners have found it difficult to hold on to any remaining copies for their own use and the design of future guidelines for other areas is expected to include similar public review.

The guidelines for Cityfront Center have been successfully applied to the planning of other redeveloping areas in Chicago. Can the same be said of Cooper's master plan for Cityfront Center? Cooper has been successful in adapting his designs to varying environments such as Battery Park City in New York, which was used as a prototype for the design of Cityfront Center. Both projects aggregate open public spaces, work to bring the development into the fabric of the existing city surrounding them, and have established internal design guidelines to govern the build-out of individual sites and structures within the projects.

The design firm of Cooper, Robertson + Partners is currently working on various projects in which its experience

with Battery Park City and Cityfront Center will also be useful. Its past projects include the Embarcadero Center in San Francisco, the Times Square redevelopment in New York City, and the ongoing redevelopment of Rockefeller Center also in New York City. Current projects include Donald Trump's Television City in New York City, a 750 acre foreign trade zone in New Jersey, the expansion of several college campuses, and a redevelopment plan for downtown Charlotte, North Carolina. Most of these projects are owned or controlled by a single business entity or public agency. In the case of Cityfront Center, most of the land had also been previously cleared for redevelopment; this gave Cooper a clean slate from which to work (although existing infrastructure and grade changes did limit his design opportunities). In the future, the more difficult challenge to Cooper in designing master plans will be the successful transfer of his ideas to projects with ongoing residential and business communities, where buildings already exist, the infrastructure is in place, and many diversified owners hold the land.

THE CHICAGO APPROVALS PROCESS

The approvals process in Chicago appears less arduous and time consuming than the processes established in a number of other major cities. When asked how long it would take to get a project similar to the 60-acre Cityfront Center approved in Boston or San Francisco, Ed Smith replied that it may not be

possible at all. So why is it easier to get a development approved in Chicago? A number of factors make up the answer to this question.

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 required that a great portion of Chicago, including the entire downtown area, be completely rebuilt. Since that time, the City of Chicago has been pro-development. (It is interesting to note in contrast that San Francisco had a similar earthquake and fire in 1906, but currently has a reputation as one of the country's most restrictive cities for new development.) The original comprehensive zoning plan of 1958, allowing for an average FAR of sixteen in the central business district, reinforced the city's commitment to development. At the time of the zoning plan, no new high rise buildings had been built since the 1930's and the lenient zoning was an inducement to attract new development. Today the city is still pro-development and competes with surrounding suburban areas for new projects which will increase tax revenues and the number of jobs available to its citizens.

As a result of the existing as-of-right zoning in Chicago, a great deal of development can be done without a developer having to apply for a zoning variance or a plan for development (PD). Plans for development are usually only required on projects greater than an acre in size. According to Bill Martin, developers feel they have certain rights and

retain these rights, under their as-of-right zoning even when they do come in for a zoning variance. With substantial rights under their as-of-right zoning, it becomes more difficult for the city to extract stiff concessions, particularly regarding issues of density. As an example, if CDEV had developed under its as-of-right zoning (ie. developing the land parcel by parcel rather than under a single PD), the site could have had 55 million square feet of mixed use space built upon it.

Moreover, the process of submitting building plans to the city makes it easier to develop in Chicago. A preliminary submittal for a plan for development simply requires that the developer identify the site and the total number of square feet to be built. (No building designs are required at this point.) Next, the land planners and architects work on a variety of plans and conceptual drawings, but no additional submissions of design or otherwise are required by the planning department. As a result, the city planners do not have a formal opportunity to make comments during the conceptual drawings stage. The developers only come back to the planning department for final approvals.

At this stage they come with full-blown models and plan and are "almost to working drawings." At that point the developer has committed a great deal of time and money in the project. As mentioned earlier, the Chicago Planning

Department does not review the aesthetics of a proposed development. Design review is a "scary issue in Chicago" and there is a concern that it will halt new development.⁹¹ Phil Levine, Director of Zoning for the City of Chicago, also explained that there are limits on the city's authority regarding design control. "If someone came in with an absolutely horrible building, it would be hard for us to tell them to go back to the drawing board." (This approvals process stands in sharp contrast to that of the BRA which reduced the height of the buildings to be built on the Fan Piers by one-half, despite great investments of time and money by the projects' developers.)

The approval of Cityfront Center set another precedent through the creation of a working relationship between the project's developers and the city planning department. Although not required by zoning regulations, the developers of Cityfront Center worked with the city planning department throughout the conceptual design phase to successfully create a development which satisfied both public and private demands. Although the current approvals system in Chicago appears to be working, the planning department and community interest groups would like to improve the process and involve more developers in ongoing dialogue during the conceptual phase of designing a project.

Currently, the planning department can only informally

ask developers to bring their conceptual drawings in for review. Although some developers, such as CDEV, have been willing to work with the city on an ongoing basis throughout the planning process, this informal review system is experiencing only limited success. Therefore, the planning department and civic groups are working to formalize the review process by amending the long-standing zoning ordinance to reflect an established process for review of plans and a time schedule for that process.

Chicago has only recently begun drafting development guidelines which address the treatment urban design issues. Some community groups argue that city does not yet know what it can extract from the developer. "The city pushed hard [on Cityfront Center], but only by Chicago standards, not by Boston or San Francisco standards."⁹² In rebuttal, Ed Smith of Equitable feels that by paying \$75 million in infrastructure expenses, Equitable and the Dock and Canal Trust. . .

are paying the piper. The city's not paying for any infrastructure at all and that doesn't come out in the papers. . . Infrastructure is the responsibility of a municipality. It benefits the property we hold and the city as a whole. The city made it clear that [private funding of the infrastructure expense] was a condition of the development going forward.

Accepting the assumption it is more difficult to develop in a city that has a larger planning staff and with more time to carefully review and critique each development proposal at

least one community group has agreed that one reason it is easier to develop in Chicago is that its planning department is understaffed. As one civic leader explained, "Where government operates better, interest groups don't exist." If one were to look at the planning department staff in relation to the population of the cities, Chicago (1: 9,250) would compare unfavorably to Boston (1: 2,000) and San Francisco (1:4,950).

Another way of viewing these statistics is to consider that, because Chicago is more in favor of development compared to these other cities, it does not need as large a staff to review and "impede" development. In other words, the smaller staff per capita does not so much allow more and easier development to occur in Chicago, but it is instead the result of a development stance adopted by the city many years ago. (Note that, regardless of the conclusions drawn, these statistics should be viewed with a very critical eye as cities include varying departments under the heading of "planning" and "development" and are therefore not necessarily comparable.)

QUALITY OF CHICAGO DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

Despite the seeming relative ease of gaining planning approvals and the fact that there is no public architectural review process, Chicago is known for its quality of building design. In fact, with the Chicago School of Architecture as a

cornerstone, many feel Chicago is the United States' most architecturally diverse, exciting and attractive city. This may seem incongruent until one understands Chicago's tradition of high architectural standards set in place by Daniel Burnham, Frederick Olmstead, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Louis Sullivan. With a precedent for quality well-established, developers and architects apparently tread lightly. Stringent controls may not be necessary to continue the tradition of architectural excellence. In the words of Brian Shea of Cooper, Robertson + Partner, "Chicago comes from a tradition of responsible, good architects so the city hasn't suffered that much [from lack of development controls]." In Bill Martin's opinion, "there are talented people here, both good developers and good architects. Besides, when a new building goes up, it's never going to please 100% of the people. That's what has given Chicago its diversity." Some would also add that this diversity has played an important role in establishing the architectural tradition for which Chicago has become known.

The design and approval of Cityfront Center "is an interesting piece of history. A new book was written by the [CDEV] people."⁹³ The lessons and experiences of Cityfront Center will be used in the development of many future projects. Through ongoing discussions with the city

planning department, the designers of Cityfront Center were able to design a project which met both the needs of the public sector (the city and civic interest groups) and the joint venture partners who were privately developing the project. These discussions set a precedent for the development of a working relationship between public and private entities from which a better project may be planned. The development guidelines established for Cityfront Center and published by the city planning department have been used as a model for the creation of guidelines for other developing areas in Chicago. Finally, the previous experience of Alexander Cooper was valuable in the design of the master plan for Cityfront Center. His approach to the project of aggregating open spaces, maintaining view corridors, and establishing access to the waterfront can be used in the design of future large-scale developments.

For many years, the City of Chicago has pushed for new development. This goal is reflected in the as-of-right zoning established for the city, in the relative leniency a developer has in designing a project (as compared to a number of other major cities), and even in the limited size and power of the Chicago planning department. Nonetheless, Chicago has long been known for its fine architecture. One hypothesis which may be made is this excellence in design has caused architects to respect the tradition of quality that has been established

in Chicago and to "tread lightly" when designing new developments.

Despite the fact that it may be easier to develop in Chicago, in the words of Jack Guthman, CDEV's zoning counsel, the approval process for Cityfront Center was "incredibly hard work." The city, civic interest groups, and the developers are pleased with the results of their time and effort. Since the approval of the Cityfront Center plan, Mary Decker of the Metropolitan Planning Council has noted that "everyone [involved in the project] wants to take credit for its approval. That's the sign of a good deal." The project may have been summed up best by Planning Commission Chairman Miles Berger upon the Planning Commission's approval of Cityfront Center's Plan for Development: "It is approved. Very handsome plan. Very handsome plan."

EXHIBIT A
MAP OF SITE

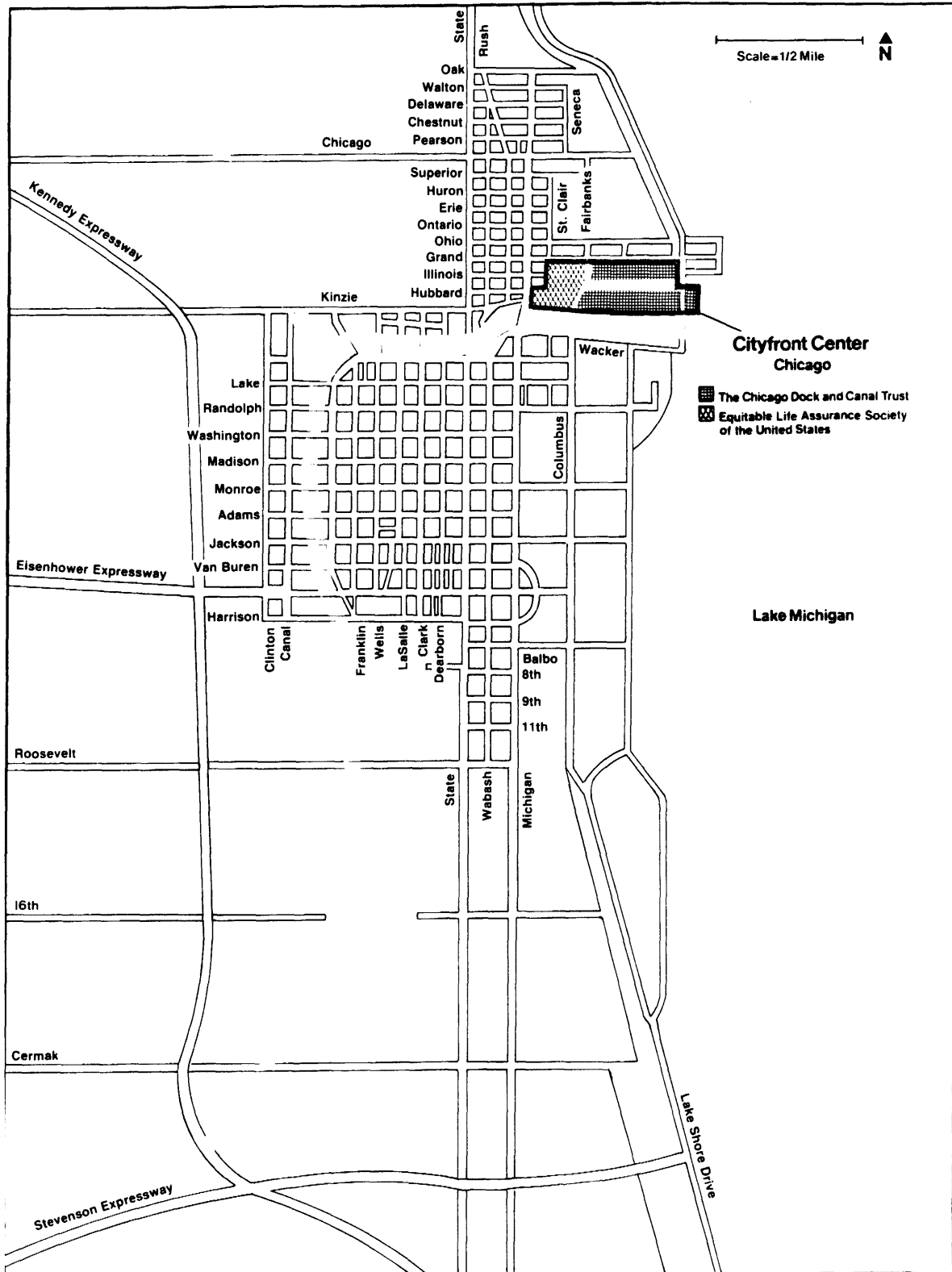


EXHIBIT B
OVERVIEW OF MASTER PLAN FOR
CITYFRONT CENTER

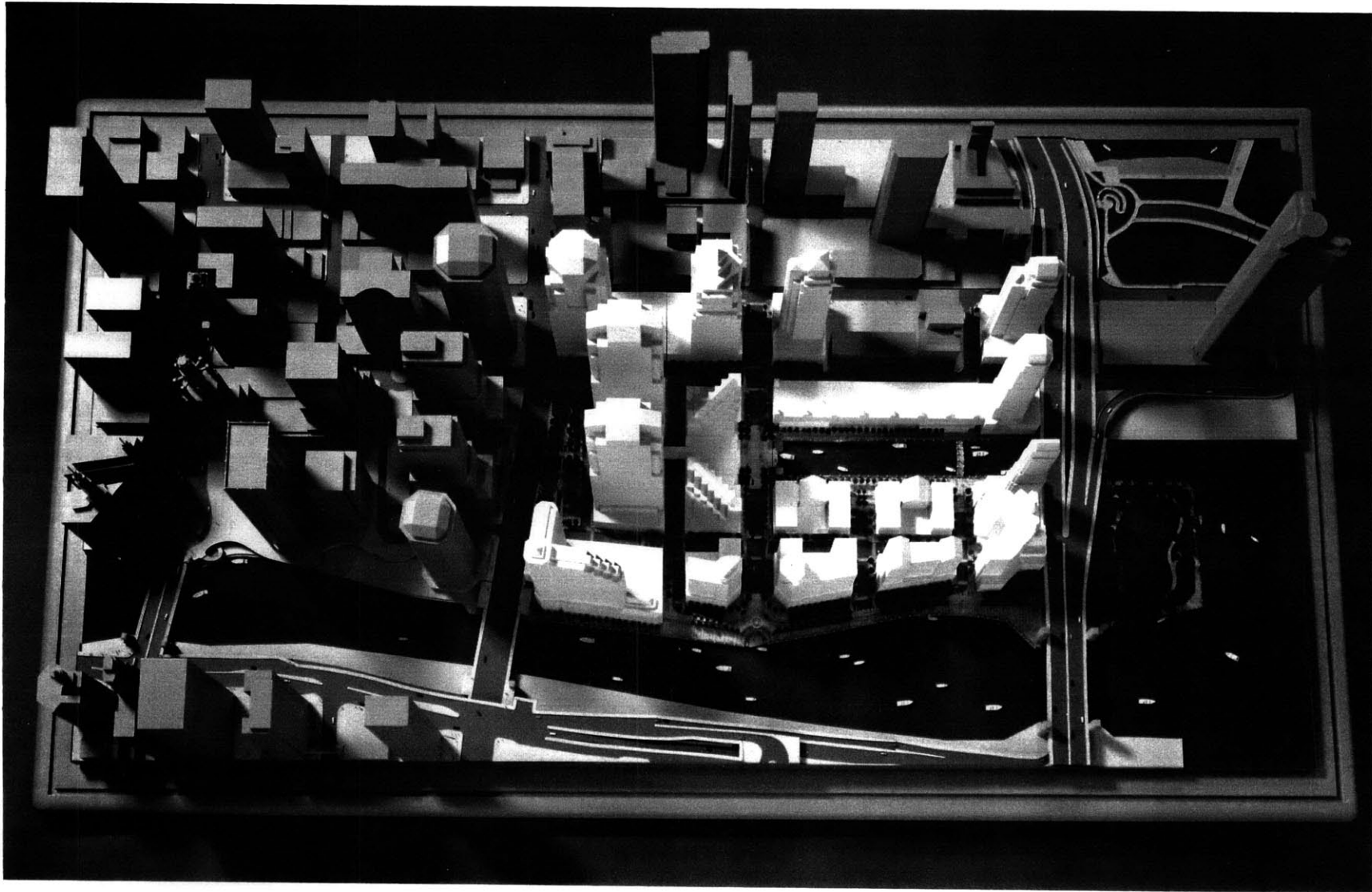


EXHIBIT C
OGDEN SLIP
VIEW CORRIDOR

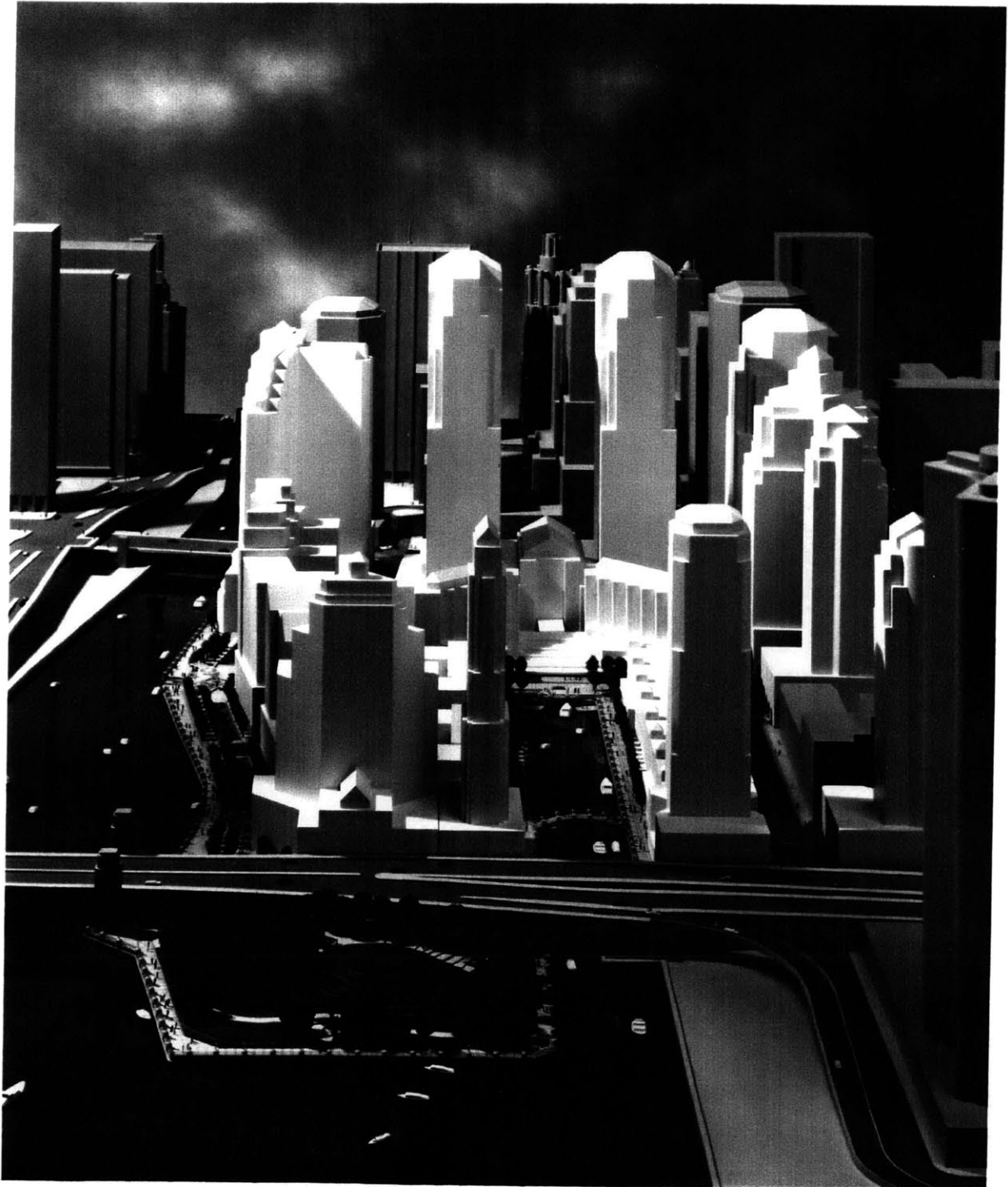


EXHIBIT D
RIVERWALK AND MSD COMMEMORATIVE FOUNTAIN
PLANNED FOR McCLURG COURT

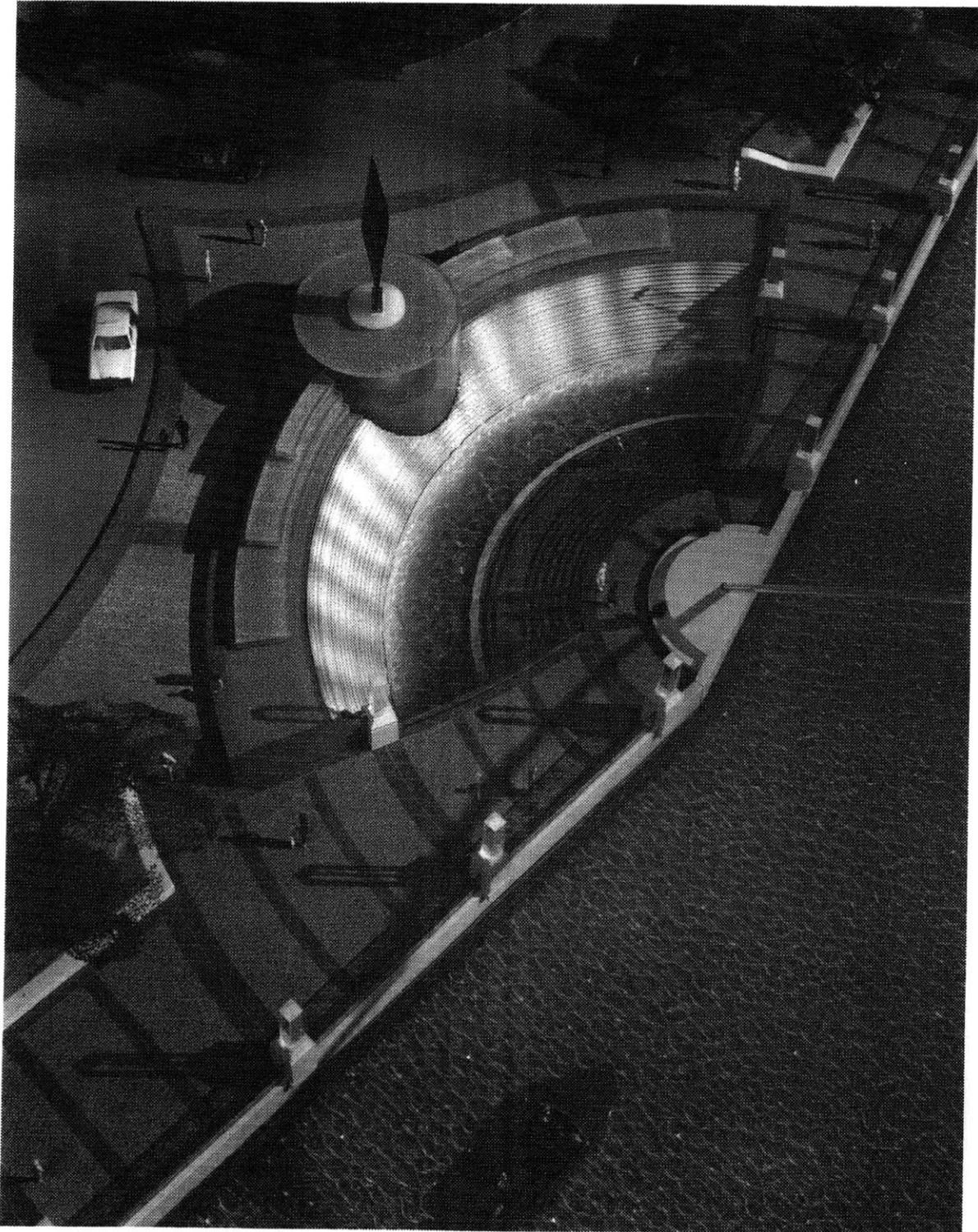


EXHIBIT E
CHICAGO CIVIC GROUPS ASSOCIATED WITH THE
APPROVAL OF CITYFRONT CENTER

Chicago Central Area Committee - civic organization dedicated to urban research and development. Its primary goal is to preserve the economic vitality of Chicago and to act as a catalyst to create a strong downtown.

Friends of Downtown - citizen-based organization concerned with promoting the vitality, diversity, and attractiveness of downtown Chicago.

Friends of the Parks - community organization dedicated to the preservation, protection, and improvement of parks in Chicago.

Friends of the River - advocacy group dedicated to protecting and improving the Chicago River system.

Landmarks Preservation Council - founded to preserve the character and vitality provided to Illinois' cities, towns, and neighborhoods by historic architecture.

Metropolitan Planning Council - dedicated to initiating and promoting comprehensive programs and policies that help (the Chicago region) cope with growth and change.

Open Lands Project - dedicated to increasing the quality and quantity of public open space in northeastern Illinois.

ENDNOTES

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²Wolper, 11-12.

³Billings, Robert, "New Life for Chicago's Dormant Waterfront," Chicago Sun-Times, June 2, 1985.

⁴Wolper, 12-14.

⁵Wolper, 20-21.

⁶Wolper, 24,29.

⁷Wolper, 31-32.

⁸Wolper, 39.

⁹Weese, Harry, "A Planner's Premise Or, The World According to Weese," Inland Architect, November/December, 1985, 55, 80.

¹⁰Interview with Mike Pepper, Partner, Linpro Company, formerly with Tishman-Speyer as project manager for Cityfront Center, June 10, 1988.

¹¹Interview with Charles Gardner, President, The Chicago Dock and Canal Trust, April 28, 1988.

¹²Wolper, 40.

¹³Interview with David Tinkham, Director of Finance, The Chicago Dock and Canal Trust, April 28, 1988.

¹⁴Wolper, 47.

¹⁵Interview with Jack Guthman, Attorney, Sidley, Austin, zoning counsel for Cityfront Center, June 17, 1988.

¹⁶Interview with Bill Martin, Urban Planner, Chicago Central Area Committee, previously with Department of Planning, City of Chicago and involved with zoning of Cityfront Center, June 8, 1988.

¹⁷Guthman.

¹⁸Interview with Amy Hecker, Director of Operations, The Chicago Dock and Canal Trust, June 7, 1988.

¹⁹Strahler, Steven R., "Why Chicago Dock, Equitable Scrapped Cityfront Pact," Crain's Chicago Business, December 26, 1985.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Gardner.

²²Cooper, Alexander and Shea, Brian, "Designing for Public Approval and for Changing Markets," Urban Land, July, 1986.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Guthman.

²⁵Zotti, Ed, "Cityfront Center: The 20-Year Venture," Inland Architect, November/December, 1985, 50.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Pepper.

²⁸Interview with Joe Caprile, Senior Associate, Lohan Associates, Master Planner for The Chicago Dock and Canal Trust, April 29, 1988.

²⁹Interview with Philip Levine, Director of Zoning, Department of Planning, City of Chicago, June 20, 1988.

³⁰Interview with Erma Tranter, Executive Director, Friends of the Parks, June 20, 1988.

³¹Weese, Inland Architect.

³²Martin, June 8, 1988.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Interview with Beth White, Executive Director, Friends of the River, June 21, 1988.

³⁵Guthman.

³⁶"Alex Cooper Looks at Urban Design," Compass, Equitable Real Estate, Summer, 1986, 17.

³⁷Wiseman, Carter, "A Vision with a Message," Architectural Record, March, 1987, 114.

³⁸Compass, 20.

³⁹Guenther, Robert, "Different Approach Winning Acceptance in Urban Projects," Wall Street Journal, December 10, 1986.

⁴⁰Compass, p. 17.

⁴¹Hecker, June 7, 1988.

⁴²Cooper.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Compass, p. 17.

⁴⁵Tinkham, April 28, 1988.

⁴⁶Pepper.

⁴⁷Martin, July 11, 1988.

⁴⁸Guthman.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Interview with Brian Shea, Partner, Cooper, Robertson + Partners, Master Planners of Cityfront Center, July 7, 1988.

⁵²Martin, July 8, 1988.

⁵³Shea.

⁵⁴Martin, July 8, 1988.

⁵⁵Chicago Dock-Equitable Venture Development Guidelines, April 11, 1985, 7.

⁵⁶River North Urban Design Plan, City of Chicago, Department of Planning in conjunction with the Chicago Central Area Committee, May, 1987, 2.

⁵⁷Martin, July 8, 1988.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Martin, June 8, 1988.

⁶⁰Tranter.

⁶¹White.

⁶²Tranter.

⁶³Interview with Mitch Kardon, Metropolitan Planning Council, June 17, 1988.

⁶⁴White.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Mitchell, Cindy, President of Friends of the Parks, Position letter to Elizabeth Hollander, Commissioner of Planning and Neighborhood Development, City of Chicago, January 31, 1985.

⁶⁷Billings.

⁶⁸Goff, Lisa, "Chicago Dock Seeks City Help for Huge Project," Crain's Chicago Business, March 4, 1985.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Goff, Lisa, "Chicago Dock Developers May Face Landmark Hurdle," Crain's Chicago Business, August 5, 1985.

⁷¹Decker, Mary, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Planning Council, Position paper presented to the Chicago Planning Commission, September 12, 1985.

⁷²Pepper.

⁷³Chicago Dock and Canal Trust Internal Design Standards, Section II, September 29, 1986, 3.

- 74 Tinkham.
- 75 Caprile.
- 76 Wiseman, Architectural Record.
- 77 Wiseman, Carter, "The Next Great Place, The Triumph of Battery Park City," New York, June 16, 1986.
- 78 Wiseman, Architectural Record.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Wiseman, New York.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Interview with Thomas Walker, Director of Construction, The Chicago Dock and Canal Trust, April 29, 1988.
- 83 Wiseman, New York.
- 84 Fisher, Thomas, "Building the New City," Progressive Architecture, March, 1988, 92.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Caprile.
- 87 Interview with Donald Connors, Attorney, Choate, Hall & Stewart, July 15, 1988.
- 88 Quotation from architect wishing to remain anonymous.
- 89 Martin, July 8, 1988.
- 90 Martin, June 8, 1988.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Interview with Mary Decker, Executive Director, Metropolitan Planning Council, June 21, 1988
- 93 Interview with Elizabeth Hollander, Commissioner of Planning and Neighborhood Development, City of Chicago, April 28, 1988.

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