

November 19, 2008



Charrette (shuh-ret),
noun. Any collaborative
session in which a
group of people drafts a
solution to a design
problem; serve as a
way of quickly
generating a design
solution while
integrating the
aptitudes and interests
of a diverse group of
people.

PEORIA STREET CHARRETTE

Hosted by Aleece Smith, Michael Spadafore, Caitlyn Castello, and Valbona Kokoshi

Contents

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION.....3
 Location and Context 3

SECTION 2: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.....4
 What is a Charrette? 4
 Peoria Street Charrette Goals 4
 Outreach 5
 Roles & Responsibilities 5
 Actual Participants..... 6

SECTION 3: CHARRETTE DESIGN 7
 Location 7
 Timing 7
 Event Agenda 7
 Charrette Deign Products 8

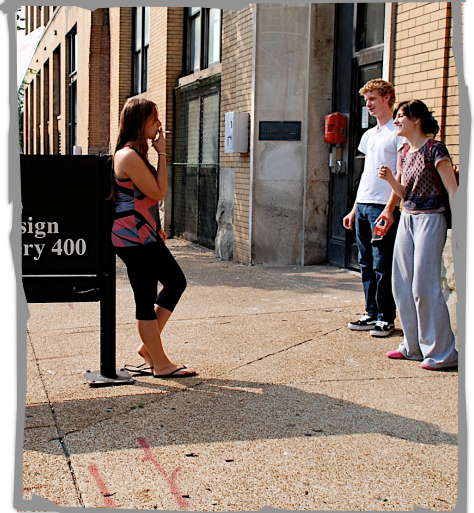
SECTION 4: PARTICIPANTS’ FEEDBACK. 9
 Bike Station..... 9
 CUPPA & Art and Design Halls 9
 CTA Station..... 10
 Parking 10
 Safety10
 Site Design.....11
 Traffic11
 Evaluation Comments11

SECTION 5: SUGGESTION MAPS. 12
 Peoria Street-Existing Map12
 Group One12
 Group Two13
 Composite Map.....13

SECTION 5: FOLLOW UP. 14
 Special Acknowledgment14

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

November 19, 2008



Location and Context

Located north of the Eisenhower Expressway and adjacent to the UIC-Halsted CTA stop, the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs Hall (CUPPAH) and Art and Design Hall (ADH) are very much isolated from the rest of the UIC Campus.

Despite its strategic location as a transportation hub, proximity to Greektown, and some of the best dining, educational, and housing opportunities in the city, Peoria Street has not thrived like the surrounding community. Safety concerns, such as poor lighting, coupled with a lack of streetscaping and sidewalk maintenance make Peoria Street around CUPPA and AD Halls an unattractive and unfriendly place.

Students, staff, neighborhood residents, and tourists alike use this space, and we want all these stakeholders involved in planning revitalized Peoria Street. We envision Peoria Street to be a safe, attractive, functional, and welcoming gateway to the UIC campus, the CTA Blue Line station, and the Near West Side of Chicago.



Peoria Street is the gateway to West Loop's Blue Line station and to the campus of University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Urban Planning and Policy Hall (CUPPAH), Art and Design Hall (ADH) and the Laundromat share the Peoria Street

SECTION 2: Public Participation



What is a charrette?

The French word “charrette” means “cart” and is often used to describe the final, intense work effort extended by art and architecture students to meet a project deadline. This use of the term is said to originate from the École des Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart, or “charrette”, to collect final drawings while students frantically put finishing touches on their work.

A charrette is:

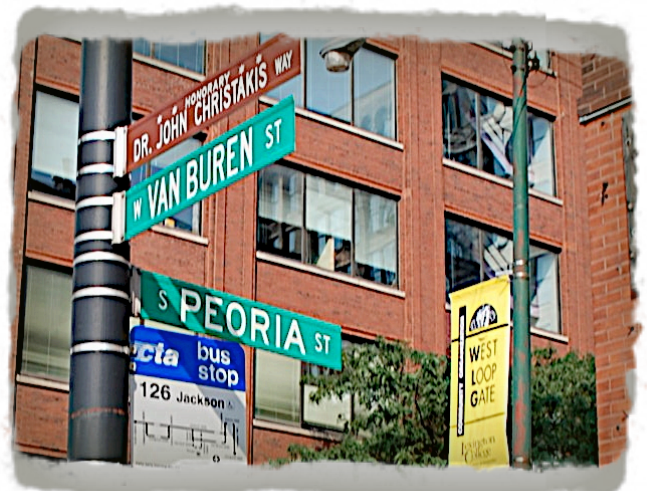
- An open process that includes all interested parties
- Focused on producing a feasible plan
- A collaborative planning process that harnesses the talents and energies of all interested parties to create and support a feasible plan that represents transformative community change

Peoria Street Charrette Goals

The purpose of the charrette was to invite anyone who frequents and is interested in Peoria Street area, area between the intersection of Peoria and Van Buren Streets, ending at the UIC/Halsted Blue Line station. In addition, the charrette would provide an opportunity to speak about the area and how it is used, what improvements are needed to make the area more pedestrian friendly, or to share their concerns about the site.

The goals and objectives presented to all participants of the Peoria Street Improvement Charrette were:

- Assist people in connecting on a deeper level with the physical space outside the College of Urban Planning and Administration Hall and the College of Art and Design Hall
- Facilitate interaction among attendees to create a shared vision of change
- Compile ideas to be submitted to campus and city officials that increase the appeal, attraction,



Outreach

The Peoria Street Charrette was lead by a team of Urban Planning and Policy Masters' students from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) who launched an extensive effort to get input from the many stakeholders who visit and use the identified area. The outreach efforts included UIC students and faculty from the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA) and Art and Design (AD) Halls, residents of the condominiums on Van Buren Street, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), the owner of the "Downtown Cleaners" located on the To ensure each participant had a opportunity to be heard, participants were divided in two groups of 7 to 8 people. Each table was assigned a facilitator and supplied with an oversized arial photograph of the site.

Demographics of Participants

The potential stakeholders of this process were identified as the following:

UIC students and staff who use CUPPA and Art & Design Halls

Residents of the condominiums on Van Buren Street

The Chicago Department Of Transportation (CDOT)

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

Owner of the dry cleaner on Peoria Street (Downtown Cleaners)

The second ward Alderman's office

Participants

To contact these stakeholders, our group developed an outreach plan that included posting flyers, sending emails, and face-to-face interactions. The group made an effort to contact individual stakeholders first. With the exception of the owner of the dry cleaner, these singled-out stakeholders were contacted by email:

Al Schorsch, Associate Dean of CUPPA Hall

Joshua Koonce, Urban Planning and Policy student, CDOT employee

CTA, Office of the Secretary

Alderman Fioretti

Thomas G. Byrne, Commissioner, CDOT

James Foerster, Associate Vice Chancellor, Facility and Space Planning

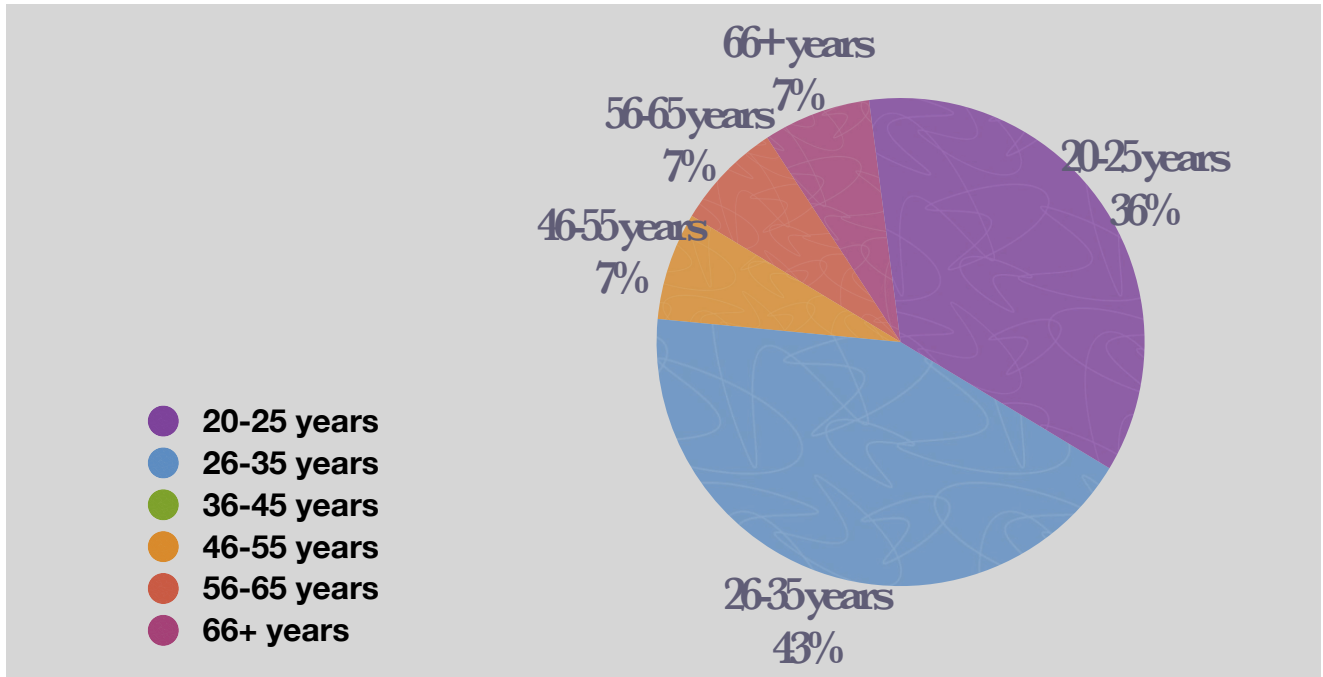
Westgate Center Condominium Association (via the property manager)

The flyers were posted at several places in the area to be affected. While most of the flyers were concentrated on UIC property, they were also posted in the Broadway Bank entrance (900 West Van Buren Street), Alice Salon & Spa (400 South Green Street), and at Downtown Cleaners (407 South Peoria Street). Shortly before the RSVP deadline, mass emails were sent out to Urban Planning and Policy faculty, Masters in Urban Planning students, and a request was made to send an email to Art and Design school students.

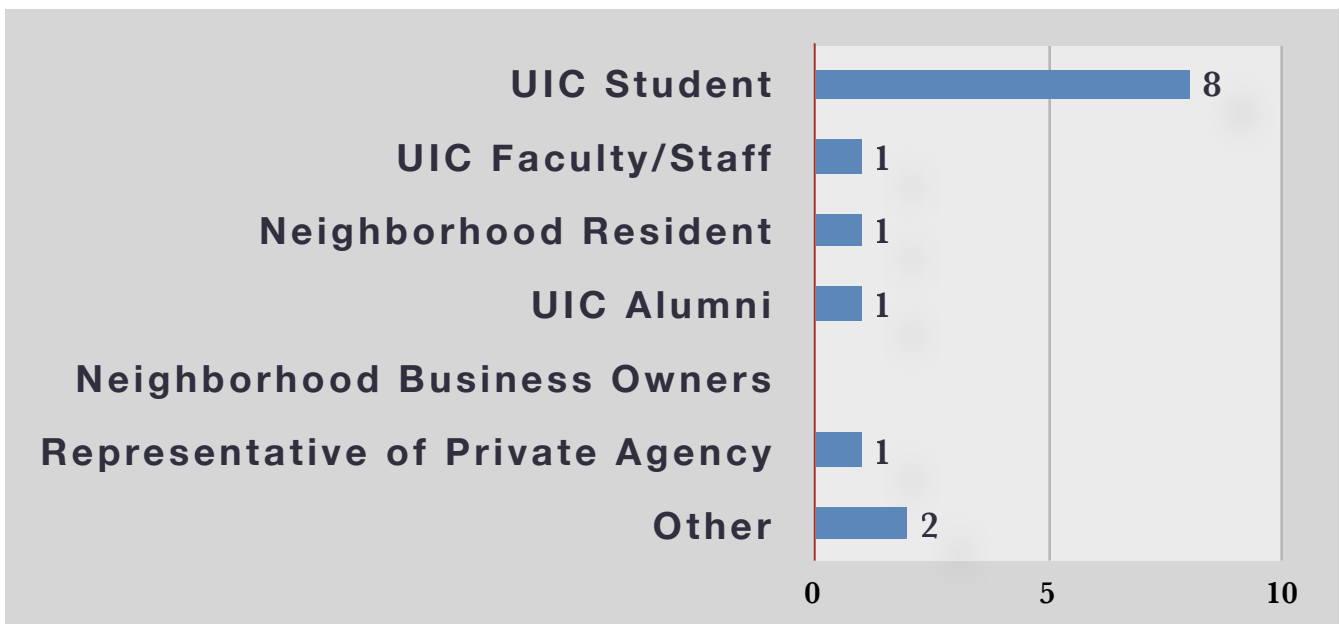
As expected, the participant group was relatively young. The majority were UIC students (about 61 percent), and 79 percent were under the age of 35. Even though this demographic was over-represented, the charrette planners were happy with the variety of people that came to provide input. Please see the charts below for full description of participant demographics.

Note: When compared with the sign-in sheet, it seems some participants may not have completed the evaluation form used to compile

Distributions of Participant



Participant Relationship to Peoria Street Space



SECTION 3: CHARRETTE DESIGN

November 19, 2008



The charrette format was chosen as the most appropriate type of meeting to accomplish the above goals. Charrettes provide a way of quickly generating a design solution while integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group

Location

The charrette was held at Gallery400, a facility on the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) campus. This location was chosen for multiple reasons, mainly proximity to the focus area. By having the workshop within the streetscape in question, we guaranteed that all of the identified stakeholders who were able to make it to the event had a chance to experience the look and feel of Peoria Street. Gallery400's location also made the charrette more accessible to the area's frequent users..

Timing

This planning exercise was scheduled to start at 6 o'clock on a Wednesday evening. This time was chosen because we wanted to mitigate the odds that the charrette would conflict with the stakeholders' work schedules and be minimally invasive to their leisure time. Our group also tried to provide adequate food and beverages to avoid absences due to meal time conflicts.

Event Agenda

The evening began with a looping slide show displaying existing streetscape conditions as well as possible options for improvement. Once the participants were situated, the lead facilitator gave some opening comments, which included introductions of the organizers, a brief presentation of images of existing conditions and expectations for the evening.

The focus then shifted to the table level, where the table facilitators initiated introductions amongst the participants at the table to give everyone an idea of their tablemates' experience and expertise. The facilitator then asked each participant to write their names on the area map, to help them develop a sense of ownership of the work surface.

Next, the facilitator led the tables into more detailed instructions (including the ground rules of communication) and review of the streetscape. The schedule allowed for about twenty minutes of discussion on how each participant uses Peoria Street, the current situation and what things the participants want to see changed.

In the main event of the evening, participants were directed to begin the design process. Everyone at the table was encouraged to be a recorder, making sure to draw or write down their ideas. In addition to recording progress on trace paper, roaming facilitators took pictures of group interactions throughout the event.

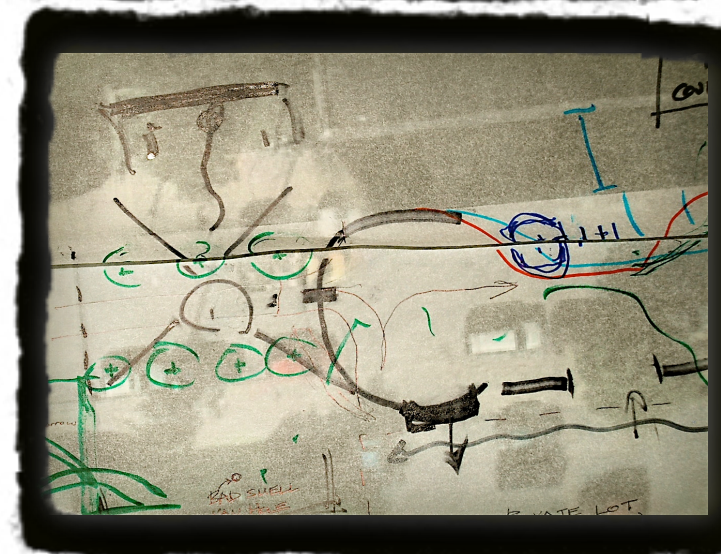
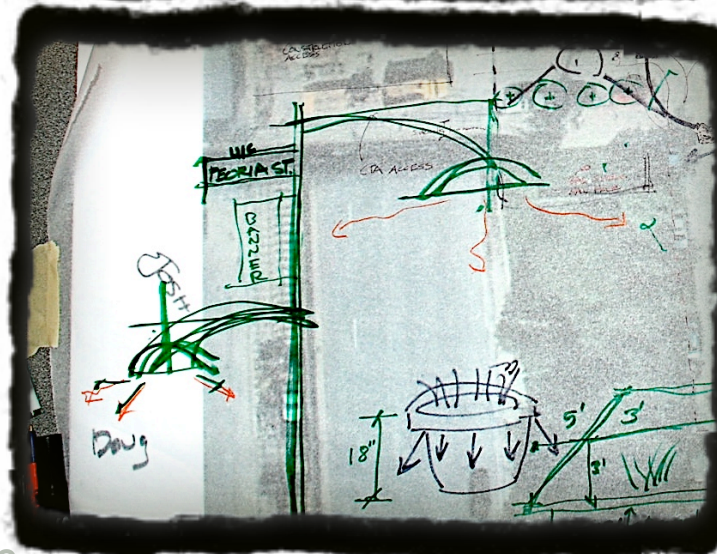
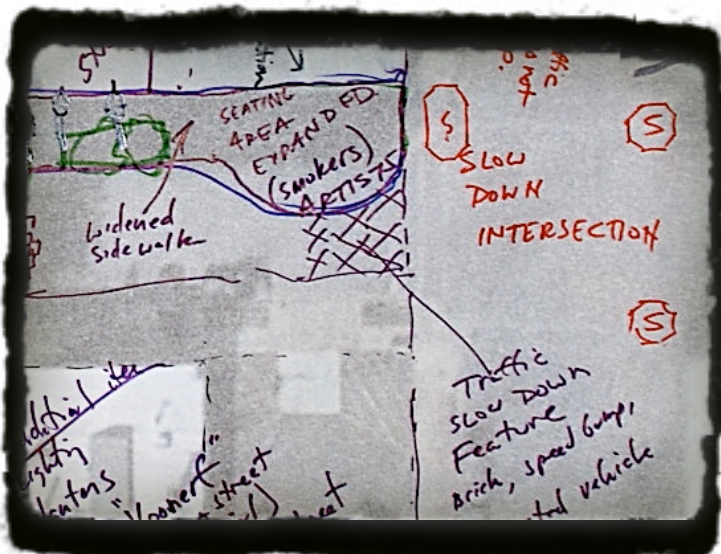
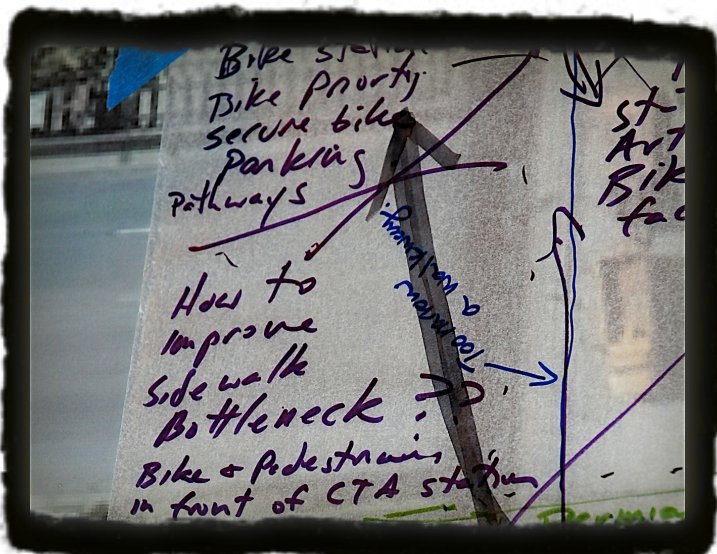




A few minutes before the end of the design hour, a roaming facilitator took digital photos of each table's design, which were then uploaded for the presentation portion of the evening. Each group selected a representative to give a brief explanation of their table's design ideas.

After the last table's design was presented, the lead facilitator closed the evening with brief remarks and asked the participants to fill in evaluation forms to improve the charrette experience of future participants.

Charrette Design Products



SECTION 4: PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

The concerns, comments and suggestions noted by the facilitators from each table addressed the following subjects: Bike Station, CTA station, CUPPA & Art and Design Halls, Parking, Safety, Site Design, Traffic, and Other.

Bike Station

The participants feel there are not enough bike racks to accommodate all bikers. During nice days, the racks are always full. The current location of the bike racks is adjacent to the fire hydrant (less than three feet of clear sidewalk on each side of the hydrant). The bike rack area was expressed as having inadequate lighting, creating security concern.

The recommendations made by the participants to address these issues were to have a bike station on UIC property for anyone who wants to rent a bike to get around campus, or the near vicinity. In addition, a lockable storage facility for bikes would be ideal by the CTA station, where the attendant could provide passive surveillance. Participants also felt that in order to enhance the bike-friendly atmosphere on the UIC campus, emphasis should be made on the upkeep of bike paths and the provision of better racks (where the front tire doesn't hang over the bar). They also would like to see the current bike racks moved to a better location.



CUPPA & Art and Design Halls

The participants suggest that the University should take advantage of multi-media potential in the building by creating a roof access for both Halls. This could be an opportunity for UIC to incorporate sustainable development initiatives by creating a roof garden that shares the same theme as the streetscape on Peoria Street.

Also, the participants would like for the space in front of the two buildings to be "a living gallery", where the space could be converted into flexible galleries and art objects would be accessible to pedestrians. They feel the area could create an inviting atmosphere where people could stop, sit and enjoy students' art and design projects; create a connection between the neighborhood and the university. The Art and Design Hall performance space could be used for events that serve to strengthen the relationship between the university and the community. One idea was to show classic movies in the performance spaces.

CTA Station

Overall, the participants agree that the CTA blue line station area could be revitalized to create “a gateway to the Chicago Campus”. Currently, they feel CTA has taken over the street with the current construction and cranes, trucks and employee parked cars have created a car dominated area and an unfriendly space for all user (pedestrians, CTA users, residents, and students).

The participants would like to see CTA employee parking designated to another location, which would alleviate some of the current congestion in the area. Due to the semi-permanent work to be done by the CTA station, the participants feel the area needs to be redesign to create a friendly, walking area which would still be accessible by CTA's vehicles for future use, but predominately used by the participants. Another suggestion proposed by the participants was to lease the I-GO parking lot to a coffee shop that would provide respite to students from their studies and would, as well, be frequented by the local residents in the area.

Parking

The participants strongly agree that car priority be placed on Van Buren Street and not in the site area of Peoria Street. Even though Peoria Street needs car access for the 43 residents who own parking spots in the parking lot just southeast of the dry cleaner, the no-parking ordinance and tow-away zones should be better enforced by the city. To accommodate the dry cleaner, short-term parking should be allowed.

The parking lot north of the dry cleaner is owned by UIC and currently leased to I-GO. The participants feel the area is underutilized and could be better used if a coffee shop was introduced to the space, which would serve the university students and the neighborhood community as well.

Safety

Students and faculty for both Colleges have 24-hour access to the buildings and participants indicated that cars and bikes are routinely stolen. They believe lighting is an issue and better lighting should be available for the driveway to the courtyard. In addition, sections of the sidewalks are old and broken. When it rains, large puddles of water collect by the road and are not drained out, which are seen as dangerous when temperatures drop and the water freezes over or covered with snow. Entrances to parking lots have too generous of curb cuts, suggesting more importance is placed on cars as opposed to pedestrian walkways.

Although not truly a security issue, participants added that the presence of “one homeless person renders the unusable space” and the dark corners are “dirty, not kept and stinky”.



Site Design

The participants would like the sidewalks and street to be separated, in order to highlight different uses. They feel the current space is passive and not inviting, and the participants recommended replicating the cul-de-sac idea as is in Sangamon Street and expand the open-green on the north side of the highway. This would create a corridor to connect both sides of the campus. Also, the cul-de-sac design would create the opportunity to create a “living street” for all users, one that offers sitting area, wider sidewalk, a green beltway on both sides of the street with perennial planters, terraced green space, full spectrum pedestrian-scale lighting (LED lighting was suggested), and an area that creates a safe and social presence for being near the buildings.

The redesign would take into consideration that CTA vehicles still need to get through to load/unload material. Also, because the sewer drains in the area, it was recommended to redirect the sewer vent to another area. Signage of the area should be take in consideration as well in order to create a sense of place and help people identify highlights of the area when they get on or off the CTA Blue Line.

Traffic

Traffic calming ideas should be considered at the intersection of Peoria and Van Buren Streets. The suggestions given by the participants were to raise the crosswalks, or create bump-outs, to slow down traffic. In addition, the participants recommended a 4-way-stop on Van Buren and Peoria Streets to address some of the safety concerns and further emphasize that the surrounding area is a pedestrian friendly zone.

Quotes From the Participants:

“The little block that never was.”

“I’m a user of the space, but I always cut through diagonally.”

“The space is riddled with cracks, I think it is about time someone did something about them.”

“Hope something would be done about the alley – dirty, smelly, rats”

“We need to get better lighting along the street at the pedestrian scale.”

“The front of the building is not really a good place to hang out.”

Evaluation Comments

Based on the evaluation sheet, the participants were satisfied with the charrette. They thought the charrette allowed them to communicate diverse ideas in an open and informal atmosphere, work in a teamwork setting, and they enjoyed meeting the many stakeholders living in the neighborhood and those who frequently use the space. On the other hand, some participants would have likes to step outside and discuss the site with their group members.

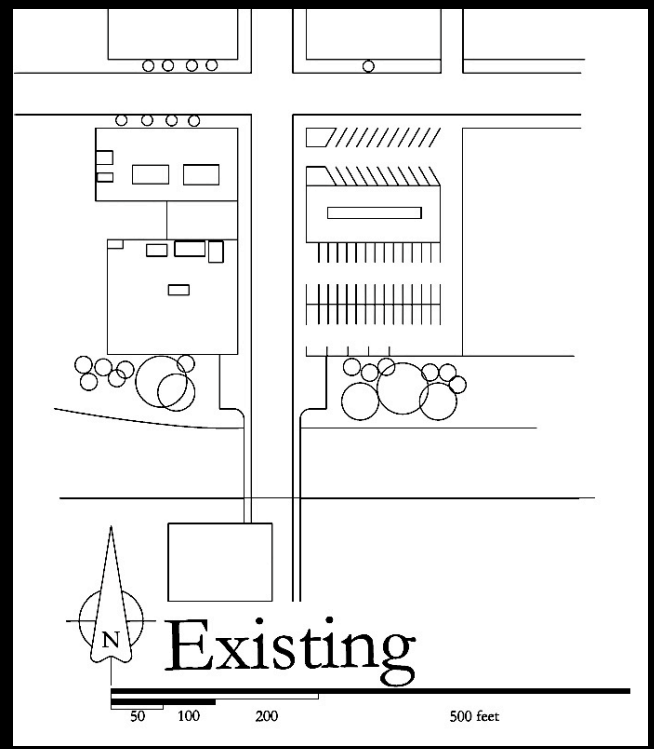
SECTION 5: SUGGESTION MAPS

The following map represent a composite of the recorded design ideas produced by the participants.

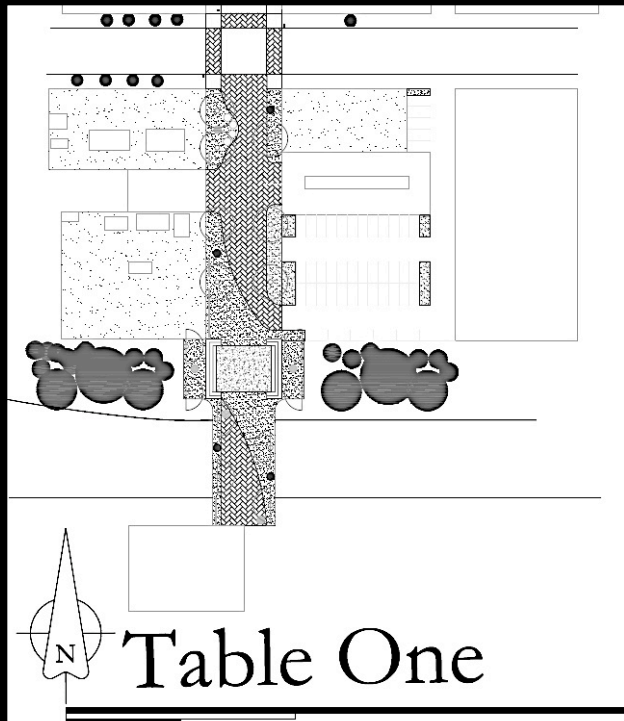
Peoria Street - Existing Map



Peoria Street area, area between the intersection of Peoria and Van Buren Streets, ending at the UIC/Halsted Blue Line.

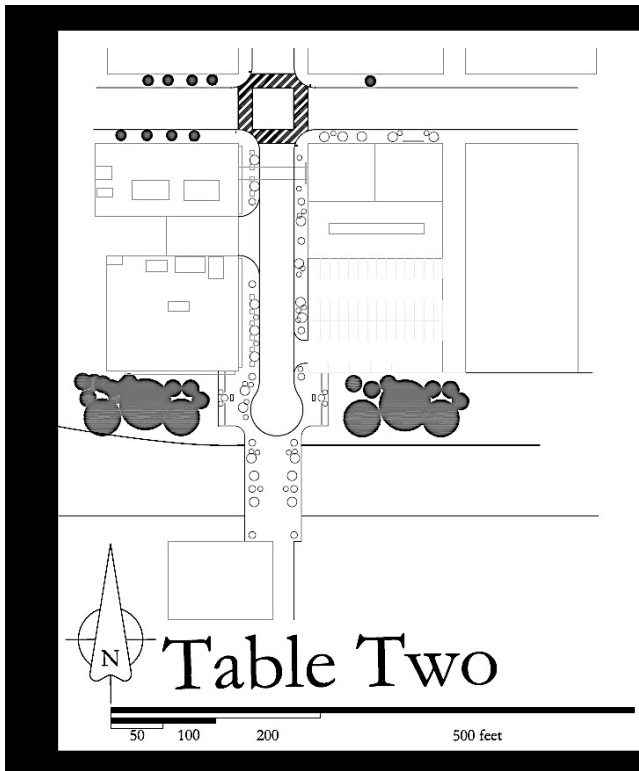


Group One



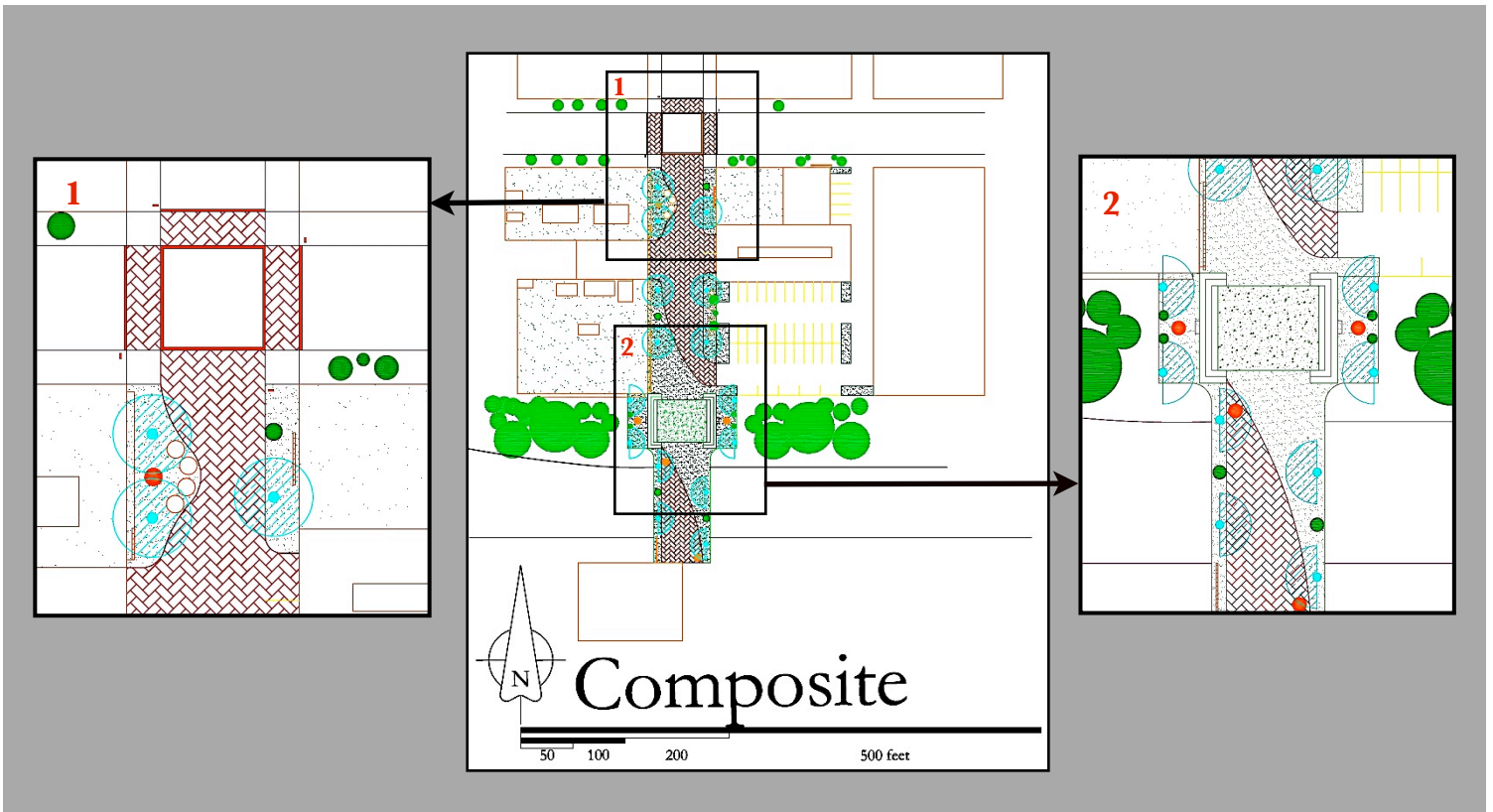
Group one suggested creating “a living street” on Peoria Street with permeable surface to help water drainage, cobblestone sidewalks, sitting areas, and a green belt to act as a gateway to the CTA station and UIC campus. In addition, widening the sidewalks and eliminating some of the curb cuts would further create a friendly pedestrian environment.

Group Two



Group two suggested creating a pedestrian friendly street by adding a cul-de-sac at the end of Peoria Street, similar like the one on Sangamon Street, with seating benches, green spaces, LED lighting on a pedestrian scale, and cobblestone sidewalks. The space would still be accessible to CTA vehicles when needed

Composite Map of Suggestions of Group One and Two



SECTION 6: FOLLOW UP

After compiling all the suggestions and concerns addressed during the charrette, the facilitators will present this report and the original designs generated from the charrette to UIC's Associate Vice Chancellor for Facility and Space Planning, James Foerster, who will consider the material during the revision of UIC's Master Plan.

The facilitators will also use this report to communicate with the participants who wished to be kept current with activities regarding the future of Peoria Street site plans.

Special Acknowledgment

The facilitators would like to give special thanks to Hubert Morgan and Ty Warner, to the participants who gave their time and creativity, to the CUPPA and College Art and Design for their support, guidance and furnishing this event.

Credits:

Report Design: Valbona Kokoshi

Composite Maps: Michael Spadafore

Written Text: Caitlyn Castello, Valbona Kokoshi, Aleece Smith, & Michael Spadafore

Question regarding this charrette should be addressed to Valbona Kokoshi at vkokoshi@gmail.com