



The Chicago Avenue Corridor Improvement project is part of a series of Invest South/West initiatives to re-activate neighborhood cores that have historically served as focal points for pedestrian activity, shopping, services, transportation, public spaces and quality of life amenities for residents. Since the onset of this project in April, 2021, the project team has conducted an existing conditions analysis, coordinated with community stakeholders, and has begun developing design alternatives.

Public Meeting #2 was held on March 1, 2022 through the online webinar platform Zoom. The meeting began at 6 p.m. and ended at approximately 7:30 p.m. The presentation provided an overview of the project, schedule, public engagement, Soul City theme ideas, street design, and next steps. The public engagement portion included a recap of the first public meeting as well as a summary of three small group meetings that included civic and institutional groups, business and property owners, and artists. The input received to date was distilled into three value statements that served as the initial thoughts on potential design themes. The next steps will include two small group workshop meetings and a public meeting to allow for further input and development of the design themes. Nine attendees expressed interest in participating in these workshops and their contact information was collected. Anyone else that is interested in participating in these workshops should contact the project team at ISWChicagoAve@civiltechinc.com.

Panelists included representatives from CDOT, the project team, Department of Planning and Development, Alderman Taliaferro's 29th Ward office, and Alderman Mitts from the 37th Ward. In total 46 members from the general public logged in to participate. The questions and answers portion of the meeting covered a wide range of topics that included community engagement, street design, identifiers, and general project details. Further input was received on the initial design themes. A summary of the questions and answers facilitated during the meeting along with the chatted reactions to the initial themes is provided in Appendix A.

The design phase of the project is expected to be completed by mid-2022. Community members and other stakeholders are encouraged to visit the project website <https://tinyurl.com/ISWChicagoAve> to view past meeting presentations, contact the project team, find updates about the project including the schedule, and to sign up for email updates.

Appendix A

Public Meeting #1 Questions and Answers

Community Engagement

- Q: Why have you not engaged the leadership of the Austin QLP if you are supposed to be building off it?
- A: *The project team has been working with the members of the community who were involved with the Austin Quality of Life Plan, and will continue to do so. If you would like to be engaged in the process, please indicate so in the chat.*
- Q: How can more youth voices get involved? How are you honoring Austin's history in the streetscape? Thank you!
- A: *The presentation provided an overview of the youth led design components. Territory is on the team and is actively involved in this process.*
- Q: Who's responsible for getting information out about these engagement opportunities?
- A: *There are a few different ways that we do this. First we rely on social networks inside Austin. We have a list of contacts from DPD, Aldermen, as well as folks that have contacted us directly. We have also considering all of the planning documents that have been previously created. Whenever there is an engagement opportunity, the team uses this list of contacts that has approximately 135 individuals. We also ask these individuals to please share with their networks. Paper flyers are also distributed to businesses along Chicago Avenue for the public meetings. All of our project partners including Territory and Alt_ also have their own contact lists that are used. Additionally, updates are posted on the project website. Recognizing that there is always room for improvement please let us know any suggestions for reaching community members. Messaging also happens through the Aldermanic offices and Department of Planning and Development.*
- Q: Who was in the small group meetings? How was the public notified of these engagement opportunities? How were "Small Groups" participants selected?
- A: *Small groups were composed of local stakeholders, specifically civic and institutional leaders, businesses, and local artist groups. Each one of the groups had 10-15 people from the list of contacts previously referenced. These meetings were run like focus groups, with the intent of understanding baseline information, documents, priorities, as well as previous conversations and decisions that have been made to date. These are fact finding missions, and not the last time that these groups will be approached. There is always room for additional participants or additional groups of stakeholders who would like to participate in these discussions. These were initial conversations that helped the team level set on where we needed to start. As shown in the presentation, we will be having two additional workshops where we will take the feedback provided today from the three themes and begin to work together real time on the design of the identifiers. This will also include looking at summaries of past plans and reports, themes, checking for*

gaps and if any words need to be included or if additional themes need to be included. Then we will work together what the representative imagery is for each theme.

We anticipate that each of these upcoming workshops will have 20-40 people that will be included in these conversations. After the identifiers have been created in draft form out of those conversations, we will take those back to the community at large in our third public meeting.

In addition to these design workshops, we are always happy to have a one-on-one conversation. If you'd like to have a conversation about ideas that you have or feel that there are others that need to be included, please let us know. The team wants to make sure that these themes are representative of your ideas and look the way you feel they should look.

Q: I went to the web page but cannot see how many of the community members that attended, just a picture of some. Can you give a number?

A: *At the first public meeting 45 people attended and then 76 people completed the follow-up survey.*

Q: I am a long time community representative and did not get or see any survey about any of this, going forward please put this information out in the community for all residents to see, I have been in the Austin Area for over 45 years, this is greatly appreciated.

A: *Information for the previous public meeting was distributed through aldermanic offices, various community groups, and city agencies.*

Q: I know you are working with businesses on Chicago Ave. Does that include selection of which areas are “stand” and which are “sit”? Specifically, there are a number of new dining establishments, are you being purposeful in making those areas for people to congregate versus areas for people to pass through?

A: *The project team will be going “block by block” determining the location of these features and coordinating with the business space needs and adjacent land uses.*

Q: Where did this group originate from, which consisted of 17 youth that gave their input?

A: *Territory's youth come from the Austin neighborhood. All of the youth on Territory's design team live in Austin zip codes 60644 and 60651. The fall event had 17 youth from Austin ages 14-21 who are part of BUILD and Territory programs. Summer engagement events included 40 youth who live in Austin ages 4-21.*

Q: How can we share information about how to participate in working groups? Besides signing up right now?

A: *The project team will send out an email asking for participation.*

Street Design

Q: I'm concerned about the installation of white plastic street stanchions at corner bump-outs and at street crossings. They are easily broken (hit by cars, street cleaners, and snow plows), get dirty, and end up making streetscape improvements look chaotic. There has to be a better solution for pedestrian safety because these are a waste of money.

A: *The plastic delineators and painted bumpouts are temporary measures that are proposed to be replaced with concrete curbed bumpouts.*

Q: Overall safety to slow down speeding vehicles day and night on BOTH main and residential streets and alleys.

A: *Tonight's presentation highlights how the roadway space is being reallocated to help with overall safety and mobility improvements. The super wide travel lanes are being reduced to standard sizes, with that extra space being provided to sidewalk and bike lanes to help slow traffic down and create more pedestrian friendly street. Additionally, many of the intersections are receiving bump out style treatments and raised cross walks to help deter speeding and prioritize pedestrians.*

Q: How will narrowing streets and expanding sidewalks affect CTA bus routes?

A: CTA bus service will not be affected by the roadway configuration changes. The design team is and will continue to coordinate with the CTA to ensure their buses have appropriate space. The travel lanes are being narrowed, however, the bus routes are not changing.

Identifiers

Q: Who are you consulting to determine the design for signage, light pole identifiers, and community identifiers, etc.? How will you ensure a uniform theme throughout all of Austin, not just on Chicago Ave.? Are you soliciting local artists for any such custom pieces? Who will design them and who will approve them?

A: *The project team is engaging with several stakeholder groups from the community to gather feedback on potential designs for community identity elements. Local artist collective Alt_ is leading the conceptual design of the identifiers. The project is limited to this corridor, but is being coordinated with other public projects in Austin.*

Q: I would still like to know the community role in the final decision process, not just in contributing to what is created. Specifically, who gets a "vote" in the final design choices? How will those groups be selected?

A: *Design concepts will be presented to the community in the next public meeting to allow for a vote on the final design. We will be looking for feedback at the next public meeting as well as a follow-up survey.*

Q: Where is faith represented in your design.

A: *This comment has been noted for theme feedback.*

Q: What about History, I do not see or hear that mentioned, did I miss it?

A: *This comment has been noted for theme feedback.*

General

Q: How does all the new property project development intersect with the IDOT plans?

- A: *CDOT is responsible for all of the roadway transportation improvements. Coordination with adjacent developments is on-going. This is typical coordination that happens on all street design projects and will continue to be performed.*
- Q: What steps are being taken during the initiative to ensure continuity and connectivity between ISW projects and initiatives?
- A: *CDOT is coordinating with the Department of Planning and Development and frequently coordinating with the Invest South-West groups and roundtable meetings.*
- Q: Are there any plans for commercial development from any major chains?
- A: *None that we are aware of at this time.*
- Q: What is the budget?
- A: *The project has a budget of approximately \$21 million.*
- Q: Will it start this year, if so when, very needed.
- A: *Our goal is for construction to begin on the first phase, Austin to Central, in late 2022.*
- Q: Is there a maintenance plan and corresponding budget for these beautiful streetscape examples?
- A: *Yes, maintenance is being considered throughout the design process. CDOT will work with local community partners, such as the SSA, to determine an appropriate maintenance plan for the corridor.*
- Q: I would like to know if there will be a group of people assigned to keep the Chicago Avenue project clean from Austin to Cicero? The upkeep of the project is just as important as the beautification. Business and personal properties are required to do property upkeep but that does not always happen (Winder, Spring, Summer and Fall).
- A: *Yes. CDOT will identify and come to an agreement with local community partners during the design process to create a year-round maintenance plan for the streetscape.*
- Q: Why is it going to take over 2 years to do 1.5 miles to implement this plan on Chicago Ave.?
- A: *CDOT wants to ensure we take the time to gather this important feedback, so that the community can help guide the final design. The engineering, as well as the creation of construction documents, coordination with various utilities and agencies, and the construction procurement, all take time. The construction is also staged to keep the street open, maintain access to the businesses, and to maintain parking outside of active construction zones. This time line is typical for this scope of corridor improvements.*
- Q: Will we increase safety cameras as well? I believe it is still a deterrent to some degree...
- A: *Safety cameras are outside the scope of the improvement. We encourage you to contact your alderman about adding additional safety cameras.*

[Feedback provided in the Chat on the Initial Design Themes](#)

Questions presented to the group: Thoughts on Theme 1 (Rooted in Place), Theme 2 (Chicago Rhythm), and Theme 3 (Bright Future), Do they Resonate with you? How can they represent Soul City? Do you have other thoughts on what you'd like to see represented?

- 3.
- 1.
- 3.
- Theme 1.
- Theme 3 Bright Future.
- 2&3 could be a hybrid. Education and Community Recreational could be 1.
- 2&3.
- Trades programs along with 3.
- I would like to see something more specific. These themes are very broad and can be taken in a lot of directions in the final design.
- 1 and 3.
- Of what is here, Theme 2.
- I would really like to see something more specific as well.
- I think Chicago Ave Roots in Austin!!
- Theme 3 adding a "Rich history" – Bright Future.
- 1 and 2, there's blues and migration iconography that should also be considered.
- Healthcare with the reduction of anxiety, stress and depression with a focus on Mental health and reducing violence. Again Theme 3.
- I like that idea. Each block should have an area for sitting, activities. This would allow for peace circles.
- I love the peace circle idea.
- How about the ideal for people to relax, release and relate to Massage therapy?
- This meeting has been very informative. Thank you.
- Thank you for the thorough presentation
- I think the schools in the community is a good way to get this information out to parents & community residents.

Additional Avenues to Provide Project Updates

- Austin Weekly News
- Austin Talk News

Other Comments

- The co-chairs of the Austin Quality of Life Plan Task Force that created this portion of the plan are both in this meeting. I think we would both be interested in having that conversation. Our emails are in the chat.
- Thank you, Lesley!
- Excellent! Thank you.
- Thank you
- Thank you. I appreciate all of your expertise and intentionality.
- Thank you!
- Thank you for a great presentation.
- Have a good evening everyone from me and the 29th Ward Office