

Chicago Riverwalk

PHASES 2 AND 3 | STATE ST. TO FRANKLIN ST.



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
Submitted by Sasaki

2017 RUDY BRUNER AWARD

PROJECT DATA



**RUDY
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AWARD**
FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name **Chicago Riverwalk | Phases 2 & 3** Location _____ City **Chicago** State **IL**

Owner **Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT)**

Project Use(s) **Public Park**

Project Size **3.5 acres** Total Development Cost **\$95.48 million**

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) **\$9 billion (estimated operating budget for the City of Chicago)**

Date Initiated **8/01/2011 (design start)** Percent Completed by December 1, 2016 **100%**

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) **10/22/2016** Project Website (if appropriate) **https://www.cityofchicago.c**

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates _____

Application submitted by:

Name **Gina Ford, ASLA** Title **Principal**

Organization **Sasaki**

Address **64 Pleasant Street** City/State/Zip **Watertown MA 02472**

Telephone **617 923 7161** E-mail **gford@sasaki.com**

Perspective Sheets:


Organization	Name	Telephone/e-mail
Public Agencies		
	Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld	(312) 744-3600 rebekah.scheinfeld@cityofchicago.org
	Architect/Designer Gina Ford	(617) 923-7161 gford@sasaki.com
	Developer	
	Professional Consultant	

Community Group	Chicago Loop Alliance, David Broz	(312) 782-9160	david_broz@gensler.com
	Friends of the Chicago River, Margaret Frisbie	(312) 939-0490	MFrisbie@chicagoriver.org
	Other		

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Check all that apply).

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Mailing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Email | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous Selection Committee member | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Organization |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous RBA entrant | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online Notice | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Bruner/Loeb Forum | _____ |

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Signature  Date **12/7/2016**

2017 RUDY BRUNER AWARD

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE



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PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

Project Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

1. Give a brief overview of the project. (1000 characters)

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.) (1000 characters)

2017 RUDY BRUNER AWARD

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



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1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project? f) \$\$\$ k cfXg'a UI Ł

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve?
How many people are served by the project? f) \$\$\$ k cfXg'a UI Ł

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. fl \$\$\$ k cfXga UI Ł

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. fl \$\$\$ k cfXga UI Ł

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? fl \$\$\$ k cfXga UI Ł

2017 RUDY BRUNER AWARD

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE
PERSPECTIVE



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COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	David Broz	Title	Chairman of the Board
Organization	Chicago Loop Alliance	Telephone	(312)782-9160
Address	27 East Monroe Street, #900	City/State/ZIP	Chicago IL 60603
E-mail	david_broz@gensler.com	Website	www.loopchicago.com

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Signature		Date	12/5/2016
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1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? * * * * *

The Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA) was formed in 2005, merging two not for profit business associations, the Greater State Street Council and the Central Michigan Avenue Association. Its mission is to create, manage and promote high-performing urban experiences, attracting people and investment to the Loop. Since 1929, its membership has played an active role in civic projects including: the construction of the State Street subway beginning in 1938, instituting the State Street Pedestrian Mall in 1976 (which ushered in Chicago's first Special Service Area), planning the State Street Renovation Project in 1995 (hallmarked not only by vehicular traffic returning to the street but also the concept for the Loop's theatre and education districts), and supporting Mayor Daley's vision for Millennium Park in 1998.

In early 2000, Wacker Drive, which borders Chicago's Loop, began to crumble. Redesign and reconstruction of this major double-decker street that runs alongside two main branches of the Chicago River presented a unique opportunity to take a new look at the Chicago River. The Chicago Park District completed a Chicago River Master plan that laid out strategies for improving open space on the river, and then in 2007 Mayor Daley formed the Chicago Riverwalk Development Committee. Ty Tabing, then CLA's Executive Director, was a member of that committee. Tabing informed CLA's Board of Directors and Planning and Advocacy Committee frequently on the progress of the committee's work and sought their input. After the design phase for the Riverwalk was underway, CDOT's Michelle Woods gave periodic presentations and updates to these groups along with the State Street Commission for Special Service Area #1.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? * * * * *

Loop stakeholders were thrilled at the prospect of adding a new, vibrant space to the downtown area that could be enjoyed by tourists, workers, and our growing residential population. But they questioned if the space could be utilized year-round. One of the tasks of the Chicago Riverfront Development Committee was to look at programming for the Chicago River. Since Chicago has severe weather and river walks located in cities like San Antonio did not have that concern, the group established a sub-committee to look specifically at all weather programming. (Other sub-committees addressed design & vision, maintenance, and resource development.)

Excited by the Riverwalk's potential for programming, in 2008 CLA asked CDOT for permission to "showcase today's emerging Loop to the rest of the world" by integrating sections of space into Looptopia, a dusk-to-dawn celebration similar to Europe's "White Nights." Permission was granted, and a raw 10,000 sq. ft. space on the south bank of the Chicago River was turned into a Visual Art Gallery space that included art, circus arts, and musicians performing from 5pm – 12:00 am. The sidewalk and plazas on Wacker Drive were also used to host sculptural installations and live performances, and an open house was held in the McCormick Tribune Bridgehouse and Chicago River Museum.

In 2015, CLA submitted another programming proposal for the Riverwalk titled "Come to the River." Components included painting classes, book sellers, movies, and other activities. Unfortunately, it was not implemented due to lack of sponsorships.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?.....

This amenity has only begun to surprise and delight local pedestrians and families along with increasing Chicago tourism. It's a great place to jog, or walk, or take in Chicago's splendid architecture. Retail and restaurant options are improving. The Island Party Hut serves Tiki drinks in the summer but switches to a place to buy Irish Coffee and a Christmas tree in the cold of December. Cyrano's Cafe shifted from a hot weather ice cream parlor to a fall farmers market. Wheel Fun Rentals created a pumpkin patch in the city by installing cornstalks and 1600 pumpkins -- just in time for the city's first Riverwalk Fall Festival in October, 2016.

Although in its infancy, the Riverwalk may be inspiring private investment in infrastructure related to tourism as well. In May, 2016 Broadway in Chicago President Lou Raizin and Chairman of Geller Investment Company Laurence Geller spoke to Chicago's City Club about "A New Vision for Tourism in Chicago" -- which included an aerial gondola that rides along the Chicago River called "The Skyline." The Riverwalk has a very exciting future ahead of it indeed!

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?.....

No.

2017 RUDY BRUNER AWARD

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE
PERSPECTIVE



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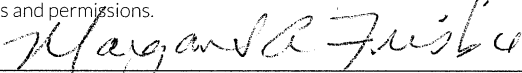
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Margaret Frisbie	Title	Executive Director
Organization	Friends of the Chicago River	Telephone	(312)939-0490, Ext. 22
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Signature  Date 12/5/2016

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

Friends of the Chicago River has been an advocate for a continuous Chicago River Trail since we were founded in 1979 and has supported the downtown Chicago Riverwalk from the beginning. Friends' staff members helped influence the design of the riverwalk and build community support and enthusiasm for the project. Friends' executive director served on the Chicago Riverwalk Development Committee for several years and designed the Fish Hotel which served as the inspiration for The Jetty. The Jetty, which is located between Wells and Franklin, provides a wonderful array of habitat that will benefit aquatic life in the river. Friends also secured a grant of \$175,000 which helped cover the costs of the habitat installation there.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

From Friends' perspective there were no real issues concerning the project other than figuring out how to fund it. The City of Chicago was committed to the riverwalk concept but in a tight fiscal climate it proved challenging to find funding. The City was innovative in figuring how to apply the federal TIFIA loan program which enabled them to move forward with Phases 2 and 3.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?.....

The Chicago Riverwalk is an exciting and dramatic addition to the City of Chicago for the people who live, work, and visit here. It provides a wonderful opportunity to get outside and enjoy a natural resource in the dense downtown area where usually such things would be impossible. There are a wide array of activities so that people can enjoy the river and its pageantry in many ways including walking, biking, kayaking, dining, or just hanging out. The riverwalk is also educational with the McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum, interpretive signage highlighting the significance of the native plants that have been incorporated all throughout, and regular programming on the riverwalk at the museum that highlights the river, its health, and its ties to the city. In addition, Friends is currently working with the Chicago Park District to develop educational science-based programming at The Jetty for children.

The Chicago Riverwalk is also an economic benefit to the city because it provides a new place for people to go which creates new income from jobs, corporate income, tax income, and fees from boat parking and vendors, while also increasing revenue for the existing businesses in the area.

The riverwalk is also key for the river's recovery and restoration because it provides new habitat on-land and in-stream. This is important for wildlife but also for the people who live here because with the increased proximity, people are starting to better understand the river's role as a natural resource and that it deserves to be cleaned up. The healthier the river is, the safer it is a recreational resource and the more people will be able to use it.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?.....

While the design and development of the Chicago Riverwalk was a multi-year process which was sometimes frustrating because it took so long, the net result was that it involved many stakeholders which contributed to the final outcome and its success. Additionally I believe that the timing for the final design for Phases 2 and 3 was much better because perceptions of the river had changed quite a bit since the process started and the final project brings people right down to the water's edge which is a singular achievement. I do not believe that would have happened if the whole thing had been finished in the early 2000s.

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PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE



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This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name **Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld** Title **Commissioner**
Organization **Chicago Department of Transportation** Telephone **(312) 744-3600**
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1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) has overseen the design and construction of the Riverwalk since 2001. The project was initiated by series of studies, plans, and guidelines that led to the submission of a plan to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Volpe National Transportation Center. The plan created a continuous public park along the river's south bank, including a 25 foot extension into the river under bridges, making it possible for pedestrians to continuously traverse the riverside from the Lakefront to the confluence without coming up to Wacker Drive or crossing any traffic.

CDOT completed Phase 1, an initial segment of the Riverwalk that began east of Michigan Avenue and extended to State Street, in 2005 with a team led by Collins Engineering with Ross Barney Architects and Jacobs/Ryan Associates. CDOT completed Phase 2 (2015) and Phase 3 (2016), the remaining six blocks from State Street to Lake Street, with a team led by Sasaki with Ross Barney Architects. For Phases 2 and 3, CDOT additionally secured funding for the project, which included a \$98 million loan from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act (TIFIA) program and \$10 million in state funding.

The City's Department of Fleet and Facility Management (2FM) oversees programming, maintenance, operations, and vendor agreements.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

Mayor Rahm Emanuel is committed to developing healthy neighborhoods throughout Chicago where people can live, work, and play. The Chicago Riverwalk project plays a central role in enhancing the downtown Chicago public experience by giving visitors and residents of Chicago, alike, a place to engage in recreation and leisure in the heart of the city.

This design project is the latest in Chicago's long history of commitment to design excellence that touches the lives of all Chicagoans. Mayor Emanuel, through the Building on Burnham Plan, is fulfilling a pledge: to make the river Chicago's next recreational frontier and to finally make it a part of our neighborhoods, rather than a separate part of the city. In keeping with Daniel Burnham's advocacy for keeping the lakefront and other natural assets public amenities, Mayor Emanuel's administration has long endeavored to connect Upper Wacker Drive to the river's edge to improve waterfront access from city to shore.

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.*****

Environmentally, the ecologically-sensitive design aids in improving water quality, enabling people to interact with the river as they have never been able to before. Forty years ago, there were just seven aquatic species in the river. Today, according to the Friends of the Chicago River, there are 75 and counting. The floating wetlands in The Jetty, for instance, provides habitat for aquatic life and give Chicago's children an outdoor classroom for learning about the river's native ecosystem.

Socially, the park space transformed underutilized industrial riverfront in a dense urban environment into a healthier and happier environment for all Chicagoans. The Riverwalk is part of a larger city-wide initiative to develop dynamic green spaces throughout the city, including recent projects like the 606 trail, Maggie Daley Park, and Navy Pier. These public spaces collectively help to keep Chicago competitive as a beautiful destination city.

Economically, the project's powerful design, programmatic activation, improved access, and placemaking represents a significant investment in the economic vitality of the city. The Riverwalk will continue to be a draw for tourism, an attraction for local business, and a boon for real estate interests in the area.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?*****

The Chicago Riverwalk has provided a foundation on which to realize Mayor Emanuel's vision of turning the Chicago River into the city's next great recreational park. It has inspired other agencies and developers to see the value more holistically in the city's waterfront assets.

A recently released document, Our Great Rivers, completed by the Metropolitan Planning Council and a host of advocacy organizations, sets out a vision to unlock the potential of the Chicago, Calumet, and Des Plaines Rivers and riverfronts. The entire river system has steadily gained a vocal collective of advocates, all looking to reconnect the daily experience of the City with the dynamic and changing life of the River. With over 150 miles of riverfront and 70+ species of fish, the river is an evolving ecosystem of inestimable natural value.

Additionally, Mayor Emanuel has outlined a comprehensive plan for investment in the Lakefront, the Chicago River, natural areas, and recreational nodes in neighborhoods across the city entitled, Building on Burnham. This plan follows the Mayor's successful expansion of Chicago's park system in his first mayoral term, which has already added 750 acres of new parkland, 256 new playgrounds and more than \$800 million in capital investment from neighborhoods and private sources. Finally, innovative financing from the TIFIA loan is another model of a public/private partnership. The loan will be paid back over the course of 33 years from revenue generated by a number of vendor contracts and the popular boat rides along the river. 2FM will oversee the structuring of contracts and repayment plan for the TIFIA loans.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?*****

In terms of successful aspects, the Riverwalk achieves a number of innovations, including:

Economic Sustainability: the unique funding model and the early revenue-generation successes in the project's first years show a path forward for other cities looking for "proof of concept" for riverfront investment

Placemaking: the project's unique river-themed spaces offer variety of experience, activation and programming

Flood Resiliency: the entire project is designed to be resilient to the river's annual flooding

Ecological Health: the project integrates best practices such as extended soil volumes for tree planting and reuse of rainwater for irrigation while also creating "first-in-the-world" demonstrations like the floating wetland gardens.

In terms of challenges, as with any major public project of this complexity, the Riverwalk has taken many years to be realized. The project was implemented in multiple phases intentionally due to the funding schedule. It is an incredibly complex and detailed process to design and build and because it's a layered system, each system can not start until the other one is finished. In the end, the project was generally close to target completion dates in both phases.

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ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER
PERSPECTIVE



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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name	Gina Ford	Title	Principal
Organization	Sasaki	Telephone	(617) 923-7161
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Signature  Date 12/7/2016

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

Over the last decade, the role of the river has been evolving with the Chicago Riverwalk project—an initiative to reclaim the Chicago River for the ecological, recreational and economic benefit of the city. For these five important downtown blocks, the team conceived of the Riverwalk as both a path and a series of places. Through changes in its shape and form, the path itself drives a series of new programmatic connections to the river—each block taking the form and program of a different river-based typology. These spaces include:

- The Marina Plaza: Restaurants and outdoor seating provide views of vibrant life on the water,
- The Cove: Kayak rentals and docking for human-powered crafts provide physical connections to the water
- The River Theater: A sculptural staircase and accessible walkway linking Upper Wacker Drive and the Riverwalk
- The Water Plaza: A water feature offers an opportunity for children and families to engage with water at the river's edge
- The Jetty: Piers and floating wetland gardens offer an interactive learning environment about the river's ecology

The experience is both one of variety and continuity. Variety is created by the sculptural configuration of each block or “room” that provides different kinds of river-inspired uses. Continuity is provided with a unified material language threading together the six blocks. The project’s unifying material language is inspired by the refined materiality of the Beaux-Arts bridgehouse architecture and the “nakedness” of the bascule bridges.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

Beneath the history of the site and the technical challenges it presents, lays a deep current of public sentiment for a more strongly interwoven relationship between the city and the river. The intent for the Riverwalk is to not only create a continuous east-west circulation system, but also a series of north-south vertical relationships. To satisfy this need, the design vision relies upon a series of traditional land/water typologies that are interlocking and symbiotic as opposed to walled off. The Marina Plaza, The Cove, The River Theater, The Water Plaza, and The Jetty are spaces re-interpreted to the immediate context of each block—all with an entirely urban language, all formed by the strong figural shape of the path, and all inviting various forms of interplay between City and River. Each of these spaces provides different experiential qualities and suggests different types of habitation and program all linked by a fluid and connective thread of path.

To express the project’s ethic of physical continuity and universal accessibility, the design team conceived the Riverwalk as a series of civic layers. The design language of the path reinforces the overall concept of a connected system, yet still invites diversity through distinct layers of program, lighting, vegetation, and icons/art. The programming of the spaces further east responds to the city’s commercial and tourism core, with more potential for dining and retail and a greater emphasis on flexible, paved areas. To the west, spaces along the path become greener and more intimate, suggesting more use by local office workers on lunch breaks, downtown residents on a family walk, or tourists on a stroll. In the center of the project, the first phase of construction’s end point, a magnificent and three-dimensional landscape provides flexible spaces to watch the River while also enabling a gentle accessible connection to Upper Wacker Drive.

Chicago Riverwalk

PHASES 2 AND 3 | STATE ST. TO FRANKLIN ST.



KEY MAP



DESIGN CONCEPT



Completed in Fall of 2016, the five block extension of the Chicago Riverwalk creates a continuous walkway along the river's edge and a series of new programmatic connections to the river inspired by different river-based typologies.



EXISTING CONDITION

The existing condition prohibited continuous circulation along the river or direct access to the water's edge. Working within a tight permit-mandated 25-foot-wide build-out area, the project creates new land to expand and connect the pedestrian experience.



DESIGN STRATEGY

The realized project threads together the experience of the river's edge and allows direct access to the water, welcoming those on foot and by boat and enabling the life of the city and life on the river to co-mingle.



BUILDING THE VISION

The construction overcame significant complexities in addition to the traditional challenges associated with building new land. This included complex sub-surface conditions, construction staging by barge and continuous traffic operations on all sides.



THE MARINA PLAZA

The Marina Plaza is located between State and Dearborn streets across the river from the famed Marina City.



The project's material language takes its cues from the adjacent architecture. The upper section matches the limestone and granite of the Wacker Drive Viaduct and Bridgehouses. The lower (flood prone) section is more rugged precast concrete and metal like the hulking bascule bridges.



In the Marina Plaza, the cross section is subtly manipulated to create various great people spaces. Restaurants and outdoor seating provide views of vibrant life on the water. Steps descend to nearly river level.



Elegantly-detailed and custom high-backed teak benches provide great place to sit and watch the life on the river and create a dramatic edge to the new Riverwalk walkway.



THE COVE

The Cove, which is located between Dearborn and Clark streets, was inspired by beach landscapes. Kayak rentals and docking for human-powered craft provide physical connections to the water.



Custom precast seating elements capitalize on the shallow grade changes and create sunny places for sitting near the river's edge. Flood-tolerant and native grass plantings frame the space.



Integrated LED lighting provides texture at the pedestrian scale and clarifies edges for safety. All of the lighting is designed to endure occasional flooding, which was put to the test in flooding that immediately followed the project's opening.



A series of "underbridge" crossings connect blocks that had been previously discrete spaces. These stainless steel-canopied mini-bridges both shelter pedestrians as they pass beneath the bridge deck above and reflect the texture and light of the river's surface.



THE RIVER THEATER

The River Theater links the streets to the river's edge through a grand set of dynamic steps that support staged events and watching the "theater" of the river. A fully-accessible geometric path is the central circulation feature.



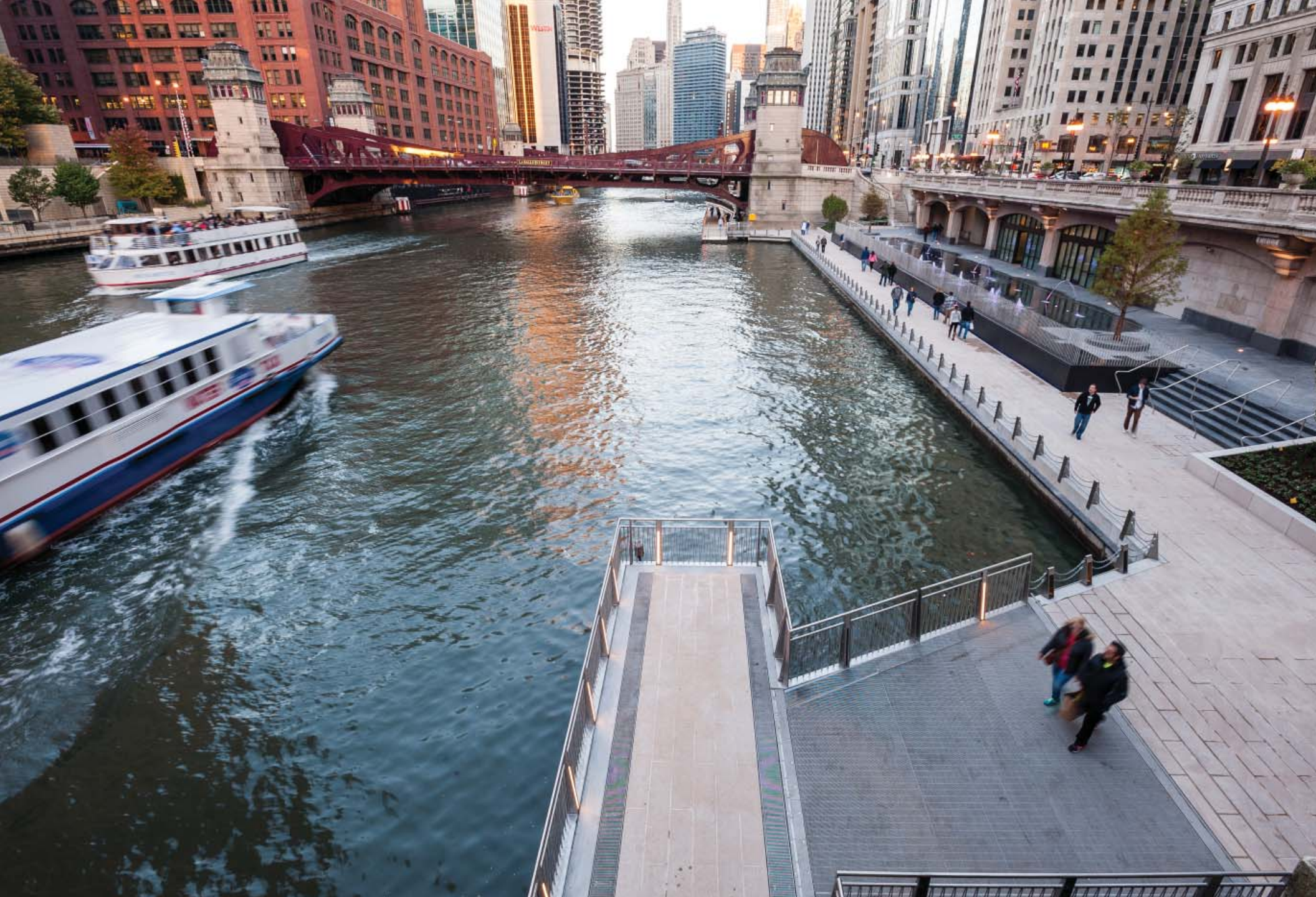
Long-term tree health is supported project-wide with structural paving systems to enable generous soil volumes and irrigation using reclaimed stormwater.



The River Theater was conceived as a space where Chicago's streetscape folds down to the river in a smooth and dynamic way. The path, less than 5% in gradient, is reinforced with dramatic LED lighting.



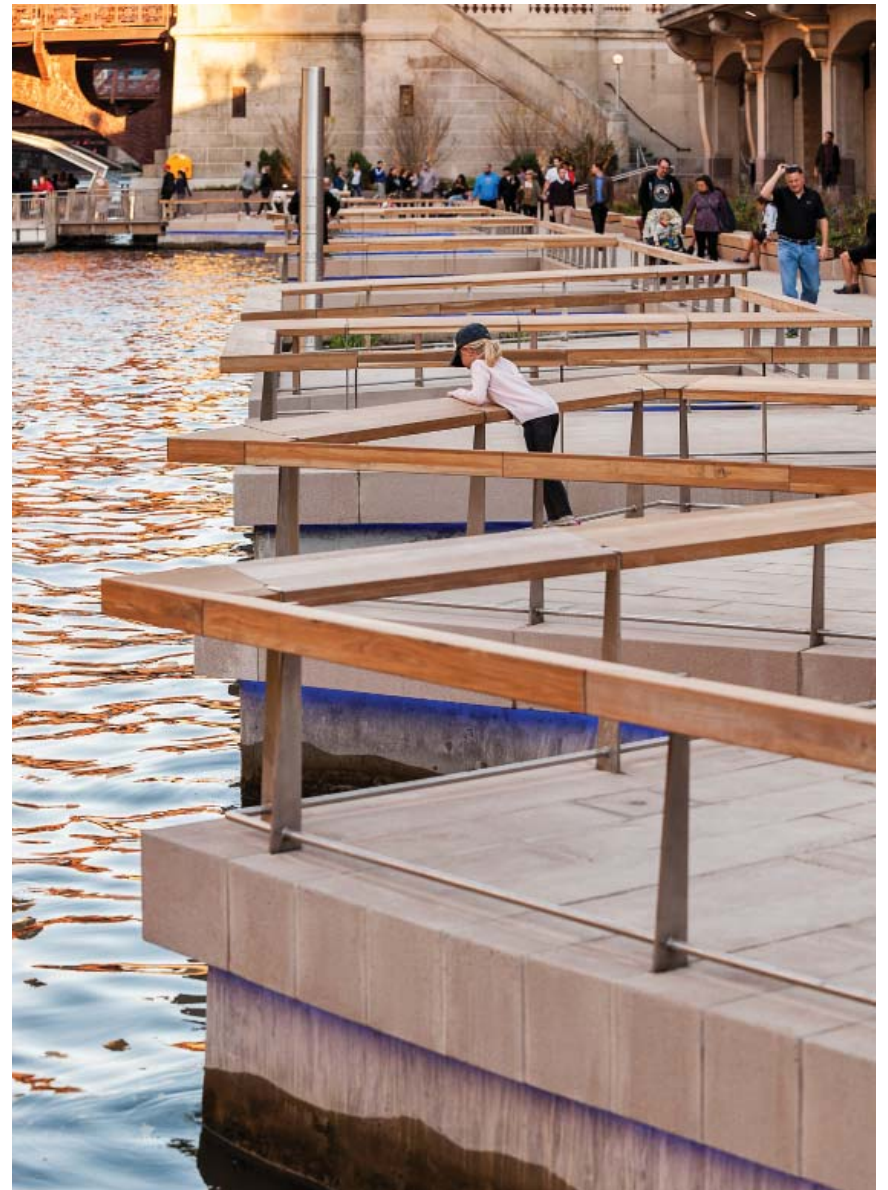
The block-long River Theater offers itself as a unique setting for years to come, treating downtown visitors to a perhaps unexpected place of both quiet reflection and dynamic excitement.



THE WATER PLAZA The Water Plaza is located between LaSalle and Wells streets.



A water feature offers an opportunity for children and families to engage with water at the river's edge.



THE JETTY The Jetty, located between Wells and Franklin streets, embodies the philosophy that truly sustainable design accounts for the whole environment—not only for humans.

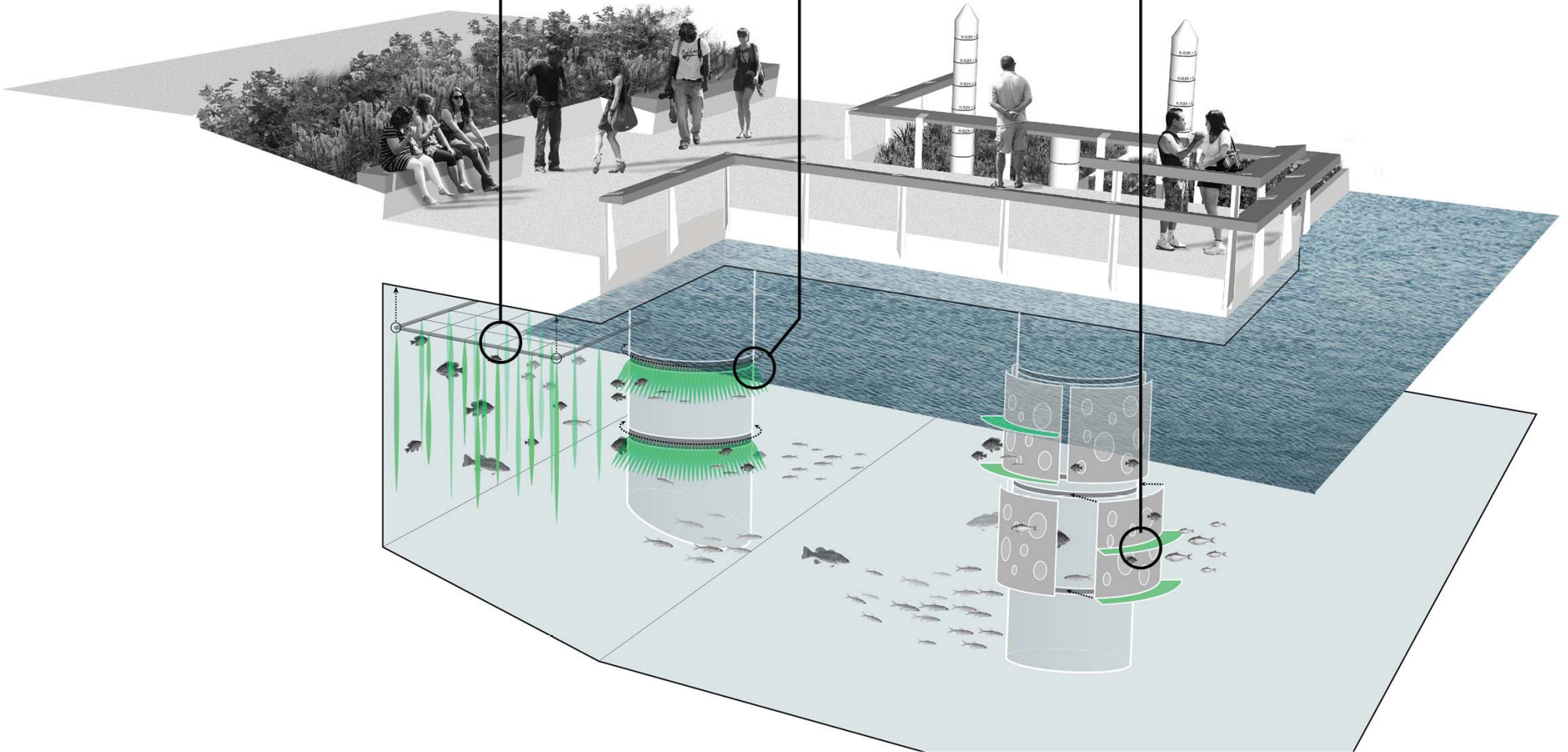
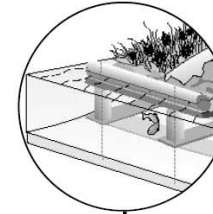
LIMNETIC HABITAT CURTAIN



POLE "HULAS"



CAISSON MOUNTED LUNKERS



Through plantings and other interventions, such as an underwater fish habitat installed in the Jetty, fish and aquatic life are given environments in which they can thrive.



Boardwalk spaces, illuminated at night, intertwine with the constructed fish habitat, and provide places for pedestrians to observe, fish, and learn.



A series of piers and floating wetland gardens offers an interactive learning environment about the ecology of the river, including opportunities for fishing and identifying native plants.

IMAGE CREDITS

- Page 1 Courtesy of Sasaki
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URBAN PLANNING

Chicago's new Riverwalk offers a vision of the future of urban parks

The city's new waterfront gem shows how urban public spaces are evolving

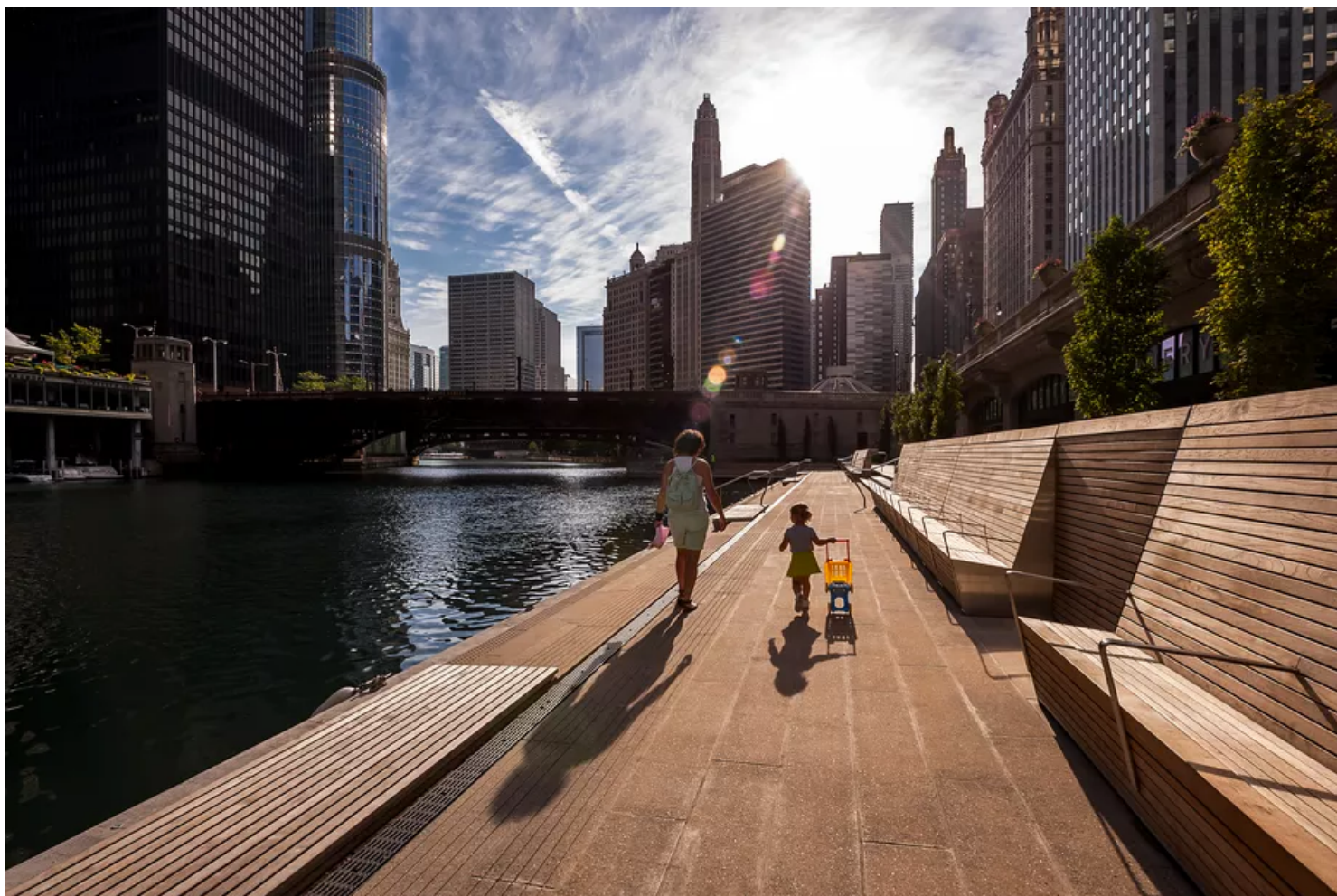
BY **PATRICK SISSON** | OCT 24, 2016, 1:34PM EDT

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Christian Phillips

Chicago's Lakefront Trail is arguably one of its finest civic asset, a cherished 18.5-mile linear park that showcases the beauty of Lake Michigan. Grant Park, which sits adjacent to the Lake at the center of the trail network, is often called Chicago's front yard. This weekend, with the opening of the final stages of the city's ambitious new Riverwalk, Chicago gains a new signature public space, part of a **growing effort** to transform the city's river system, and redevelop its so-called backyard.

A new 1.5-mile stretch of revitalized and redesigned riverfront, under construction since 2009, wraps around the city's downtown Loop, running from Lakeshore Drive to Lake Street and turning the banks of the Chicago River into a civic gathering space, park, and transportation corridor. The second and third sections of the Riverwalk, a collaboration between Sasaki and Ross Barney Architects—a firm led by Carol Ross Barney, who spearheaded the initiative and has been working on the project for more than two decades—also showcase how this new series of walkways, staircases, and event spaces represents the cutting-edge of landscape architecture, and the many ways that urban parks are evolving and changing.

Gina Ford, design principal at Sasaki, says this project represents a championing of versatile infrastructure: it not only offers recreation, but added ecological benefits,



TWEET

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into multifunctional spaces. Recent projects such as **Houston's Buffalo Bayou** and the **Play the LA River** initiative are also helping residents rediscover and redefine the urban waterfront.

Curbed spoke with Ford about the ways the Riverwalk represents a sea change in how city parks are designed today.



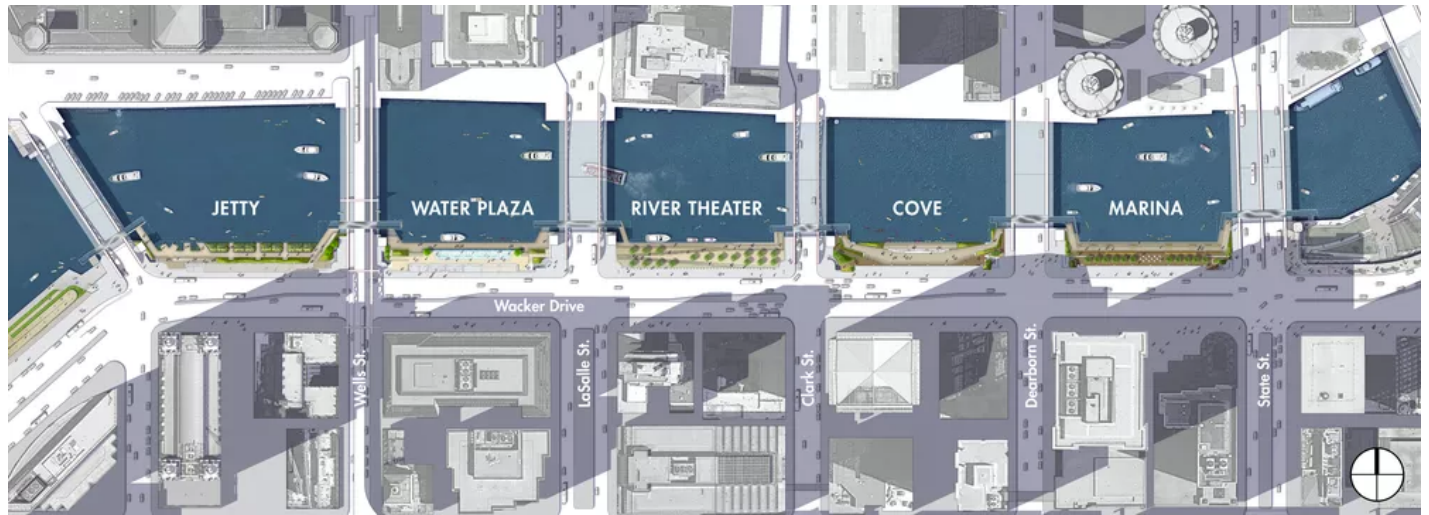
Christian Phillips

It's not just about new space, it's about new programming

A gorgeous new riverfront promenade would be welcome anywhere, especially in the heart of a big city. But the Riverwalk designers aimed for something more, creating a series of separate areas with designated functions that they call “rooms,” block-long areas spaced between the bridges that cross the river. This approach turned the waterfront into multi-use civic gathering spaces lined with amenities, including a theater, kayak dock, zero-depth fountain, and interactive nature area. Going beyond simply connectivity, the rooms give the spaces identity.

“The form invites a different type of programming,” Ford says of the Riverwalk’s layout. “It’s meant to be a beautiful contribution to the urban landscape, and boost economic development and tourism. But it’s also a great asset to city workers downtown, to come in and just sit and enjoy the sun and the river, to play in the

fountain.”



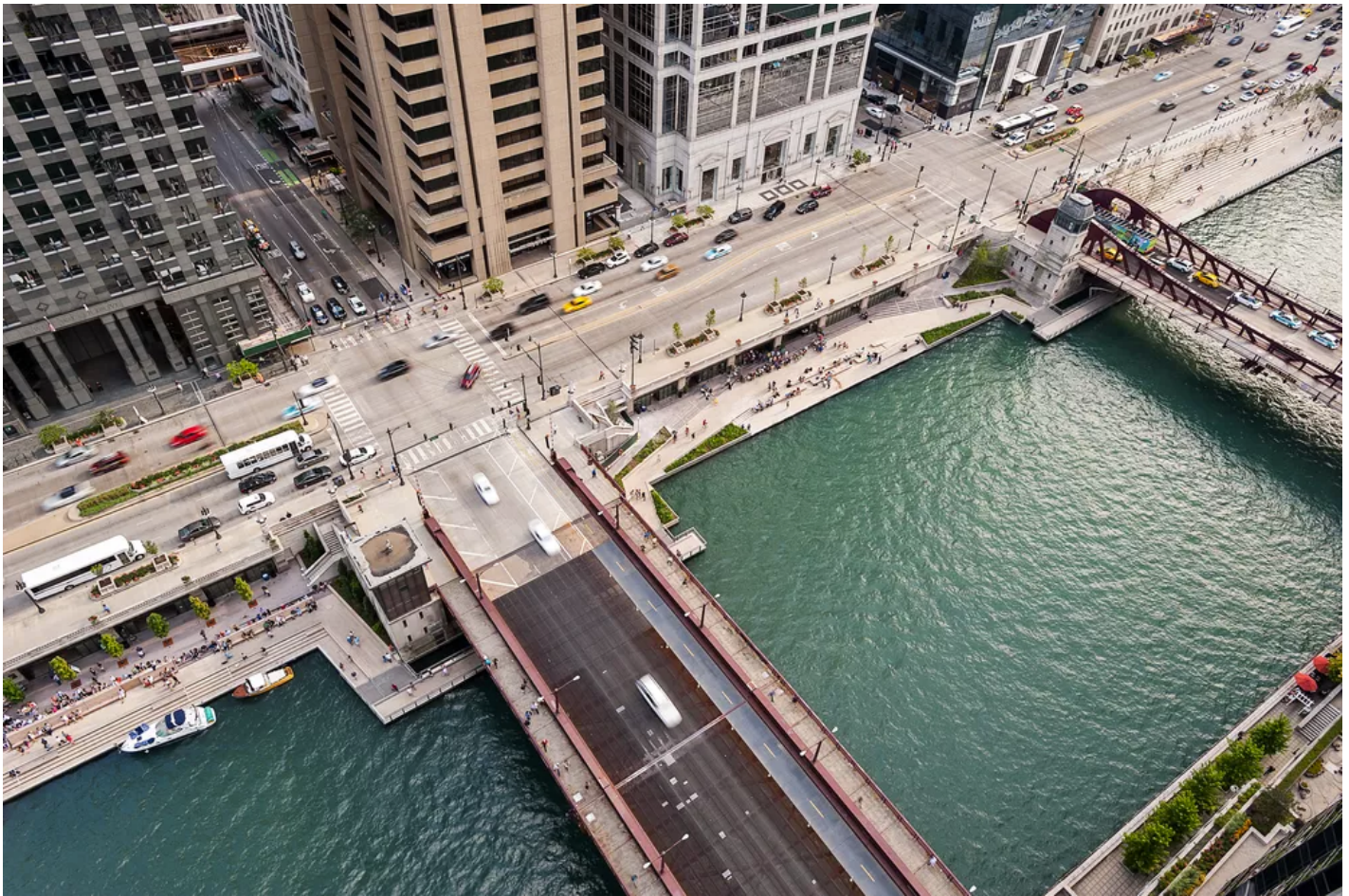
Sasaki

Landscape architects are today's urban planners

Ford also looks at the Riverwalk as part of a broader transformation of public space taking place the city, including the new **606 bike trail**, a rails-to-trails project on the near northwest side, the renovation of **Navy Pier**, and the opening of **Maggie Daley Park**, which features an ice skating ribbon and playground. These are profound projects that create playful, interactive public landscapes, part of catalytic urban change, according to Ford.

“There’s a return of people to the city, so downtown spaces are trying to be both great tourist destinations, which enhance the city’s image and identity, as well as spaces that serve the needs of the new residential population,” she says.

Architecture is important, says Ford, but **landscape and park design**, and accessible streets, can make a huge impact with a relatively small investment (or in this case, make the most out of a small sliver of land). A few years ago, Sasaki conducted a **State of the City survey**, asking 1,000 urban dwellers about their experiences downtown. When respondents were asked about where they experienced their favorite city moments, 67% of them were in public spaces.



The Riverwalk runs under the bridges that cross the Chicago River, which creates natural breaks between different “rooms”
Christian Phillips

Transportation is (still) key

Daniel Burnham’s famous **1909 plan of Chicago**, a pioneering example of urban planning, actually called for a riverfront promenade where today’s new Riverwalk stands. It wasn’t built for various reasons, but the new riverfront parks and paths live up to his vision for a civic circulation path that connects different areas and creates an entirely new way to get around the city (as well as a more aesthetically pleasing connection to boats and water taxis).

“One of the real innovations of the park was figuring out how to accommodate path and place, and balance the needs of moving as well as stopping and enjoying,” says Ford.

That presented a challenge, especially considering the designers worked with a relatively narrow space, just 25 feet wide in some parts. But the resulting

continuous walkway really does knit together different parts of the city. It's a much shorter version of the way the High Line in Manhattan isn't just a space to gather and appreciate, but one that's part of a pedestrian's everyday routine.



The Cove

Christian Phillips

New parks require new types of funding

The transportation benefits of the Riverwalk not only help Loop workers get around, but ultimately were the reason the project got off the ground. The Riverwalk took advantage of a \$99 million loan provided by the federal Transportation Finance Innovation Act. This is just one of a number of funding mechanisms being used to build new civic infrastructure, including public-private partnerships and cross-department municipal collaborations. Cities are recognizing that the park departments can't do all this alone, and when properly organized, these types of collaborative efforts pay huge dividends.

“Parks like this need to demonstrate value and revenue potential, in a way,” says Ford. “There’s a High Line effect, where the park impacts surrounding areas and businesses. It can make a lot of money for the city with a small investment.”



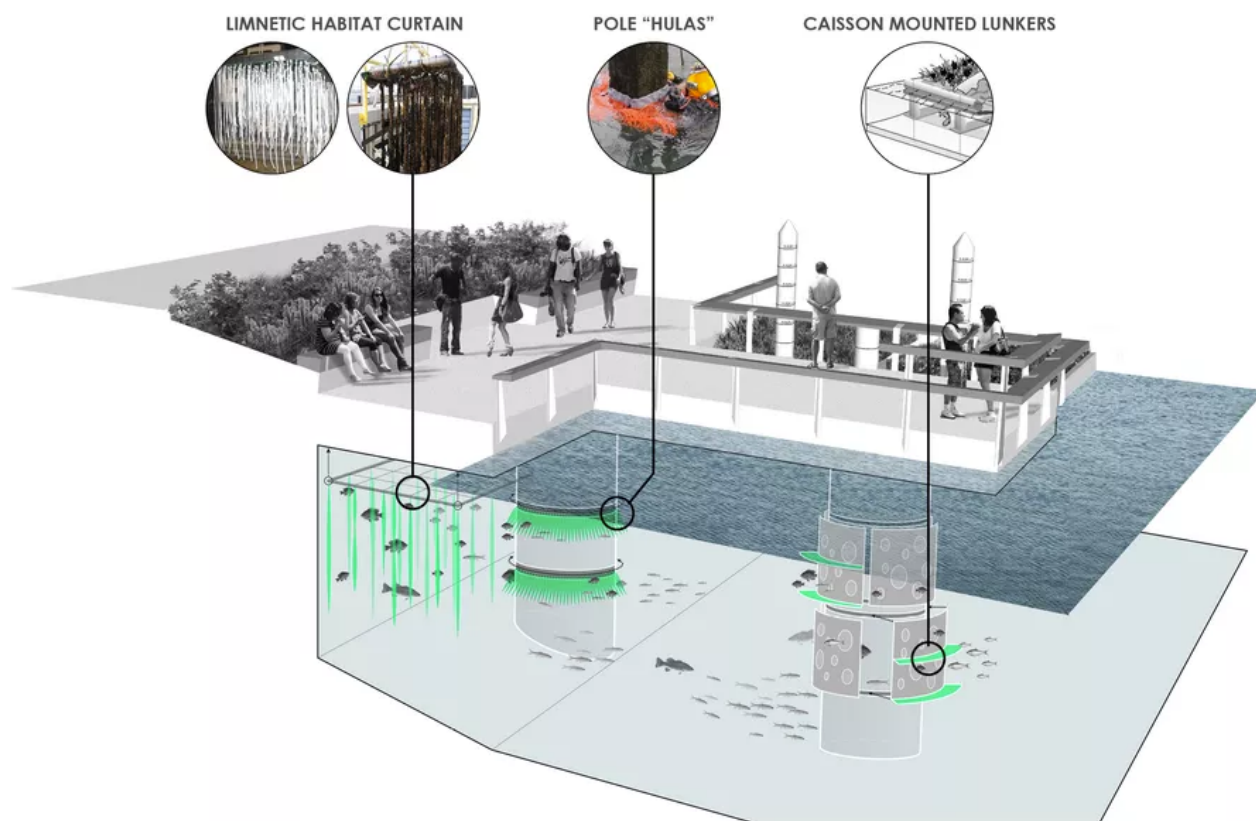
Kate Joyce

To promote sustainability, tell a story

The Chicago Riverfront, owing to its history as an industrial shipping corridor, has long been derided as a polluted backwater. Until recent efforts cleaned up the waterway, there was a running joke that when the river was dyed green for the annual St. Patrick’s Day celebration, it was cleaner than it was the rest of the year.

The river today is exponentially cleaner, an opportunity Riverwalk designers used to connect visitors with nature. The waterfront has been lowered to meet the river, and numerous activities, including a kayaking cove, help get people on the water and enjoying the waterway. One of the recent sections that opened last weekend,

the Jetty, includes fish habitats and wetland plants that allow visitors to get close and personal with wildlife. Visitors can see how plants and animals are thriving in a riverway once mocked for its lack of cleanliness. The Jetty isn't an idealized version of nature, says Ford, rather it's reflecting the urban context and telling a contemporary story.



A rendering of the Jetty, and the underwater infrastructure that will help attract and nourish plant and animal life near the Riverwalk

Sasaki

“There’s a growing awareness of climate, flooding resiliency, and sustainability, but often, unless you really connect people with urban rivers, they can just walk right past them,” says Ford. “We want to tell a story with this park that helps them see it not as an industrial conduit but as a beautiful place in their city. We want to show them nature, let them touch and experience it, and become stewards. That’s how you change people’s minds.”

Making the riverfront a place for people



Scene looking west along the last stretch of the Riverwalk near Lake St., as construction work presses on along Wacker Dr. and Chicago's Riverwalk, Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2016. (Antonio Perez / Chicago Tribune)



By **Blair Kamin**
Chicago Tribune

SEPTEMBER 15, 2016, 1:13 PM

The downtown Chicago Riverwalk often seems so effortlessly successful that it's easy to forget that people actually labored to design it, including Chicago architect Carol Ross Barney and Boston-area landscape architect Gina Ford.

Theirs were among the guiding hands for the latest sections of the popular pedestrian and bike path, which runs along the south bank of the Chicago River and is lined by everything from Chicago's Vietnam Veterans Memorial to outdoor seating, restaurants and bars. The final section, expected to open by late October, seeks to attract families and children with fishing jetties and a zero-depth fountain where kids will frolic in the water, as they do at Millennium Park's Crown Fountain.

The prospect of the fountain gave Ford cover recently as she toured her 9-year-old daughter Ruby through the Riverwalk.

"Mom, what do I do here?" Ruby asked.

"The fountain's coming," replied Ford, a principal at Watertown, Mass.-based Sasaki Associates, a multidisciplinary design firm with projects around the world.

She and Barney have teamed up on the two most recent phases of the Riverwalk, a project that began decades ago with a pedestrian and bike path stretching roughly from Lake Michigan to Michigan Avenue. In 2009, the path reached two more blocks westward with an extension to State Street. Last year, three blocks were added, reaching to LaSalle Street. When the final section extends the Riverwalk to the confluence of the river's north and south branches at Lake Street, the path will stretch uninterrupted for 11/4 miles and will have transformed harsh industrial-era docks into a teeming postindustrial amenity.

"This is a piece of the city that needs to be looked at again, integrated again," said Barney, who has worked on all three phases of the project and heads Chicago's Ross Barney Architects.

There have been bumps along the way. Days after city officials opened the three-block section last year, they had to close and power-wash it when heavy rains pushed sewage-laced floodwaters over the pedestrian path. And the concluding block of the soon-to-open section, which overlooks the confluence, will consist of little more than an expanse of grass and a wheelchair-accessible ramp that links the Riverwalk with Upper Wacker Drive.

City officials insist that the project did not run short of money and that they are comfortable with having this section be an interim, flexible park until a permanent anchor (likely a restaurant or entertainment venue) is found. Still, the section will look bare.

"It's a big question mark," Barney said

The other new sections are far more polished. Between LaSalle and Wells Streets, the stretch called the Water Plaza will offer a long, rectangular fountain with black granite pavement and arching, interactive jets of water. With the river too polluted for swimming, the idea is to let kids splash around in water alongside it. There are restrooms and changing rooms, as well as a hidden set of pumps to keep the fountain's water circulating and clean.

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"We wanted a place to touch water along the river," Ford said.

The other new section, the Jetty, is named for seven narrow piers, or jetties, that extend into the river. The piers are for fishing or watching fish that the designers hope will be attracted to the Riverwalk. Between the piers are floating trays for waterborne plants. If the display works, it should bring much-needed greenery to a once-harsh urban edge and give new meaning to Chicago's motto — "Urbs in Horto," Latin for "City in a Garden."

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ARCHITECTURAL

Making Places: Public Spaces in Chicago

Reclaiming defunct infrastructure, a series of new public paths and parks invite locals and visitors to gather, play, or simply enjoy navigating the city's neighborhoods.



Riverwalk

Sasaki Associates, Ross Barney Architects, and Alfred Benesch & Company

Chicago

Designed and built by Sasaki Associates, Ross Barney Architects, and Alfred Benesch engineers, the 1 1/4 miles to Lake Michigan upon completion.



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October 16, 2015

Blair Kamin

Reclaiming defunct infrastructure, a series of new public paths and parks invite locals and visitors to gather, play, or simply enjoy navigating the city's neighborhoods.

Every night, as I walk along the Chicago Riverwalk to my commuter train, I witness scenes that were unthinkable a year ago: young office workers sipping drinks at a packed wine bar, big powerboats tied up at dockside, clusters of kayaks scooting along the water. Some of the paddlers are on floating architecture tours, taking in everything from the corncob-'shaped twin towers of Bertrand Goldberg's Marina City to the eclectic wedding cake that is the clock-towered Wrigley Building. These vignettes exemplify a new burst of place-making in Chicago. As if in anticipation of the crowds that are expected to descend upon the city for the Chicago Architectural Biennial, Mayor Rahm Emanuel has recently dedicated four signature public spaces: the Riverwalk, a sleekly modern addition to the Beaux Arts retaining wall along the Chicago River; the 606, a winningly un-slick 2.7-mile bike trail and chain of narrow parks that slices through four neighborhoods on the city's Northwest Side; Maggie Daley Park, a kid-centric pleasure ground of more than 25 acres just east of the wildly popular Millennium Park; and the southern part of Northerly Island, a 40-acre ecological showcase of man-made hills, a lagoon, and campgrounds that's a short cab ride away from the Loop.

These diverse projects have something in common: the transformation of outmoded transportation infrastructure into prime public space. The Riverwalk replaces decrepit docks. The 606 supplants a defunct elevated railroad freight line. Maggie Daley Park supersedes a dull 1970s park that was built atop a lakefront parking garage. Northerly Island was a small shoreline airport, mostly used by

politicians shuttling between Chicago and the state capital in Springfield, until one night in 2003 when former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, in a Robert Moses moment, sent out city backhoes that carved giant X's into its runway and shut it down.

As Emanuel told me, not without reason, when he showed off Northerly Island, “We are at the epicenter of taking old transportation platforms and turning [them] into public spaces.”

The new spaces build upon physical and conceptual foundations laid in the early 20th century, when architect and planner Daniel Burnham articulated a vision that led to Chicago's nearly continuous 26-mile chain of parks along the shore of Lake Michigan. But, to their credit, the designers of the new spaces are creatively adapting Burnham's industrial-age ethic to the digital age, forgoing stiff European-inspired formality and the banal “mow, blow, and go” aesthetic of suburban office parks. Their looser arrangements foster new forms of interactivity. Whether these pleasure grounds are tightly confined linear spaces, like the Riverwalk and the 606, or broader plots, like Maggie Daley Park and Northerly Island, they reflect the increasingly prominent role of landscape architects, who are turning once-marginal areas of cities and regions into new centers of civic life.

The three-block-long, \$110 million extension of the Riverwalk is the most prominent—and, to date, the most successful—example of this trend. Set on the lower level of double-deck Wacker Drive, an urban ring road inspired by Burnham's 1909 Chicago Plan, the hardscrabble docks along the Chicago River's south bank resembled a scene from the 1954 movie *On the Waterfront*. The absence of a walking path beneath the river's bascule bridges rendered the riverfront even less appealing, forcing strollers to climb stairs to the upper-level of Wacker Drive, cross a city street, and then descend in order to get from one section of the waterfront to another.

To create continuity and bring pedestrians close to the water, the team of Sasaki Associates, Ross Barney Architects, and Alfred Benesch engineers lowered the decades-old dock platforms by several feet, extended the shoreline 25 feet into the river's roughly 200-foot-wide channel, and built pedestrian pathways beneath the bridges. The bridges effectively delineate three vibrant, roomlike outdoor spaces: the Marina Plaza, whose high-backed teak benches offer dazzling views of Marina City; the Cove, where people sprawl on low-slung benches, resembling seals on rocks baking themselves in the sun; and the River Theater, a monumental flight of steps that is equally suited to lunchtime brown-baggers and crowds gathered to hear music.

The design achieves a compelling synthesis of consistency and variety, and an equally effective counterpoint of tradition and modernity. Another three-block extension, now under construction, will join with this and earlier sections of the Riverwalk to create a continuous 1¼-mile pedestrian and bike path reaching from Lake Michigan to the meeting of the Chicago River's north and south

branches. Along with smartly designed riverfront boathouses in outlying neighborhoods by Jeanne Gang and Chris Lee, the Riverwalk reveals how Emanuel is turning the river into the city's "second waterfront." The change is gathering momentum, even though the river's still-polluted waters contain levels of disease-causing bacteria that routinely exceed state standards for recreational waterways. Emanuel's public works are bringing Chicagoans to the edge of, as well as onto, the once-neglected body of water.

While the 606 isn't as camera-ready as the Riverwalk, it is having an equally transformative impact, bringing open space to off-lakefront neighborhoods that desperately needed it.

Designed by the team of Collins Engineers, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, and artist Frances Whitehead, the 606 is, in many respects, the anti-High Line of New York: more earthbound than ethereal, more geared to locals than tourists, and more utilitarian than uber-chic. In all that, it is quintessentially Chicago. As the design blogger Matt Hickman wrote when the 606 opened, "Whereas the High Line is the high-end cocktail lounge where one might take fancy out-of-town cousins to show off, the 606 promises to be more of a comfortable dive bar—a real neighborhood joint."

His forecast was on target. Named for Chicago's zip code prefix and built atop a concrete-framed earthen embankment rather than a skeletal elevated line, the \$95 million 606 consists of a central concrete trail for bikes, and rubberized shoulders for joggers and strollers. The trail itself is called the Bloomingdale Trail in acknowledgment of the city street that runs parallel to it. Access ramps link the path to street level, and a chain of four parks has been built at ground level, because there wasn't enough room atop the embankment. Today, the landscaping is underwhelming. But once an "arcade" of grasses, plants, and trees matures—it will include evergreens, paperbark maples, and sumacs—it should create an almost-cinematic montage of greenery for cyclists zipping down the trail.

On weekends, to be sure, the 606 gets crowded. Most of the time, though, it's soothing and expansive. While the Riverwalk brings people below street level to a cool and quiet realm, the trail lifts them above urban congestion. Sharpening the 606's contrast with the Riverwalk's urbane downtown milieu, the elevated perspective allows trailgoers to peek (almost literally, at second-story levels) at the way people live in residential neighborhoods. And there are myriad practical benefits. Residents of the heavily Latino neighborhoods that adjoin the trail use it not just to walk, jog, or ride bikes, but to get to the grocery store, the doctor, or their jobs. Yet in correcting long-term inequities in the provision of open space, the 606 has brought rising real-estate values and the threat of gentrification. How sad it would be if, as the 606's landscape grows in, the very people it was built to serve are priced out.

Because the \$60 million Maggie Daley Park and the \$9.7 million southern stretch of Northerly Island occupy Chicago's already spectacular lakefront, they can't match the transformative impact of the Riverwalk and the 606. Nonetheless, they are altering the shoreline and pushing the conceptual envelope of public space.

Renzo Piano once cracked that the snaking Frank Gehry–designed overpass that leads eastward from Millennium Park to the land now occupied by Maggie Daley Park was a “somewhere to nowhere bridge.” That was right. The park that used to be there was so ordinary that people simply stopped at the end of Gehry's span and turned around. But that park sat atop an underground garage.

And when the membrane that protected the garage from groundwater deteriorated, it was ripped off like a bad toupee. That opened the door for Maggie Daley Park, which is named for Chicago's late longtime first lady, wife of former Mayor Daley.

With its climbing walls and an ice-skating ribbon that wends its way around them and evergreen trees, the park has been an instant hit with the public. Hives of kids run, climb, slide, holler, and laugh as they enjoy colorful play equipment with skyline views that no suburban playground can match. Another Van Valkenburgh creation, the park effectively mixes the recreational with the pastoral; its diagram is an X consisting of intersecting areas for passive recreation and active play. While its play spaces pick up on the interactivity of Millennium Park's Cloud Gate sculpture and Crown Fountain, gently sloping lawns, perfect for picnicking, form a welcome respite from the joyful frenzy of the children's play zones. Unfortunately, the lawns are lined with clunky, tripod-shaped light masts that resemble giant praying mantises.

The just-opened Northerly Island promises to be far more serene. In place of the airport and its pancake-flat landscape, SmithGroupJJR, Studio Gang Architects, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have shaped man-made hills, a five-acre lagoon, and a winding mile-long path for bikes, strollers, and bird watchers. The design, which Jeanne Gang has compared to a “Millennium Park of nature,” recreates habitats, from ponds and marshes to prairie and savannas, that existed before development overran Chicago. It sounds like an eco-Disneyland, but the result has the feel of authenticity and the urban wild. Fish already are spawning in the wetlands. Great blue herons alight there too. City kids will be able to camp in the park. They'll see stars in the dark night sky, hear the roar of the waves on Lake Michigan, and emerge, it is hoped, with a sense of wonder.

In his great 1909 Plan of Chicago, Burnham wrote, “the lakefront by right belongs to the people.” It is remarkable, more than a century later, that his democratic axiom still resounds and even more remarkable that his words continue to inform and inspire Chicago's latest crop of public spaces—

though these pleasure grounds possess a geographic scope and creative spark that Burnham himself never imagined.

Architectural Record contributing editor Blair Kamin is The Chicago Tribune's architecture critic and the editor of Gates of Harvard Yard, to be published in spring 2016 by Princeton Architectural Press.

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