

**NORTHCENTER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
ZONING AND LAND USE COMMITTEE**

**Guidelines Regarding Land Use, Development, Zoning,
Transportation and Environmental Issues**

The Northcenter Neighborhood Association (“NNA”) wants to retain an attractive mix of residential, commercial business and institutional uses in its community. New development, construction and renovation in Northcenter should conform to the policy statements described in these guidelines. The boundaries of the NNA area are Addison Street on the south, the Chicago River on the west, Montrose Avenue on the north, and the Union Pacific rail line (Ravenswood Avenue) on the east (such area referred to herein as “Northcenter”).

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL USES

A. Land Use Recommendations

1. It is the intent of NNA to encourage commercial business along the “Arterial Streets” in the neighborhood – Lincoln Avenue, Western Avenue, Irving Park Road, Addison Street, Montrose Avenue, rather than on other streets (the “Residential Streets”). NNA prefers to encourage locating commercial venues for shopping, dining, entertainment and services on these Arterial Streets in order to minimize the traffic and parking impacts.
2. Lincoln Avenue should remain a pedestrian-oriented commercial street, with active uses during daytime and evening hours.
3. Montrose Avenue and Addison Street have and should retain a mix of commercial and residential uses. Retail businesses are encouraged at intersections with other Arterial Streets.
4. Western Avenue and Irving Park Road should remain commercially focused streets that provide off-street parking where possible as required by city zoning. NNA is not opposed to mixed use or exclusively residential buildings at key locations. Such proposed developments should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. NNA recognizes that these streets are automobile dominated.
5. Other areas are recommended for residential use, with the provision that existing responsible businesses are encouraged to remain.

B. Consistency and Planning

1. Inventory – We support a vibrant mix of residential, commercial and institutional uses essential to an urban environment and want to encourage commercial development that supports and works along with the existing local business community and will positively impact the long-term future of our neighborhood.
2. Preservation – We encourage and support the preservation, renovation and, whenever appropriate, adaptive reuse of existing buildings in Northcenter. Tax or rehab incentives should be used or considered to encourage restoration and where we can preserve the character and quality of the original structure.

3. Unified Architecture and Appearance – We urge that new construction and renovation be responsibly developed and creatively designed in ways that harmonize with, and respond to, the character and context of our community. We encourage the use of lasting quality materials and craftsmanship, as well as the incorporation of LEED or green technologies in building construction and renovation. For example, we encourage the use of finished brick or stone exteriors, rather than split-faced, exposed concrete block. Commercial storefronts should be aesthetically pleasing. Signage, awnings and lighting should be consistent with the character of the surrounding environment.
4. Setbacks and Heights – Restrictions along commercial streets vary but should be made consistent with the surrounding commercial properties and respectful of neighboring residential areas.
5. Streetscape Integrity and Continuity – Streetlights, sidewalks, curbs and landscaping in commercial corridors should remain pedestrian friendly to encourage active uses during the day and night.
6. Density – We welcome higher density development near public transportation stations to help reduce automobile traffic consistent with NNA Zoning Transportation Guidelines.
7. Public Safety – We recommend that extensive consideration be given to safety features:
 - (i) New buildings should incorporate good security features, including proper and efficient lighting, secure parking and vestibules that are well lit and secure
 - (ii) When possible, entryways should face the street and there should be adequate lighting around the property
 - (iii) Security systems and security cameras should be installed when practical.
8. Landmark status – Any request for a landmark status should undergo extensive community review.

II. GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTY BASED UPON LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

A. Commercial Office

1. We see the role of office space in the following context: It should meet a community need, support local businesses and residents, and create and sustain local jobs.
2. We encourage innovative and flexible office space with a diverse mix of tenants so that office properties can better withstand the stresses of future economic downturns.
3. Primary zones for office uses are along Ravenswood Avenue (north and south of Irving Park Road), Western Avenue and the Irving/Lincoln/Damen intersection.
4. We discourage speculative office development if it has a significant negative impact on existing conditions in the local market for office space.

B. Commercial Retail Based Upon Specific Types of Business

1. Business Mix – Businesses in Northcenter should respond to the needs of the community and the 47th Ward, though business that attract customers from a broader area are certainly welcome. NNA would like to see more restaurants, retail stores and shops, art galleries, book stores, bicycle shops, clothes stores, shoe stores, gourmet food shops, gift shops, as well as other new businesses. We are concerned about the existing concentration of certain business types in our community and would prefer that their numbers do not increase substantially. These include branch banks, salons, dry cleaners, real estate offices, and cell phone retailers.
2. Offensive Uses - Uses that can offend community standards, such as massage parlors, adult bookstores, hookah bars, smoking paraphernalia shops, are not encouraged.
3. 24-Hour Operation – Businesses that operate 24 hours a day are discouraged except for the existing stores located on the Arterial Streets. NNA wants to retain a reasonable balance between convenience and the character of the neighborhood.
4. Drive-Through Facilities – The community is currently served by a reasonable number of drug stores, banks and fast-food restaurants that provide drive-through service. NNA does not encourage additional facilities with drive-through service.
5. Taverns and Alcoholic Beverages – NNA supports our existing taverns and is open to additional new establishments that serve alcohol if they are well planned, appropriately located and conscientiously operated. All taverns shall comply with city ordinances and be courteous to surrounding neighbors. NNA would prefer to see new liquor licenses issued for restaurants and taverns that serve food. NNA discourages additional 4 am liquor licenses.
6. Small-Box and Mid-Box Development – NNA is open to new small-box retailers (less than 5,000 sf) on Lincoln Avenue and Montrose Avenue, and mid-box retailers (5,000 to 30,000 sf) on Irving Park Road and Western Avenue. Whenever possible, retail stores should hold the streetscape by orientating the building so that it abuts the front property line and parking is placed at the rear. Retail stores shall provide all off-street parking, access, landscaping, lighting and signage as required by city code and ordinances. If parking areas are visible from the public right-of-way, the parking should be properly screened through landscaping and fencing. We also encourage permeable surfaces wherever possible to minimize the effects of storm water runoff from parking lots.
7. Big-Box Retailers – Few locations within Northcenter could support the building size and great parking needs of a big-box retail facility. NNA opposes any big-box use approved by the city without the prior involvement of NNA and other community groups. No unfair advantage should be given in terms of incentives without the full knowledge of the neighborhood. NNA encourages small business to fill the community needs. Existing regional big-box stores that draw from a wide area are convenient for the residents of Northcenter.
8. Sidewalk Cafes – NNA encourages outdoor cafes on Arterial Streets in the neighborhood. NNA may recommend restrictions on the hours of operation and/or live music.

C. Institutional Uses (including, but not limited to, schools, hospitals, medical offices, religious)

1. Community Balance – NNA supports all educational, religious, medical and health services institutions because they help create an inclusive and diverse community. These large institutions are encouraged to support local businesses and hire local workers.
2. Growth – Institutions interested in acquiring property for expansion or changing the use or character of their facility are encouraged to discuss their plans with NNA and the local community before making any final decisions. All expansions should comply with city ordinances and include green space, landscaping and other benefits to the neighborhood.
3. Parking – Whenever possible, local institutions should allow for the use of their parking lots by local residents and businesses if not in conflict with the normal operation and hours of use of their facility.

D. General Guidelines For All Commercial Parking Lots, Structures And Garages

1. Parking and parking lots shall adhere to all city ordinances and zoning codes, including those for landscaping. Parking should be consistent with the neighborhood and streetscape. Lots should be designed to minimize any impact on nearby homes and residents including impacts from storm water runoff. Items to be considered include noise, security, aesthetics, hours of operation, storm water runoff and light shielding if applicable.
2. As a general rule, NNA shall discourage parking at grade. Notwithstanding such, NNA shall review developments proposing such on a case-by-case basis.
3. Parking areas should not be located in front of buildings. This type of parking arrangement negatively impacts the streetscape and can impair pedestrian passage and safety.
4. Parking along alleys should not extend the full width of the lot, and any rear parking area should allow for needed storage and access to trash containers and for snow removal/storage, and emergencies without encroachment into the alley right of way per city code.
5. Parking garages should harmonize with the architecture of the building. If concrete or split face block is used, it should not be visible from the street front or alley.
6. Curb cuts should not be added, except where alley access to parking is impossible. NNA would support curb cuts, subject to municipal approval, where the cut provides a benefit to the neighborhood, such as a parking lot or business with a parking lot. Where a curb cut to a parking area is allowed, the commercial property should, at a minimum, provide more off-street spaces than the on-street spaces it eliminates. Driveway design should meet city requirements for slope, width, and curb radii to provide for proper pedestrian and vehicle passage.

III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR INDUSTRIAL USES

- A. NNA encourages the renovation and expansion of existing M and C zoned property in the area for new or existing businesses. As a general rule, NNA does not support the rezoning of property from commercial to residential.
- B. NNA should be apprized in a timely manner of all requests to change the zoning or secure approval of a special use or variation request and should have the opportunity to request a meeting where the proposed development and zoning relief alteration can be explained and discussed with the applicant.
- C. Primary zones for industrial property are located along Rockwell Avenue north and south of Irving Park Road, Talman Avenue and Bradley Place north of Addison and west of Western, the Ravenswood corridor, and other pocket areas.
- D. NNA supports the creation of jobs through both new business development and the expansion of existing businesses. We encourage businesses to hire employees that live in the neighborhood.
- E. Projects shall meet all city ordinances for building code, parking, landscaping, lighting, noise, and all other applicable requirements.

IV. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENTIAL USES, INCLUDING MULTIFAMILY HOUSING AND MIXED USE

Note: Commercial multifamily housing and mixed use pertains to properties with five or more residential units along with 1st floor retail and parking.

A. General Residential

1. Density – NNA hopes to maintain the relatively low-density character of our community. However, we recognize that NNA is located near the center of one of our nation’s largest metropolitan areas where pressures to increase density are likely to grow over time. For that reason, NNA believes higher density residential development is most appropriately located along public transportation routes and especially near CTA and METRA train stations. We recognize that increased density in select locations can help reduce automobile traffic, enliven street life, better support local business and help preserve open space in other locations.
2. Housing stock – NNA wants our community to have a diverse stock of housing that strikes a balance between protecting existing home values and assuring that a meaningful percentage of housing in the community is affordable at a wide range of income levels. We are concerned by the steady reduction in available rental housing in the community, largely due to conversion of larger apartment buildings and two-flats into either condominiums or single-family homes. Combined with the steady increase in property taxes, this has contributed to both increased rental rates and the conversion of more rental units to owner occupied housing.
3. Preservation – To help maintain the character of our community, NNA supports the preservation, renovation and, where appropriate, adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
4. Residential Zoning – NNA generally opposes land use changes from residential to commercial/business, industrial, or institutional uses. Every effort should be made to preserve the existing housing inventory and character of the neighborhood.

Exceptions will be made when it is in keeping with the character, quality and desired economic base of the community.

5. Residential Streets – Virtually all residential streets in Northcenter are zoned exclusively for detached single-family homes. To maintain the character of our residential streets, to promote appropriate rehabilitation of older buildings and to accommodate new development, we are committed to preserving the existing residential zoning that predominates in our community. We oppose rezoning any RS3-zoned properties to RT3.5 or higher zoning classifications when out of character with surrounding properties, except for minor alterations to existing non-conforming properties or to rebuild a non-conforming property lost to fire or some other catastrophe. However, we do encourage multifamily properties at the corners of streets in areas otherwise dominated by single-family homes.
6. Excavation Ordinance – We support enforcement of the Excavation Ordinance, including its notice provisions. We also support strict enforcement of the public notice requirements for all zoning amendments, administrative adjustments, special uses and variations, and for new construction generally. We encourage efforts to improve the effectiveness, transparency and fairness of notification procedures.
7. Senior Housing – NNA welcomes senior housing in the community. Such housing should be maintained to standards consistent with our community and should attract and serve senior residents.
8. Rental Housing – NNA supports the development of new rental housing that is designed to be consistent with our concerns relative to density, architecture and other considerations described elsewhere in this document. NNA believes tax incentives that encourage rental development can be appropriate when the resulting buildings are consistent with our broader goals and incorporate affordable units as defined below.
9. Affordable Housing – NNA encourages well-planned and operated affordable housing to help maintain the economic diversity of the community. We define affordable rental housing as units with rents affordable to households earning 60% or less of the median income of the City of Chicago. For condominiums or single-family homes, we define affordable as properties that can be purchased by those who earn no more than 100% of the median income for the City of Chicago. In 2015 the City Council expanded the Affordable Requirements Ordinance. We encourage prospective developers seeking zoning relief to meet or exceed these requirements whenever practical.
10. Parking – NNA opposes permit parking in Northcenter and the creation of new curb cuts on residential streets. Other than for Transit-Oriented Development (“TOD”) projects, NNA prefers a minimum number of parking spaces for residential buildings in compliance with city ordinances. In condominium properties, NNA generally prefers parking spaces owned by the residential unit owner (as opposed to requiring the owners to lease or purchase spaces separately, for example). Additional parking space may be required depending on size of units, location, guest parking needs and other factors. More parking may be required for large-scale residential properties. In all cases, parking spaces should be wide enough to accommodate wide vehicles with

ease. NNA encourages use of shared parking spaces among uses that do not conflict (e.g. business during the day, residential at night), as a means of obtaining greater parking availability. Tandem or stacked parking for individual units is also encouraged. These requirements may be reduced if a building is close to public transportation.

11. Mixed-use – NNA believes mixed-use buildings that combine residential and commercial or residential and institutional uses can be valuable additions to the community when properly located and designed. We prefer to see mixed-use development concentrated at major intersections or adjacent to the Montrose, Irving Park and Addison CTA stations. At the same time, we are concerned about the proliferation of first-floor commercial spaces in new mixed-use buildings on arterial streets because our area and the city as a whole already face a high vacancy rate for this type of commercial space.

B. Design Feature

1. Roofs – Black tar and other highly unreflective surfaces on flat roofs are discouraged. Unreflective surfaces contribute to the urban “Heat Island” effect and inefficient uses of energy. Therefore, reflective surfaces are preferred. Green roofs, where appropriate, are also highly encouraged to combat the “Heat Island” effect and minimize storm water runoff.
2. Fencing – Neighbors should be considerate of the traditions and patterns of their block when constructing fencing. Open front yards are preferred, however if front yard fencing is consistent with surrounding properties wrought iron or a combination of iron and brick is favored over chain-link. NNA encourages back yard fences to be shorter than 6’ to foster relationships between neighbors.
3. Parkway fences and parkway landscaping –In all cases, parkway improvements should follow city permit guidelines.
4. Entryways – To reflect the historic character of our neighborhood, we recommend that entryways for residential properties face the street, rather than the side of a building.
5. Space for trash cans – All properties must include space for trash cans adjacent to the alley but within the property line. Developments should not be designed to encourage residents or businesses to illegally place trash receptacles in the public space in the alleys.
6. Green space – Green space in back yards, front yards and rooftops is greatly encouraged. Green space is an amenity for the neighborhood and contributes to cleaner air, minimizes runoff, provides valuable habitat and reduces urban heating. Required rear-yard open space must be located within the rear yard, at ground level or, if located on a terrace or patio, within 4 feet of ground level. In RM5 and RM5.5 districts, where structures are located in the rear set back and do not exceed 6 feet in height, required rear-yard open space may be located directly above such structures.
7. Breezeways – Breezeways connecting houses and garages are discouraged when they adversely affect neighbors’ property. Concrete yards are discouraged.

8. Permeable Space - We encourage permeable surfaces in the rear yard, including parking pads, in lieu of impermeable hard surfaces.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES

- A. Chicago River** – Forming the western boundary of Northcenter, the river holds tremendous potential for our community as a place of relaxation, recreation and natural beauty. NNA hopes to maximize public access to the riverbank while respecting the privacy of adjoining property owners. We encourage steps to maximize green space around the river with landscaping that emphasizes native plants and habitat for wildlife, especially migratory birds. We support steps to better control runoff and reduce water pollution so that the river can reach its full potential as a recreational and natural corridor.
- B. Park Land** – Revere Park, 2500 W. Irving Park Road, is the only park owned and managed by the Chicago Park District within Northcenter. Although Horner Park and California Park provide open space along the river, they are west of the river and physically separated from Northcenter. Clark Park and Welles Park are east of the river but outside Northcenter. Revere Park provides only 10 acres of open space to serve the 16,000 residents of the Northcenter community, well below the city’s recommendation of 2 acres of park space for each 1,000 residents. For that reason, NNA strongly supports the creation of additional open space for the public, whether publicly or privately owned, where possible within our community.
- C. Runoff Reduction** – Because of Chicago’s flat terrain, storm water runoff creates ongoing problems for our community and the city. It easily overburdens storm sewers and creates flooding problems, inconveniencing and placing a serious financial strain on individuals and local government. For that reason, NNA strongly encourages steps to minimize storm runoff throughout our community by maximizing green space and, where that is not possible, employing permeable paving materials.
- D. Energy Conservation** – Reducing the energy of use in buildings is an important component of creating a sustainable society with lower energy costs and reduced emissions. To achieve that goal, NNA encourages the following for new construction and extensive rehabs:
 1. Building thermal envelope improvements: Increases in prescriptive insulation levels of walls, roof and floors; improved fenestration that reduces heat gain in warm weather and heat loss in cold weather.
 2. Infiltration control: Whole-house pressure testing with strict allowances for air leakage rates.
 3. Leakage control: Construction designed to minimize leakage from air distribution systems and fireplaces.
 4. Lighting: The use of high efficiency lighting is encouraged.
 5. Heating: Electric resistance heating is discouraged.
 6. Pipe and duct insulation: Pipes carrying hot water and ducts carrying cooled or heated air should be insulated when passing through areas where air temperature is not controlled.
 7. Appliances: Residents and business owners are encouraged to purchase only Energy Star-rated appliances.
- E. Renewable Energy** – Reducing the amount of energy use in buildings from unclean sources is an important component of creating a sustainable society. For that reason,

NNA strongly encourages solar water heaters and rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV), especially on flat roofs. Where appropriate and not unnecessarily disruptive, NNA encourages geothermal installations and small rooftop wind installations.

F. Landscaping and Fencing – NNA’s expectation is that proposed developments meet or exceed the City of Chicago’s Landscape Ordinance.

G. Sustainable Developments – NNA’s expectation is that proposed developments meet or exceed the City of Chicago’s Sustainable Development Policy (also known as the “Green Matrix”).

VI. TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES

NNA values the myriad transportation options in our neighborhood and believes they are a vital component of our prosperous and vibrant community. We encourage thoughtful development that maintains, or even increases, the diversity of transit options available to our residents. We encourage TOD within Northcenter that is pedestrian-friendly and encourages the use of mass transit and of bicycles as supplements to the automobile. Specifically we believe the following priorities should be considered whenever development or zoning plans are proposed:

A. Mass transit – Maintain a high level of accessible public transit for the community

1. We support the creation of an interchange station served by both Metra and CTA Brown Line trains where passengers can transfer between the systems (Irving Park or Addison stations).
2. We support the use of traffic tracker technology at transit stops in Northcenter, including bus and train stops.
3. We support the addition of seating areas where train and bus transit connect.
4. We advocate expanded express bus lines through Northcenter, including bus rapid transit. We also support the reintroduction of express trains on the Ravenswood line (i.e. A/B trains).

B. Bicycles – Create a more bicycle friendly environment

1. We support additional services and resources for bikers in Northcenter, including bike racks, additional bike lanes and bike rental or sharing locations.
2. We support the development of a well-maintained, dedicated bike trail along the North Branch of the Chicago River to connect with existing park/river trails at Lawrence Avenue. We further support a dedicated bicycle greenway connection between the river and the lakefront bike trail.
3. We support the “Idaho Stop,” treating stop signs as yield signs. We also strongly encourage bike riders to follow all other rules of the road.

C. Automobiles –Reduce traffic congestion

1. Wrigley Field traffic – identify ideas to help reduce congestion as the ballpark is likely to be used more in the future (not less).
2. We support alternative forms of transportation to reduce auto congestion.
3. NNA supports auto-sharing programs like Zipcar.
4. We discourage the introduction of additional permit parking in Northcenter except in areas meeting stringent guidelines.
5. We discourage the creation of new curb cuts on any of Northcenter streets.

6. We seek the reconstruction of all speed bumps that have been improperly installed and cause damage to vehicles and encourage more effective traffic calming measures as an alternative to speed bumps.

D. Pedestrian – Increase safety of pedestrian crosswalks and walkways

1. We support moving bus stops to the far side of traffic lights.
2. We support testing “crossing flags” in Northcenter, specifically on Western Ave. and Irving Park Road.
3. We support the addition of crosswalk signage warning drivers of potential pedestrians.
4. We support expanded enforcement to increase crosswalk safety.
5. We support traffic calming measures to slow traffic near school zones and other areas where children are present. We do not support speed cameras.
6. NNA discourages zoning that removes existing parking spots for garage access. Garages should be accessed exclusively through alley; homes without alley access should not be permitted to have garages and instead use on-street parking.