

LAFOLLETTE PARK FRAMEWORK PLAN





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Executive Summary

LaFollette Park is a neighborhood park located on Laramie Avenue in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois. The Chicago Park District (CPD), in the interest of the revitalization and historic preservation of LaFollette decided to further study the LaFollette area to determine appropriate steps for its modification and rehabilitation. Through facilitation efforts by the Thompson Dyke and Associates, the CPD sought help from its community to identify the goals and structure of the study in the form of a Framework Plan. The community process began by holding personal interviews with stakeholders in the community which included alderman, the principals of the neighborhood schools, the LaFollette Park Advisory Council, faith based organizations and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT). Regular steering committee meetings were held to solicit the input of community members. During these meetings with the community and the region, the team identified four goals of the Framework Plan. These goals are organized within four themes: 1) the integration of the Park with the community; 2) the integration of the school, Park and Fieldhouse; 3) the improvement of circulation, parking, and accessibility; and 4) the assessment and renovation of facilities in the interest of usage and historic preservation.

The primary approach of the LaFollette Framework Plan was to examine existing uses and recommend changes that promote safety, provide diverse recreational opportunities, and enhance the neighborhood aesthetically. To achieve this goal, both facility and park programming needs were explored in relation to each other. Also, the plan responds to the

needs of the residents and identifies the Park as an agent for neighborhood revitalization.

With the structure and preliminary goals of the study identified, the Framework Plan began with a site analysis and historical review. The site analysis was completed in conjunction with the CPD's structural analysis of the Fieldhouse, a newly appointed park staff and a focus on current park renovations. Existing park conditions were examined including an inventory and analysis of circulation, parking, safety, programming, facilities, and amenities. The physical layout of the Park was also considered and the Park was organized with an axial focus.

The Framework Plan also addresses the changing demographics and economic status of the Neighborhood Study Area and how they have affected zoning districts and land uses. Analysis of the neighborhood shows a K-8 school to the north, residences farther east on Hirsch, residences all along Potomac, the Fieldhouse at the west end of the Park, and several churches in close proximity. The needs of several segments within the community were reviewed, especially those of Leslie Lewis Elementary School.

Lastly, a historic review was conducted to understand its design development and the vision of the Park's original designer, Jens Jensen. The review confirmed that the neighborhood, Fieldhouse, the Park, and the location of the school should be integrated and allowed to function more as a community-building catalyst.



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In completing a comprehensive review, opportunities to improve the Park through programming and rehabilitation were identified and have been further outlined in the Framework Plan. The Framework Plan also addresses significant programming elements by identifying the different “rooms” contained in the Park.

This Framework Plan was developed with the support of the school and a broad range of individuals and community groups. This plan lays the foundation for future capital improvement projects in LaFollette Park. Capital improvements identified in this plan include structural improvements to the Fieldhouse; improving accessibility; making connections between the school and park; adding or improving recreational and educational facilities; creating a plaza for public events; replacing or adding walkways, comfort station, lighting and irrigation; and landscaping.

Project Approach



The Italian Renaissance style fieldhouse was completed in 1929.

Chicago Park District Mission

- To enhance the quality of life in Chicago by becoming the leading provider of recreation and leisure opportunities;
- To provide safe, inviting and beautifully maintained parks and facilities;
- To create a customer-focused and responsive park system.

METHODOLOGY

The Chicago Park District worked with the LaFollette Park Advisory Council and Steering Committee familiar with LaFollette Park to identify the needs of the neighborhood. Chicago Park District representatives and TD&A team members conducted one-on-one interviews to obtain information about the Park and the neighborhood. TD&A then prepared illustrations of existing conditions and presented the information to the LaFollette Park Steering Committee for its input. Using this information, TD&A and the Park District created a number of concepts for the Park. After internal evaluation with the Park District, two concepts were developed and presented to the LaFollette Park Steering Committee. A Framework Plan was then prepared and presented to the Steering Committee. Input was gathered at each of these Steering Committee presentations and integrated into this final study.



Neighborhood surrounding La Follette Park.

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY AREA

The Austin Community is spatially defined by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad on the north; the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad on the east; Roosevelt Road on the south; and Austin Avenue, and later Harlem Avenue, on the west. The Neighborhood Study Area lies within the larger Austin Community. A major street network defines the Study Area. The network consists of North Avenue on the north, Cicero Avenue on the east, Division Street on the south and Central Avenue on the west.

Demographics

The Austin Community as a whole has approximately 114,000 residents. Census data from 1990 reveals that the Austin Community was approximately 86% African American, 10% white, and 4% of Hispanic origin. There were 3.3 persons per household and 3.8 persons per family. The Austin Community can be generally characterized as a middle class, predominantly African American area with a majority of single-family, two-family and three-family dwelling units (Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 1994).

The Neighborhood Study Area primarily consists of census tracts #2507 and #2508. (Only a small portion of the study area in the southeastern corner between Lamon and Cicero is not within one of these two tracts.) In 1990, the two census tracts totaled 10,292. In 1990, this Neighborhood Study Area was approximately 92% African American, 5% white, and 4% of Hispanic origin. There were 3.5 persons per household

and 4.0 persons per family. Of the 3,141 dwelling units in the study area, 23% were single-family, 51% were attached single-family or two-family, 14% were three-family, and 12% were multiple-family (Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 1994).

By comparison, the demographic characteristics of the Neighborhood Study Area reflect a community that closely resembles the larger Austin Community but has a slightly higher African American population, a correspondingly lower white population, and slightly higher household sizes. The Study Area is dominantly single-family, two-family and three-family residences with a relatively small number of multiple-family dwellings.

Neighborhood

In the last several years, the neighborhood has shifted from an aging, middle-class population to a rising population of younger professionals. Property taxes have risen substantially in the last 15 years resulting in financial stress for those long-term residents with fixed and modest incomes.

There are several religious organizations within close proximity of the Park that offer a variety of services.

- Pleasant Valley Methodist Baptist Church, located on the southwest corner of Potomac and Laramie
- New Genesis Assembly of God Baptist Church, located on the northwest corner of Hirsch and Laramie

- St. Peter Canasius, located on the southeast corner of LeClaire and North Avenue
- St. Anne's Senior Housing (165 residents), located south of Division on Thomas.

All are active in the community and located within three blocks of the Park.

In addition, there are two public elementary schools within four blocks of LaFollette Park. Leslie Lewis Elementary School is located north of the Park between LeClaire and Leamington. Hay Elementary School is located south of the Park three blocks on Laramie Avenue.

Land use and zoning

Land use is primarily commercial along the streets bounding the study area with a mix of single-family and low density multiple-family housing along the interior street network. A shopping center is currently under development at the southwest corner of North Avenue and Cicero Avenue and will be anchored by a Cub Foods Store. An Ames Department Store now occupies an existing building immediately to the south of the new development. This shopping node will be supported by ample on-site parking and will increase retail opportunities for neighborhood families.

Land uses immediately surrounding the Park are either residential or educational. The south and west sides are occupied by single-family, two-family, and three-family buildings. The north and east sides are occupied by low density multiple family buildings. Leslie Lewis Elementary School is immediately north of the Park.

Zoning districts determine the location of the uses noted above. Typically, business (B) and commercial (C) districts are designated along the major streets, and residential (R) districts are designated along the interior streets. This pattern is evident within the Neighborhood Study Area (See Zoning Districts Map). Business and commercial districts are located on streets such as Cicero and North Avenue, while residential districts are located on streets such as Hirsch and Lavergne.



The New Genesis Assembly of God Baptist Church is located on the northwest corner of Hirsch and Laramie.

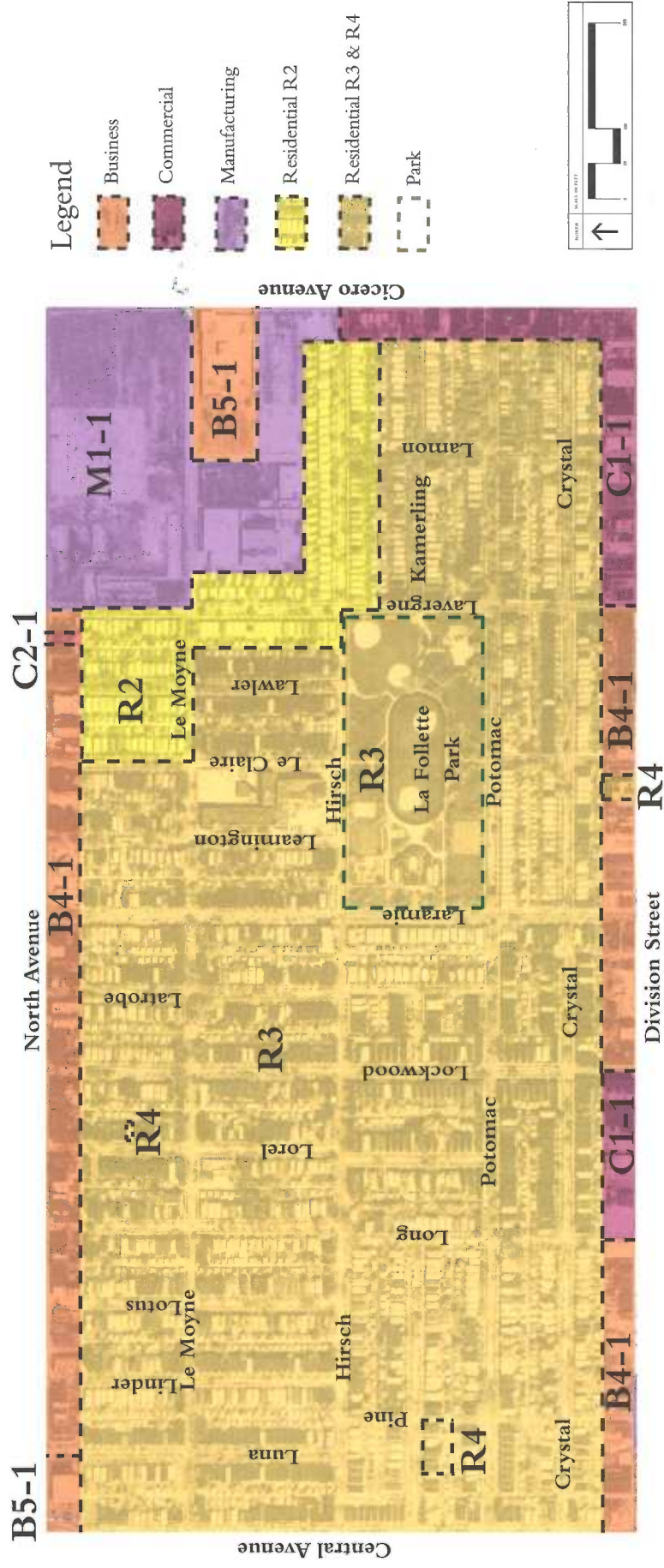
The general zoning districts are then further subcategorized. For example, within the Neighborhood Study Area, the business districts subcategorized as B4-1 and B5-1 allow for a wide variety of retail uses and buildings. The business districts subcategorized as C1-1 and C2-2 districts allow for a wide variety of retail and service commercial uses. The Park itself is zoned R-3 as is most of the surrounding neighborhood. The R-3 district allows one-family, two-family and multiple family attached dwellings. A small portion of the neighborhood is zoned R-2, a district that permits only one-family detached dwellings. A limited number of parcels are zoned R-4, a district that permits the same residential uses as the R-1 and R-2 districts. However, the R-4 district also permits townhouses and housing for the elderly (Chicago Zoning Ordinance, 1999).



An example of a residential district, located on streets such as Hirsch and Laverne.

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY AREA

Zoning Districts



Legend

- Business
- Commercial
- Manufacturing
- Residential R2
- Residential R3 & R4
- Park

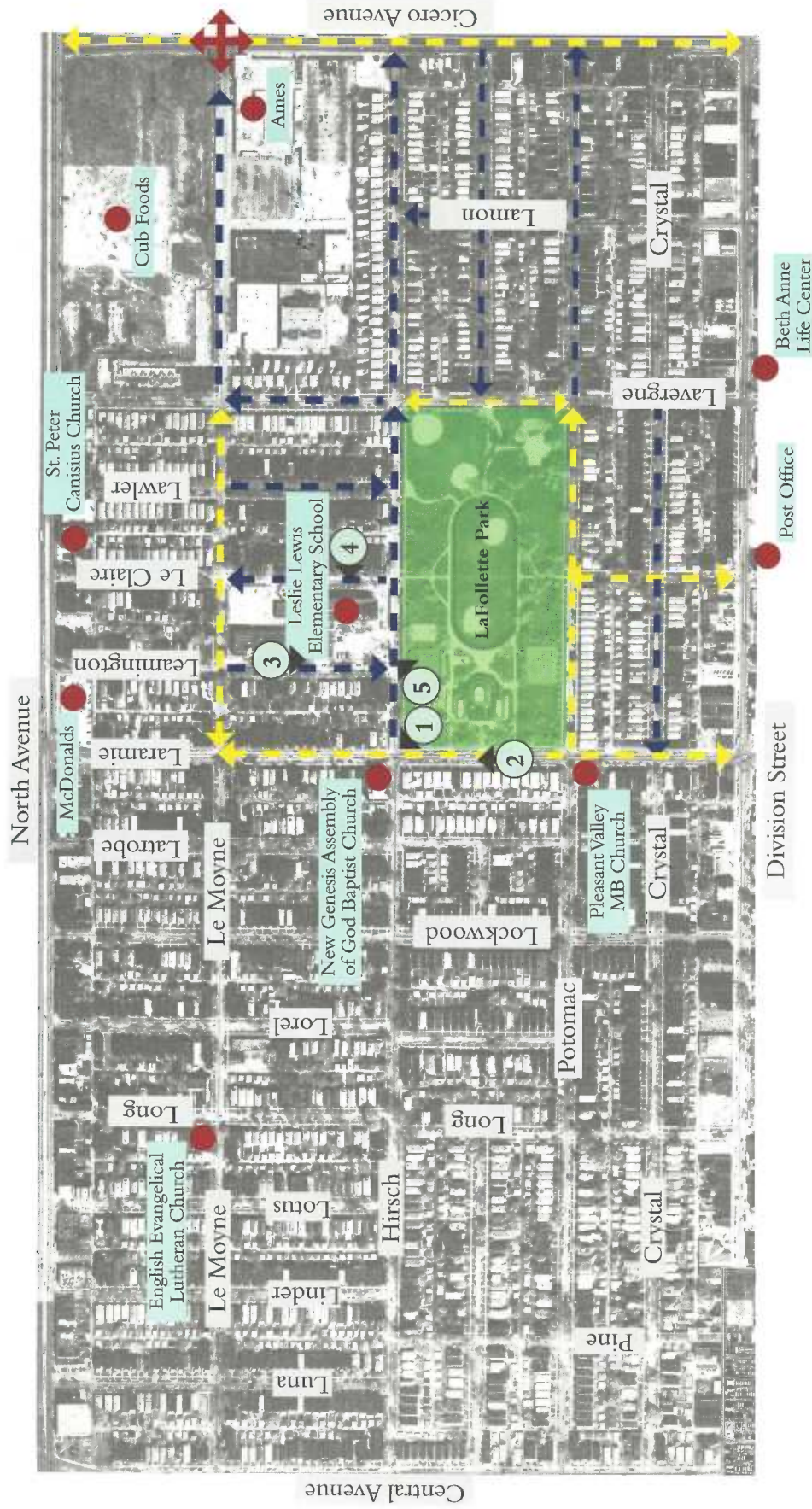
Scale: 0 100 200 Feet

North Arrow

Source: City of Chicago

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY AREA

Site Inventory



- Legend**
- Blue arrow: One-way Traffic
 - Yellow arrow: Two-way Traffic
 - Blue circle with number: 1

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