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## Density envisioned around future el stops

Green Line in South Loop eyed for development

By MICAH MAIDENBERG  
Editor

City planners are imagining future Green Line el stations in the South Loop as surrounded by dense, mixed-used towers that would support retail and inspire residents to avoid using their cars when traveling downtown.

Conceptual plans were unveiled Monday by Bennett Haller, director of design and urban planning in the city's planning department, and David White, a consultant. The Regional Transportation Authority is paying for the planning sessions in the South Loop and two other neighborhoods.

Haller said development that abuts the stations would mimic that around the Blue Line near North, Milwaukee and Damen in Wicker Park, where heights and density increase noticeably around the el but then drop. The effect would be a "recognizable town center" in the neighborhood, Haller said. After the meeting Haller said he could envision some buildings rising as high as 350 feet-but only if new Green Line stations were indeed approved.

"You have greater density of development but not in some wide area-really right at the station itself," he told a crowd of around two dozen people. "It's relatively tall for the neighborhood but I'm not in any way espousing we take vast areas of your neighborhood and re-zone them or upzone them."

The plans deal in hypothetical scenarios at this point. The Chicago Transit Authority has not committed to paying for a new station at 18th nor at Cermak. Stations can cost between \$40 million to \$50 million each. The agency would undertake its own three to five year process before they could build. There is competition elsewhere for new el stations in near-loop communities-a separate planning effort funded by the Department of Planning calls for three new el stops near the United Center, for example.

White, the consultant, said the concepts could guide future development around the sites while ensuring no scenario is precluded.

"The idea behind this is not to say, 'You need to build this building.' It is to say here's what this area could ... look like, here's roughly what the uses should be. Here's about how much parking would be needed. Here's about how tall they should be, so when a developer has funds to come in, the city can say, 'Here's the plan we like. It should be somewhere near this,'" he said.

Haller said, however, that national infrastructure legislation in Washington, and Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympics, could boost chances that the new el stations would be built.

At the meeting, some residents said, given scarce public funding, a new Green Line stop should be built at

18th Street first.

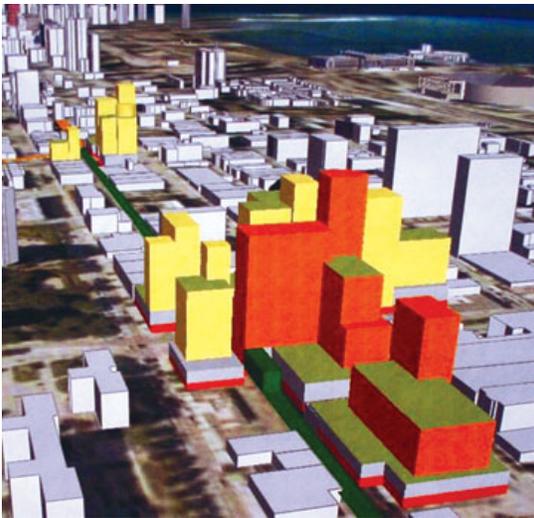
"I'm a big proponent of them starting at 18th Street. The density is there," said Bob Steinmetz, an eye doctor who lives and works in the neighborhood.

Tina Feldstein, president of the Prairie District Neighborhood Association, said a Cermak station is a "no brainer" because McCormick Place must have more public transit access. She said pushing for a station at 18th Street now thus made more sense.

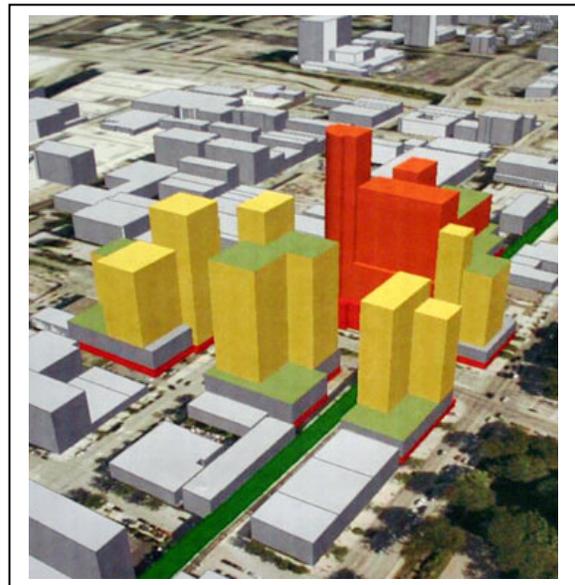
"Which ever one goes first, we want to piggy back. We want to keep it moving forward," said 2nd Ward Alderman Robert Fioretti. "We want both stations to go."

But Fioretti is hearing proposals from all sides. He said of the convention center, "They have lobbyists too."

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In this view looking north along the Green Line at Cermak Road, residential buildings are highlighted in yellow, hotels are orange and street-level retail is indicated by gray and red bars.



Looking south along Green Line at Cermak Road.

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