

WEST WALKER CIVIC ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

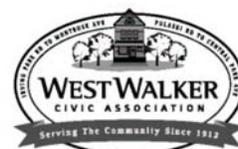


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West Walker Neighborhood Background

West Walker is a neighborhood approximately ½ mile by ½ mile square on Chicago's northwest side. It extends from Pulaski Road east to Central Park Avenue, and from Irving Park Road north to Montrose Avenue. With approximately 1,900 households it is a lower density city neighborhood with many single family homes occupying extra-wide lots with mature trees. Many of the 100-year-old homes retain traditional character and details in their architecture. The sale price of single-family homes has risen approximately 10 percent per year since 2000. The neighborhood is also home to attractive 2- and 3-flat apartment buildings as well as larger 10-to-16 unit complexes. Since 2000, several of the multi-unit buildings have been converted to condominiums. Condo sales have increased significantly since then, with over 40 condos sold in 2004 and 2005, compared with 7 in 2001.

West Walker residents have access to the amenities provided by nearby Independence Park and the Independence branch of the Chicago Public Library. Most residents feel fortunate to receive excellent services from 39th and 33rd Ward offices. Transportation to downtown, O'Hare Airport and the north and northwest suburbs is readily available via the 90-94 expressways, the Chicago El "Blue Line," express CTA bus routes and the Metra Northwest commuter train line. Parking on residential and commercial streets is generally sufficient.

Currently, residents of West Walker are dissatisfied with a lack of appealing businesses located within walking distance. Numerous auto and vehicle-related shops, nail and hair salons, and discount/convenience stores lie within the boundaries of West Walker. However, there are too few businesses that community members would like to visit regularly. Residents have a desire to see the commercial streets and their businesses reflect more of the character and needs of a pedestrian-friendly, family-oriented residential community by incorporating restaurants, retail stores and cultural venues. Residents also want to improve the appearance and functional use of the streetscape for pedestrians.

In addition, the garish signage of several businesses mars the aesthetic appearance of West Walker's commercial streets. Storefronts and facades lack consistency, and the poor maintenance of some buildings detracts from the potential character of the streets. Potentially charming buildings are overshadowed by their less attractive neighbors. Numerous buildings in the area are for sale and many storefronts remain empty.



West Walker Vision Process

The Vision Committee was formed by the West Walker Civic Association in the fall of 2005 in response to a request from Alderman Margaret Laurino (39th Ward). The Alderman asked for a written document illustrating how the community would like the neighborhood's commercial streets to evolve. The Vision Committee laid out the following three step process to accomplish the task: 1. information gathering (meeting with city officials and planning experts) 2. community input (circulating a community survey, conducting a total of three community meetings for residents and business owners) 3. writing and finalizing a community Vision Statement. This Vision Statement is the result of that process.

The Vision Statement is critical at this time because several recent requests from developers for zoning changes demonstrate that the West Walker neighborhood is attracting outside interest. With development comes change, and residents want to have a voice in shaping that change. The Vision Statement, and the neighborhood plan which will be created, may be used by the Aldermen when meeting with developers and potential businesses to help guide decision making. The goal of this document is to present a single Vision reflecting community consensus.

West Walker Vision – A Main Street for West Walker

The collective vision for West Walker is to retain the high quality of life residents enjoy in a neighborhood distinguished by century-old architecture, an abundance of single family homes, tree-lined streets and relatively low congestion. Through the vision process West Walker hopes to preserve and enhance the character of the neighborhood as a safe and friendly place to grow up, live well, raise children or retire.

We envision:

- The transformation of Elston Avenue into a bustling "Main Street" drawing the West Walker community together.
- The creation of a pedestrian-friendly shopping district, where residents can walk to bakeries, specialty shops, bookstores and a variety of restaurants. The commercial streets will echo the character of the neighborhood, with family friendly businesses operated by independent owners as well as national chains.
- The establishment of a vibrant cultural center to anchor the community. Much like the Old Town School of Folk Music is to Lincoln Square, this center would be an



Community Vision Statement

important gathering space, inviting people from the neighborhood and beyond to immerse themselves in the arts.

- The controlled and limited development of condominium housing along the major thoroughfares of Irving Park Road, Pulaski Road, Montrose and Elston Avenues that respects the character and scale of West Walker. The condominiums will match residents' preferences in terms of height, building materials, density and parking provision; they will feature architectural details suggested by the details found in older neighborhood buildings; and the grounds around them will be landscaped.
- The organized effort to support and improve the neighborhood's public library and park, both heavily used and critical to the quality of life in the community.
- The renovation of our major thoroughfares with additional trees and other greenery, ample lighting, additional parking and quality signage as well as measures to insure the safety of pedestrians.
- The rehabilitation of unique and historic buildings for both business and residential use.

Creating A Neighborhood Plan: Making The Vision A Reality

It is the intent of the West Walker Civic Association to pursue the community's vision until it is fully realized. Our Vision Statement provides a framework that will guide us as we proceed. Creating our Vision Statement was the first step. Creating a detailed neighborhood plan is the next step. Implementing the neighborhood plan is the final step.

The development of Elston Avenue as the "Main Street" of West Walker, as well as progress on the other commercial streets, requires an orderly and controlled process. With a well-developed neighborhood plan we hope to achieve coordinated development and manage changes consistent with our community goals. The detailed plan will include standards and guidelines for development as well as renderings, drawings and photos. It will serve as a guidebook for businesses, property owners and developers. The Vision and the neighborhood plan will assist the Aldermen as they works with these parties on behalf of the community.



In order to proceed:

- We will compile a property inventory of West Walker's commercial streets. This will require research and data collection for all parcels. Detailed information will be gathered for each address, including lot size, whether there is an existing structure, its condition and current zoning.
- We will identify appropriate resources and tools that can be utilized in implementing our vision. This may include identifying the financial resources required to carry out the inventory and develop the neighborhood plan; the use of zoning and the creation of special districts to facilitate controlled development; the use of grant funding to achieve specific objectives; and the identification of city resources that can assist us in developing and implementing our plan.
- In order to establish a cultural center as an anchor business we will identify and contact cultural and arts organizations. We will work to create partnerships with appropriate cultural groups.
- We will develop a marketing plan to promote West Walker's assets and attract desirable businesses to the neighborhood.

The creation and implementation of the neighborhood plan requires bringing together a variety of people and resources. We will begin by presenting our Vision Statement to Alderman Laurino and Alderman Mell. We will ask our Aldermen and their staffs to assist us in working with appropriate city departments to obtain the funding and staff assistance required to initiate our property inventory and develop our neighborhood plan.

Throughout the process we will continue to keep the community fully informed of our progress. We will use the *West Walker Wire*, our web site, and our monthly meetings to communicate with the residents of West Walker and solicit feedback.

As We Move Forward

The Vision Committee would like to thank all the individuals and organizations that have collaborated with us on this project to date. They have provided information and ideas that were indispensable in the drafting of this document. The Vision Statement could not have been drafted without the input and support of the community. The development and implementation of our neighborhood plan will only be successful with continued community input and support.



As a committee we are grateful and privileged to have the opportunity to craft and pursue the vision of our community. It is a responsibility that we take very seriously. Finally, we are excited to see the realization of our community's vision. We hope that West Walker's "Main Street" will become a destination to be treasured by West Walker's current and future generations.

Vision Committee Members

Liz Mills
Roberta Bole
Peter Cunningham
Davor Engel

Evan Price
Nicole Price
Melanie Reschke
Beth Tidmarsh

Jayme Tipre
Marianne Turk
Marvin Weinstein
Johanna Zorn

Acknowledgments

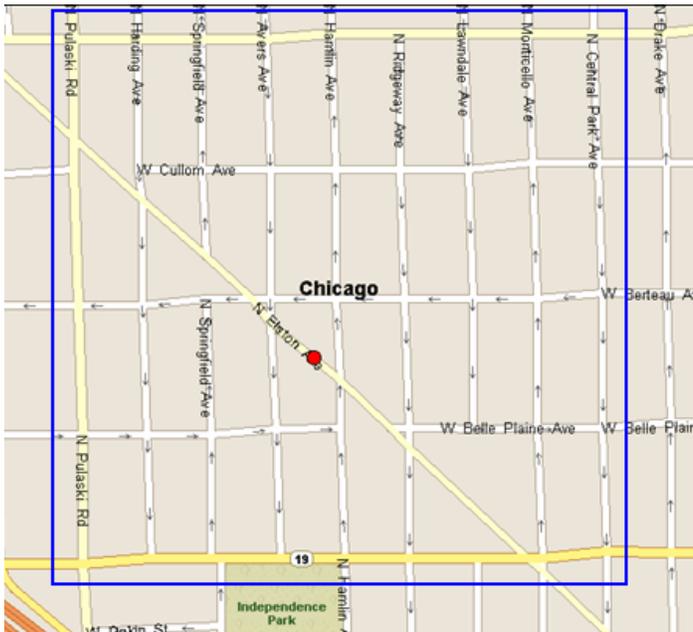
Alderman Laurino & the 39th Ward Staff
Albany Park Community Center
Andrea Terry, BauerLatoza Studio
Anne Ralston, Koenig & Strey
City of Chicago Dept. of Planning & Development
Labe Bank
Latvian Community Center
Dick McDowell
Terry Teele
The Residents of West Walker



Addenda:

West Walker Boundaries

Irving Park to Montrose - 4000 N to 4400 N
 Central Park to Pulaski - 3600 W to 4000 W

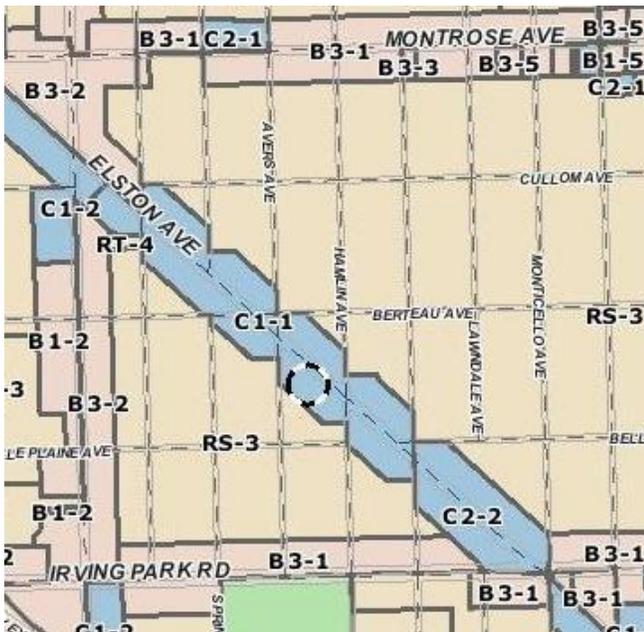


West Walker Demographic Statistics from the 2000 Census

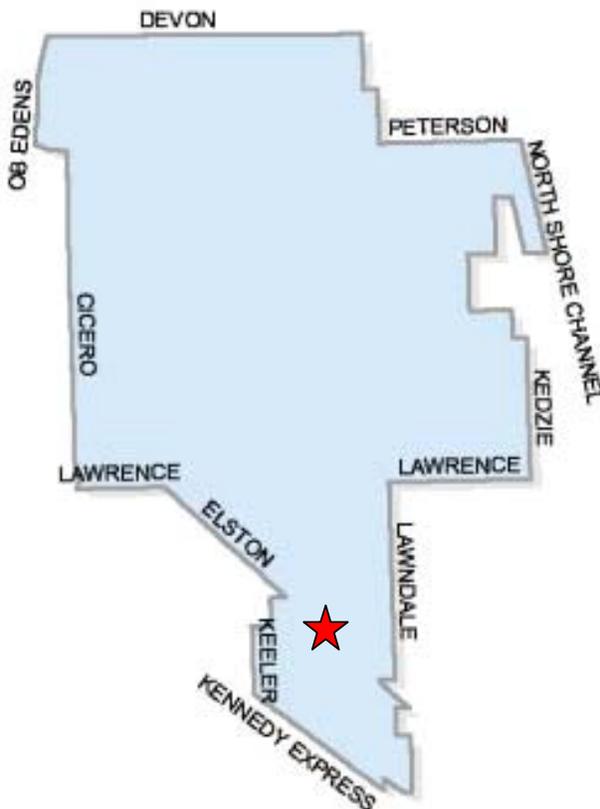
- Population 5,339
- Households 1,856
- Median Age 32
- Hispanic 41%
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher 21%
- Average household income \$40,949



West Walker Current Zoning Map



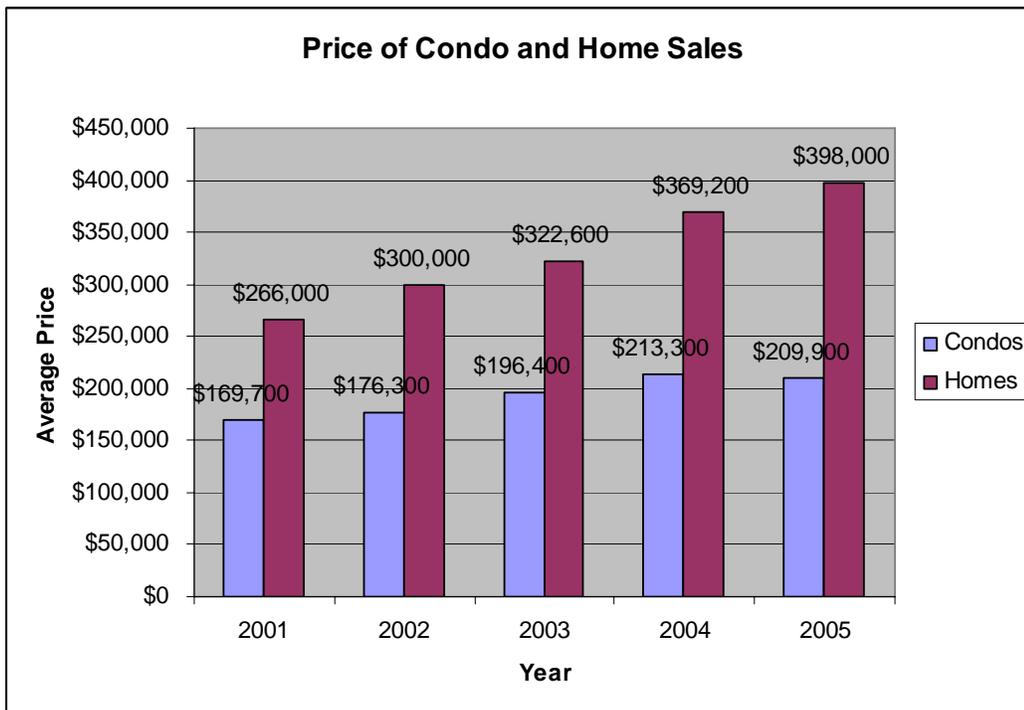
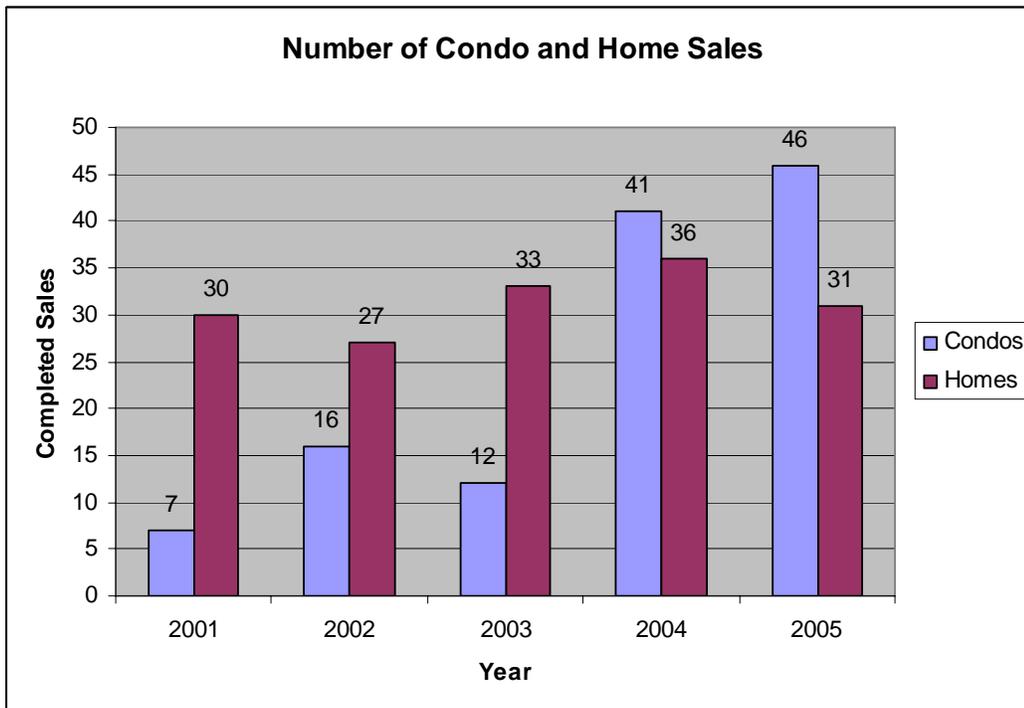
West Walker in the 39th Ward



Example - Active Businesses in Revitalized Buildings



West Walker Condo and Home Sales Data



Summary Results of the West Walker Community Survey – May 2006

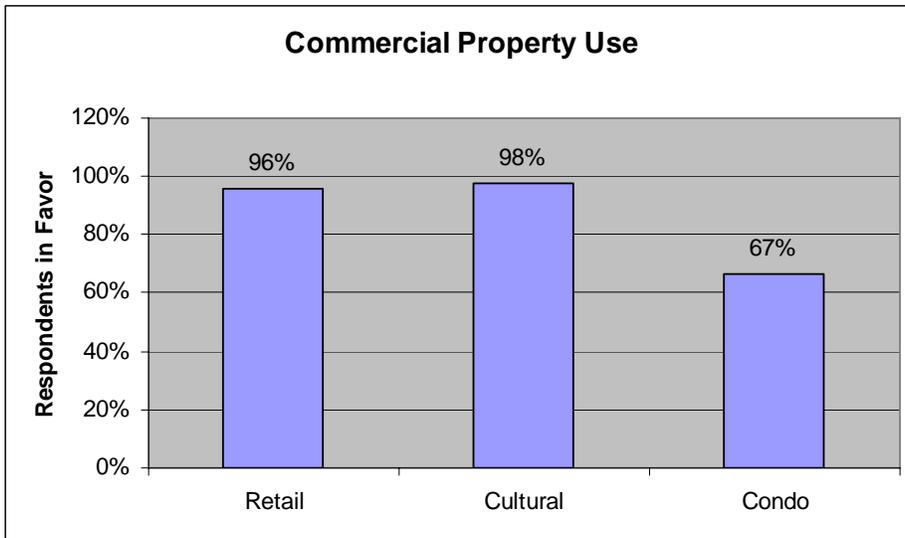
A total of 1,300 surveys regarding the Vision were circulated to the community via the West Walker *Wire* in April 2006 to solicit the input of residents. One hundred surveys were returned. The feedback received showed community consensus around several themes:

- Residents are in favor of development – primarily businesses and cultural, limited condos
- Residents want to see the introduction of restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops, specialty food stores and book stores
- Residents are in favor of restrictions on new construction – height limits, standards for materials, green space and trees, signage restrictions, limited strip malls
- The community supports streetscape improvements such as trees and flowers, trash receptacles, street lighting, sidewalk paving, traffic lights and stop signs
- Concerns regarding development include traffic congestion and difficulty parking
- Residents strongly favor renovating buildings with admirable qualities and tearing down those not worth salvaging
- The majority of respondents have lived in the neighborhood over 10 years (60%), are between 30 and 60 years old (74%), and do not have young children (63%).

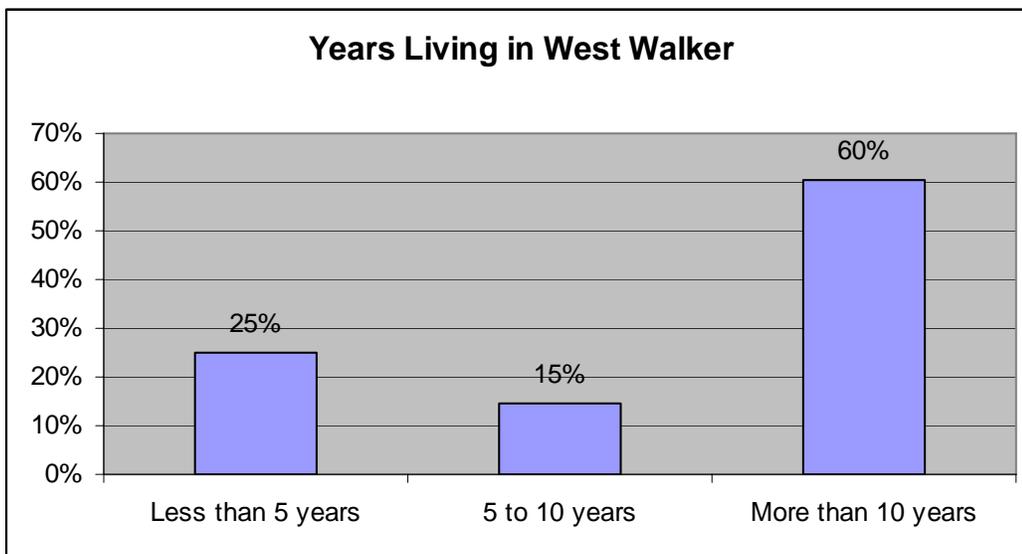
90% of respondents are In Favor or Strongly Favor of Development

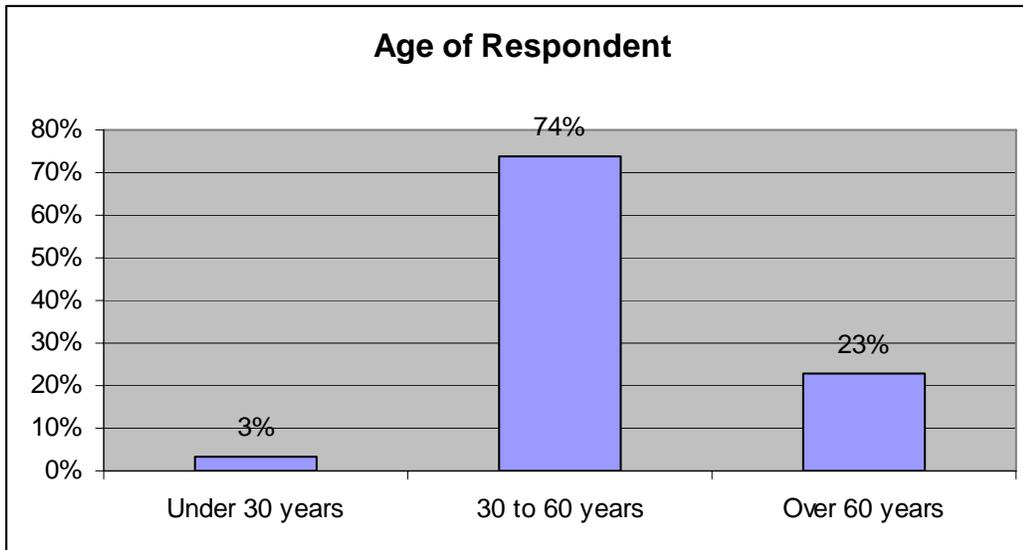
6% of respondents Oppose or Strongly Oppose Development





Profile of survey respondents:

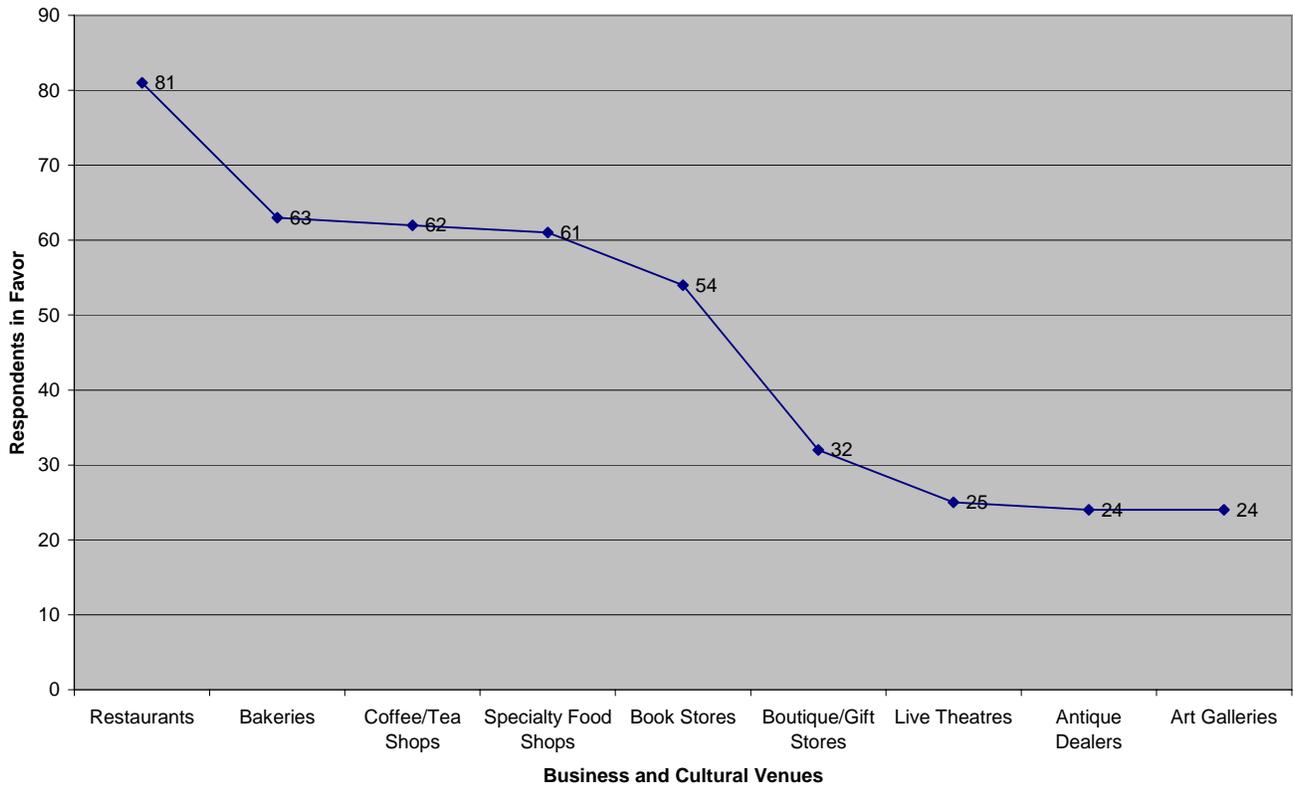




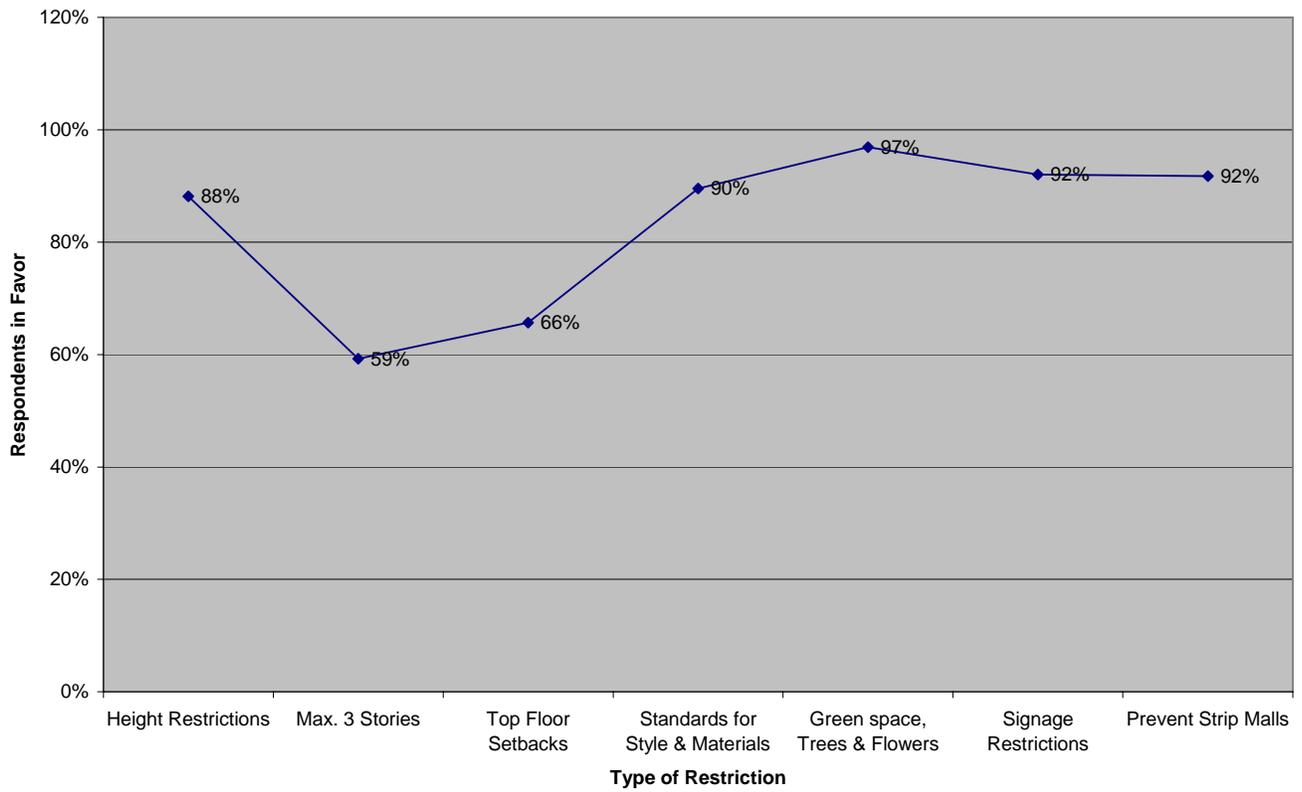
37% of survey respondents have children 12 and under.



Preferred New Establishments



Building Restrictions



Summary Results of the West Walker Community Input Meetings

Community meetings were held in February and April of 2006 to present the findings and progress of the Vision Committee to residents and solicit feedback. Another meeting was conducted for business owners in June 2006 in conjunction with the Pulaski Elston Business Association. Approximately 75 residents attended the community meetings, while approximately 15 PEBA members attended the presentation to business owners.

Following the presentation to residents, the audience was divided into small groups to discuss specific questions. Below are some of the main themes that emerged from the breakout sessions.

1. What are West Walker's assets?

Location, Transportation, Variety and character of houses, Low density, Family oriented, People, Parking, Large trees, Diverse Architecture, Access to O'Hare, Tony's, Independence Park, Neighborhood feel, Library

2. What are West Walker's challenges?

Nothing to walk to on Elston, Vacant Storefronts, Crossing Elston is dangerous, No diversity of businesses, Ugly signage, Not enough green space, Ugly buildings, No Anchor, "don't use" businesses, Lack of shopping and restaurants, Traffic due to expressway, Lack of parking, Bigger library needed, Gangs and crime, Lack of retail, Lack of pedestrian destinations

3. What should West Walker look like in 5 years? Is there an area of the city that you would like to see it modeled after?

Pedestrian friendly Elston, Mix of businesses, Restaurants, Cultural- theater- arts, Trader Joes, More retail, Starbucks, Ethnic delis, Bookstore, Green space, Anchor, Old and new mix, Coffee shops, Vital commercial strip, Stronger identity, Median planting on Elston, Lincoln Square, Southport, Edgebrook, Edison Park, Bucktown, Andersonville

4. Is it a good idea to allow new condos to be developed on Elston? Why or why not? If so, what should they look like?

Not too high, Ground floor retail, Setbacks, Courtyard, Blend in, Managed development, Diverse building materials, Parking and traffic, Attract younger people, Design guidelines, Don't want a wall of condos, Roscoe Village, Parking for units, Like Building Details,

Drawbacks - Ground floor retail is often vacant, may increase taxes, Stay commercial



5. What businesses would you like to see in West Walker?

Restaurants, Trader Joe's, Art Supplies, Antiques, Design showroom, Community center, Tea and cheese, Hardware, Starbucks, Health Club, Ice Cream, Card and Gift shop, Book Store, Art Center, Bakery, Live Music, Clothing, Deli, Boutique, Sandwich Shop, Day Care, Children's Oriented

6. Is Elston a pedestrian friendly street? Why or why not

Traffic is too fast, Spruce up the sidewalk, Lighting, Planters, Improve safety, Streetscaping, Setbacks, Brick crosswalks, Banners, Diagonal parking, Garbage, Wider sidewalks, Stop signs, Pedestrian Bridge, Parking structure, Benches, Shade Trees

