

# ‘Manhattanization’ Of Chicago Underway As High-Rises Grow



(Above) Just two of the projects on the horizons of Chicago’s north and west sides, 1565 North Clybourn (left) and Halsted Landing (right). (Click on images to view larger versions.)

If you reside downtown or on the North Side, look out your window and experience the “Manhattanization” of the Windy City.

Massive high-rise apartment projects are popping up – or are in the planning stages – on nearly every vacant parking lot. To raise millions of tax dollars and stimulate affordable housing, Mayor **Brandon Johnson** appears to be the all-powerful Wizard of Oz pulling levers behind the curtain.

The latest 615-unit megaproject to earn the Chicago Plan Commission’s approval – by a vote of 11-1 – is the twin-tower proposal for 1840 North Marcey Street in West Lincoln Park, just east of the North Branch of the

Chicago River.



The two buildings (left) would rise to 275 feet and 195 feet, and provide 275 parking spaces, according to Sterling Bay, the developer.

Solomon Cordwell Buenz

Despite opposition by neighborhood residents and the objections to the plan by 32nd Ward Alderman **Scott Waguespack**, the Johnson administration ignored aldermanic prerogative and gave the project a green light because it includes 124 affordable units.

Waguespack, who prefers mid-rise buildings for the site, likely will oppose the Sterling Bay plan when it comes to the City Council's Zoning Committee.

"The community is saying: If you do this one, and you allow these towers to start going in there, you just basically destroy the fabric of the community," said Waguespack (right).



**Erma Tranter**, of the Ranch Triangle Community Conservation

Association, said the group supports affordable residential housing at 1840 North Marcey Street, but not in the form of two high-rises that, she says, are out of scale and “too dense” for the location.

The Plan Commission also recently approved the multi-phase Halsted Landing development at 700 West Chicago Avenue, just east of Halsted Street in the River West neighborhood. Later phases are proposed further west on Goose Island.



Plans of the developer, Onni Group, call for four high-rises and two mid-rises with 2,451 residential units, including 490 affordable units.

Goettsch Partners

One of the high-rises will reach 600 feet and contain 688 residential units, including 138 affordable units. In comparison, the development will be almost as large as Sandburg Village, one of the nation’s biggest urban renewal projects.

The Halsted Landing plan also calls for 280 hotel rooms, more than 55,000 square feet of commercial space, and 1,950 parking spaces.

With all this proposed development action, just a stone’s throw from the site of the stalled Bally River West casino, imagine the traffic jams at the already congested intersection of Chicago & Halsted.

### **Gridlock in Lincoln Park**

The intersection of North Avenue, Halsted Street, and Clybourn Avenue in Lincoln Park soon may be the next gridlock neighborhood. Look at these proposed high-rise nightmares:

1565 North Clybourn. The Georgetown Company is proposing a 37-story space needle rising 450 feet on a site



now occupied by a two-story bank building. Plans call for 396 residential units and 2,500 square feet of retail space. Seventy-three garage parking spaces will be for retail shoppers and 25 spaces will be for employees.

**Clybourn Place.** CRM Properties Group is drawing up plans for a 50-story apartment tower at the mostly vacant three-acre shopping center at Clybourn Avenue & Willow Street. This mammoth high-rise is planned for 500 luxury apartments, 70,875 square feet of retail space, and 447 enclosed and surface parking spaces, as well as a pedestrian boulevard set between rows of shops.

“Due to its underlying zoning, strong retail core, and proximity to other affluent neighborhoods, the area has become a mecca for residential development,” said **Jeff Malk**, CRM Principal.

Lamar Johnson Collaborative



**Old Town Canvas.** A rezoning application filed by developer Fern Hill Company in late May calls for a proposed 44-story apartment tower with 500 apartment units for a vacant Moody Church parking lot at 1610 North LaSalle Street.

The rezoning request also includes the 84,078-square-foot Piper’s Alley site to allow a floor-area-ratio (FAR) of 420,390 square feet. That could eventually pave the way for two additional high-rise towers on the north side of North Avenue between Wells Street and North Park Avenue, within a stone’s throw of the Old Town Triangle historic district.

As proposed, the sweeping zoning changes under Fern Hill’s planned development could result in up to 1,400 residential units housing upwards of 4,000 to 5,000 new residents along a two-block stretch of North Avenue between LaSalle Drive and North Park Avenue.

Old Town Friends for  
Responsible Development



(OTFRD) argues that the proposed 44-story building, with its large number of rental apartment units, is excessive for the neighborhood.

Fern Hill Company

“Multiple high-rises on different sites through this area with no transportation infrastructure improvements is going to make it very difficult for anybody in this area to move around,” Waguespack said. “I think these projects send a clear signal that there is no concern about the character and context of these neighborhoods and how it will get built out.”

Not all residential developers in Lincoln Park are reaching for the sky.

Developer Draper and Kramer has received Plan Commission approval for 1649 North Halsted, a nine-story residential building featuring a top-floor amenity area and an open rooftop space. The low-rise, mixed-use development on the western edge of Old Town will replace the closed Royal George Theatre.

Plans call for construction of 131 rental apartments – including 20 affordable units – on the site following the demolition of the theatre.

SGW Architecture & Design



The plans also include ground-floor retail space, indoor parking for 34 cars, and storage for 131 bicycles.

The new project could provide housing for performers and staff from Steppenwolf Theatre across the street.

Draper and Kramer also will provide \$940,000 to support offsite affordable housing initiatives, with an additional \$300,000 contribution to improvements at a four-acre public park at 1514 North Larrabee Street that formerly was owned by the Chicago Housing Authority.

*Don DeBat is co-author of “Escaping Condo Jail,” the ultimate survival guide for condominium living. Visit [www.escapingcondojail.com](http://www.escapingcondojail.com).*