

Project One:

Urban Likeability

This is a warm-up and fun project. In this project you are going to record your first impressions of the urban environment by focusing on what you like. Since most of you are relatively fresh in the urban design field, your first impressions are unbiased. They are critically important since they represent the opinions and impressions of the larger lay public and users of the City.

The premise of this exercise is that if we can identify the likeable urban features, then we can use the collected information as a guide in designing new environments and retrofitting existing ones.

Today, attractive urban design is increasingly on demand for several reasons including the desire to join urban living by much of both younger and older folks. Core urban areas enjoy closeness of activities and functions (work, social, entertainment, and residence). Chicago has witnessed tremendous gentrification work that aimed at reviving urban life and improving the quality of the city's appearance. Also, sustainability thesis calls for compact urban living, and to combat urban sprawl; and therefore attractive environments are essential. Further, urban cores are places that, if designed well, could attract tourists and hence generate considerable revenues to the city.

Therefore, attractive urban design is needed so that we maintain the view that urban living is enjoyable, comfortable, and likeable. Finding the likeable urban features will help to create attractive urban design. You will capture these likeable elements through the lenses of your eyes and cameras. Your pictures could talk about general views of streets, building compositions, spatial relationship, urban plazas, gardens, etc. They could visually narrate stories. Also, they can target specific details in the built environment that you think will make a difference in enhancing the overall urban experience (e.g. water fountain, street signage, street light, landscaping furniture, etc.).

The City of Chicago is renowned about its vibrant urban life and beautiful architecture and landscape architecture. Recent architectural and urban design projects have reinforced this view. We would like you to pick about 40 (more or less) urban elements (including landscaping, buildings, composition of buildings, plazas, gardens, and the like) which you like very much in the City of Chicago and you think urban designers should learn from these examples.

You may decide to pick the likeable elements from all over the city or you may choose to focus on a square mile, a community, a neighbourhood, or a few blocks.

Digital photographs are making this type of work easier since you can take virtually limitless of photographs for “free.” We will assume that you will make about 40 observations and represent each with a minimum one photograph. You can group these observations under themes, if you wish. Interestingly, this project is healthy since it requires walking or cycling long miles in the search for likeable elements.

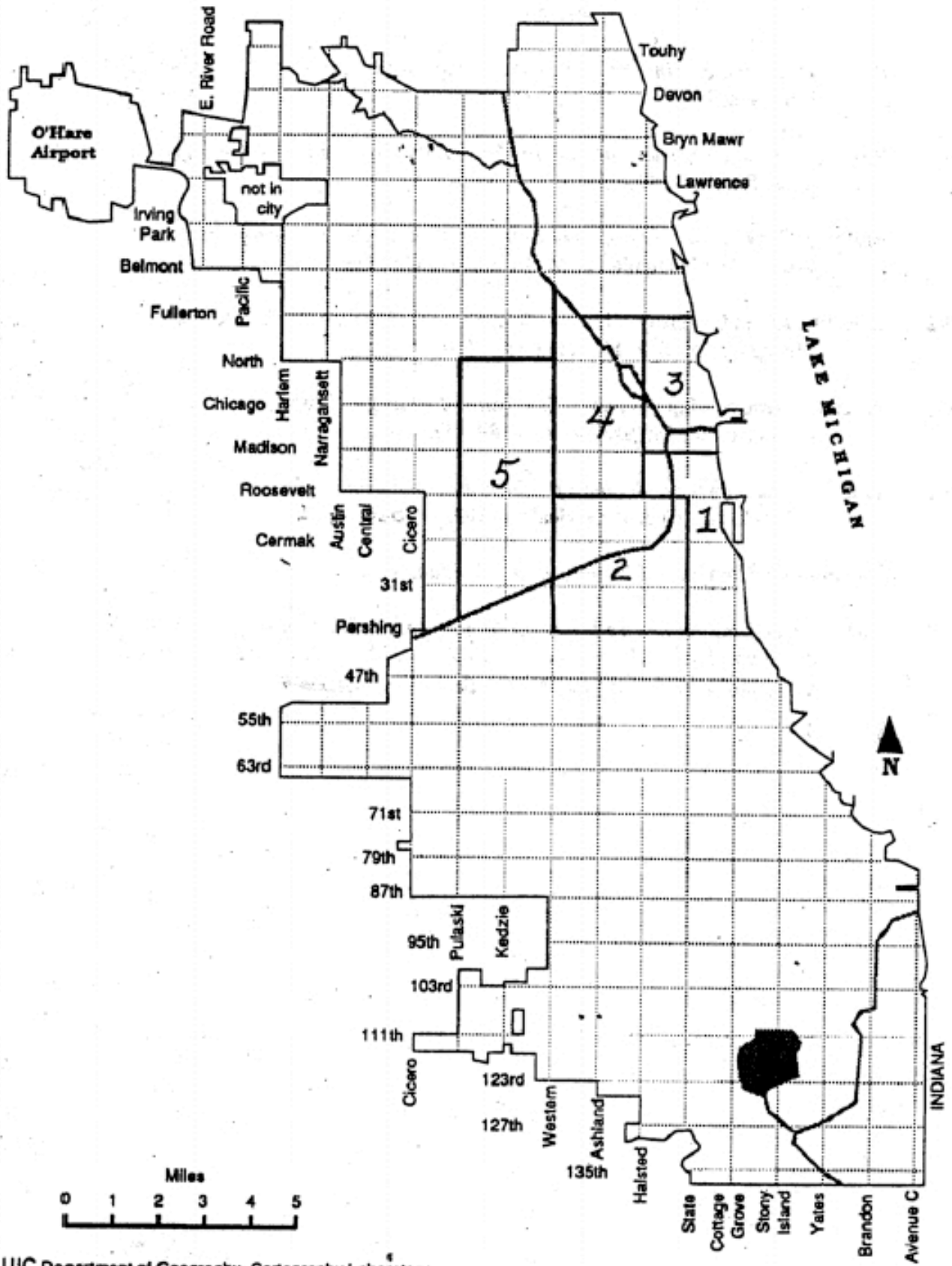
Deliverables

- PowerPoint presentations containing pictures associated with key words explaining why you like the feature(s).
- Report: About 10 double-space pages text. The text will provide a narrative that reflects on your observations. You may go deeper and ask yourselves why I like this or that. Such analysis could help us to discover the underpinning reasons of urban likeability. You may also group similar observations together so that they make up a theme, such as street landscaping, building architectural styles, canopies, entrances, greeneries, spaciousness, colour, murals, outdoor cafe, compactness, crowdedness, iconicity, and the like.

Deadline

September 23rd.

By this date, the instructor should receive a hard and soft copy of your projects. You may copy your papers and presentations to the instructor’s laptop on the days of the presentations. Alternatively, email should be fine.



UIC Department of Geography, Cartography Laboratory