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Title: **Chicago – “The” Four Corners**

Author: Michael Kaufman, Partner, Goettsch Partners

Subjects: Building Case Study
Conservation/Restoration/Maintenance
History, Theory & Criticism
Retrofit
Sustainability/Green/Energy

Keywords: Adaptability
Renovation
Retrofit

Publication Date: 2015

Original Publication: Global Interchanges: Resurgence of the Skyscraper City

Paper Type: 1. Book chapter/Part chapter
2. Journal paper
3. **Conference proceeding**
4. Unpublished conference paper
5. Magazine article
6. Unpublished

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Chicago – “The” Four Corners



Michael F. Kaufman
Partner, AIA, LEED AP

Goettsch Partners,
Chicago, USA

At Goettsch Partners, Michael Kaufman, AIA, serves as a managing partner on corporate and commercial office buildings, hotels, academic and institutional facilities, and renovation and repositioning assignments.

Recent work includes the adaptive reuse of the lower levels of Mies van der Rohe’s IBM Building as the Langham Chicago hotel, JW Marriott in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Grand Hyatt hotels in Brazil, Colombia and India. Mr. Kaufman leads the firm’s renovation and repositioning work, which includes more than 50 projects spanning early and mid-20th century buildings.

Mr. Kaufman received a Bachelor of Science degree in architecture from the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Abstract

GP was selected to Renovate or Adapt “The” prime corners of Michigan Avenue on both sides of the Chicago River, all within a two year period. The buildings include The Wrigley Building, The London Guarantee Building, 333 N. Michigan Avenue and 401 N. Michigan Avenue. Each received differing levels of work ranging from a lobby renovation to a full gut-rehab. The use of the London Guarantee Building is being changed from office to a 450-key hotel including a new addition. The three others respond to the growing demand for up-to-date office space and prime retail in historic buildings with un-paralleled views of the Chicago River and Michigan Avenue.

Keywords: Adaptive Re-Use, Historic Buildings, Real Estate Investment, Renovation, Wrigley Building

Why these Corners...Now?

Over the past 30 years, the heart of the Chicago retail scene was located on North Michigan Avenue, north of Ohio Street up to and including Oak Street. The other historic center for retail was located south of the Chicago River on State Street, where major department stores such as the former Marshall Fields (now Macy’s), Carson Pirie Scott (now Target), Goldblatt’s (now DePaul University) and others were sited.

The area on North Michigan Avenue was part of the 1909 Burnham Plan and, starting in the 1940’s, was called the Magnificent Mile by Arthur Rubloff.¹ This area was reinforced with the success of the Water Tower Place vertical shopping mall, built and opened in 1975. Over time, as the retail area around the original water tower and pumping station was built, renovated and expanded, including 900 North Michigan, the Nike and Sony (now Garmin) stores and other high-end street level retail, the increased density and lack of new sites or major leasable space within this area created a movement south along the “Mag Mile”. In 2000, Nordstrom department store anchored a mall called The Shops at North Bridge, located south of Ohio Street that created a steady flow of people in that direction and pushed the boundary towards the Chicago River.

Millennium Park, located south of the Chicago River over a parking structure that itself was over railway tracks, opened in 2004. Now over 10 years old, it has become the second largest draw for tourists and metro Chicago residents in the area, behind first place Navy Pier. Millennium Park had a revolutionary upward impact on the real estate property values directly surrounding the park and ultimately on the North Michigan Avenue buildings on the path leading to the park, including buildings on and north of the Chicago River, such as the Wrigley Building and 333 North Michigan. As the strength of the flow of people increased, building owners realized that they were holding valuable assets and chose to sell their properties (in the case of The Wrigley Building and London Guarantee Building properties), or in the circumstance of some long-term building owners, the 333 North Michigan and 401 North Michigan Avenue buildings, to upgrade and increase, where possible, their retail presence on Michigan Avenue.

Another major draw south of the Chicago River has always been the Art Institute of Chicago. At one million square feet, it is the second-largest art museum in the United States, after the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.² In 2014 the Art Institute was named the “Number 1 Museum in the World” by Trip Advisor, further increasing attendance and pedestrian traffic on South Michigan Avenue.³

1: Stamper, John W. (2005). “Magnificent Mile”. The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago. Chicago Historical Society.

2: Roberta Smith (13 May 2009). “A Grand and Intimate Modern Art Trove”. The New York Times (NYTimes.com). Retrieved 2011-06-13.

3: Art Institute of Chicago website and Trip Advisor website

Almost at the centroid of these two major draws on Michigan Avenue, or in the classic retail parlance “Anchors”, is the Chicago River. This unique location is what we refer to as “The Four Corners”. This prime location along a particular stretch of Michigan Avenue has four buildings that front on the Chicago River. Not only are they well located to take advantage of the increased flow of pedestrians, but they boast amazing views up and down the river all the way to Lake Michigan from their above street-level floors. This made the entire building more recognizably valuable, beyond the retail space accessible at street level, to include retail above the street level in the form of two story stores and made their office space or hotel space above that retail more desirable to tenants. While these buildings have always had incredible views along the river, historically they have not received the rents those views should have commanded, primarily due to the perception that they were not in a prime location and in many cases did not offer the amenities that a modern office building offered, such as high electrical load capacity, concomitant cooling capacity, fast fiber connection to the internet, modern energy efficient windows, modern bathrooms and appropriate modern security systems. As the centroid of retail has shifted south, and the buildings have, or are currently receiving, major renovations, they have become more desirable as office space (or in the case of the London Guarantee Building at 360 North Michigan, as a luxury Hotel). Three of the buildings are older Landmark buildings from

the 1920’s that had received some investment over time, but that investment was essentially caretaking versus efforts to maximize value. Goettsch Partners participated in the enhancement of all four corners, providing architectural design services to the owners for each of these projects, starting in 2010 and continuing today with construction on the southern two projects (see Figure 1).

The four buildings are 1) The Wrigley Building at the Northwest corner of this river intersection, which has been and continues to be one of the best known and photographed architectural facades in Chicago. 2) The London Guarantee Building, 360 North Michigan at the Southwest corner which is being transformed into a 450-key “Lifestyle” hotel to be called the LondonHouse after a well-known jazz bar formerly located in the building. 3) 333 North Michigan at the Southeast corner, which has been in Wirtz Family hands for decades and, while well-maintained, has never been notable as a retail or office location. Finally, 4) the newer 410 North Michigan completed in 1965 known as the Equitable Building, at the Northeast corner and set back from the street creating a large open plaza called Pioneer Court. This set-back has been the site of numerous temporary public art displays, such as the popular, yet controversial 26 foot tall “Marilyn”, as well as the site of lunch time concerts and displays (see Figure 2).

The Wrigley Building

The best known of “The Four Corners” is The Wrigley Building. It had been in the hands of the original owner, the founders of the Wrigley Gum and Candy Company since their inception, as they were the original developers of the project. The company had been sold in 2008 to the Mars candy company who were more focused on their gum and candy business versus this particular real estate asset. This led to the building and a nearby site being sold to a consortium in 2011, led by BDT Capital Partners and Zeller Realty Group that owned one of the other corners across the street at 401 North Michigan Avenue. BDT Capital Partners set the strategy and Zeller Realty Group executed the plan to maximize valuable retail on both the street level and the level above, to take advantage of the large rise in retail rents caused by the move south towards Millennium Park. Modern office space was created in the floors above to take advantage of the location, views and reputation that the building had in the marketplace. The historic Wrigley Building is comprised of two buildings located running east-west separated by a Plaza and connected by bridges at the 3rd and 16th floors.

The Wrigley Building, designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, is one of downtown Chicago’s most recognized architectural icons, dating to the 1920s. The original South Tower was completed



Figure 1. Two maps of downtown Chicago. The top map highlights the main downtown Chicago shopping district. The Four Corners is central to the district. The bottom map is an enlarged view of The Four Corners. (Source: Goettsch Partners)



Figure 2. View of The Four Corners looking south. (Source: Goettsch Partners)



Figure 3. (Left) Historic photo of Wrigley Building overall; (Right) Photo of Wrigley Building, restored. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

in 1921, with the North Tower following in 1924. The two buildings comprise a total of 502,000 square feet (see Figure 3).

Following its sale in 2011, new ownership sought to renovate the property, retaining the building's name and restoring its historic integrity while positioning it to serve a new mix of tenants. The building was recently officially Landmarked, a surprise to many Chicago residents who had assumed it had long ago been landmarked. This designation allowed current owners to avail themselves of Federal Tax Credits and local Class "L" tax benefits. The owners hired Goettsch Partners to renovate and restore this important building, starting in 2011 and completing construction in 2014.

One significant effort was the removal of the screen wall between the two towers at ground level. The 1920 plan for the building had anticipated an upper-level street that would run between the towers. Although this street was never built, the removal of the glazed screen and the 1950s-era connecting walkways accomplished the 1920s vision of creating an open passage and plaza (see Figure 4).

Work on the plaza itself was extensive. The entire 1950s-era plaza was demolished down to structure and rebuilt, defining a distinguished, large open space that presents an inviting outdoor amenity and caters to prospective retailers and restaurants (see Figure 5).

Inside the towers, all major public areas were renovated. The building lobbies in both the South and North Towers and the lobby ceilings were removed and replaced with modern interpretations of the original designs (see Figure 6). On the upper floors, work involved replacing over 2,000 windows with efficient thermally isolated, insulated glass units in a historic profile to meet Landmark standards. The unusual requirement for these windows was that they had to be capable of being cleaned from the inside as the terra



Figure 4. (Top) View of Wrigley Building plaza entry before renovation; (Bottom) View of Wrigley Building plaza entry after renovation. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

cotta overhangs did not allow for an efficient exterior window cleaning solution. Four manufacturers created mock-ups on a floor in the courtyard space, providing both a visual mock-up and a test case for each mock-up to ascertain if the cleaning methodology was efficient. A full upgrade of all mechanical, electrical and low voltage systems, plus the creation a fully sprinklered building was accomplished. All toilet rooms and public corridors were renovated. This was completed in the building while partially occupied.



Figure 5. (Left) View of Wrigley Building facade before renovation; (Right) View of Wrigley Building facade after renovation. (Source: Goettsch Partners)



Figure 6. (Left) View of Wrigley Building elevator lobby before renovation; (Right) View of restored Wrigley Building elevator lobby. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

Elevator cabs were renovated and all new hall lanterns and controls were installed.

The Wrigley Building is now capable of competing with newer buildings on a number of fronts, including electrical capacity and the concomitant cooling needs, as well as life safety enhancements – all accomplished using existing risers and mechanical rooms, while offering tenants a historic enclosure and superb views and location.

London Guarantee Building at 360 North Michigan Avenue

360 North Michigan Avenue, or the London Guarantee Building, a Beaux Arts-style building designed by Alfred S. Alschuler in 1923, is one of Chicago's most visible skyscrapers due to its location near the Michigan Avenue bridge. This Landmark building is currently under renovation, making way for the 342,000 sf adaptive reuse and expansion of the structure from office to hotel use. The renovation consists of 275,000 sf of the existing 21-story building, plus a 67,000 sf expansion on an adjacent site. The 4+ star "Lifestyle" hotel will total 450 keys, significant meeting space, food and beverage, including a roof-top bar, and has been designed for a LEED-NC Silver rating (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. (Left) Overall historic view of 360 North Michigan; (Right) Overall view of 360 North Michigan after restoration. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

Previously, we were hired in 2001 to renovate this historic building, which at the time was an office building with 70% vacant space. Many of the unique design details of the building had been destroyed and/or covered up in a 1950s imposed modernism. For example, the original glass and cast iron entry was destroyed and replaced by flat granite slabs and low stainless doors (see Figure 8). The interior 30-foot-tall rotunda was covered with a "modern" acoustical tile ceiling. The 2001 renovation sought to return the building to its original character in both volumes of space and detail (see Figure 9).



Figure 8. (Left) View of 360 North Michigan entry before restoration; (Right) View of 360 North Michigan after restoration. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

A revitalization plan was developed to bring back the stature of the building, introduce state-of-the-art MEP systems and infrastructure to reach full market potential. Great care was taken to upgrade basic building systems and interior appearances, but the major design issue was to replace the long-missing entryway and restore the ornamented ceiling of the domed rotunda. With the examination of original architect Alfred Alschuler's drawings, and a digital enhancement of 1920s photographs, we brought back the pattern makers trade by providing detailed pencil sketches of the two dozen patterns required for the exterior



Figure 9. (Left) 360 North Michigan lobby before restoration; (Right) 360 North Michigan lobby after restoration. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

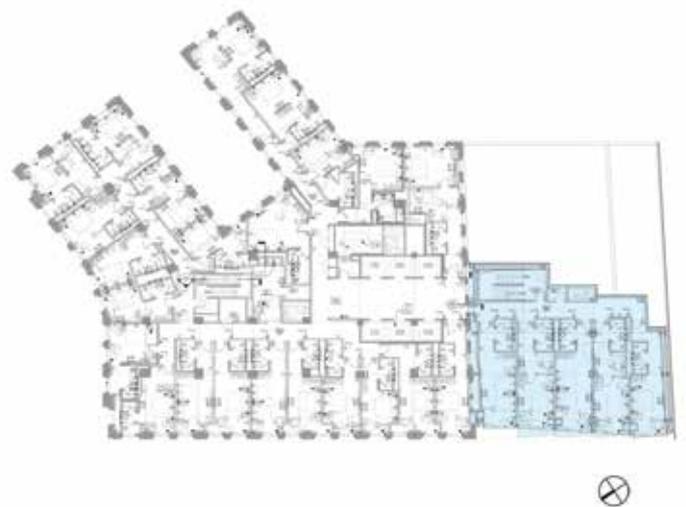


Figure 10. 360 North Michigan hotel adaptive reuse. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

333 North Michigan

333 North Michigan is a 35-story commercial property long held by the Wirtz family. The building was designed by Holabird and Roche and completed in 1928 in an early art-deco style. The Wirtz family is Chicago-based with real estate holdings, a major liquor distribution company and are the owners of the Chicago Blackhawks National Hockey League (NHL) team, their most public holding. Over many years of ownership, little capital improvement was undertaken on the public side of the building. Recently, the owners realized that with retail development moving south towards Millennium Park, a highly-visible renovation was required to maintain the property's relevance on an important corner in Chicago. The building had been home to various well-known tenants who no longer exist, such as the legendary members-only Tavern Club (1927-2007), Lawrence Pucci's sought-out custom fashions and at one time, the original building architectural firm, Holabird and Roche (now Holabird and Root). Goettsch Partners was hired in 2012 for both the exterior and interior renovations. Construction is nearly complete on this extensive renovation.

The renovation of the building included both infrastructure and retail-focused changes. This incorporated adding another floor of retail to the ground floor offering, moving from only ground floor retail to both ground and second floor retail space (see Figure 12). The original building entry which had previously been removed and "modernized" over the building tenure was recreated and the lobby was designed to be more functional and truer to the original architect's vision (see Figure 13). Elevator cabs were renovated to be more in keeping with the original vision.

The building needed new two story retail windows and their enclosures as the originals had rusted through and required full replacement. A new retail master plan was also created to develop locations for new entries to retail and as tenants have been procured. That plan is being implemented.

New infrastructure in the form of new and renovated mechanical rooms and distribution, as well as a new electrical bus duct brought the building up to modern standards. New corridors and standards for tenant entries were implemented. Bathrooms are being renovated on a floor-by-floor basis as they become available and as tenants are replaced. The floors that housed the former Tavern Club are being transformed into "special" office space with taller ceilings, renovated outdoor



Figure 11. (Top) 360 North Michigan before renovation: (Bottom) Rendering of 360 North Michigan after renovation. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

and interior storefronts. With a modern twist, the original artwork was scanned into CAD drawing files to create composite photo renderings, as well as detailed drawings for the pattern makers use in accommodating foundry shrinkage.

We also designed the latest renovation, from office to hotel use, that takes advantage of the previous restoration of the entry and the lobby leading to and including the elevators, which have been Landmarked along with the exterior of the building; allowing both Federal Tax Credits and local Class 'L' tax benefits. The design for this new use started in 2013 and is now in construction with an anticipated opening in Spring 2016.

The addition of a 60 foot wide sliver building, on a former parking lot adjacent to the existing building added a new hotel entrance, a 2nd floor lobby with a ballroom above, and room floors up to the height of the existing building (see Figure 10). This new addition fills in the missing tooth in the façade along Wacker Drive looking west down the river. The addition also takes advantage of the existing building elevators and connects at the elevator lobby to the existing building. By pushing the hotel functions into the new structure, two floors of retail were created in the existing building to provide over 22,000 square feet of prime Chicago River and Michigan Avenue frontage (see Figure 11).



Figure 12. (Top) 333 North Michigan before renovation; (Bottom) Rendering of 333 North Michigan after renovation. (Source: Goettsch Partners)



Figure 13. (Left) 333 North Michigan main entry before renovation; (Right) 333 North Michigan main entry after renovation. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

terraces, new exterior enclosure and amazing views up and down North Michigan Avenue.

401 N Michigan New Lobby Design and Glazing of 35th Floor East Façade

The 35-floor 401 North Michigan is a building designed by Skidmore Owings and Merrill and completed in 1965. It is set back from Michigan Avenue with a large plaza, called Pioneer Court, between the street and the entry to the building. The set-back exposes the historic Tribune Tower to the North but in making this gesture the entrance, path and location of the front door of 401 for first time visitors has been problematic, as the building entry is not easily located. Our design task was to improve the visibility of the entry and to refresh an aging lobby that had received a renovation in the 1990's. That renovation unfortunately was a detriment to the building in that the lighting scheme did not enhance the elevator lobbies, which were dark, the floor stone was failing with numerous cracks and breaks, and the security desk and security turnstiles were poorly located.

Our work in the lobby included a new stone floor, luminous LED back panels and new perimeter lighting at the elevator banks and core. Those lighting elements are visible from Michigan Avenue and clearly delineate the lobby (see Figure 14). The lighting also has the ability to change colors or patterns to affect seasonal changes. New, relocated and integrated security turnstiles were designed that no longer intruded into the lobby as the old ones had. A new and relocated security and welcoming desk was included in this fresh update to the lobby (see Figure 15).

Since development of 401 North Michigan in 1963, the 35th floor east façade had been enclosed in granite cladding and concrete block, limiting use of the space to storage and mechanical spaces. The design objective included removal of the solid masonry enclosure and installation of full height glazing, including a portion with operable windows, creating an outdoor terrace for a special user.

The solution was to remove the granite cladding, its aluminum backup sub-framing and concrete block wall, and install a curtain wall to work within the existing exterior skin module and architectural features, creating a seamless exterior transition from the floors below. While these windows created spectacular,

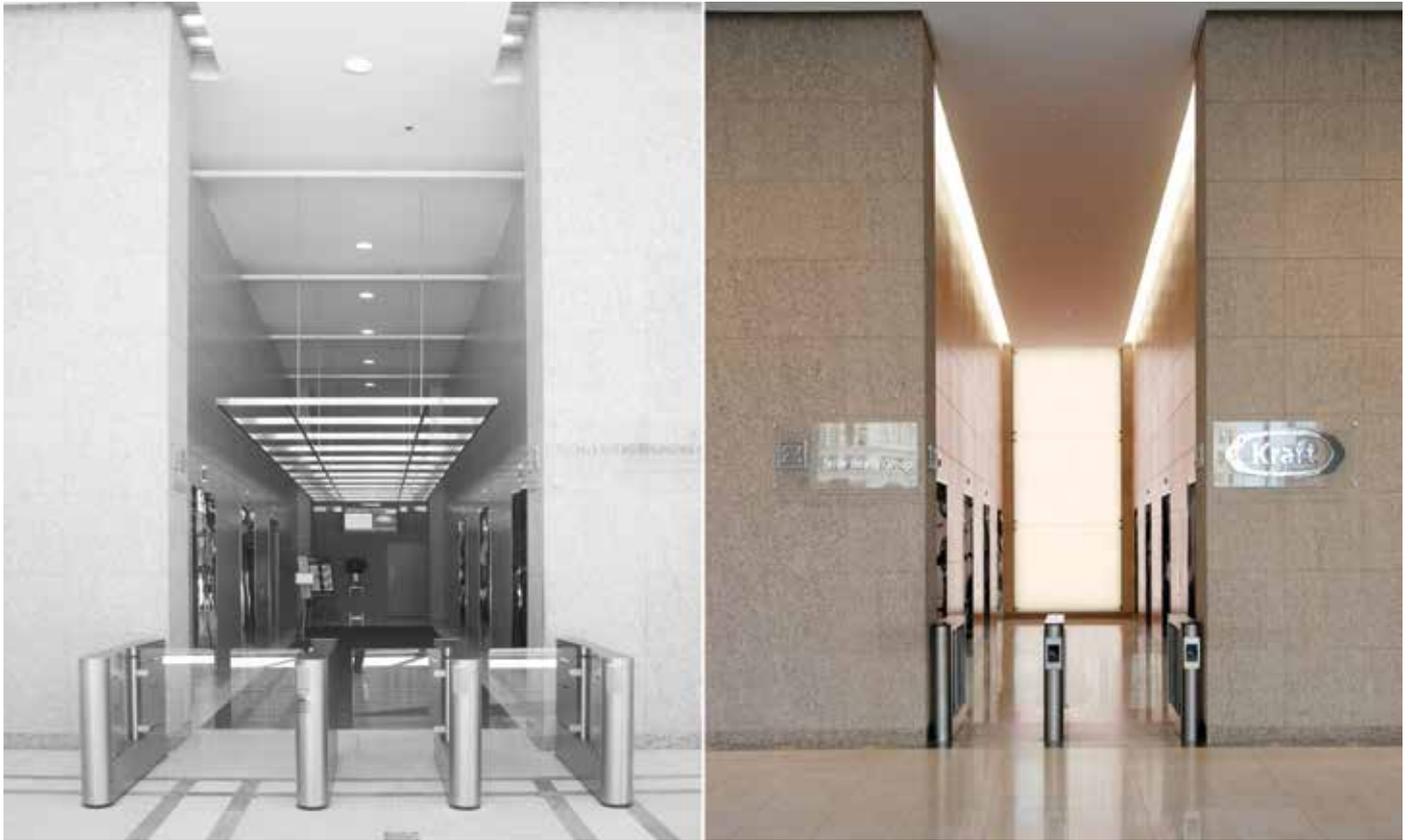


Figure 14. (Left) 401 North Michigan elevator lobby before renovation; (Right) 401 North Michigan elevator lobby after renovation. (Source: Goettsch Partners)



Figure 15. (Top) 401 North Michigan building lobby before renovation; (Bottom) 401 North Michigan building lobby after renovation. (Source: Goettsch Partners)

virtually unobstructed city and lake views, the changes from the exterior are imperceptible except when lit at night.

The most innovative features include the six foot tall window bays at the southeast corner of the floor that open accordion-style and stack to either side, with a glass-framed handrail fixed below the operable units for safety. Interior walls will be added to create a perennial terrace. The HVAC system in the terrace was isolated and waterproof flooring and drains protect the space below if the windows are left open during inclement weather. The final result of this change was to attract a unit of Kraft Foods to lease space in the building and to use this special space as a draw for their young, urban staff.

The renovation of the Four Corners at Michigan Avenue and the Chicago River provides the market with an ideal location, incredible views and up to date infrastructure and amenities sought by tenants, as well as a purposeful adaptive re-use that will breathe

new life into the corner buildings. The current trend of renovating and repositioning urban historic buildings in significant locations is expected to continue as owners realize the added value of adapting and modernizing their portfolios and maximizing retail while preserving the unique design elements these properties provide.

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Stamper, John W. (2005). **Magnificent Mile**. The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago. Chicago Historical Society.

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