

I. INTRODUCTION

Sponsorship and Support: This economic development plan has been created by the City of Blue Island with broad support from business and community organizations and with assistance from the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT).

Blue Island Background: Blue Island is a 170-year-old city that touches the southwest corner of Chicago. The city grew up as a transportation and industrial hub, with a local retail district. Current land use patterns and a rich set of transportation assets reflect this past. Transportation assets include: several arterial highways, 2 expressway exits, service by 5 freight rail lines, 3 passenger rail lines, 6 bus routes, and the Calumet Sag Channel that runs through the middle of town. Blue Island's population of 23,500 residents is ethnically and economically diverse. Approximately 54% of residents are white, 24% are African American, and 39% are of Hispanic ancestry (a break down that reflects overlapping descriptions of heritage). In 2000, Blue Island's median family income was \$42,277, slightly lower than the Cook County median of \$45,922. However, more than a third of the population had household incomes greater than \$50,000.

Goal and Principles: The goal of this plan is to foster development that will create jobs and raise local tax revenues in Blue Island. In the pursuit of this goal the City intends to celebrate Blue Island's historic identity, preserve its diversity, enhance its natural environment, and improve the quality of life for all residents.

Strategy: This plan proposes to capitalize on Blue Island's assets to support two types of development: Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and Cargo-Oriented Development (COD).

- **TOD involves** the integrated development of homes, retail and service businesses, a pleasant walking environment and other public amenities within a quarter-mile to one-mile radius of a public transit station.
- **COD entails** the development of manufacturing and distribution businesses in locations that benefit from access to multiple types of freight transportation, proximity to complimentary businesses, and a large local industrial workforce.

A 2004 study by CNT and the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Urban Planning demonstrated that Blue Island has extensive potential for both TOD and COD.

TOD Area: Blue Island's primary TOD opportunities are centered around its Vermont Street Metra stations. The TOD area encompasses Blue Island's main street or central business district. So in Blue Island, a TOD plan is also a plan to optimize the development of main street. The success of the TOD project will impact the entire city through increases to city revenues, local amenities for residents, jobs, and housing choices.

COD Area: All three of Blue Island's industrially zoned areas (on the northeast, western, and southern edges of the city) have layered freight transportation assets and strong potential for COD.

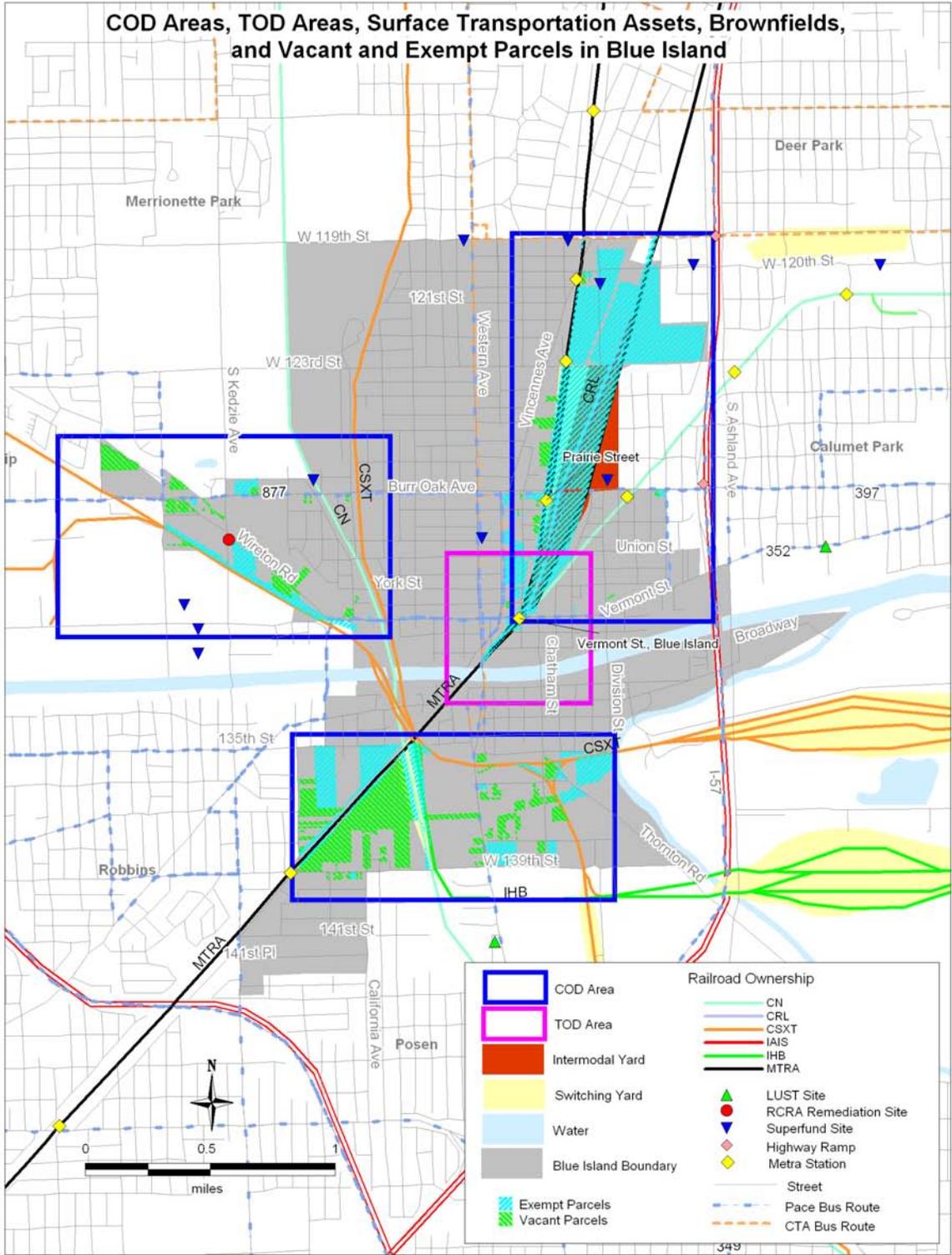


Figure 1. COD and TOD Areas in Blue Island