



City of Blue Island

Comprehensive Plan

Existing Conditions Report

November 2011

with technical assistance provided by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

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Acronyms

AADT - Average annual daily traffic

ATA - Active Transportation Alliance

CATS - Chicago Area Transportation Study

CMAP - Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

CMAQ - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program

CM2020 - Chicago Metropolis 2020

CNT - Center for Neighborhood Technology

COD - Cargo Oriented Development

CSEDC - Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation

CSHCDC - Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration

GIS - Geographic Information System

HUD - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

IDNR - Illinois Department of Natural Resources

IDOT - Illinois Department of Transportation

LTA - Local Technical Assistance Program

LPC - Logistics Park Calumet

MMC - Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

MPC - Metropolitan Planning Council

NRPA - National Recreation and Parks Association

PUD - Planned Unit Development

REDVSP - Robbins Economic Development Vision and Strategy Plan

RTA - Regional Transportation Authority

SSMMA - South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association

TOD - Transit Oriented Development

Introduction

Existing Conditions

The City of Blue Island has decided to create a new Comprehensive Plan, which will define the vision of what the community wants to become and the steps needed to meet that vision. Having an accurate understanding of the City's existing conditions is necessary in order to develop an appropriate and effective Comprehensive Plan that addresses the correct issues and concerns of the community.

This Existing Conditions Report — representing the accumulation of approximately three months of research, analysis, and public outreach activities — provides an overview of the current conditions in the City of Blue Island and is designed to provide an agreed upon “starting point” by which to move forward with the community to create a shared vision.

The Existing Conditions Report is organized in the following sections:

- Introduction
- Section 1: Regional Context
- Section 2: Summary of Previous Plans and Studies
- Section 3: Community Outreach Summary
- Section 4: Demographic Summary
- Section 5: Economic Overview
- Section 6: Existing Land Use
- Section 7: Housing
- Section 8: Mobility
- Section 9: Natural Environment
- Section 10: Community Services, Health, and Infrastructure
- Section 11: Image and Identity

Why Does Blue Island Need a Comprehensive Plan?

Blue Island enjoys a unique position in the South Suburban region, possessing uncommon assets and considerable potential for future investment and growth. With an extensive network of major roadways (I-57, Tri-State Tollway, Dixie Highway) and convenient public transit connections to and from the greater Chicago region (via six Metra stations, Pace Bus service, and the CTA), Blue Island is well-matched to the needs of businesses and employees alike. Excellent healthcare and recreational facilities, walkable neighborhoods, and a diverse housing stock are other key assets that make Blue Island a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

As a result, Blue Island will be faced with numerous decisions in the near and distant future. Having an up-to-date Comprehensive Plan in place provides a context in which decisions affecting the future of Blue Island can be made with some certainty that today's choices — whether large or small — contribute to achieving the long-term goals and vision of the community.

Because the City's Comprehensive Plan is almost thirty years old (1984), it does not provide adequate guidance for land use and development decisions in the community. As a result, Blue Island has instead relied upon a 2005 plan created by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT). CNT worked with the City to create the Blue Island Economic Development Plan which presently serves as the city's "unofficial" comprehensive plan, helping to guide development and investment decisions, primarily in areas of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Cargo Oriented Development (COD).

The City of Blue Island has undertaken a number of planning initiatives over the past decade. In addition to transit oriented development and cargo oriented development, these previous planning initiatives have helped the community focus on issues related to housing, economic development, and natural resource enhancements.

The new Comprehensive Plan will build upon these initiatives, bringing them together to help shape a more cohesive, community-wide plan. The Plan will serve as a guide for elected officials, municipal staff, community residents, business owners, and potential investors, allowing them to make informed administrative and implementation choices, in community development decisions affecting land use, transportation, infrastructure, and capital improvements, throughout the entire City.

Growth and change in the City will continue to shape the community's physical, economic, and social character. Having an up-to-date plan that clearly articulates the desired character of the community will help at all levels of the decision-making process, as Blue Island faces the many choices — large and small — that will come.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan outlines the vision of what a community desires to become as well as the process that will allow it to realize that vision. In addition to providing a well-defined framework for the community's development and investment goals, the Plan seeks to explore and promote new opportunities and changing community trends.

Typically a comprehensive plan is written to provide guidance for a community to work towards its vision over the next 10 to 20 years. Although the plan should be viewed as a long-term document, it should also be thought of as a plan to be used daily by the community to assist in land use and development decisions. The comprehensive plan should also be considered flexible and one that can adapt with change. At any time the municipality can update its comprehensive plan to match local needs, interests, or opportunities. It is typically recommended that a municipality update its comprehensive plan every five years to keep the plan as accurate as possible.

Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

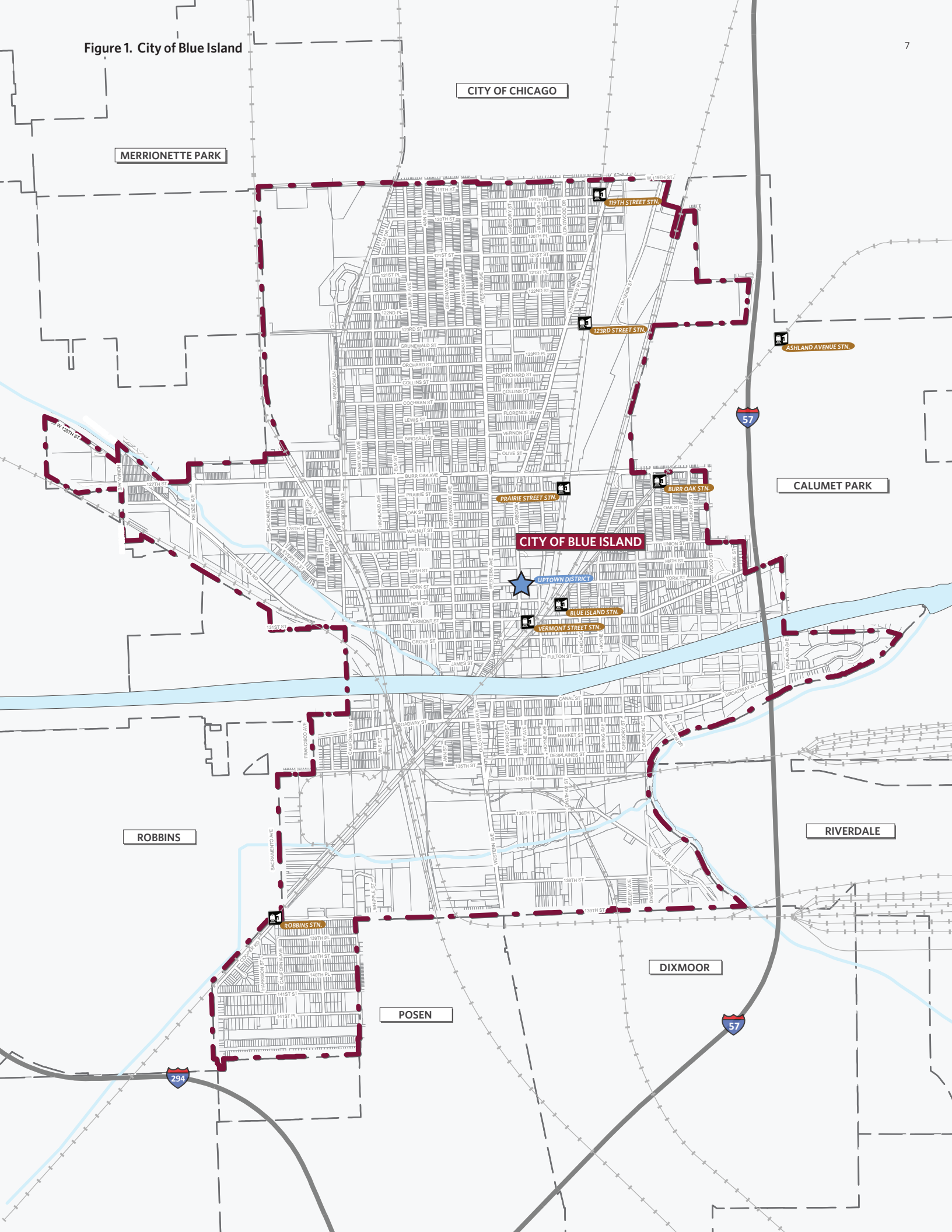
A Comprehensive Plan is composed of a series of distinct yet interrelated elements defined within the Illinois Local Planning Assistance Act (Public Act 92-0768). The key elements addressed in the Blue Island Comprehensive Plan will be based upon those outlined in the State Statute. The primary elements addressed in the Blue Island Comprehensive Plan will include:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Natural Resources
- Transportation and Circulation
- Economic Development
- Historic Preservation
- Local Food Production
- Implementation

In addition to the primary elements listed above, Comprehensive Plans have also begun to include additional elements that may either be unique sections in the plan, or may be incorporated as common themes that run throughout the document. Additional elements that will be included in the Blue Island Comprehensive Plan are likely to include: the creation of a shared vision with corresponding goals and objectives; community facilities; image and identity; sustainability; and urban design.

Under the Illinois Municipal Code (65 ILCS) 5/11-12-5(1)), a municipal plan commission is responsible for preparing and recommending a "comprehensive plan for the present and future development or redevelopment of the municipality." The code continues to say "that the plan may include reasonable requirements with reference to streets, alleys, public grounds, and other improvements."

Figure 1. City of Blue Island



What are the Purposes of a Comprehensive Plan?

- Present the big picture and state the vision
- Involve the citizenry
- Guide regulation and public investment
- Give direction
- Protect the community

Source: Planning 1-2-3, Campaign for Sensible Growth, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, and Metropolitan Planning Council

Relationship with the GO TO 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan

The City's Comprehensive Plan priority should be to provide guidance and support at the local level, and to address community needs and desires, in an effort towards implementing the City of Blue Island's vision. However, in preparing the plan, the City should look at how Blue Island fits into the larger region, in order to understand and plan for the impact of regional economic and demographic change.

A summary of the recently released GO TO 2040 Regional Plan prepared by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is included in Section 1 of the Existing Conditions Report.

GO TO 2040 states, "municipalities are critical to the success of GO TO 2040 because of their responsibility for land use decisions, which create the built environment of the region and determine the livability of its communities. The most important thing that a municipality can do to implement GO TO 2040 is to take this responsibility very seriously." By undertaking a planning process to create a new Comprehensive Plan, Blue Island has taken responsibility for guiding its future, and demonstrated its commitment to helping shape the future of the region as well.

Planning Process

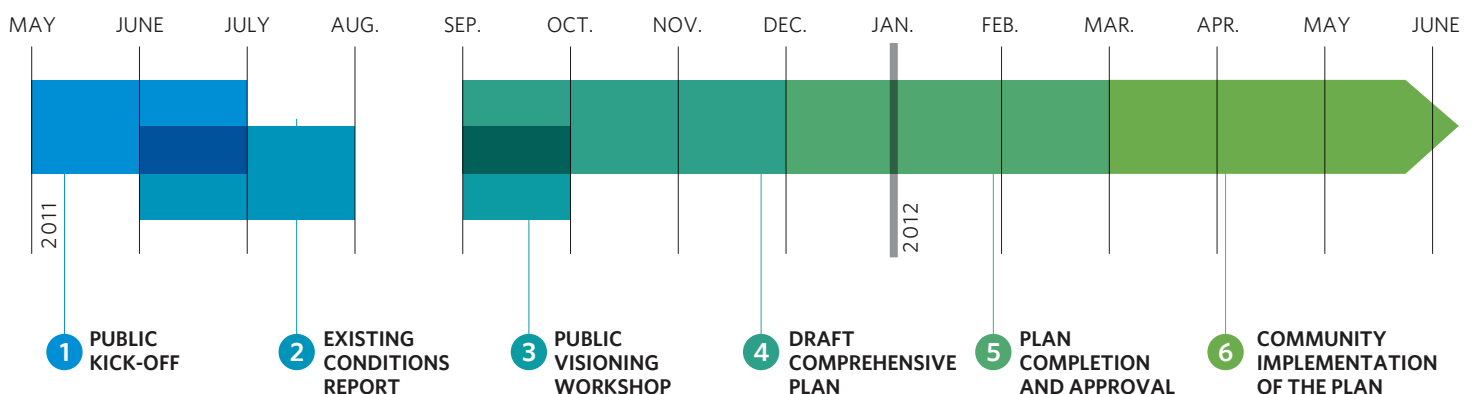
The planning process to create the City's Comprehensive Plan includes multiple steps that will last approximately 10-12 months. The process has been crafted with assistance from City Staff, and has been designed to include resident and business owner input throughout. The key steps in the planning process are illustrated in the following flow chart:

Next Steps

After the Existing Conditions Report is presented to the Planning Commission, the next step in the process will be to work with the community to create a shared vision for Blue Island. Building upon the work that has been completed to compile the information included in the Existing Conditions Report, CMAP will work with residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials, and City staff to accomplish this.

One of the next key steps in the planning process to help shape the community's shared vision for Blue Island will be to hold a visioning charrette workshop with the community. Based upon the results from the visioning workshop and from the data and information compiled in the Existing Conditions Report, a common vision with associated goals and objectives will be prepared. Following the creation of the vision, goals and objectives, CMAP will begin to develop the elements of the new Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 2: City of Blue Island planning process



Section One

Regional Context

This section provides an overview of how the City of Blue Island fits into the larger Northeastern Illinois region. Having a broader perspective of how Blue Island is situated in the region will aid in both the understanding of existing conditions and in identifying potential opportunities or issues that may impact the City.

History of Blue Island

Established in 1835 as a scenic suburb with unique natural resources, Blue Island is one of the oldest communities in Cook County. The early development of the city can be attributed primarily to two natural resources — clay left by the glacial lake bed, and the Calumet River. Brick manufacturing and the opening of the Calumet feeder canal in the mid to late 1800s brought a number of residents, entrepreneurs, and investors to the city. Businesses thrived and several residential neighborhoods were established during this period that exist and prosper to this day. The steady inflow of people and investment during this time resulted in the creation of a thriving Main Street with various cultural, retail, and recreational attractions. The growth in population also led to the development of excellent educational and healthcare facilities early on, making Blue Island the ideal place to live, work, and raise a family.

Blue Island continued to see rapid economic and physical growth through the early half of the twentieth century with the construction of railroads and heavy industries. To this day, Blue Island's rail infrastructure is a vital asset not only for the community but for the greater region.



Over the last few decades, Blue Island has been in a state of transition. Although typical of most major U.S. cities, the population decline and loss of jobs since 2000 has significantly strained community resources and expenditures. To keep pace with the ever-changing economic environment, businesses and major employers are having to rethink the way they operate and grow. In spite of these setbacks, the city has created ambitious plans for revitalization that will help it successfully adjust to and benefit from the new socio-economic climate in years to come. The strategic investment decisions made throughout the history of Blue Island will continue to play a crucial role in its success over the next several decades.

Regional Setting

From a regional perspective, Blue Island is positioned in the midst of Chicagoland's transportation infrastructure. The city is home to an extensive network of freight and commuter railroads, waterways, Interstate Highways, and is in close proximity to Midway International Airport and O'Hare International Airport, the nation's second largest airport. These attributes connect the city to the region and country, opening its door to unique economic and physical development opportunities.

Geographically, Blue Island is located just outside of the City of Chicago's corporate limits and forms part of the south suburban region. The following list of major regional destinations and their approximate driving distance from Blue Island highlights the regional significance of Blue Island.

Public Transit

- Metra Stations – Six stations are located on two lines within city limits. In addition, two stations are located in close proximity.

Table 1.1. Metra Stations

ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT LINE

Blue Island- Vermont Metra station

Prairie Street Metra station

123rd Street Metra station

119th Street Metra station

METRA ELECTRIC DISTRICT LINE

Blue Island Metra station

Burr Oak Metra station

ADJACENT COMMUNITY STATIONS

Robbins Metra station (Robbins)

Ashland Avenue Metra station (Calumet Park)

- Pace Bus - Five pace bus routes run through the City.
- CTA Bus - One CTA bus route runs through the City.

Interstate Access

- Interstate I-57 – Runs through the eastern sector of the city. The nearest access ramp is Burr Oak Avenue/127th Street (1.2 miles from City Hall)
- Interstate I-294 - 3.3 miles from City Hall (access via 127th Street)
- Interstate I-94 – 4 miles from City Hall (access via I-57)

International Airports

- Midway International Airport – 10 miles from City Hall
- O'Hare International Airport – 32 miles from City Hall

Other Nearby Regional Destinations/Points of Interest

- Calumet-Sag Channel - runs through the City and a regional trail system is planned to run along the channel
- Indiana State Limits – 11 miles from City Hall
- City of Chicago Downtown Loop - 15 miles from City Hall

Baseline Indicator Analysis

Baseline indicators have been included within the report and are highlighted in this section, particularly those indicators that relate to the regional location of Blue Island. The baseline indicators are useful in helping to illustrate how the City compares to the overall Chicago Region.

Table 1.2. Baseline Indicators Related to Location

	BLUE ISLAND	SEVEN COUNTY CHICAGO REGION
Vehicle miles travelled per household (2007)	16,423	17,443
Percent regional jobs accessible by car (< 45 minutes)	15.1%	15.9%
Percent regional jobs accessible by transit (< 75 minutes)	30.1%	20.9%

Source: CMAP

Not surprisingly, the fact that there are two Metra lines with six stations in the City, combined with multiple Pace bus routes, the community is well served by public transit.

The result is a high percentage (30.1%) of regional jobs accessible by transit when compared to the region as a whole (20.9%).

Figure 3. Regional location



Section Two

Previous Plans and Studies

This section provides a summary and analysis of the existing City plans and studies that will likely inform and impact the ultimate recommendations of the new Comprehensive Plan. The previous documents have been reviewed to assist in building upon any current or still relevant findings and recommendations to create an all encompassing Comprehensive Plan.

A majority of the previous documents focused on transit oriented and cargo oriented development opportunities. One of the key goals of this new Plan is to create a document that incorporates all of the previous planning work compiled by the City over the past decade into one singular planning document.

The following are the existing plans, studies and reports that are reviewed in this section:

Blue Island Plan for Economic Development (2005)

<http://www.csu.edu/cerc/researchreports/documents/BlueIslandPlanEconomicDevelopmentExecutiveSummary2005.pdf>

Blue Island Reaches Next Crossroads MPC Blue Island Task Force Report (2006)

<http://www.metroplanning.org/uploads/cms/documents/BlueIslandrpt.pdf>

Blue Island Main Street Revitalization Study - Full Circle Mapping Project (2007)

http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/full-circle/case-studies/detail/-/asset_publisher/8zmQ/content/city-of-blue-island-main-street-revitalization

Calumet River Corridor Economic Development Vision and Strategy (2007)

<http://www.blueisland.org/community-development-department/plans-projects-programs/calumet-rivers-development-project/>

Blue Island Brownfields: A Technical Report and Recommendations (2007)

http://biplanning.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/blue-island-brownfields-report-final_-february-2010_.pdf

Homes for a Changing Region: Phase 2 (2009)

http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org/10_20.htm

Robbins Economic Development Vision and Strategy (2009)

http://www.metroplanning.org/uploads/cms/documents/CBI_Robbins_EconomicDevelopmentVisionandStrategy.pdf

Green River Planning Book (2009)

<http://www.blueisland.org/wp-content/uploads/calumet-river-handbook-20090116-calumet-river-web-opt.pdf>

Community Design Workshops (2009)

<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/community-design-workshops/blue-island>

Chicago Southland Transit Region Initiative (2010)

Green Transit, Intermodal, Manufacturing, Environmental Zone (2010) - <http://www.cnt.org/repository/GTZ.pdf>

CNT Case Study: Chicago's South Suburb's: Smart Growth in Older Communities (2011)

<http://www.cnt.org/repository/SS-Case-Study.pdf>

In addition to the above listed studies, the City is currently undertaking a South Cargo-Oriented Development (COD) Reuse Plan and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Study funded by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA).

Blue Island Plan for Economic Development

The Blue Island Plan for Economic Development (a.k.a. Blue Island Plan) was prepared by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) and the City of Blue Island in 2005. The Plan serves as both the guiding document for the City (in lieu of an update of the comprehensive plan) and as the basis for subsequent planning studies in Blue Island. The Plan presents nine basic proposals for development. The nine proposals for development include: three for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD); three for Cargo-Oriented Development (COD); and three citywide programs.

The recommendations are based on a thorough study of market conditions and input received from the community through the planning process.

TOD Recommendations

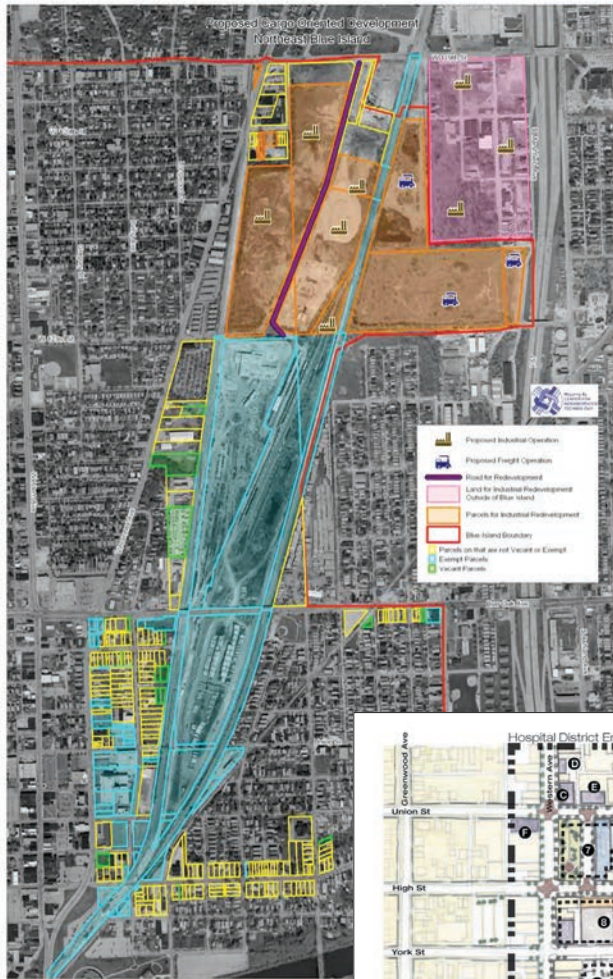
The key TOD recommendations include:

- Developing more than 40 condominiums and townhomes overlooking the Calumet-Sag waterfront.
- Creating a nature and recreation trail.
- Developing 37,000 s.f. of commercial space between the Metra stations and the Uptown district.
- Relocating industrial properties outside of the station area with Metra parking to replace vacated industrial properties.
- Replacing 40 single-family homes with higher-density housing.
- Improving the environment for institutional and commercial development in the hospital district and northern parts of Uptown.
- Rebuilding the Gregory and Western Avenue intersection to allow two-way traffic.

COD Recommendations

The key COD recommendations include:

- Redeveloping 115 acres of vacant industrial land in the northeast industrial sector.
- Establishing new employment centers on the western border of Blue Island and Alsip to help generate revenue and jobs.
- Redeveloping 60 acres between 135th Street and 139th Street for logistics/manufacturing enterprises.

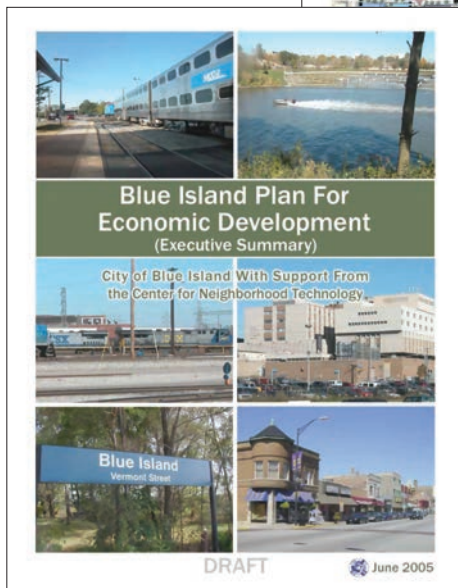
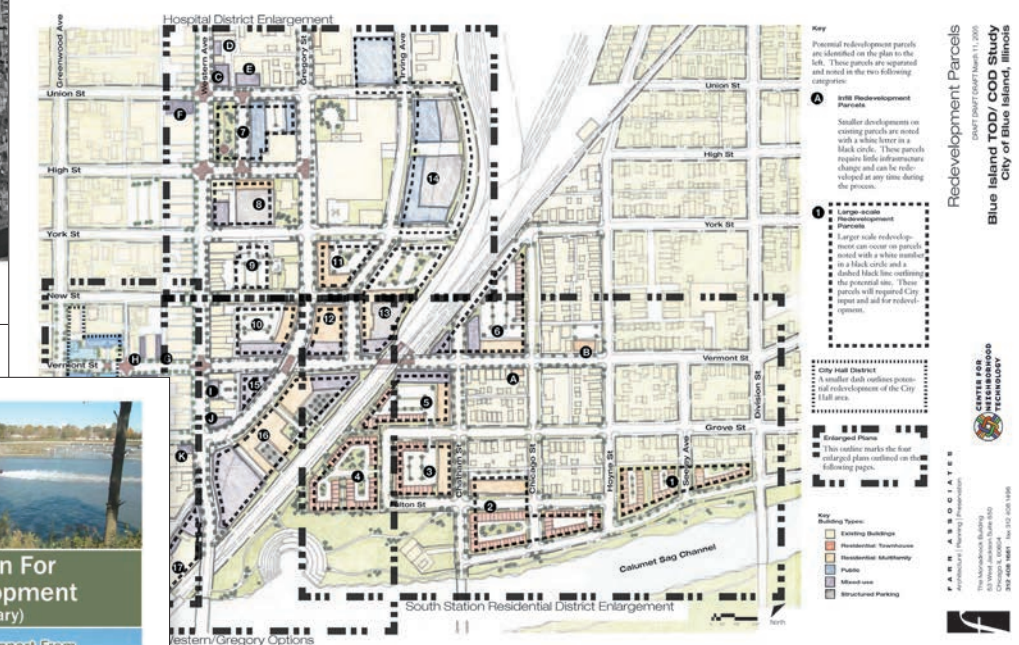


Citywide Recommendations

The key City-Wide recommendations include:

- Revisioning the existing zoning ordinance and commercial design standards to accommodate higher-density and mixed-use pedestrian-friendly development.
- Establishing worker education, training, and referral service by establishing a network of partnerships with local education and training institutions, community organizations, and public employment referral/placement agencies.
- Creating an internal public transportation system supporting employers and residents as well as improve local/regional air quality. Key players would likely include Pace, Metra, Active Transportation Alliance (ATA), Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), Chicago Area Transportation Study (*now the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning*), and Regional Transportation Authority (RTA).

The concluding section of the Plan describes roles and responsibilities for various individuals and agencies to be involved in the implementation process.



Blue Island Reaches Next Crossroads: MPC Blue Island Task Force Report

In the summer of 2006, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) convened a two-day workshop in Blue Island to help identify specific steps local leaders could take to implement the Blue Island Plan for Economic Development. The workshop was part of MPC's Community Building Initiative, aimed at supporting municipalities throughout the Chicago region in determining solutions to local development challenges, testing and refining policies and strategies, providing models for other communities, and creating a network of regional partners and contacts.

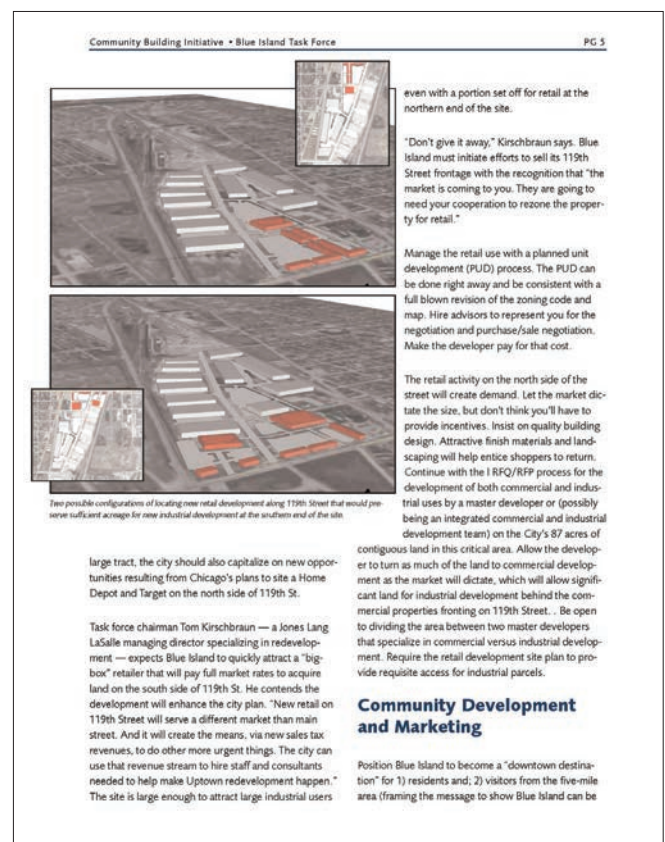
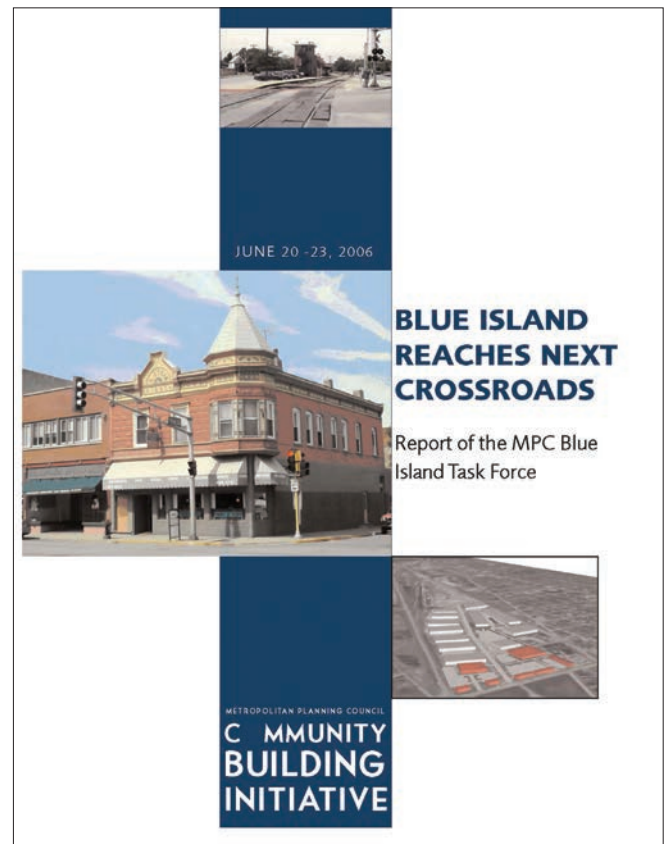
The two-day workshop was led by a Task Force of thirteen real estate, planning, and financial professionals with extensive experience in public and private sector development.

The MPC Blue Island Task Force Report focuses on the city's Uptown District, outlining zoning reform strategies, land use changes, and program modifications based on neighboring communities' development initiatives. Specific areas addressed in the report include the Blue Island-Vermont Street Metra Station Area, MetroSouth Medical Center area, and the Northeast Industrial & Commercial Sites.

Some of the key redevelopment action items identified with the report are:

- Concentrate retail business retention/attraction efforts in a four-block area extending along Western Avenue from High Street to Grove Street.
- Relocate the hospital parking lot abutting Western Avenue to make way for mixed-use development (retain on first floor with residential above)
- Relocate parking lots from within the station area and Main Street to allow for transit-oriented development.
- Develop and enforce code requirements for vacant buildings.
- Accelerate efforts to enhance physical appearance of buildings.

In addition to specific redevelopment strategies, the Task Force also identified marketing and branding strategies to help distinguish Blue Island from other communities in the South Suburban region, financing mechanisms to fund improvements, and administrative improvements to streamline the development process.



Blue Island Main Street Revitalization Study — Full Circle Mapping Project

Building on recommendations within the Economic Development Plan, the City of Blue Island's planning department partnered with the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), Main Street Blue Island, and Blue Island Chamber of Commerce to deploy the Full Circle Mapping Project.

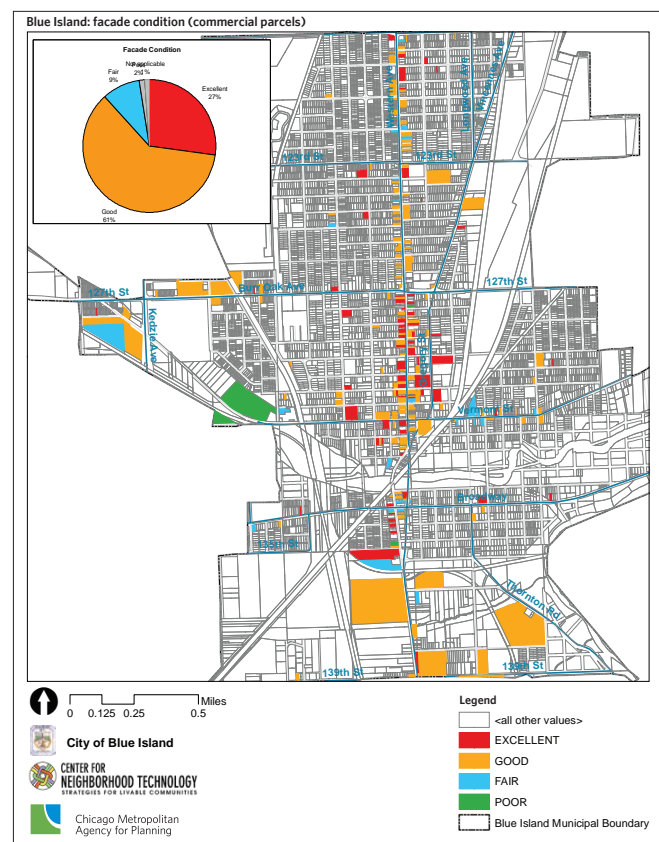
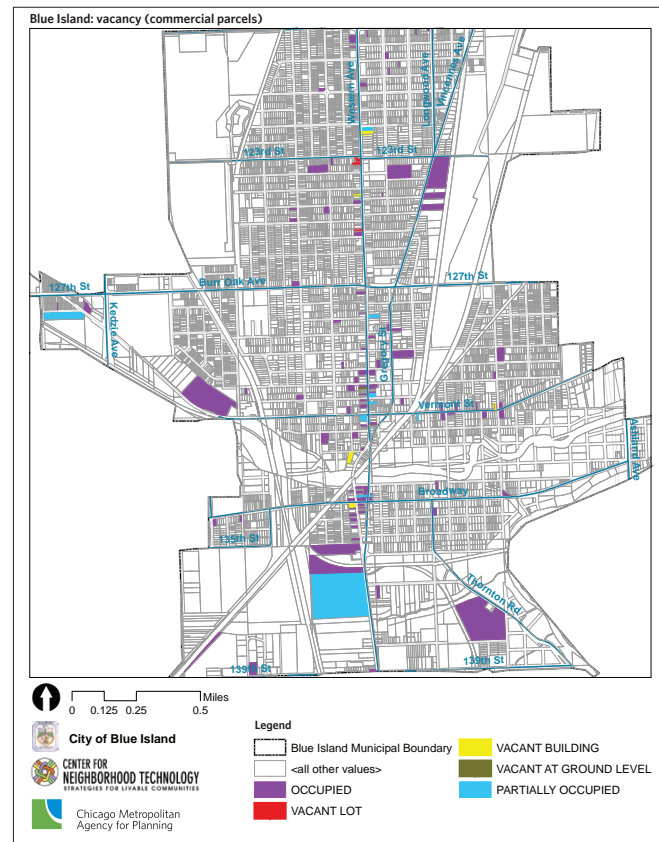
Utilizing a web-based parcel mapping system, the project allows municipalities and organizations document a number of quantitative and qualitative data at the parcel level, e.g. assessed property value, most recent sales price, business licenses, building condition, land use, business type(s), number of housing units, structure type, vacancy, parking available, and ideas and opinions of business owners and managers.

The Blue Island Main Street Revitalization Study was part of CMAP's Southern Cook County Planning Pilot Project funded by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The goal of the 2007 study was to build an inventory of businesses along Western Avenue and document the physical condition of buildings and public areas. In addition, it also highlighted the locations of current bus stops and sidewalks, traffic circulation patterns, parking conditions, and vacant lots/buildings/businesses along Western Avenue.

At the time, study results showed that only two (2) percent of parcels along the Western Avenue corridor were vacant and a majority of buildings, sidewalks, and facades were in good condition. It identified streetscape design and safety issues to address in order to enhance the appeal of Blue Island's Western Avenue to pedestrians.

This information collected has enabled the City of Blue Island to better respond to development inquiries and investment opportunities as well as utilize the data to help attract new businesses and retain existing ones along the Western Avenue corridor.

The Blue Island Chamber of Commerce utilized the Full Circle data to develop a comprehensive business directory. The Main Street Blue Island organization utilized the data to identify historical assets among the commercial corridor, to identify the physical conditions of historical buildings, and to determine how resources could best be allocated to preserve the corridor's traditional character.



Calumet River Corridor Economic Development Vision and Strategy

The purpose of Calumet Rivers Development Project was to create a framework for development and investment in the seven south suburban communities that comprise the Calumet River Corridor, including Robbins, Blue Island, Calumet Park, Riverdale, Dolton, Calumet City, and Burnham.

The consultant team comprised of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, (CMAP), Business Districts, Inc. (BDI), Vandewalle & Associates (V&A), and the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA).

The project focused on the Calumet River system as an important environmental amenity and economic asset. It is based on the assumption that by strategically working together, the communities can accelerate and expand the potential economic impact of their individual efforts. The result is a shared economic development and land use vision, identification of priority projects and development sites, recommended actions to implement the vision and projects, and an outline of steps to build the planning and development capacity that will be necessary to implement the vision.

Recommendations of the Economic Development Vision & Strategy

- Establish a Calumet River Corridor Economic Development Council
- Sponsor a Planning and Economic Development Academy
- Support Development of the Calumet-Sag Multi-Use Trail
- Support Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in Robbins and Blue Island
- Support Development at the Robbins Community Power Facility and adjacent Energy Park
- Market and Develop Industrial Property in Dolton and Calumet City
- Plan Corridor Festivals and Events
- Prepare a Calumet River Corridor Pattern Book/Design Guidelines
- Work with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) on Land Conveyance Processes
- Research Opportunities to Pursue Green Technology and Development

Accomplishments/Current Activities

- **March 2007**
Resolution adopting vision statement for the Calumet River Corridor passed by Blue Island and other Corridor communities.
- **Spring 2007**
Calumet River Corridor Economic Development Council formally established.
- **Fall 2007**
SSMMA received a grant to create a development pattern book for the Calumet River Corridor.
- **Spring – Summer 2008**
Metropolitan Planning Council organized and facilitated several sessions of the Planning and Economic Development Academy. Sites chosen as development models include the Robbins/Blue Island TOD and Calumet City Industrial properties identified in the “Recommended Actions” section of the Corridor Vision.
- **Ongoing**
Development of the Calumet-Sag Multi-Use Trail
- SSMMA and Center For Neighborhood Technology have been actively working together on the MWRD land conveyance issue.

Blue Island Brownfields: A Technical Report and Recommendations

A technical report was prepared for the City of Blue Island by the Delta Redevelopment Institute as part of the work plan for a federal EPA Brownfields Assessment grant that was awarded to the City in 2007. The purpose of the report was to educate City staff and other brownfield stakeholders to make for a more informed decision-making process as well as to lay the groundwork for creating new tools that contribute to a more permanent brownfields redevelopment program.

In addition to considering assessment needs in the TOD areas, the City also had some isolated commercial and industrial sites outside of the TOD and COD areas that it wanted to consider for brownfield assessment depending on the importance to the community of encouraging redevelopment of these sites in order to reduce potential health risks or conflicts between residential and nonresidential uses.

The focus of the City was to select approximately 20 brownfield sites for preliminary environmental assessment and then select a few with the most potential for immediate redevelopment for more in-depth assessment.

The City’s economic development focus was on areas adjoining its rail assets, or Cargo-Oriented Development (COD) and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) areas.

Homes for a Changing Region: Phase 2

Homes for a Changing Region is a multi-phase initiative undertaken jointly by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) and Chicago Metropolitan 2020 (CM 2020). CMAP and MPC have also recently participated in Homes for a Changing Region.

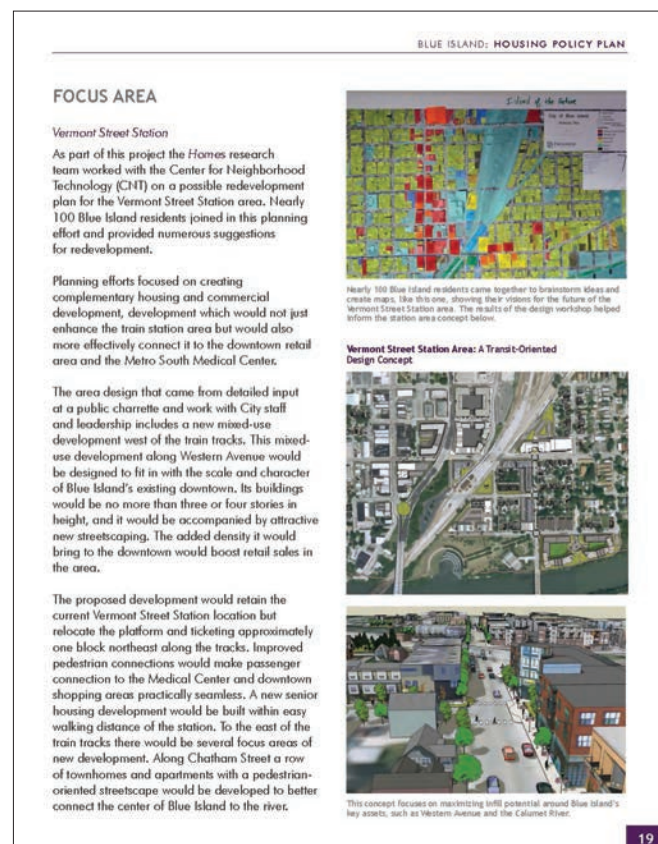
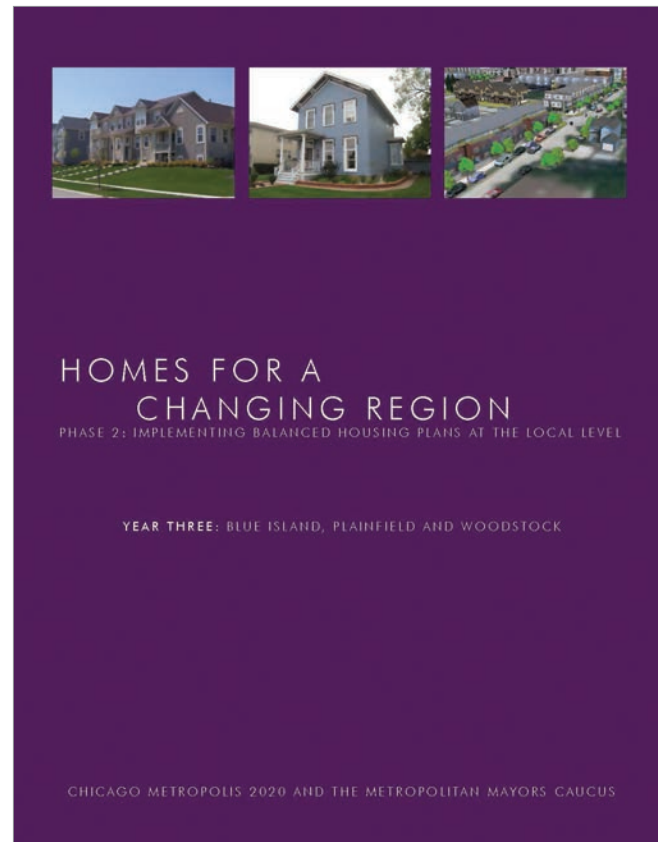
The goal of the project is to provide communities in the Chicago metropolitan region with in-depth housing analysis that would play a key role in enabling them to plan effectively for the future housing needs of citizens. In Phase 1, MMC and CM 2020 worked with *Fregonese Associates*, a private consulting firm, to project the housing supply and demand in the Chicago metropolitan region to identify imbalances that would impact the regional housing market, and to provide recommendations that address these imbalances at the local, regional, and state levels.

Completed in 2009, Phase 2 of the study involved nine specific Chicago region communities including Aurora, Gurnee, Libertyville, Montgomery, Northlake, Oak Forest, Blue Island, Plainfield, and Woodstock. The Blue Island Housing Policy Action Plan is built upon an analysis of demographic trends and existing housing conditions. Some of the major issues identified in Blue Island's current housing stock include high vacancy rates (10%), large percentage of economically stressed households (i.e. spending more than 30% of income on housing), and overcrowding in both rental and owner occupied units.

The Plan recommends a series of action items for the City based on an analysis of existing housing inventory and housing capacity, future housing needs projections, and opportunities to incorporate sustainable practices. These include:

- Encouraging transit-oriented mixed-use development within the Vermont Street Metra station area.
- Promoting development which can make the recently revitalized Metro South Medical Center more successful (e.g. senior housing near the Center and better pedestrian access from the train station).
- Continuing efforts to upgrade Western Avenue (e.g. streetscaping, reduced number of parking lots along Western Avenue).
- Targeting neighborhood rehab projects.
- Creating a condo conversion ordinance.
- Continuing mixed-income housing development at Fay's Point.
- Collaborating with property owners to prevent overcrowding and find long-term solutions
- Increasing pedestrian amenities (e.g. along the Calumet River).
- Continuing interjurisdictional collaboration on housing and economic development issues.

The Plan also identifies several prototypical households to better illustrate the housing needs of Blue Island's workforce.

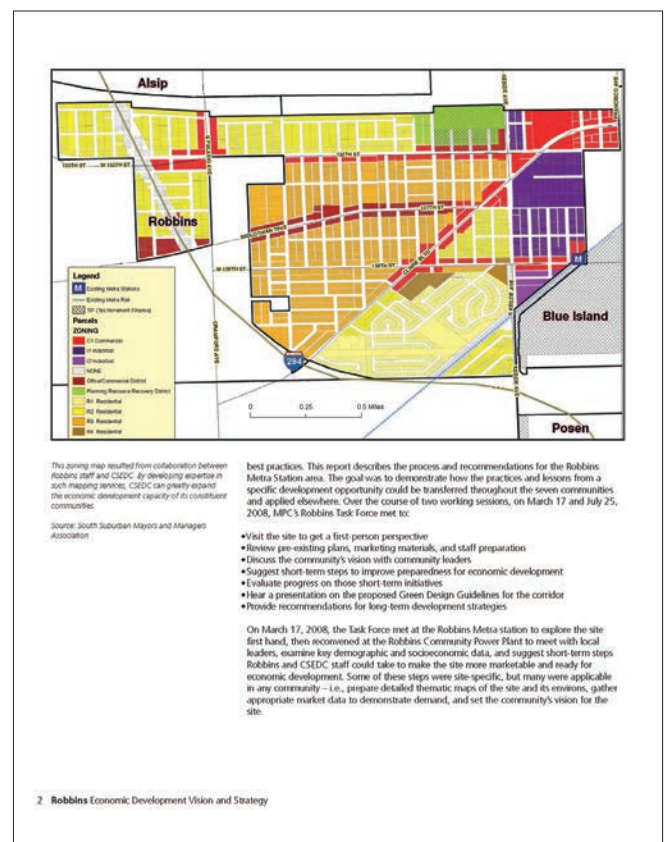
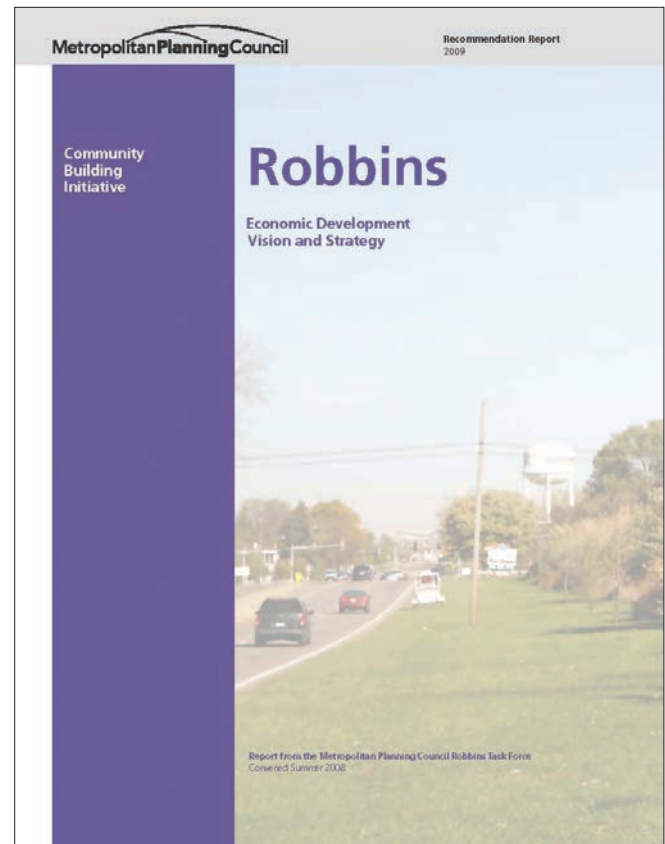


Robbins Economic Development Vision and Strategy

The Robbins Economic Development Vision and Strategy Plan (REDVSP) was developed as a prototypical document to demonstrate how the practices and lessons of a specific development opportunity can be transferred and applied to other communities. The Plan accomplishes one of the major goals of the Calumet River Corridor Economic Development Vision and Strategy, aimed at building external relationships, market development opportunities, and local planning and economic development capacity of each of the seven participating communities — Blue Island, Burnham, Calumet City, Calumet Park, Dolton, Riverdale, and Robbins.

The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) undertook the Robbins Metra Station assignment as part of its Community Building Initiative in 2009. Working together with a Task Force comprised of planning and real estate professionals over the course of two working sessions, MPC reviewed pre-existing plans and marketing materials, discussed the community vision with community leaders, and provided recommendations for short-term and long-term development opportunities.

One of the key recommendations within the report is the need to partner with neighboring Blue Island on development of the Robbins station area via an intergovernmental agreement. This could occur in the form of a joint Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the station area containing shared regulations and permits. The unified PUD would in turn allow for a straightforward and streamlined development process, encouraging private developers to be confident in investing their time and resources. Another recommended approach to forge cooperation is to jointly adopt the Green Design Guidelines created as part of the Calumet River Corridor Initiative. It would allow developers looking to work in both communities to use the same set of design guidelines, making the development process more streamlined.



The Green River Pattern Book was created to provide a reader-friendly guide to the sustainable practices and techniques that are applicable to sites and conditions within the Calumet River Corridor. The Pattern Book is intended to help residents, stakeholders, and decision makers promote redevelopment that improves the quality of life for residents and makes the Calumet River Corridor more attractive to visitors and investors. Municipalities are encouraged to use the Pattern Book as a reference as they review, revise, and implement new zoning and development ordinances that support sustainable development in their communities.

The first section describes and illustrates a number of environmentally-friendly design and development practices that can be utilized in residential, commercial, and industrial projects. In the second section, six locations have been selected to demonstrate how the sustainable techniques can be applied to sites typically found within the Corridor. The second section describes how the development process works and provides additional sources of information.

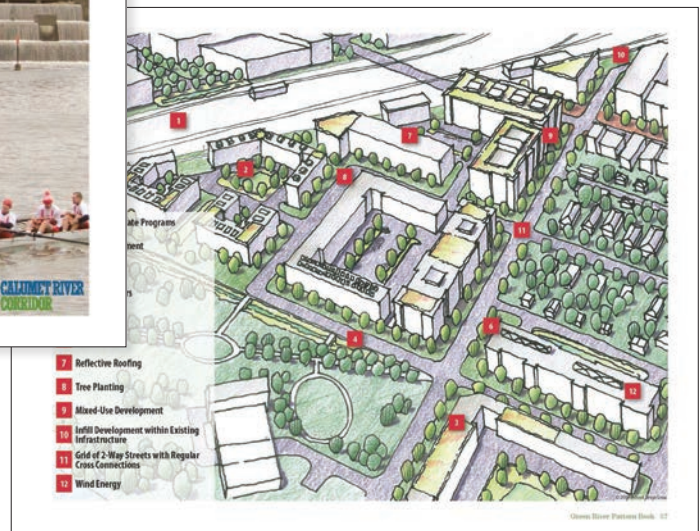
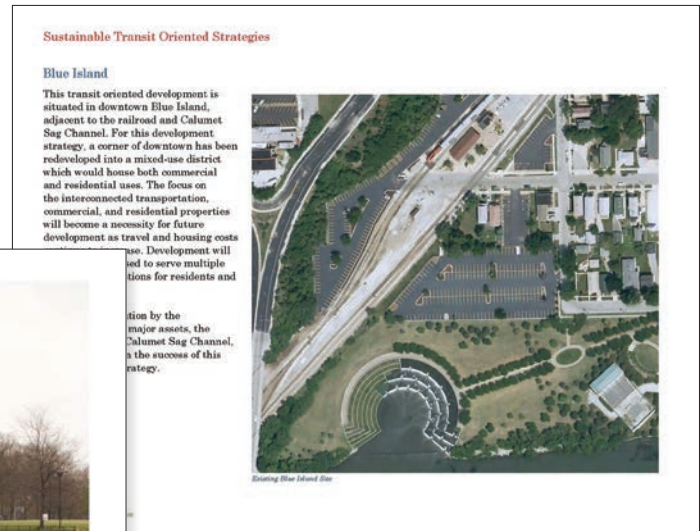


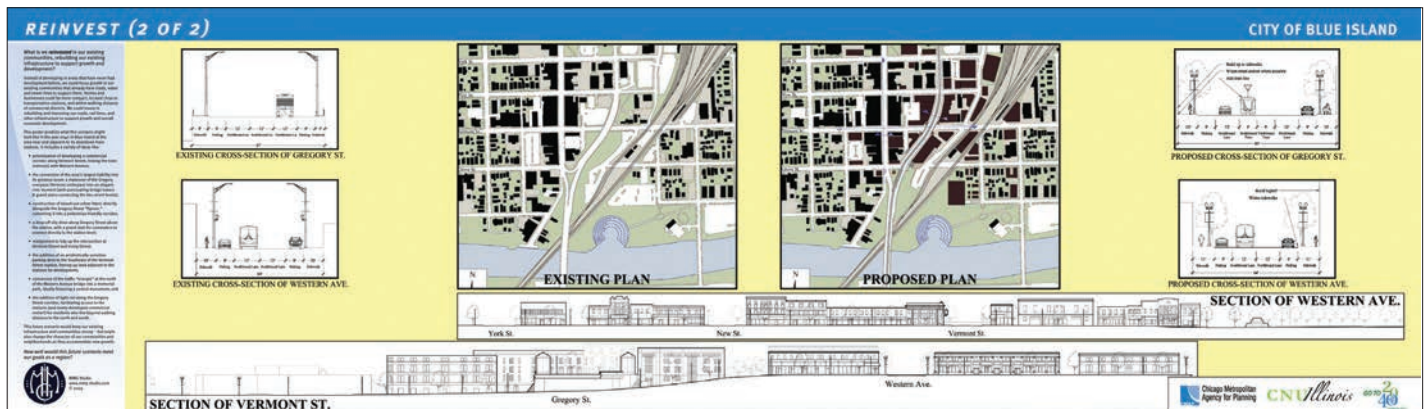
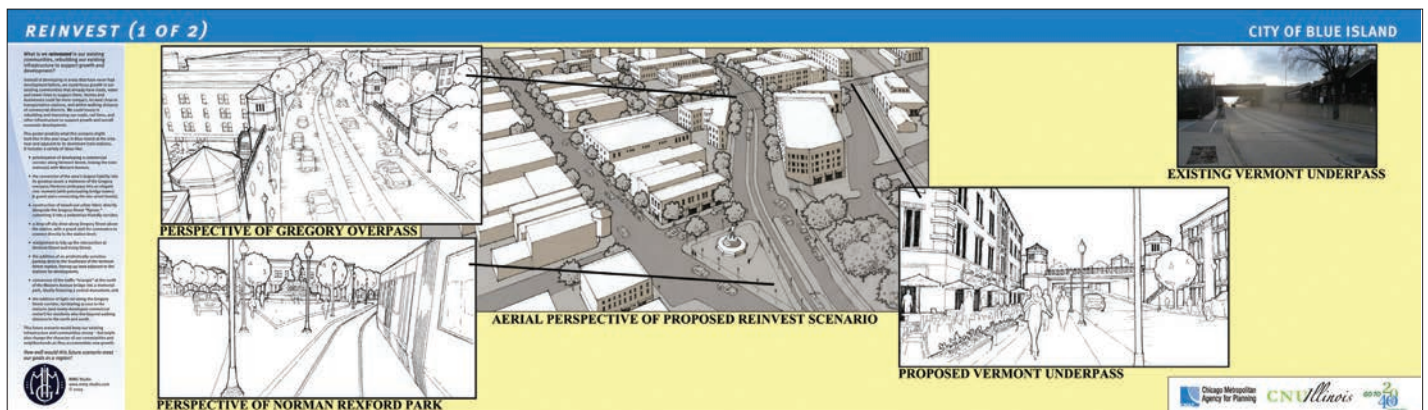
Illustration above from the Green Pattern Book by Hitchcock Design Group

Community Design Workshops

The following illustrations were prepared by the architecture and urban design firm MMG Studio, working in collaboration with members of the City of Blue Island Plan Commission and CMAP. These posters depict what each of the GO TO 2040 scenarios might look like at the local level if applied in Blue Island, based on ideas generated over the course of three meetings held during the spring of 2009.

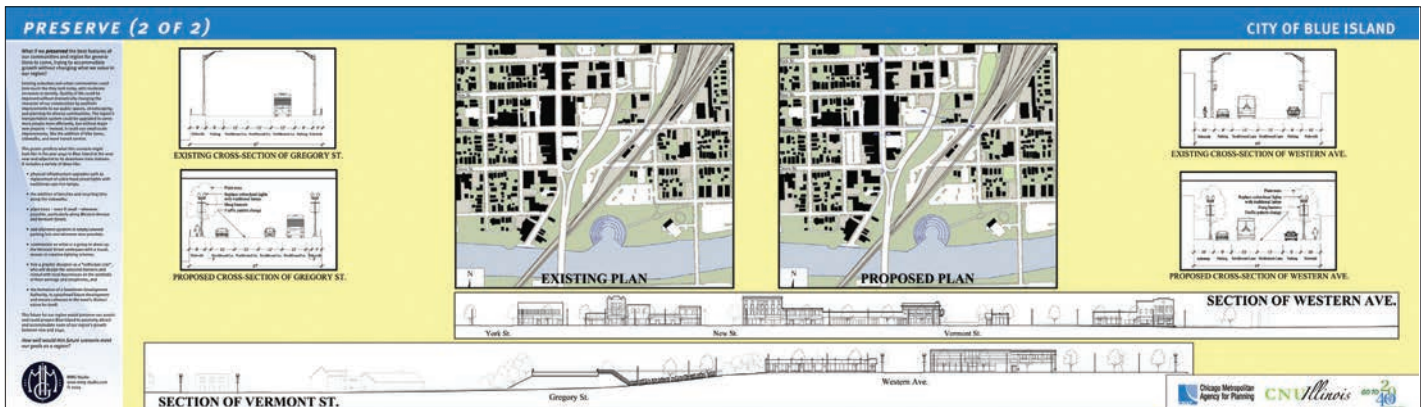
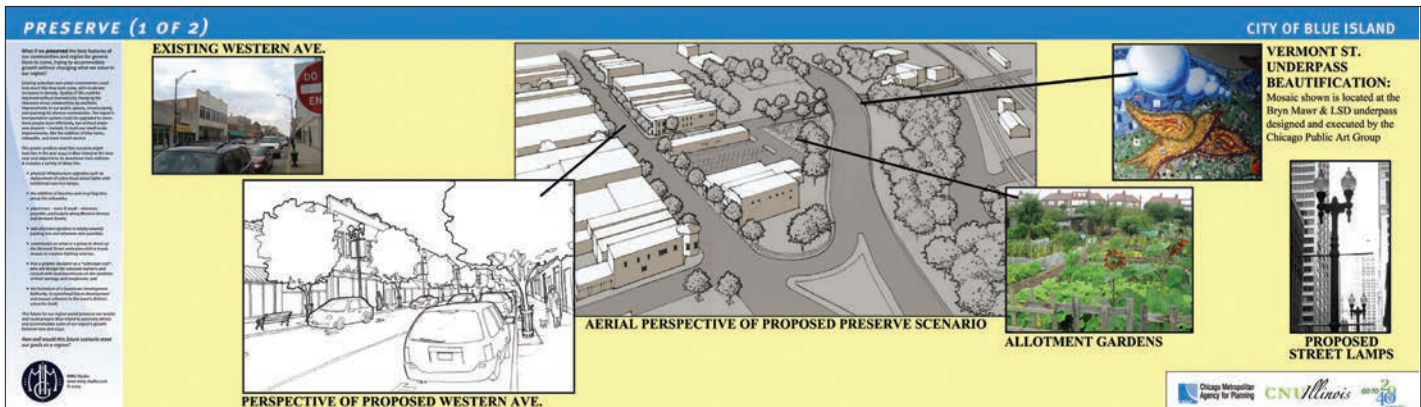
Reinvestment Scenario

These posters predict what the area near and adjacent to its Uptown train stations may look like in 2040. Some key ideas include: prioritization of a commercial corridor along Vermont Street; the conversion of the Gregory overpass/Vermont underpass into an elegant civic monument; construction of mixed-use along Gregory Street; a drop-off slip drive along Gregory Street; realignment to tidy up the Vermont Street/Irving Street intersection; the addition of a parking deck; conversion of the traffic triangle into a memorial park; and the addition of light rail along Gregory Street.



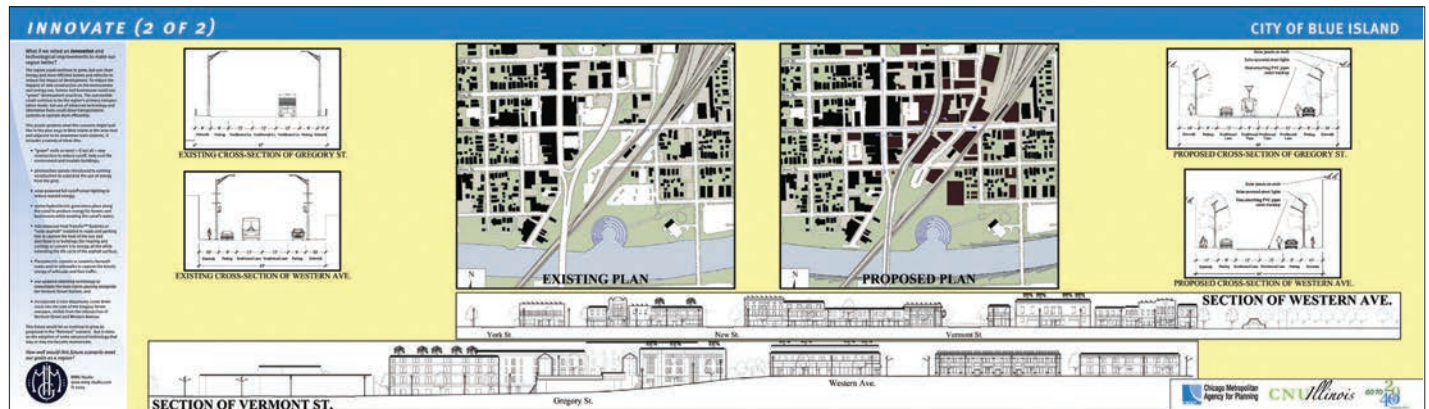
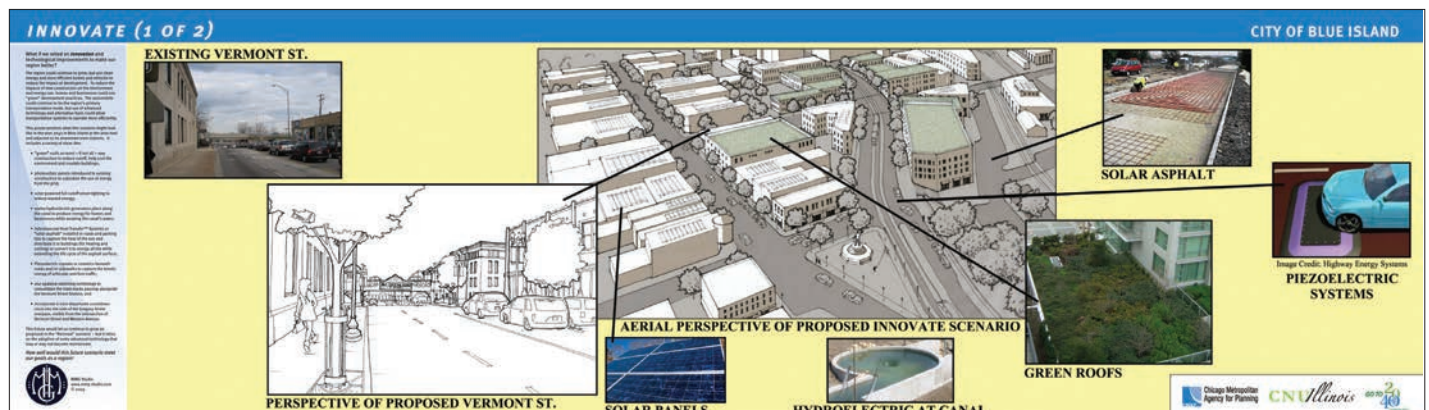
Preserve Scenario

These posters predict what the area could look like in 2040 with a focus towards preserving the Uptown area. Some key ideas include: making infrastructure upgrades; adding benches and recycling bins; planting trees; add allotment gardens; commission an artist; hire a graphic designer for seasonal banners; and form a Downtown Development Authority.



Innovate Scenario

These posters predict what the Uptown area could look like in 2040 with a focus on innovation. Key ideas include: greening most roofs; adding photovoltaic panels; using solar powered full-cutoff street lighting; using vortex hydroelectric generators; using interseasonal heat transfer systems; adding piezoelectric crystals or ceramics beneath roads; using updated switching technology; and incorporating train departure countdown clocks into the side of the Gregory Street overpass.



Chicago Southland Transit Region Initiative

The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) commissioned *Land Vision*, a private consulting firm, to prepare a transit study involving 36 existing and 9 proposed station areas. The Chicago Southland Transit Region Initiative is Phase 1 of a multi-phased study aimed at promoting economic development in the south suburbs by capitalizing on the region's extensive network of commuter rail lines over the next 15-20 years. In addition to promoting the region's economic potential, the study highlights the health-related, environmental, and social benefits of transit.

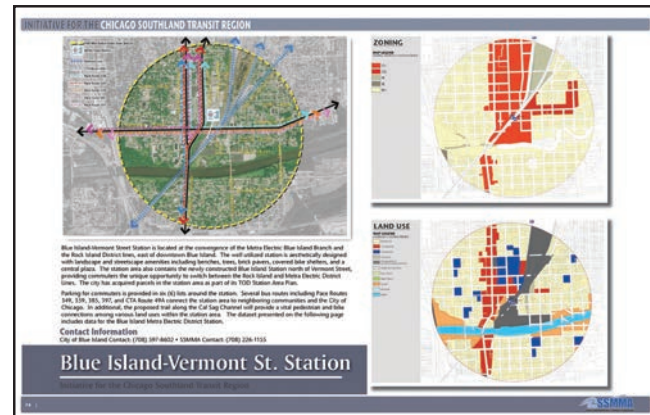
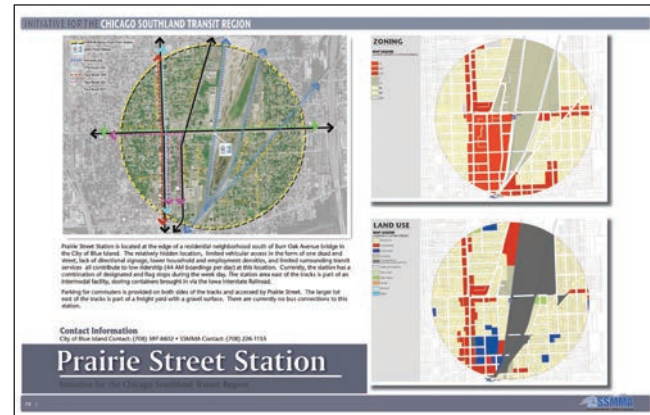
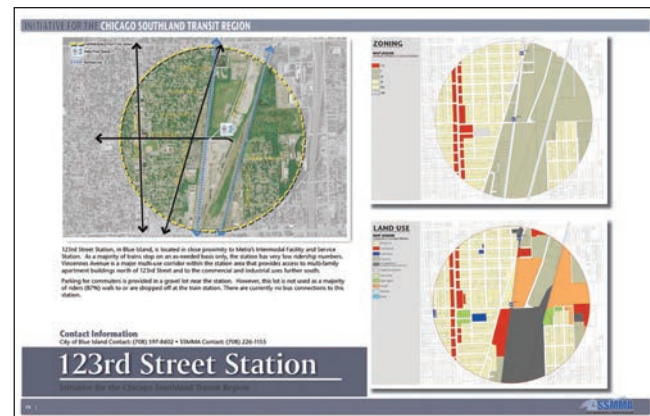
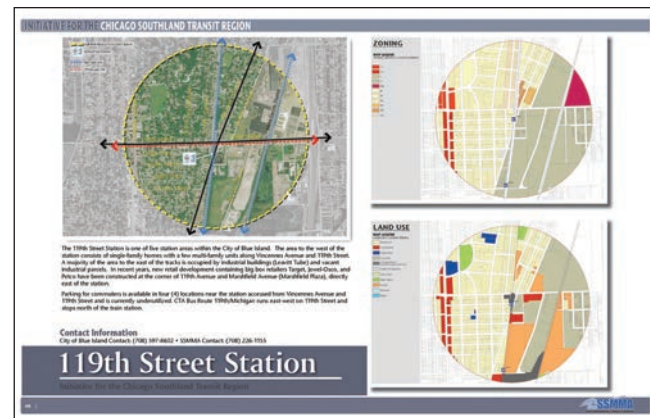
As part of the planning process, a Steering Committee was established comprising other representatives from the SSMMA, Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation (CSEDC), Cook County, RTA, Pace, Metra, stakeholder communities, and regional organizations. Stakeholder communities and individuals were actively involved throughout the planning process using a variety of public input techniques including one-on-one interviews with elected officials, expert panel discussions, planning workshops, and community open houses.

The project consisted of four major components:

- Establishing a development typology for each station area that describes the intensity of development and mix of land uses.
- Identifying the types of developers that would be interested in certain communities and station area typologies, thereby allowing municipalities to focus their marketing efforts.
- Outlining potential economic, physical, and administrative remedies to support development.
- Establishing the building, streetscape, and transit characteristics for each station area typology via a series of illustrations.

The six (6) Metra station areas within Blue Island were part of the study and evaluated in detail. Information pertaining to existing zoning, land use, demographic data, and community vision were compiled and analyzed to arrive at station area typologies and developer typologies for each station area. The Blue Island-Vermont Street station area was designated as a high density multi-use development typology whereas the other station areas were recommended for lower intensities of development.

A follow-up Phase 2 study is currently underway. This study will focus on specific implementation strategies, financing mechanisms, and regulatory changes to help three selected communities get one step closer towards realizing their station area vision. One of the station areas included in the Phase 2 study is the Blue Island-Vermont Street station area.



Green Transit, Intermodal, Manufacturing, Environment Zone (aka Green TIME Zone)

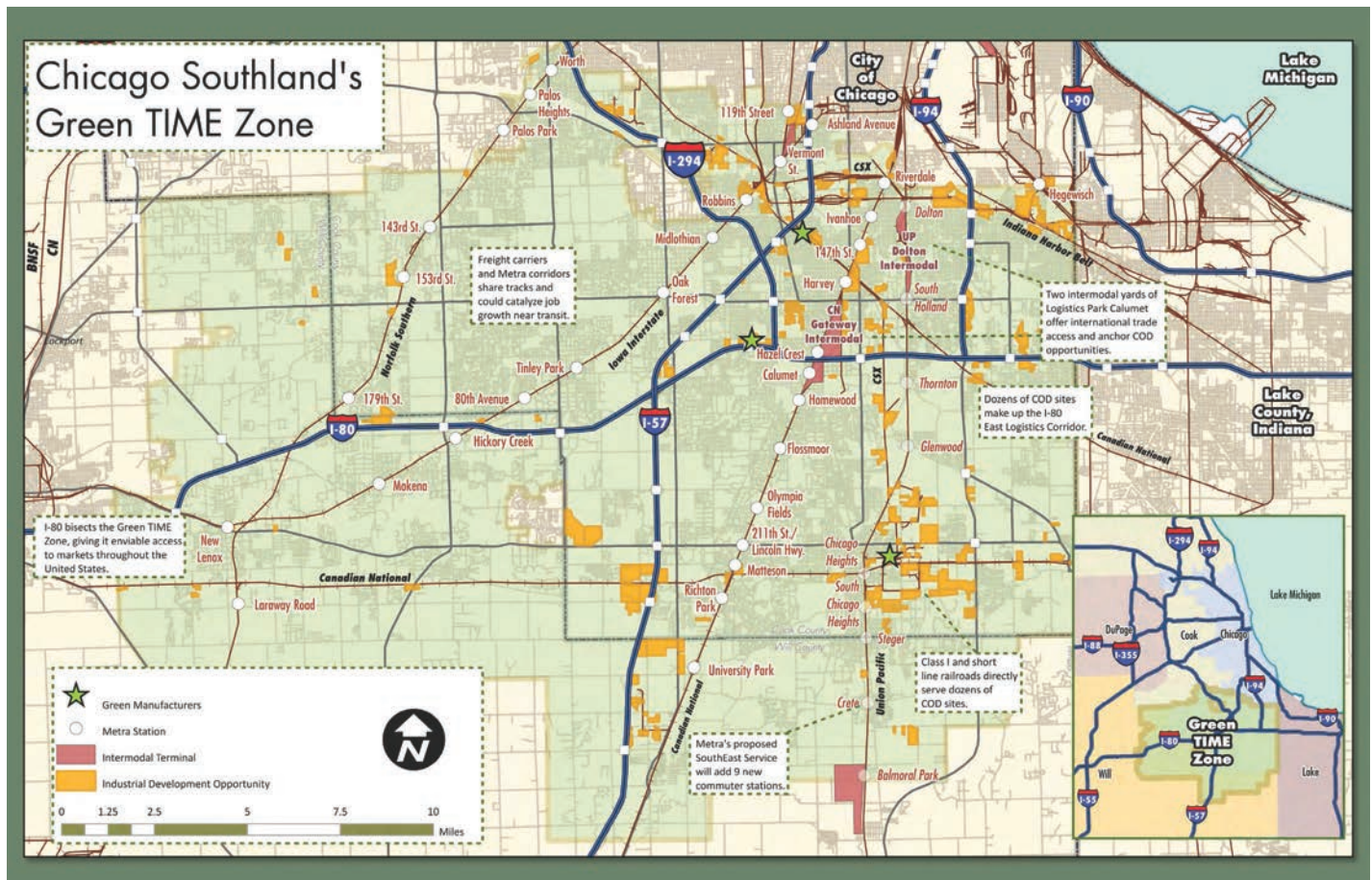
The Southland Green TIME Zone plan was developed over six years by two development arms of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) — the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative (CSHCDC) and the Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation (CSEDC) — in partnership with the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), the Delta Institute, and the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC).

The plan is a comprehensive strategy for sustainable redevelopment that integrates planning in three main areas:

- Transit oriented development (TOD)
- Cargo-oriented development (COD)
- Green manufacturing, supplemented by ongoing environmental initiatives in the sub-region.

The Plan identifies various mechanisms to create and further promote sustainable TOD, COD, and Green Manufacturing opportunities in the South Suburbs. With respect to TOD redevelopment, the Plan recommends focusing on municipal cooperation, employer-assisted housing, land assembly and predevelopment, land banking, zoning and entitlement coordination, energy and housing conservation, and housing development. Recommended COD initiatives highlighted in the Plan include railroad intermodal investments, land assembly and predevelopment, intermodal connector road improvements, environmental remediation, customs inspection, among others. Lastly, the Plan identifies specific projects that are practicing the concept of green manufacturing in the South Suburbs while listing their benefits.

With respect to Blue Island, the Green Time Zone report discusses the Logistics Park Calumet (LPC) and Fay's Point Development as examples of successful COD and TOD projects respectively.



CNT Case Study: Chicago's South Suburbs: Smart Growth in Older Communities (2011)

In 2011, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) produced a case study regarding the efforts that have occurred in the South Suburbs using the City of Blue Island as one of its case studies. The document describes the plans, efforts, and lessons that have been learned over the last decade when planning for this area.

The Case Study begins with a discussion regarding the work CNT began in 2004. At that time CNT began to study community assets and potential development opportunities surrounding rail stations and industrial districts in the south suburbs of Chicago. CNT launched a pilot project in the cities of Blue Island and Harvey, two communities with extensive rail infrastructure and a weakened yet resilient industrial base, examining whether linking transit-oriented development and cargo-oriented development could be an effective and sustainable economic revitalization strategy.

After discussing the results of the 2004 Pilot project the report summarizes the following efforts:

- Green Transit, Infrastructure, Manufacturing and Environment (TIME) Zone
- TOD and COD = A Replicable Strategy

towns were able to collect this detailed information using mapping technology made available by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the land-use and transportation planning agency for the seven northeastern Illinois counties. The creation and management of site inventories is a challenging task, but even a small town with limited financial resources can succeed with the help of supportive agencies that have GIS capability. Blue Island eventually created its own GIS system, a task that is beyond the ability of most small, disinvested cities.

The cities were now in a better position, having increased their planning capacity and understanding of the market, and having reformed their zoning and entitlement processes. With the aid of some government funding won early on, they were able to secure priority sites and begin redevelopment. Not every project required an extensive public-private effort, and between 2006 and 2008 some private developments were quickly approved while the towns began the more intensive effort needed for projects that required publicly funded predevelopment work.

SIMPLE, MOSTLY PRIVATE PROJECTS

Blue Island attracted an Aldi's supermarket — for which the planning commission required pedestrian-friendly design — as well as a mid-sized Hispanic supermarket, a mixed-use building with ground floor retail and storage space on the upper level, and a building that houses several small manufacturers and distributors. Fay's Point LLC, a market-rate residential developer, built and sold 36 riverfront townhomes without help

industrial land adjacent to the Canadian National terminal with the expectation that there would soon be expansion opportunities. Allied Tube, Harvey's largest employer, built a 500,000 square-foot distribution center. The city also approved a retail-residential center with six stores and 12 townhomes adjacent to the city's second rail station.

COMPLEX, PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

In 2006 Harvey and CNT began discussing how to redevelop 57 acres that straddled the town's boundary with the neighboring village of Divmoor. The property lies within 1.5 miles of two intermodal terminals and two expressway ramps, and is directly served by two freight railroads. It is called the "Wyman-Gordon site" for the machine manufacturer that operated in this location for more than 40 years before abandoning the site and



The master plan for the Fay's Point development on a peninsula at the convergence of the Cal Sag Channel and the Little Calumet River. Near historic downtown Blue Island, the peninsula has trails, a canal lock and marina, restored wetlands, woods and prairie.

CASE STUDY

CHICAGO'S SOUTH SUBURBS

SMART GROWTH IN OLDER COMMUNITIES



LESSONS LEARNED

Public Support for Redevelopment Should be Coordinated

Public agencies that support community redevelopment should coordinate the delivery of resources, much like the federal agencies involved in the Partnership for Sustainable Communities have begun coordinating grant programs and schedules. This would make it easier for all communities to succeed, not just those that can finance redevelopment themselves.

While the SGMA partnership was proving critical, another relationship was developing with the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), a regional business-backed planning group. MPC played a major role in the Green River Initiative, which was created by SGMA and seven of its member municipalities that front the Cal-Sag Channel to develop the waterfront as a scenic, recreational and residential asset.

MPC leveraged its relationships in the business community to involve developers willing to donate their time to study the towns' development challenges and help define proposals for

sustainable development along the riverfront. This group learned from the planning work already done by CNT and Blue Island, and worked with CNT and the Hitchcock Design Group, to come up with recommendations for environmentally positive development in the area. The Green River Pattern Book, developed by the Cal-Sag waterfront is a key element of redevelopment all seven suburbs along the channel.



Section Three

Community Outreach Summary

For the Blue Island Comprehensive Plan, a primary goal is to optimize community engagement, focusing particularly on populations that have typically been underrepresented or harder to reach in previous planning initiatives. A public outreach strategy was formulated by CMAP staff to emphasize broad-based inclusion of Blue Island residents and other stakeholders, such that the concerns and interests of Blue Island's diverse community will be reflected in the goals of its comprehensive plan. In particular, the outreach strategy will focus on including the African American population, the Latino population, students and young adults, and senior citizens in the comprehensive planning process.

Part of this community engagement process to determine Blue Island's existing conditions includes meeting with City officials and the project's steering committee, holding confidential interviews with key leaders throughout the community, and conducting public meetings to ascertain ideas from the wider community in Blue Island.



Steering Committee Meeting # 1

The Blue Island Comprehensive Plan's Steering Committee is comprised of the City's seven-member Plan Commission. This steering committee first met the evening of May 11, 2011, and CMAP staff attended this meeting to introduce members to the comprehensive plan project and gather feedback regarding issues and opportunities for improvement in Blue Island.

Issues

Steering Committee members noted a number of issues or concerns that they would like to see addressed in the comprehensive plan, ranging from aging infrastructure (including bridges, roadways, and sidewalks) to an incomplete zoning ordinance and lack of code enforcement. Several members raised issues about pedestrian and bicycle safety due to problematic roadway circulation and freight traffic throughout the city. Economic development was also a primary concern. Steering Committee members expressed that a multitude of absentee landlords make it difficult to address the commercial vacancies in the Uptown District. Committee members also acknowledged a loss of industry in the region and the community, and pointed to the broader need for business attraction and retention in Blue Island.

Top Issues:

- Aging infrastructure
- Zoning code enforcement
- Business attraction and retention
- Safety (public, pedestrian)
- Capitalize on assets

Opportunities

Next the Steering Committee members listed projects and redevelopment sites that could help address the issues and concerns they identified. Overall, there was a desire amongst the group to capitalize upon existing community assets. Some of the specific project ideas included:

- Updated and completed ordinances and easily searchable and enforceable codes
- Transit-oriented development around the Metra stations
- Repairs to bridges and other infrastructure
- The conversion of Western Avenue to a two-way street
- New pedestrian safety features at Western Avenue and 127th Street
- The addition of a new full-service grocery store at the former Jewel-Osco site
- More bike lanes and streetscaping throughout the city.



Key Person Interviews Summary

In order to gain further insight into the issues and opportunities that exist in Blue Island, CMAP staff conducted interviews with several key stakeholders throughout the community. These individuals represented a wide variety of interests and perspectives, and ranged from institutional leaders to business owners to elected officials.

People interviewed included:

- Greg Lochow, Executive Director, Blue Island Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Owner of GL Studios
- Cynthia Anderson, Director of Academic Outreach, Moraine Valley Community College – Blue Island Educational Center
- David Seaman, CEO, Pronger Smith Medical Care Center
- Alderman Mark Potoska, 3rd Ward, Arts and Culture Committee
- Rita Pacyga, Director of Blue Island Senior Citizens Office
- Tommy Brown, Executive Director of the Tommy A. Brown Sports Association
- Sandra Wilks, Executive Director of Community Relations and Marketing, Metro South Medical Center
- Dr. Ray Lauk, Superintendent, Cook County School District #130

Issues

Collectively, these stakeholders brought up community needs that they hope the comprehensive plan will address, ranging from issues with the physical environment to economic development needs to social concerns. Many interviewees expressed that upgrading infrastructure like bridges, improving pedestrian safety, and dealing with the negative impact of certain roadway circulation are all necessary steps to create the conditions for local businesses to thrive and for residents to enjoy a higher quality of life. Other issues focused on improving community identity both within Blue Island and around the region. Interviewees raised concerns about perceptions of public safety, a lack of strong identities for unique neighborhoods around the city, and the growing number of commercial vacancies in the Uptown district.

Opportunities

Although the issues that emerged from these interviews varied, a common sentiment was the desire to build upon the strong core of amenities in Blue Island to greatly improve the quality of life of its residents and the community's image throughout the region. The historic Uptown District, the variety of historic housing types, the access to multiple Metra and PACE transit lines, and the diversity of residents were all frequently identified as assets that the City needs to exploit further to increase livability and attract new residents and businesses.

Opportunities identified for improvements included:

- Adding more senior housing options;
- Increasing public art;
- Establishing Blue Island as a destination for its railroad history;
- Completing the Calumet-Sag Trail project;
- Increasing public bus service;
- Promoting public health;
- Improving community entrances and way-finding signage;
- Celebrating the city's ethnic diversity.

Public “Kick-off” Meetings #1 and #2

To initiate the public’s involvement in the comprehensive planning process, two separate meetings were held in different areas of the city to hear from residents and stakeholders about their main issues in Blue Island. Evening meetings were held at the Salvation Army’s Crossgenerations community facility on June 20, 2011, and at the Tommy A. Brown Sports Association on June 21, 2011. Whereas previous planning processes throughout the last several years have held their public meetings in central locations near the Uptown district, these venues were chosen purposefully outside of the center of Blue Island in order to maximize the convenience of the meeting venues for different populations and to reach into neighborhoods that may have been underrepresented in past community planning.

The meetings were promoted both in English and Spanish languages, and bilingual staff allowed for translation services during the meetings. Over 60 residents and community stakeholders attended the two public meetings to share their ideas and concerns. Roughly a quarter all participants were teens and young adults under the age of 25.

Since several planning processes and related public engagement sessions had occurred in Blue Island throughout the past several years, there was a need to distinguish the comprehensive plan as a citywide process that will tie together all of the public’s valuable input on previous planning studies. Participants learned about comprehensive planning through a brief presentation from CMAP, and then were asked to share their main issue with the entire group. Next, participants were divided into small groups to work with aerial maps of the city to discuss their perceived opportunities for improvement.

Many of the top issues discussed concerned the physical and built environment, from dilapidated infrastructure (specifically, closed bridges) to needed streetscaping to vacant and non-maintained storefronts. Other issues related to social concerns, such as the need for safe gathering places for young adults and better access to information and community involvement. Public health and safety were addressed through expressed interests in healthy food options, more recreation areas, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian safety measures, as well as litter and garbage clean-up. Economic concerns surfaced as participants discussed the need for attracting more daily shopping options in Uptown and throughout the city.

Focus Group Outreach

Local business outreach and youth engagement is currently in progress.

Current Strengths of Blue Island

In each of the meetings and conversations held throughout the first two phases of Blue Island’s comprehensive plan process, residents and stakeholders shared a myriad of strengths found in Blue Island. By identifying those assets which the community treasures most, the comprehensive plan can preserve and enhance those strengths as it prepares Blue Island for future development. The “word cloud” (Figure 4) illustrates the most commonly mentioned strengths that Blue Island possesses today.

Figure 4. Community strengths



Section Four

Demographic Summary

To gain insight into the market and demographic dynamics that impact the Blue Island community, data from the U.S. Census was gathered for analysis. Data discussed in this section comes from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census, and from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, both collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. For comparisons and trend analysis, data was also gathered for the same periods for Cook County and the Chicago, IL-IN Urbanized Area, which includes all contiguous areas with a population density of more than 1,000 persons per square mile.

Demographic Analysis

Blue Island can be characterized generally as a low-to-moderate income community, with significant pockets of middle-class and working-class family households, as well as more impoverished sections. Blue Island's housing stock is a balanced mix of single-family homes and multifamily structures, with most of those being in the 2-6 unit range. Because of the concentration of rail lines in the community, Blue Island has had a long history of being an industrial and manufacturing center, and its demographic makeup reflects that legacy. Analysis of U.S. Census and American Community Survey data yields the following findings.

Blue Island's population increased slightly in the past decade. Between 2000 and 2010, Blue Island's population increased by slightly more than 1 percent (from 23,463 to 23,706 residents). That figure is impressive given the slow growth of the region during the past decade. Since 2000, Cook County's population dropped by 3 percent, while region-wide, population grew by over 3 percent.

Table 4.1. Population

	BLUE ISLAND	COOK COUNTY	CHICAGO REGION
Percent population change, 2000-2010	+1.0%	-3.4%	+3.5%

Blue Island's minority share of the population continues to grow rapidly, while its white population continues to decline. More than three-quarters of Blue Island residents in 2010 were members of a minority group, up from 64 percent in 2000. The rapid growth in minority growth between 1980 and 2000 appears to have dissipated and is being replaced by more moderate growth, particularly among Hispanics. Meanwhile, almost two-fifths of Blue Island's white residents left the community between 2000 and 2010.

Table 4.2. Blue Island race/ethnicity

	2000	PERCENT	2010	PERCENT	PERCENT CHANGE
White	8,498	36.2%	4,990	21.0%	-16.2%
Black	5,599	23.9%	7,173	30.3%	+6.4%
Hispanic	8,899	37.9%	11,133	47.0%	+9.1%
Asian	78	0.3%	79	0.3%	+0.0%
Other	389	1.7%	331	1.4%	-0.3%

Blue Island is a young community compared to Cook County and the Chicago region, but may be closing that gap. The median age of Blue Island residents grew moderately between 2000 and 2010. Median age grew from 30.4 years to 31.3 years over the ten-year period, compared with a small increase for Cook County (33.6 to 34.7) and for the region (33.8 to 35.1).

Table 4.3. Median age

	2000	2010	PERCENT CHANGE
Blue Island	30.4	31.3	+3.0%
Cook County	33.6	35.3	+5.1%
Chicago region	33.8	N/A	-

Blue Island's age cohort makeup is changing – decreasing its number of seniors and children, yet holding steady in its number of young and middle-age adults. Between 2000 and 2010 the number of children age 19 and younger in Blue Island declined and the number of seniors age 65 and older declined as well. Compared to the County and Region, Blue Island has a greater percentage of younger residents.

Table 4.4. Age cohorts, 2010

AGE COHORT	BLUE ISLAND		COOK COUNTY		CHICAGO REGION	
	TOTAL	PCT.	TOTAL	PCT.	TOTAL	PCT.
0-19	7,807	32.9%	1,374,096	26.5%	2,346,937	27.8%
20-34	5,306	22.4%	1,204,066	23.2%	1,790,049	21.2%
35-49	4,898	20.7%	1,067,351	20.5%	1,807,886	21.4%
50-64	3,690	15.6%	928,833	17.9%	1,534,488	18.2%
65-79	1,429	6.0%	436,799	8.4%	679,470	8.1%
80+	576	2.4%	183,530	3.5%	272,556	3.2%

Demographic Key Conclusions

Analysis of the demographic data yields the following conclusions:

- Despite the overall slow rate of population growth, Blue Island is becoming a point of destination for minority families.** The slow growth in Blue Island's population is almost exclusively due to the decline in its number of white residents in the last decade. On the other hand, Blue Island showed modest increases in black and Hispanic populations, continuing on a trend that has occurred for the last twenty years. It is likely that Blue Island is drawing black and Hispanic residents seeking to leave Chicago.
- The changing age structure of Blue Island may have impacts on future housing needs.** It appears Blue Island may be transitioning from being a traditional family-oriented community to one with fewer children and more empty nesters. This will have to be taken into consideration when future policy decisions on Blue Island's housing are made.

Section Five

Economic Overview

Employment Analysis

Blue Island has lost approximately one-sixth of its private sector jobs since 2000. According to the Illinois Department of Employment Security, the number of jobs in Blue Island decreased from 9,521 to 7,889 during the last decade, a loss of 17 percent. Job loss has had a significant impact on Blue Island, but it is consistent with similar data for both Cook County and the region. During the same period, jobs declined by 13 percent in Cook County, and 10 percent throughout the Chicago region.

What has not transpired in Blue Island, however, is an increase in the number of private sector businesses like what has occurred in the county and the region. The number of businesses declined slightly in Blue Island over the last decade; however, due to the number of (likely) small business startups since 2000, the number of businesses increased in Cook County and in the region overall.

Table 5.1. Private sector jobs data

	2000	2010	PERCENT CHANGE
Private sector businesses	453	444	-2.0%
Private sector jobs	9,521	7,889	-17.1%
Jobs per resident	2.46	2.82	+14.6%

Table 5.2. Private sector employment data

	BLUE ISLAND	COOK COUNTY	CHICAGO REGION
Change in private sector businesses, 2000-2010	-2.0%	+12.8%	+17.9%
Change in private sector jobs, 2000-2010	-17.1%	-13.7%	-10.2%
Change in jobs per resident, 2000-2010	+14.6%	+13.4%	+13.0%

The presence of Blue Island's industrial areas, the MetroSouth Medical Center (the former St. Francis Hospital) and associated health care businesses provides Blue Island residents with significant employment anchors. According to Dun & Bradstreet's Market Insight database, Blue Island's largest employers in 2011 are:

Table 5.3. Largest employers

EMPLOYER	2011 EMPLOYMENT
Modern Drop Forge Corporation	430
JK Guardian Security Services	400
A&R Security Services	400
School District 130	359
G&W Electric Co.	335
City of Blue Island	221
Metro South Medical Center	220
School District 218	176
RNA Corporation	150
Pronger-Smith Medical Associates	150

In 2009, 19 percent of Blue Island residents were employed in education or health care jobs, roughly on par with figures in Cook County (21 percent) and the region (20 percent). In fact, the growth in jobs in the education and health care sector has largely replaced those lost in the manufacturing sector. By 2009 there were 25 percent fewer Blue Island residents working in manufacturing than in 2000.

Table 5.4. Top three industries employing residents, 2009

BLUE ISLAND		COOK COUNTY		CHICAGO REGION	
INDUSTRY SECTOR	PCT.	INDUSTRY SECTOR	PCT.	INDUSTRY SECTOR	PCT.
Education/Health Care	19.4%	Education/Health Care	21.0%	Education/Health Care	20.3%
Manufacturing	14.0%	Professional/Management/Administrative	13.1%	Manufacturing	12.7%
Arts/Recreation/Food Service	11.7%	Manufacturing	11.4%	Professional/Management/Administrative	12.5%

However, few of the employed residents in Blue Island appear to take advantage of the employment anchors. In a scenario common in many suburban communities, few Blue Island residents work within the community and the vast majority of workers in Blue Island come from outside of the community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employment and Household Dynamics (LEHD) database, 749 Blue Island residents work in Blue Island.

Table 5.5. Blue Island worker inflow-outflow dynamics

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Workers living in Blue Island	9,238	100.0%
Workers living in Blue Island, but employed outside	8,489	91.9%
Workers living in Blue Island, employed in Blue Island	749	8.1%

Blue Island residents largely work in lower-paying clerical and service jobs, and are less likely to work in higher-paying management jobs. In 2009 nearly half of Blue Island residents worked in sales/office or service occupations (48 percent). Similar figures are lower for Cook County (43 percent) and the region (42 percent). Only 21 percent of Blue Island residents report working in management jobs, compared to 36 percent for the county or the region.

Table 5.6. Top three occupations employing residents, 2009

BLUE ISLAND		COOK COUNTY		CHICAGO REGION	
JOB SECTOR	PCT.	JOB SECTOR	PCT.	JOB SECTOR	PCT.
Sales/Office	24.5%	Management	36.4%	Management	36.6%
Service	22.4%	Sales/Office	26.0%	Sales/Office	26.5%
Management	20.9%	Service	16.9%	Service	15.9%

Income Analysis

Household incomes in Blue Island are changing at the same pace as that of the county and region, and still remain relatively low in comparison. For all households, income for Blue Island's residents increased slightly more than that of the county and region. However, that does not hold true for all groups in Blue Island. In fact, median household income for white and black households in Blue Island increased at a rate faster than that of Cook County and the region. Blue Island's Hispanic households lagged significantly in the increase in household income, growing only 9 percent over the decade.

Table 5.7. Median household income

	BLUE ISLAND	COOK COUNTY	CHICAGO REGION
Change in MHI, 2000-2009	21.2%	17.4%	16.6%
Change in white MHI, 2000-2009	50.9%	23.8%	20.3%
Change in black MHI, 2000-2009	22.4%	9.7%	9.2%
Change in Hispanic MHI, 2000-2009	8.5%	13.5%	14.1%

Table 5.8. Detailed median household income

	BLUE ISLAND		COOK COUNTY		CHICAGO REGION	
	2000	2009	2000	2009	2000	2009
Median household income	\$36,520	\$44,270	\$45,922	\$53,903	\$50,747	\$59,193
MHI, whites	\$36,261	\$54,715	\$53,909	\$66,736	\$56,865	\$68,435
MHI, blacks	\$31,418	\$38,450	\$32,417	\$35,554	\$32,962	\$35,979
MHI, Hispanics	\$41,714	\$45,278	\$39,560	\$44,903	\$41,291	\$47,114

Education Analysis

More Blue Island residents are receiving high school diplomas; however, the number of residents with bachelor's degrees is decreasing. More adult Blue Island residents age 25+ have high school diplomas in 2009 compared to 2000. In fact, the number of residents with a high school diploma grew more rapidly than similar figures for the county and region. However, the number of residents with a college degree or more decreased, increasing an already significant gap in college degree attainment that exists with county and regional residents. Only 11 percent of Blue Island residents have a bachelor's degree or more in education, compared to about a third of residents in Cook County or the Chicago region.

Table 5.9. Education

	BLUE ISLAND		COOK COUNTY		CHICAGO REGION	
	2000	2009	2000	2009	2000	2009
High school diploma or higher	66.0%	74.3%	77.7%	82.7%	80.6%	84.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	11.7%	11.3%	28.0%	32.7%	29.6%	33.4%

Key Economic Conclusions

Blue Island possesses many economic development strengths with its concentration of manufacturing, transportation and health care industries. However, Blue Island demonstrates a disconnect between its economic base and its residential employment that indicate weakness. The economic development data yields the following conclusions:

- ***Blue Island has been severely impacted by the loss of manufacturing jobs.*** Much of Blue Island's identity is tied into its history as an industrial hub. However, the last decade saw a substantial loss in the number of manufacturing jobs in the community.
- ***There has not been a significant effect of increased entrepreneurship or business attraction activities on the continued job losses in Blue Island.*** Part of the reason that job loss has been particularly severe in Blue Island is because there have been few startups. While Cook County and the Chicago region lost jobs, there was an increase in the number of businesses; Blue Island reported a decrease in the number of businesses as well as jobs over the last nine years.
- ***An opportunity may exist to better match the types of jobs currently offered in Blue Island with the present skill set of its residents, thereby increasing local employment prospects.*** It is unrealistic to think that a community of Blue Island's size, in a region this size, would employ all of its residents within its municipal boundaries. However, given the Blue Island's manufacturing and health care-based employment base and its number of moderately skilled workers, greater connections between the two could be sought.
- ***There is a need to improve educational attainment among Blue Island residents as it may be hindering future employment prospects for residents.*** Higher educational attainment may be the surest way to increase access to the jobs that are growing in Blue Island, particularly those in health care and in transportation. Residents will have to demonstrate greater progress in that regard to get into the jobs Blue Island has to offer.

Section Six

Existing Land Use

The section describes the existing land use and development conditions within Blue Island with a focus on types of uses, existing zoning, and the built environment. The information in this section has been obtained from CMAP's Geographic Information System (GIS) database and a visual assessment of the community undertaken by the project team in July 2011.

A detailed inventory of Blue Island's existing land use pattern is shown in Table 6.1 and Figure 5.

Residential

Single-Family Residential

Single-family residential uses are the primary residential type in the community and also represents the largest total acreage of any land use in the City (40.5% of the City). The physical and socioeconomic character of each of the single-family residential neighborhoods is unique, ranging from historic Greek Revival style homes to mid-century Sears Modern homes to newer Ranch style homes.

Multi-Family Residential

According to the City's existing land use map, multiple-family residential units are sporadically located throughout Blue Island and account for approximately 2.7 % of the City's total land area. Multi-family residential in the City includes two to three story condominiums, rental apartments, and senior living units.

Industrial

Given its extensive railroad, waterway, and roadway infrastructure, it is little surprise that Blue Island is home to several large manufacturing and warehousing facilities. These include large intermodal facilities north of Vermont Street, manufacturing facilities south of 135th Street, and smaller scale industrial buildings along Wireton Road.

There are several vacant sites that need remediation before they can be built upon. Cleaning up brownfield sites is an expensive and time consuming process. The City of Blue Island has been successful in acquiring some funding for cleanup of abandoned industrial parcels in the past decade.

Community Facilities

Schools: Blue Island is home to fourteen educational institutions located within two school districts, District 130 and District 218. A majority of these are located north of the Calumet Sag Channel.

Educational/Medical Institutions: Moraine Valley Community College has a satellite campus located in Uptown. Blue Cap, an organization serving infants, children, and adults with developmental disabilities occupies several parcels along Broadway Street.

MetroSouth Medical Center and Pronger Smith Medical Care are major medical institutions and land owners in the city, located within the Uptown District and walking distance from the Vermont Street Metra station.

Infrastructure and Utilities: A number of utilities owned by private utility companies and governmental agencies exist in the community. In addition, the extensive network of commuter and freight railroad rights-of-way account for more than 10% of the city's land area.

Commercial

Retail: Despite increasing retail vacancies along Western Avenue, the corridor continues to be the main commercial corridor in the city. Commercial and work place land uses are primarily located within the Uptown District and along Western Avenue north of the Calumet Sag Channel. In total, they account for 6% of the city's land area with an additional 1% being vacant parcels or buildings.

Auto-Related: A number of small scale auto service businesses are located along major commercial corridors including Western Avenue, Vermont Street, and 127th Street. Auto sales stores are located along 127th Street west of Western Avenue (e.g. Lincoln Mercury)

Open Space

Parks: The Blue Island Park District is responsible for the maintenance, upkeep, and programming of twelve parks, recreation areas, and play lots within city limits. Memorial Park, located at the corner of 127th Street and Highland Avenue, is the largest public open space with a number of active and passive recreational amenities. Opened to the public in 1994, The Meadows is an 18 hole public golf course located in the northwest corner of the community.

Forest Preserve: The northwest portion of Calumet Woods Forest Preserve is located within city limits, acting as a buffer between residential uses to the north and the Little Calumet River.

Calumet Sag Channel: The Calumet Sag Channel, also referred to as the Calumet Sag Channel, is a 16 mile navigation canal running east-west through Blue Island. Used until a few decades ago to host recreational events, the channel currently carries the city's treated sewage.

Table 6.1. Land use inventory

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION	AREA (ACRES)	AREA (PERCENTAGE)
Single family residential	1054.6	40.5%
Multi-family residential	70.8	2.7%
Mobile home parks	44.9	1.7%
Commercial/mixed-use	168.7	6.5%
Open space	598.9	23.0%
Manufacturing	290.8	11.2%
Institutional	85.2	3.3%
Utilities/transportation	287.1	11.1%

Current Zoning

Last amended in 2006, the Blue Island Zoning Ordinance does not accurately reflect the existing development pattern of the city. As per the zoning map, the community's entire housing stock is zoned under the R-1 single-family residential district designation, which is not the reality on the ground. A number of non-conformities exist that relate to setbacks, heights, and building types.

The existing zoning classifications include:

Table 6.2. Zoning classifications

ZONING CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM LOT AREA	MAXIMUM LOT COVERAGE	MAXIMUM HEIGHT
R-1: Single Family Residential	4,312.5 sf.	40%	35 ft.
C-1: Central Area Commercial	3,125 sf.	90%	No limit
C-2: Highway Commercial	6,250 sf.	70%	No limit
I-1: Limited Industrial	10,000 sf.	60%	No limit
I-2: General Industrial	40,000 sf.	60%	No limit
L-C: Land Conservation	80,000 sf.	10%	35 ft.

The following existing land uses are in contrast to their current zoning.

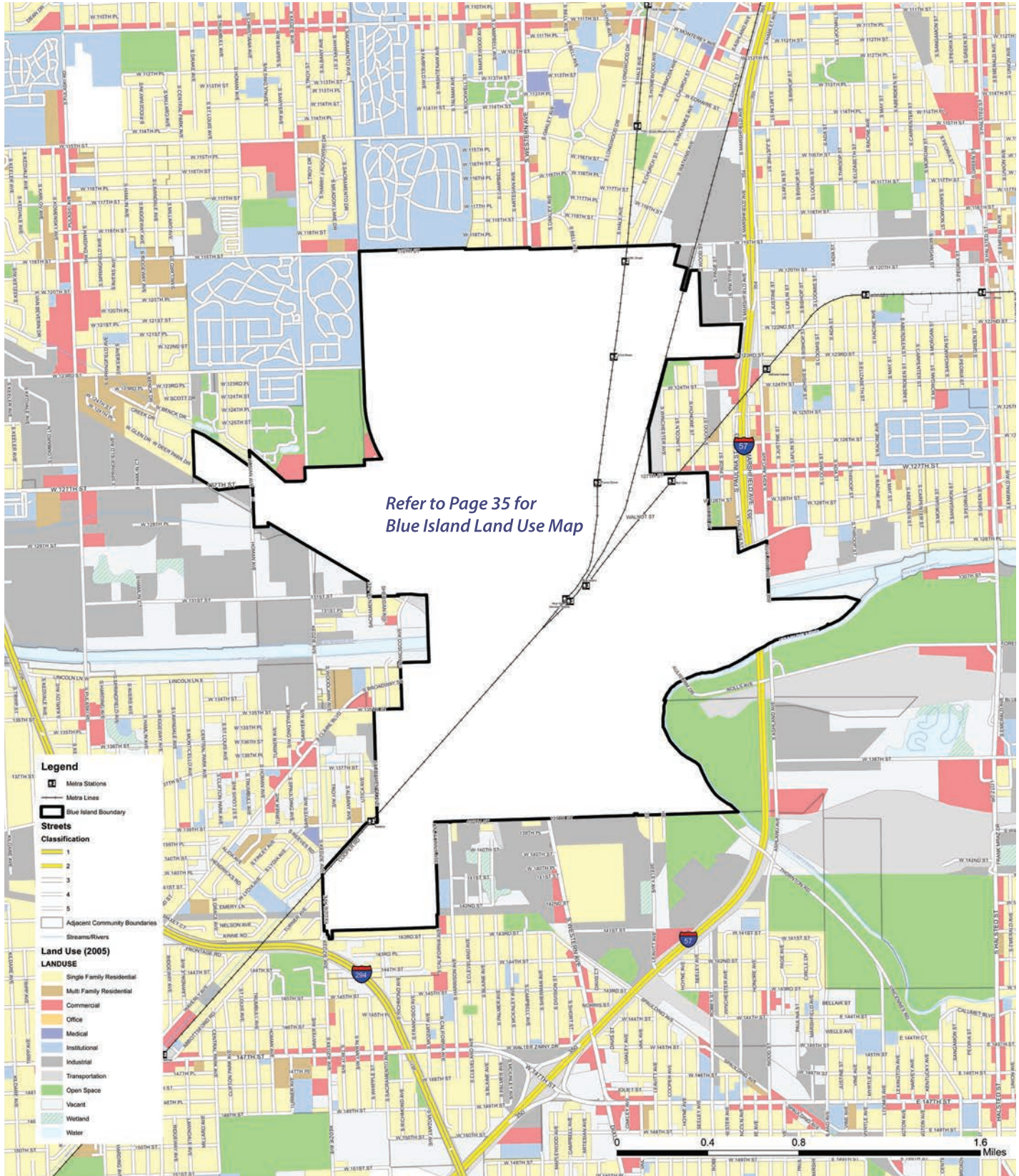
Multi-Family Residential: The existing zoning ordinance does not include any classification for multi-family residential units. The ordinance was amended in 1993 to exclude new multi-family developments. This is a significant exclusion as there a number of multi-family residential units including owner occupied and rental apartments spread throughout the community. This has resulted in several non-conformities that create a significant problem in terms of property maintenance.

Institutional and Open Space: The zoning ordinance does not have a separate classification for institutional uses. These, including school, libraries, religious institutions, are accommodated as permitted uses within the R-1 single family district. Similarly, open areas such as parks, recreational amenities, and other natural features are permitted uses within the L-C Land Conservation District. There are however is no district designated for land conservation.

Figure 5. Existing land use



Figure 6. 2005 Existing land use including adjacent communities



Source: CMAP's 2005 Land Use Inventory for Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will Counties, Illinois. Version 1.0. Published January 2009

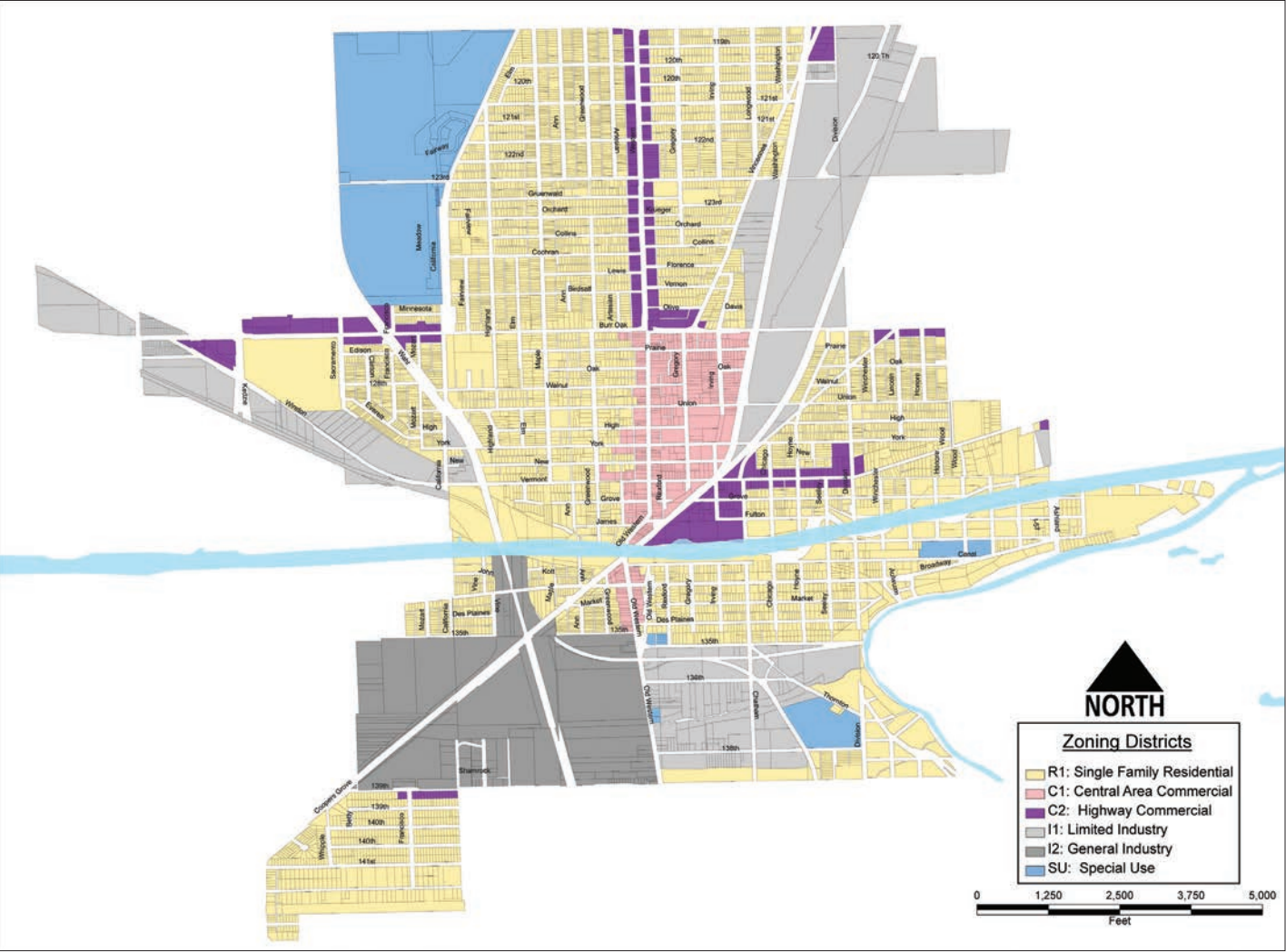
Key Land Use and Development Conclusions

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing land use and development conditions in Blue Island. Moving forward in the planning process, these key findings should help to shape (and to inform) the community's vision, goals and objectives, and ultimate recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use and Development Conclusions

- ***A large number of vacant structures exist throughout the community and contribute to blight.*** Additionally, there are several industrial parcels with no structures, e.g. corner of 119th Street and Vincennes Road. The large number of vacant structures and/or parcels detract create 'gaps' in the built environment. Vacant storefronts along the city's Main Street, Western Avenue, are in need of repair and maintenance.
- ***There is a need for greater preservation efforts to maintain the historic facades of buildings along Western Avenue.*** A number of building facades have been modified over the past few decades, diluting the architectural heritage of the corridor. The streetscape and signage conditions have experienced a similar decline.
- ***There are a number of historic properties including homes and retail stores that enhance community character.*** A number of retail storefronts within the Uptown District are historic in character, especially along Western Avenue. Similarly, several single family residential homes in the city are historic in character, having been designed by prominent architects including Robert E. Seyfarth and Bertrand Goldberg in the early 1900s.
- ***The city is home to a number of excellent community facilities including religious institutions, parks, and schools.*** Memorial Park is the largest recreational facility in the city. In addition, the Cook County Forest Preserve and Calumet Sag Channel provide additional natural open space for development of recreational activities (e.g. bike trails) while supporting walkability between uses. There are a number of large open spaces available within and in close proximity to the city.
- ***Vacant parcels present excellent opportunities for development and redevelopment.*** The parcels available range in size from several acres to less than 10,000 square feet, presenting opportunities for infill development, transit-oriented development, neighborhood parks, community gardens, and multi-use trail developments.
- ***Previous Land Use Plans have been completed for areas throughout the City, however, the focus has primarily been upon the Uptown and Metra Stations.*** Redevelopment efforts in the Uptown District have been prepared specifically near the Vermont Street Metra Station, the MetroSouth Medical Center and the Northeast Industrial and Commercial Sites. For example, the MPC Blue Island Task Force Report focused on the city's Uptown District, outlining zoning reform strategies, land use changes, and program modifications based on neighboring communities' development initiatives.
- ***Currently, the City is part of a study to prepare a transit study called the Chicago Southland Transit Region Initiative.*** The six (6) Metra station areas within Blue Island were part of the study and evaluated in detail. Information pertaining to existing zoning, land use, demographic data, and community vision were compiled and analyzed to arrive at station area typologies and developer typologies for each station area. The Blue Island-Vermont Street station area was designated as a high density multi-use development typology whereas the other station areas were recommended for lower intensities of development.
- ***A follow-up Phase 2 study is currently underway.*** This study will focus on specific implementation strategies, financing mechanisms, and regulatory changes to help three selected communities get one step closer towards realizing their station area vision. One of the station areas included in the Phase 2 study is the Blue Island-Vermont Street station area.
- ***Plans have proposed different types of development options in key areas of the City, especially in the Uptown District.*** An example is the Community Design Workshops (2009). The result of those workshops were different depictions of what each of the GO TO 2040 scenarios might look like at the local level if applied in the Uptown area: Innovate, Reinvest and Preserve.

Figure 7. Current zoning



Source: City of Blue Island, 2011

Section Seven

Housing

Blue Island's housing stock is primarily single-family in character with some multi-family units (in the form of rental and owner-occupied) located throughout the community. Multi-family housing is located throughout the community. Overall, the housing stock is well-maintained and consists of a mix of both aging and new construction.

Although housing stock is considered well-maintained, housing affordability and character differs significantly on either side of the Calumet Sag Channel. Newer home developments and attractive residential units do exist south of the channel, however, there are larger areas of homes that appear to need improved maintenance and larger vacant properties that detract from the overall sense of neighborhoods.

In addition to single-family homes, multi-family homes are distributed throughout the community, with a larger concentration north of the Cal-Sag Channel. Varying in height from 2-4 stories, most multi-family buildings are older and varied in architectural style.

Historic Homes

Several historic and well maintained neighborhoods, including the City's Historic District (Old Western Avenue) are located within and near the Uptown District. However, a majority of the Sears Homes are located north of 127th Street. More detail about these homes and landmarks is presented in the Image and Identity section of this report.

Newer Residential Developments

In addition to older homes, and historic structures, the City experienced new residential developments over the last decade. One of the newest, and largest residential developments is Fay's Point. This residential project was the last major housing development planned for and constructed in the city, comprising of high quality and attractive townhomes, a marina, and senior housing units. Fay's Point Development contains the only large scaled senior suites in Blue Island with 42 units. According to the City, all 42 units are occupied.

Mobile Home Residences

In addition to multi-family condominiums and apartments, there are also mobile home residential neighborhoods located throughout the City. In general, these neighborhoods are in need of improved screening and buffering from adjacent non-residential uses such as commercial or industrial businesses and arterial streets. Many of the homes are also in need of improved maintenance or general landscape improvements. These neighborhoods also appear to have poorly maintained internal roads and parking areas.

Housing and Transportation (H+T) Affordability Index

Housing and Transportation (H+T) Affordability Index has been developed as a more complete measure of affordability beyond the standard method of assessing only housing costs. By taking into account both the cost of housing as well as the cost of transportation associated with the location of the home, H+T provides a more complete understanding of affordability. Dividing these costs by Representative Regional Incomes illustrates the Cost Burden placed on a Typical Household by H+T expenses.

While housing alone is traditionally deemed affordable when consuming no more than 30% of income, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) has defined an affordable range for H+T as the combined costs consuming no more than 45% of income. CNT has calculated the housing costs as a percent of income to be 38.3% in Blue Island (compared to 47.5% in the region).

Source: http://htaindex.cnt.org/mapping_tool.php#region=Chicago%2C%20IL&theme=menu=0&layer1=23&layer2=24

Photos illustrating the diversity of housing stock in the City of Blue Island.



Key Housing Conclusions

The following are key conclusions regarding Blue Island's existing housing conditions. Moving forward in the planning process, these key findings should help to shape (and to inform) the community's vision, goals and objectives, and ultimate recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Housing Conclusions

- **CNT has calculated the housing costs as a percent of income to be 38.3% in Blue Island (compared to 47.5% in the region).** The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) has defined an affordable range for H+T as the combined costs consuming no more than 45% of income.
- **Blue Island lost 4 percent of its housing units in the last decade.** The last decade can be characterized as one of substantial growth in the number of housing units throughout the nation as well as in the Chicago region. However, Blue Island was not a recipient of such growth. Blue Island's number of housing units slipped from 8,750 in 2000 to 8,410 in 2009. The Chicago region's number of housing units grew by 6 percent between 2000 and 2009, while Cook County's housing units grew by 4 percent during the same period.



- **The share of family households in Blue Island is growing while the number of non-family households is shrinking, in contrast to trends at the county and regional level.**

Blue Island may be developing a reputation as an affordable housing option for families. Countering the larger regional and national trend of a decline in the percentage of family households, Blue Island's share grew from 66 percent to 70 percent during the last decade. Both Cook County and the region registered slight declines.

Table 7.1. Percentage of family households

	2000	2009
Blue Island	66.3%	69.9%
Cook county	64.3%	62.3%
Chicago region	67.5%	65.9%

- **However, Blue Island has lower homeownership levels compared to the county and the region.** In 2009, 56 percent of Blue Island's housing units were owner-occupied single-family homes, up from 54 percent in 2000. These figures are slightly lower than homeownership rates in Cook County, with percentages of 61 percent and 58 percent respectively over the same periods. Both figures are substantially lower than that for the Chicago region, with a 67 percent homeownership figure.

Table 7.2. Owner occupied housing

	2000	2009
Blue Island	54.3%	55.7%
Cook county	57.9%	60.7%
Chicago region	64.1%	66.6%

- **Housing in Blue Island is slightly older, smaller and much less expensive than housing in Cook County and the region.**

In 2009, the median age of a home in Blue Island was 59 years. Homes in Blue Island are slightly older than those in Cook County (53 years), and the region (46 years). Blue Island's homes tend to be smaller on average than those in Cook County and the Chicago region, with an average of 5.0 rooms in 2009 (5.2 for Cook County and 5.4 for the region). However, the starkest housing contrast for Blue Island lies in its value — owner-occupied home values have consistently remained slightly more than half of the value of homes overall in Cook County and in the Chicago region.

Table 7.3. Median year structure built

	2000	2009
Blue Island	1954	1950
Cook county	1956	1956
Chicago region	1962	1963

Table 7.4. Year structure built (Blue Island)

2009		
YEAR	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL
2000-2009	221	2.6%
1990-1999	403	4.8%
1970-1989	1,381	16.4%
1950-1969	2,230	26.5%
1949 and earlier	4,175	49.6%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey

- **Vacant units nearly doubled in Blue Island between 2000 and 2009.** The number of vacant housing units in Blue Island substantially increased over the nine-year span, from 503 in 2000 to 920 in 2009. This represents an 83 percent increase over the period. While this increase is substantial, it is less so when compared to Cook County (88 percent) and the region (86 percent).

- **The City should continue to implement the recommendations of the Homes for a Changing Region report.** The Blue Island Housing Policy Action Plan is built upon an analysis of demographic trends and existing housing conditions. Some of the major issues identified in Blue Island's current housing stock include high vacancy rates (10%), large percentage of economically stressed households (i.e. spending more than 30% of income on housing), and overcrowding in both rental and owner occupied units. The Plan recommends a series of action items for the City based on an analysis of existing housing inventory and housing capacity, future housing needs projections, and opportunities to incorporate sustainable practices.

These include residential recommendations such as:

- Encouraging transit-oriented mixed-use development within the Vermont Street Metra station area.
- Promoting development which can make the recently revitalized Metro South Medical Center more successful
- Targeting neighborhood rehab projects.
- Creating a condo conversion ordinance.
- Continuing mixed-income housing development at Fay's Point.
- Collaborating with property owners to prevent overcrowding and find long-term solutions
- Continuing interjurisdictional collaboration on housing and economic development issues.



Section Eight

Mobility

This section describes the existing transportation system within Blue Island with a focus on streets, freight rail, water, public transit, and alternative transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks and trails. The information in this section was obtained from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), Metra, Pace, and based upon a visual analysis of existing conditions.

Transportation and Circulation Overview

Due to its well established rail and road infrastructure, Blue Island is conveniently connected to the greater Chicagoland region. Residents rely primarily on private automobiles, however, public transit opportunities are located throughout the community include pace bus routes and Metra commuter trains.

Manufacturing and other industrial businesses utilize the existing freight infrastructure including railroads, intermodal facilities, and highways to move their goods through the region.

Roadways

Functional Classification

Roadways vary not only in width, design, cross-section, or traffic volume, but also in their function. The functional classification of a road describes the character of service the road is intended to provide. The various road classifications primarily serve two competing functions; access to property and travel mobility depending upon their purpose. Based on IDOT's analysis, the following is a breakdown of roadways in Blue Island by functional classification:

Principal Arterial Roads

Burr Oak Avenue and Western Avenue are two major arterial roads. They are designed for high speed travel and to accommodate longer distance trips. Although these corridors move traffic through the community efficiently, businesses along Western Avenue have expressed the lack of a safe pedestrian environment in the Uptown District for the same reason.

Minor Arterial Roads

The minor arterial streets in Blue Island include 119th Street, Broadway Street, Ashland Avenue, and Kedzie Avenue. Similar to principal arterial roads, minor arterials provide continuity and high traffic volume movement for travel over long distances within the region and between major activity centers, such as employment centers and commercial centers. Ashland Avenue, Francisco Avenue, and Western Avenue provide the three points of vehicular access across the Calumet Sag Channel.

Collector Roads

As the name suggests, collector roads “collect” and distribute traffic from local thoroughfares to the arterial and regional thoroughfares. In Blue Island, these include 123rd Street, Wireton Road, Vermont Street, and Francisco Avenue.

Local Roads

All remaining streets in Blue Island are classified as local roads. By definition, local roads provide access to private property. Travel speeds, trip lengths, and traffic volumes are generally low and access to adjoining property is generally unrestricted.

Sidewalks

The city has an extensive network of pedestrian sidewalks connecting various neighborhoods. Although resulting in a relatively safe environment for pedestrians, the sidewalks vary in their physical condition from fair to poor. There are limited pedestrian or bicycle connections outside of the community to adjacent neighborhoods, parks, and community facilities which discourages walking and bicycling as an alternative mode of transportation.

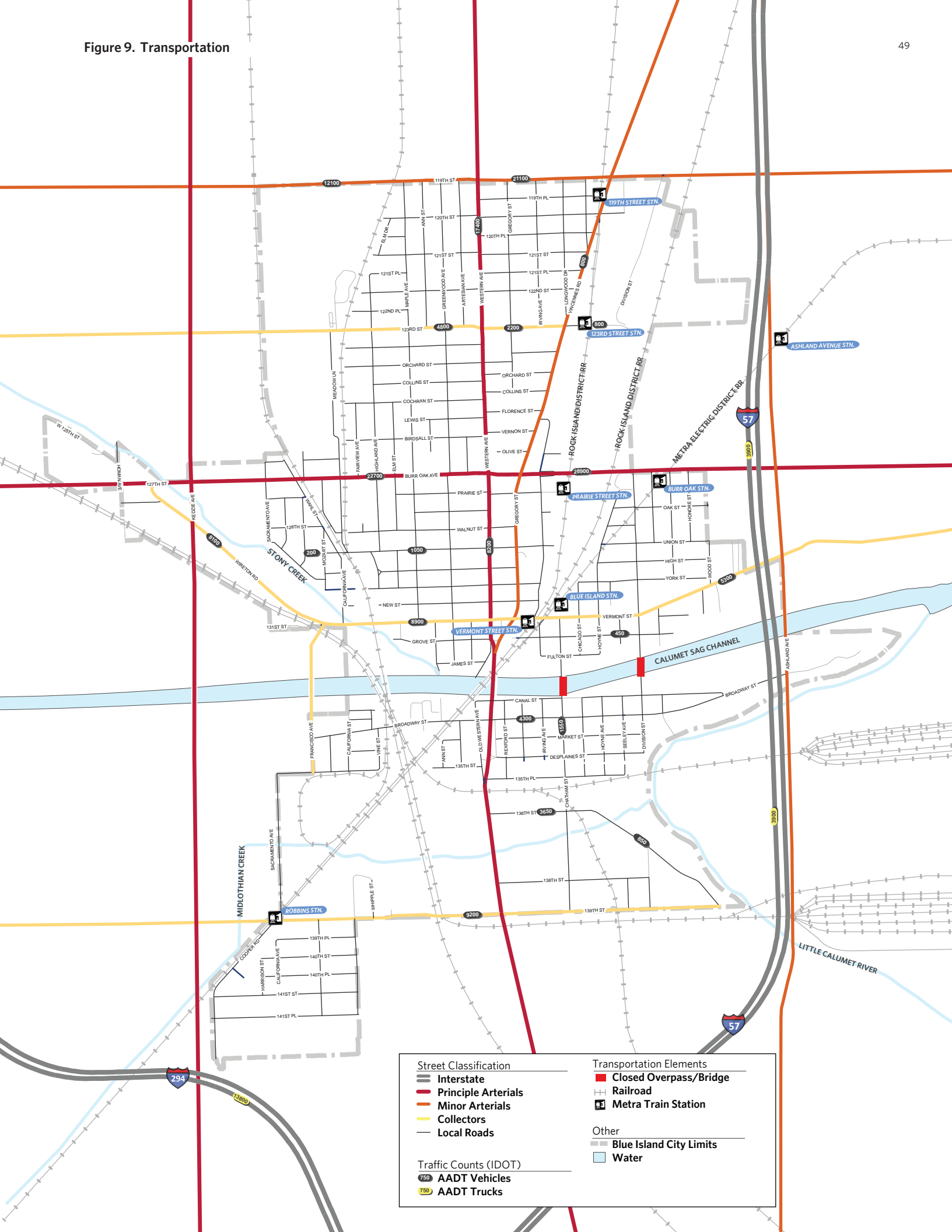
Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

Vehicle Miles Traveled represents the average annual auto travel by households. This includes commute travel, but also all other daily auto trips. According to data collected from CNT (Center for Neighborhood Technology), the VMT per household in the City of Blue Island is 13,130. This is lower than the VMT for the region which is 18,511.

The city has ownership of two bridges over the Calumet Sag Channel that are in need of extensive repair. Used informally by pedestrians only, these bridges are currently closed to vehicular traffic as the city lacks the funds to undertake repairs. Closure of the bridges has limited north-south connections within the community to Western Avenue, Francisco Avenue, and Ashland Avenue.



Figure 9. Transportation



Freight

Businesses looking to stay competitive in the global economy need to move their goods in an economical as well as efficient manner. The growing necessity of lean manufacturing means businesses are depending more and more on freight infrastructure for delivery of their goods. According to CNT's 2005 Economic Development Plan, freight volumes are estimated to increase nationally by 80% between 2000 and 2020 (source: IDOT). Recognizing this, the U.S. DOT, State of Illinois, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and the nation's freight railroads have initiated the CREATE program that will invest billions in critically needed improvements to increase the efficiency of the Chicago region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for Chicago-area residents.

This provides the City of Blue Island with opportunities for attracting investment and adding jobs.

Table 8.1. CREATE projects affecting Blue Island (status as of May 19, 2011)

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT STATUS
CP Francisco	IDOT phase III- construction
Blue Island Junction	IDOT phase III- construction
TCS Blue Island	IDOT phase III- construction
Blue Island Tower Project	Initiation pending funding availability
Western Avenue Grade Separation Project	Initiation pending funding availability

Several industrial businesses exist that could capitalize on the improved freight infrastructure. The city provides several opportunities to boost freight infrastructure in the form of railroads, vacant industrial parcels adjoining railroad ROWs, existing intermodal facilities, and vacant sites for freight operations. There are approximately 238 companies that operate within 3 miles of Blue Island, 45 of them within the city's corporate limits. (Source: CNT)

CSX, Canadian National (CN), and Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) own the freight lines within Blue Island that serve the three industrial areas in the community (source: CNT):

- Northeast District
- West Industrial District
- South Industrial District

Combined together, the three areas contain nearly 200 acres of vacant land that could be redeveloped to fit the needs of modern manufacturing and distribution needs.

The Iowa Interstate Railroad Limited (IAIS) is a regional railroad that owns and operates intermodal facilities in Blue Island. It also uses a single track running North-South that connects to the CSX/IHB main line.

Cargo-Oriented Development (COD)

The City's 2005 Economic Plan outlines the importance of freight rail in the community's economy and provides detailed recommendations for Cargo-oriented development (COD) to take advantage of the rail opportunities in Blue Island.

The plan discusses the changing conditions of industrial land use in the nation (in 2005) and other trends in the international economy that were making access to freight infrastructure important. As more products were sourced from distant locations and needed on a just-in-time basis, freight volumes were growing steadily. As freight volumes climb, virtually every segment of freight infrastructure will be used to its full capacity and become more valuable.

The 2005 Economic Plan continues by discussing the strategic advantage of Blue Island's freight infrastructure. Because the Chicago region is the hub of the North American freight system, handling more intermodal cargo shipments than any U.S. ocean port and a third of all U.S. freight rail movements, freight transportation is a major industry in metropolitan Chicago.

The Plan continues further to state that the City of Blue Island is a critical focus of the improving rail network and the Chicago area freight system generally. Expressway, freight rail, and barge transportation modes converge in Blue Island. The city contains a relatively small but growing intermodal freight terminal, and each of the City's three industrial areas (on the northeast, west, and south edges of the city) have multiple modes of freight infrastructure.

Public Transit

Blue Island is served by Pace bus routes as well as a number of Metra trains. The following is a discussion regarding the transit issues and opportunities within the community.

Pace Suburban Bus Service

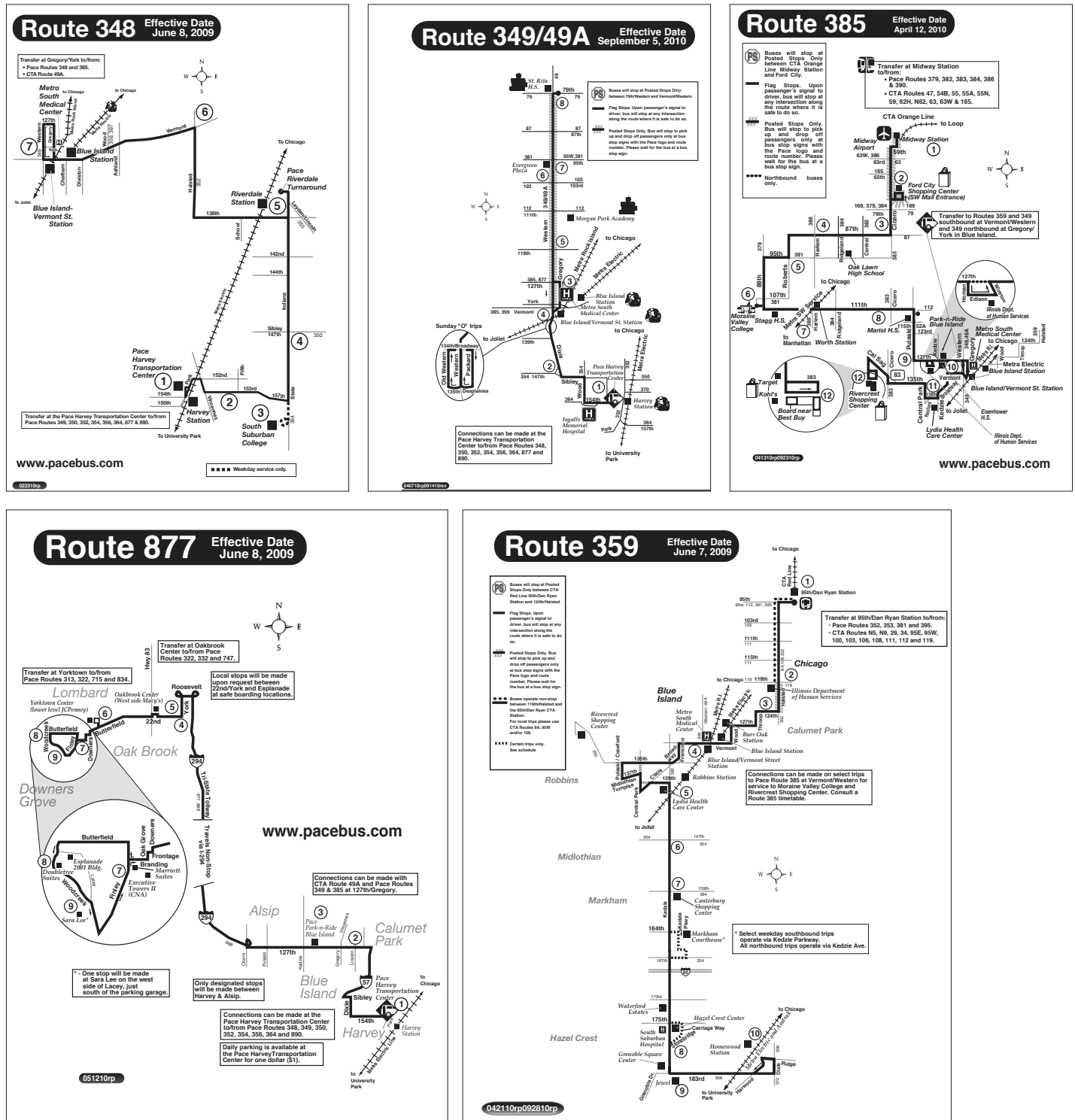
Pace provides a variety of transit services for communities including fixed bus routes, vanpools, and Dial-a-Ride programs. Within the City of Blue Island, Pace, in combination with CTA provide service between Blue Island, downtown Chicago, and adjacent communities. Despite the existing levels of service and routes, Pace buses are not utilized by a majority of residents and visitors who prefer to drive to their destinations.

Table 8.2 Pace ridership trends

BUS ROUTE	SYSTEM WEEKDAY RIDERSHIP		
	MAY 2011	MAY 2010	MAY 2009
Route 348	344	301	133
Route 349	2404	2359	2277
Route 359	1561	1407	1484
Route 385	924	728	821
Route 877	158	146	148

Source: www.rtams.org

Figure 10. Pace bus routes in Blue Island



Source: RTAMS, Pace, 2011

Metra

Metra has a significant presence in Blue Island with six stations along two rail lines serving residents on a daily basis. In addition, the Robbins station and Ashland Avenue station to the north are also used by residents. The Rock Island District and Metra Electric Lines link residents and businesses to Chicago's Downtown Loop and the south-southwest region, providing 100+ connections on weekdays.

In addition to transit benefits, the Metra stations provide a great opportunity for redevelopment of the area. The area around the stations could be redeveloped for a number of uses ranging from high-density residential to retail to mixed-use.

Table 8.3 Metra ridership trends

METRA STATION	WEEKDAY BOARDINGS		
	2006	2002	1999
Rock Island Line			
Blue Island-Vermont Street	1148	931	954
Prairie Street	44	43	41
123rd Street	96	67	61
119th Street	326	405	375
Metra Electric Line			
Blue Island-Vermont	324	237	264
Burr Oak	156	179	221

Source: www.rtams.org

Commuter Parking Analysis By Station

The following is an analysis of the commuter parking for each of the six stations in Blue Island.

Table 8.4. Blue Island-Vermont (Rock Is. parking capacity & utilization

YEAR	CAPACITY	OBSERVED PARKING USE	EFFECTIVE USE (PERMITS SOLD INCLUDED)	% EFFECTIVE USE
1987	437	0	291	67%
1991	447	445	445	100%
1994	906	649	649	72%
1997	909	554	564	62%
1999	844	614	614	73%
2001	845	611	611	72%
2003	820	550	550	67%
2007	846	525	525	62%
2008	846	466	466	55%

Source: Metra Parking Capacity and Utilization Counts

Table 8.5. Mode of access to station

YEAR	WALKED	DROVE ALONE	DROPPED OFF	CAR-POOL	BUS	RAPID TRANSIT	BIKE	OTHER
1999	14%	57%	12%	5%	1%	0%	0%	11%
2002	13%	65%	14%	6%	1%	0%	0%	0%
2006	10%	67%	13%	6%	3%	0%	1%	1%

Source: Metra 1999, 2002 & 2006 On-Board Survey, Mode of Access by Station Tabulation
* Modes not available on 1999 Survey

Table 8.6. Prairie Street (Rock Is.) parking capacity & utilization

YEAR	CAPACITY	OBSERVED PARKING USE	EFFECTIVE USE (PERMITS SOLD INCLUDED)	% EFFECTIVE USE
1987	6	0	0	0%
1991	50	45	45	90%
1994	50	22	22	44%
1997	48	12	12	25%
1999	48	10	10	21%
2001	48	11	11	23%
2003	48	20	20	42%
2007	48	6	6	12%
2008	48	5	5	10%

Source: Metra Parking Capacity and Utilization Counts

Table 8.7. Mode of access to station

YEAR	WALKED	DROVE ALONE	DROPPED OFF	CAR-POOL	BUS	RAPID TRANSIT	BIKE	OTHER
1999	67%	17%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2002	47%	47%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2006	60%	33%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Metra 1999, 2002 & 2006 On-Board Survey, Mode of Access by Station Tabulation
* Modes not available on 1999 Survey

123rd Street Parking Analysis

123rd Street Station is located in close proximity to Metra's Intermodal Facility and Service Station. As a majority of trains stop on an as-needed basis only, the station has very low ridership numbers. Parking for commuters is provided in a gravel lot near the station. However, this lot is not used as a majority of riders (87%) walk to or are dropped off at the train station. Also, there are currently no bus connections to this station.

Table 8.8. 123rd Street (Rock Is.) parking capacity & utilization

YEAR	CAPACITY	OBSERVED PARKING USE	EFFECTIVE USE (PERMITS SOLD INCLUDED)	% EFFECTIVE USE
1987	0	0	0	N/A
1991	58	4	4	7%
1994	58	0	0	0%
1997	68	2	2	3%
1999	68	0	0	0%
2001	68	0	0	0%
2003	68	0	0	0%
2007	68	0	0	0%
2008	68	0	0	0%

Source: Metra Parking Capacity and Utilization Counts

Table 8.9. 123rd Street mode of access to Station (Rock Is.)

YEAR	WALKED	DROVE ALONE	DROPPED OFF	CAR-POOL	BUS	RAPID TRANSIT	BIKE	OTHER
1999	60%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2002	84%	11%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2006	87%	9%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Metra 1999, 2002 & 2006 On-Board Survey, Mode of Access by Station Tabulation
* Modes not available on 1999 Survey

Table 8.10. 119th Street. (Rock Is.) parking capacity & utilization

YEAR	CAPACITY	OBSERVED PARKING USE	EFFECTIVE USE (PERMITS SOLD INCLUDED)	% EFFECTIVE USE
1987	224	0	176	79%
1991	337	232	232	69%
1994	369	247	247	67%
1997	384	201	201	52%
1999	376	204	204	57%
2001	354	242	242	68%
2003	352	207	207	59%
2007	344	164	164	48%
2008	344	162	162	47%

Source: Metra Parking Capacity and Utilization Counts

Table 8.11. 119th Street mode of access to station

YEAR	WALKED	DROVE ALONE	DROPPED OFF	CAR-POOL	BUS	RAPID TRANSIT	BIKE	OTHER
1999	17%	57%	19%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%
2002	19%	66%	10%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2006	19%	72%	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Metra 1999, 2002 & 2006 On-Board Survey, Mode of Access by Station Tabulation
* Modes not available on 1999 Survey

Table 8.12. Burr Oak (Electric-BI) parking capacity & utilization

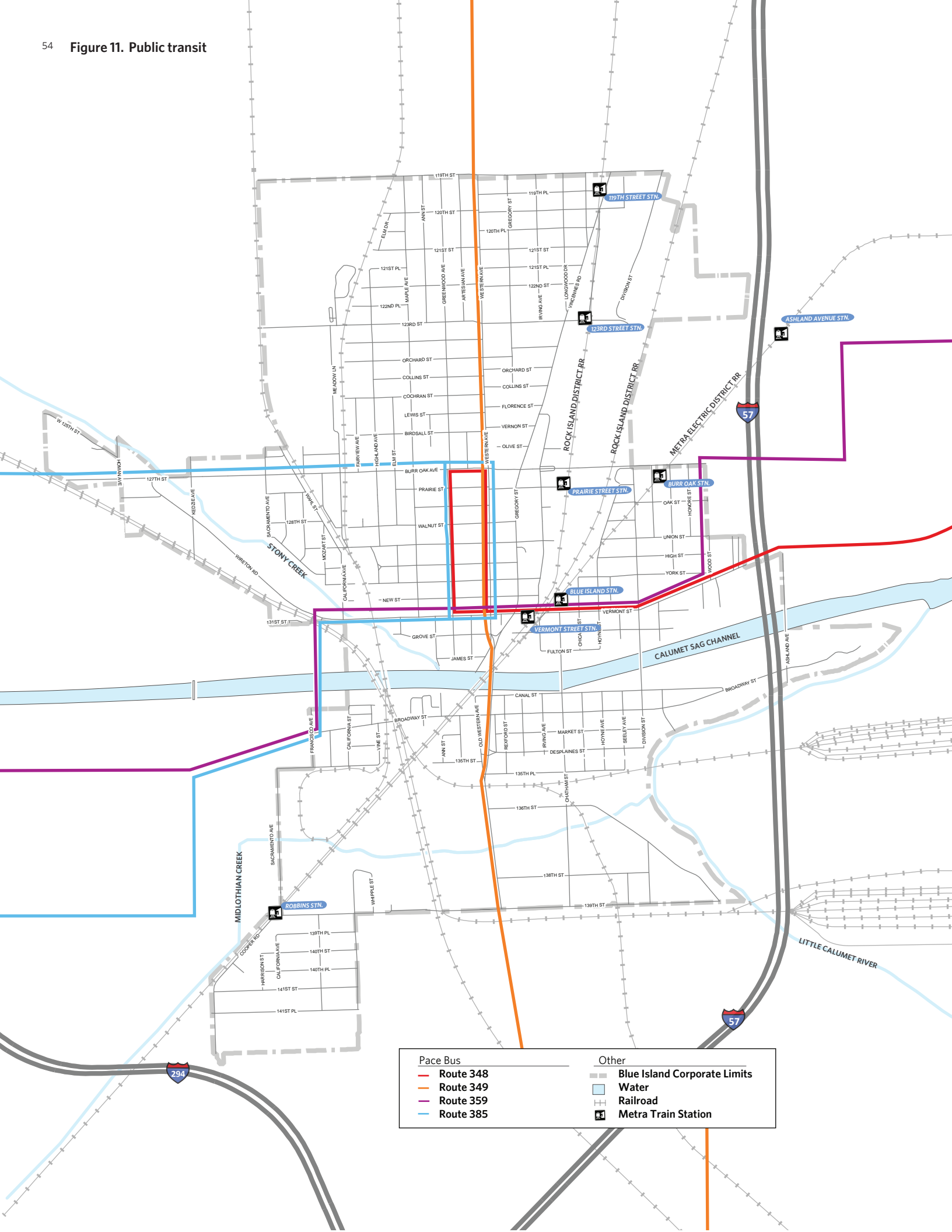
YEAR	CAPACITY	OBSERVED PARKING USE	EFFECTIVE USE (PERMITS SOLD INCLUDED)	% EFFECTIVE USE
1987	129	0	129	100%
1991	129	125	125	97%
1994	130	116	116	89%
1997	97	80	80	82%
1999	114	100	100	88%
2001	96	81	81	84%
2003	95	71	71	75%
2007	57	56	56	98%
2008	60	59	59	98%

Source: Metra Parking Capacity and Utilization Counts

Table 8.13. Burr Oak mode of access to station

YEAR	WALKED	DROVE ALONE	DROPPED OFF	CAR-POOL	BUS	RAPID TRANSIT	BIKE	OTHER
1999	26%	62%	9%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2002	38%	53%	8%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2006	30%	59%	5%	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Source: Metra 1999, 2002 & 2006 On-Board Survey, Mode of Access by Station Tabulation
* Modes not available on 1999 Survey



Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation

Non-motorized transportation is a unique component of a city's transportation infrastructure. Unlike motorized transportation modes that focus on efficient and fast movement of individuals, bicycle and pedestrian circulation plays an important role in improving the community's urban character, physical & mental health, and perception of safety.

The community is very supportive of non-motorized transportation and is currently working on a plan to provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity throughout the community.

Non-Motorized Transportation Plan

The Active Transportation Alliance is currently working on a Non-Motorized Transportation Plan for the City of Blue Island. The project will:

- Understand community strengths and weaknesses from the standpoint of non-motorized movement.
- Evaluate alternatives for providing additional bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- Create final Bicycle Master Plan based on preferred alternative.

The first public meeting of the Blue Island Non-Motorized Transportation plan steering committee was held on August 2, 2011. The committee shared ideas and discussed plans to make the community more bikeable and walkable for residents. The committee is in the process of developing a formal plan to promote physical activity. The group is planning to hold unique events to get resident input. For example, the Blue Island Model Community program and the Active Transportation Alliance will host a BIKE RODEO and educational workshop to learn people's ideas.

Findings and recommendations from the study will be incorporated within the Comprehensive Plan.

Safe Routes to School

The City of Blue Island and School District 130 received federal funding in 2008 through the Safe Routes to School program. School District 130 was awarded a Safe Routes to School grant of \$52,350 to improve the safety for students who walk and bike to school in the district. According to the school's website, the award included \$3,550 to improve a crosswalk on 123rd St and \$48,800 to install crosswalks and school zone markings in locations near the school.

The Illinois Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) is a federally funded program administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation

The Illinois Safe Routes To School (SRTS) Program supports projects and programs that enable and encourage walking and bicycling to and from school. The program applies to schools serving grades Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Calumet Sag Trail

The Calumet Sag Trail is a proposed multi-use path covering 26 miles and linking fourteen communities along the Cal-Sag channel. The proposed trail stretches from Lemont in the west to Burnham in the east and will connect to a number of regional trails, transit networks, commercial, institutional, and civic uses.

The Calumet Sag Trail will connect more than 185,000 people in fourteen communities (Source: Friends of the Cal-Sag). It will connect them to regional trails, transit systems, retail areas, parks, forest preserves, marinas, nature centers, and the legacies of Big Steel, immigrant communities and the Underground Railroad.

Figure 12. Proposed Calumet Sag trail route



Key Transportation and Circulation Conclusions

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Blue Island's transportation and circulation system. Moving forward in the planning process, these key findings should help to shape (and to inform) the community's vision, goals and objectives, and ultimate recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Vehicular Conclusions

- **The condition of several street surfaces in the City are poor and are in need of repair.** The condition of several streets in the community, in all types of areas, from residential neighborhoods to commercial businesses, and industrial areas are in need of repair.
- **Due to on-going maintenance and repair costs, the City has closed bridges that cross the Calumet Sag Channel.** According to the City, the cost to maintain these structures prohibits the City from performing repairs, and as a result, bridges have been closed. This lessens the number of channel crossings and increases use on the existing bridges.
- **Western Avenue and Gregory Street in Uptown are one-way streets that create a confusing and unsafe traffic pattern for vehicular and pedestrian traffic alike.** Retailers expressed concern that automobiles travel at high speeds along Western Avenue, making pedestrian movement unsafe.
- **Several local residential streets are one-way, disrupting traffic circulation between neighborhoods.** The one-way street sections disrupt the city's well established grid network, requiring vehicular traffic to take circuitous routes in and out of residential neighborhoods.

Cargo-Oriented Development Conclusions

- **The City has created a Cargo-Oriented Development Plan (COD).** To capitalize upon the City's high number of freight rail lines, the City's 2005 Economic Plan recommends the development of Cargo-Oriented Development (COD) areas.

Public Transit Conclusions

- **Except for the Burr Oak Station, very little of the commuter parking spaces are used.** According to Metra studies, very little of the commuter parking lots in the City are used except for the Burr Oak Station parking area.
- **The City is well-served by Metra and Pace transit service.** The number of transit options and schedules in the community provide a highly suitable location for residents to commute to other employment centers.
- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) plans have been created for Metra Station redevelopments.** The existence of unused surface parking lots, vacant or underutilized adjacent properties presents opportunities for future redevelopment of new mixed-use, TOD developments centered upon Metra stations.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Conclusions

- **The City is currently working towards a Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.** Based upon community input, the non-motorized plan will help to guide the City's efforts moving forward to prove a safe, efficient and interconnected trail plan.
- **The planned Calumet Sag Trail is expected to run through the community to provide a regional multi-use trail.** The future path and amenities of the trail as it travels through Blue Island are continuing to be designed.
- **Very few pedestrian cross-walks exist throughout the City.** Although City sidewalks exist throughout much of the residential neighborhoods, there is a lack of pedestrian cross-walks across main streets, primarily commercial corridors such as Western Avenue.



Section Nine

Natural Environment

This section provides information on the existing open space infrastructure in Blue Island with a focus on parks, wooded areas, and water bodies. The information in this section was obtained from Cook County, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and based upon a visual assessment of existing conditions.

Blue Island is home to a number of quality environmental features including streams, wetlands, and heavily wooded areas. Aside from being integral to the community's heritage, the woodlands, wetlands, streams, and water bodies contribute greatly to the residents' quality of life. To ensure their protection, the city needs to create programs and policies that are supportive of open space conservation and enhancement.

Public Parks

The School Districts, Park District, and Cook County Forest Preserve provide approximately 180 acres of open space within Blue Island (excluding Golf Course).

Park Access

Based upon a population of 23,706 residents, this amount of open space equates to a ratio of 7.6 acres per 1,000 people. This number is below the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standard which is 10 acres of open space for every 1,000 residents. Residents also have access to several major open spaces nearby, including the Cook County Preserve and Whistler Preserve in Riverdale.

Blue Island Park District

The Blue Island Park District was established in 1909. There are twelve parks owned and maintained by the District in Blue Island. According to the District there is great history to be found throughout the park system. Some of the District's historic facilities include Hart Park and Memorial Park Pool which was built in the 1930's. It is one of the oldest pools in the midwest that is still operational.

Centennial Park Redevelopment

The Blue Island Park District was awarded an Open Space and Land Acquisition and Development Grant (OSLAD). The OSLAD grant for \$250,000.00 will pay for 50 percent of the Centennial Park Field and Walking Trail Renovation. Construction began in the summer of 2011.

The City is currently working with Kaboom!, a national non-profit organization, on two open space projects: the Portland Playlot renovation and the Kiddie Koral upgrade.

The Park District owns the following parks:

- Memorial Park
- Hart Park
- Leonard Bartle Centennial Park
- Stans Park
- Kiddie Korral
- Louis Lombardo Playground
- Perillo Park
- Chris Disabato Park
- Portland Playlot
- David E. Schultz Triangular Lot
- Bark Park
- California Gardens Recreation Center

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

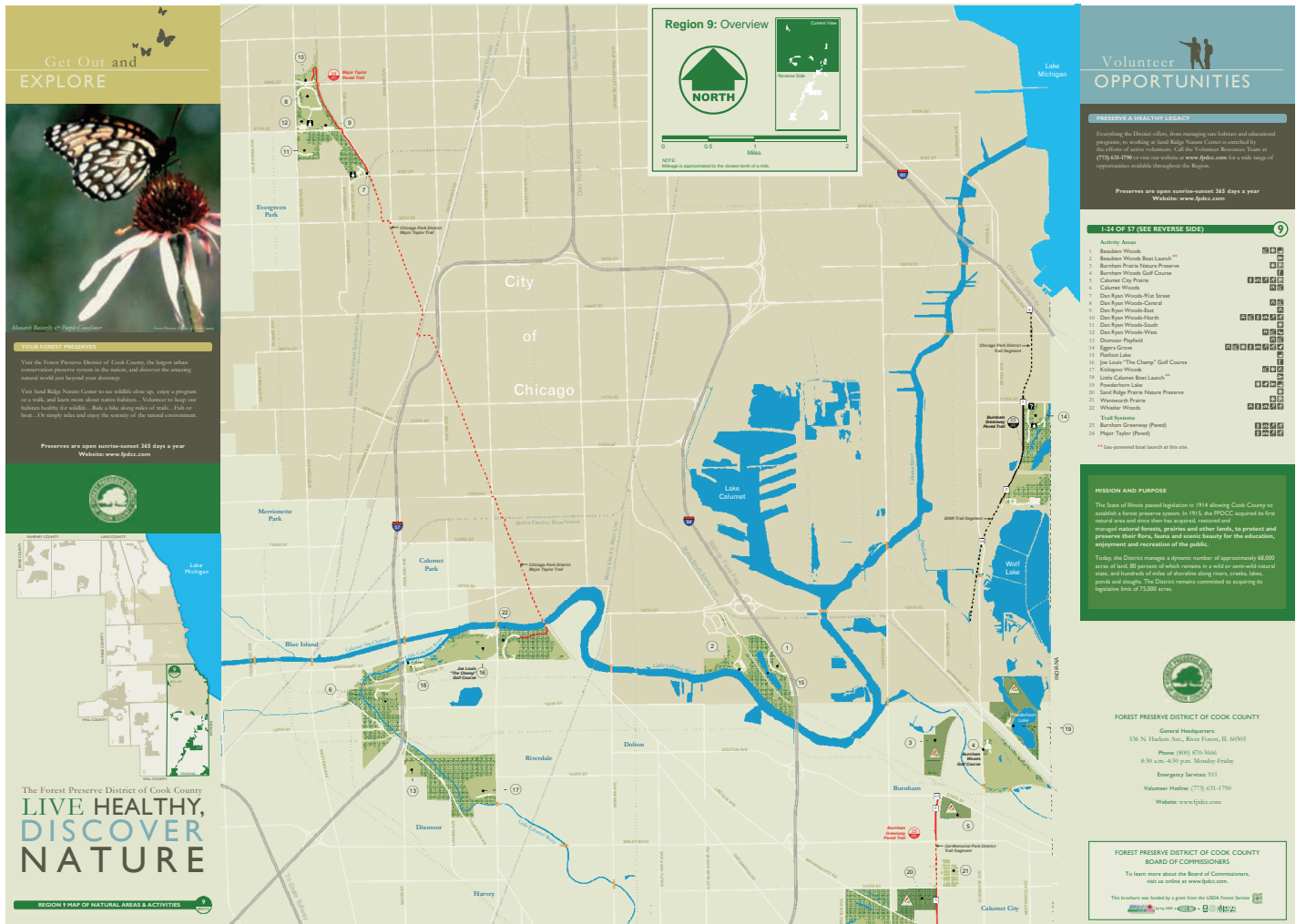
In addition to the parks and open space within the City, the Forest Preserve District has large land holding within close proximity to Blue Island. Blue Island is located within the Forest Preserve District's Region 9 (as shown in Figure 13). The following preserves are located southeast of Blue Island:

- Dixmoor Playfield
- Calumet Woods
- Little Calumet Boat Launch
- Joe Louis "The Champ" Golf Course

Tree Planting and Maintenance

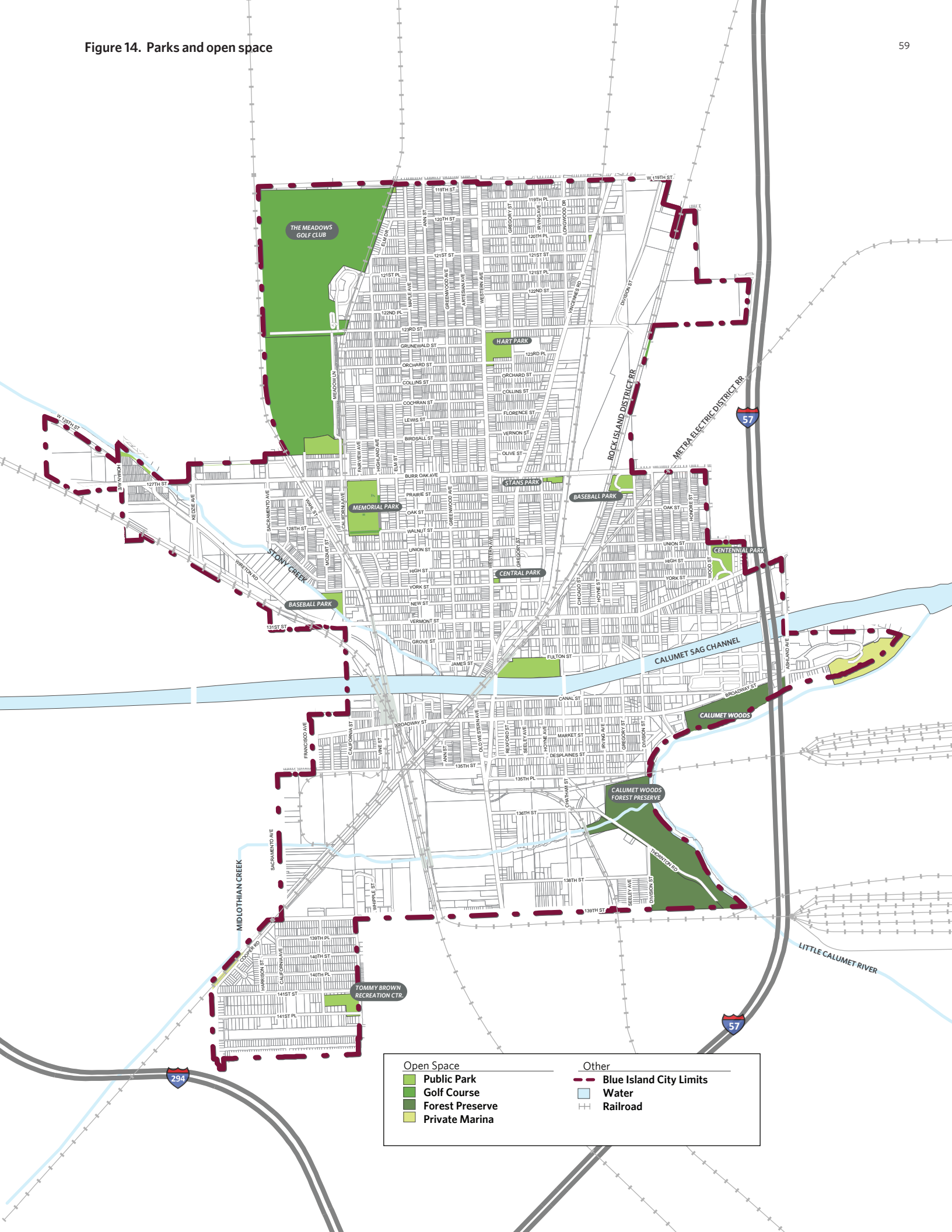
In 2011, Blue Island was recognized with a Tree City USA award designation by the Arbor Day Foundation. The Public Works Department, in coordination with the Urban Forestry Board, has proactively educated residents about the benefits of tree preservation and also maintained trees along parkways. The City also adopted a tree ordinance that requires permits for any work on parkway trees, and levies fines for improper trimming of trees.

Figure 13. Forest Preserve District of Cook County - Region 9



Source: Cook County Forest Preserve District, 2011

Figure 14. Parks and open space



Environmental Features

This section presents the existing environmental features within the City of Blue Island. Although a built out community, environmental features such as creeks, the Calumet Sag Channel, wetlands, and floodplains are important features in the community.

Floodplains and Wetlands

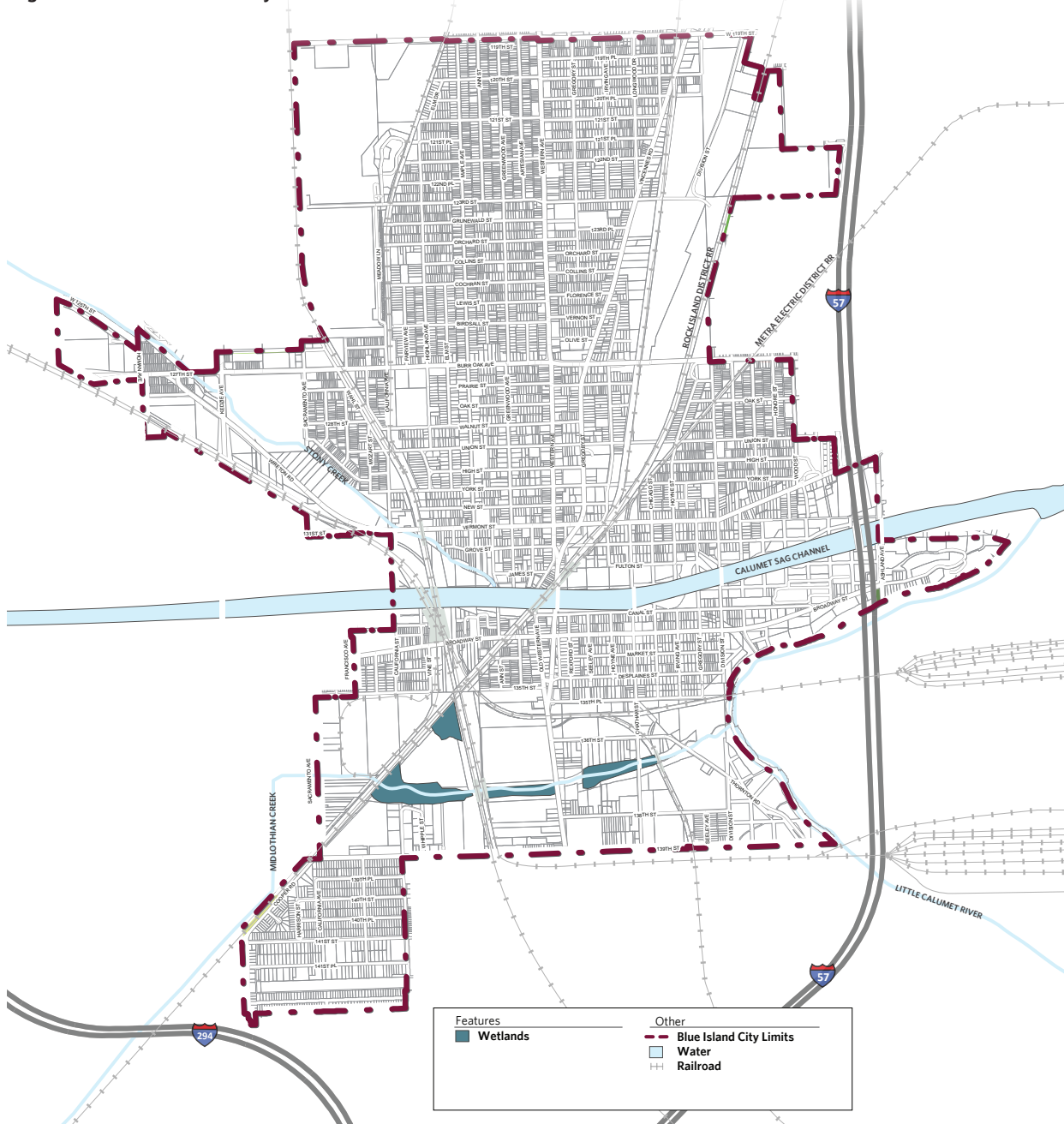
As shown on the figure, a number of areas within the community consist of floodplains and wetlands. The following is a description of each of the flood areas in the community.

National Wetlands Inventory

According to the National Wetlands Inventory, the following types of wetlands are located in Blue Island (as shown in Figure 15):

- Freshwater Emergent — Herbaceous march, fen, swale and wet meadow
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub — Forested swamp or wetland shrub bog or wetland
- Freshwater Pond — Palustrine aquatic bed
- Riverine — This classification is given for the Calumet Sag Channel (it is generally given for rivers or streams)

Figure 15. Wetlands inventory for Blue Island



Special Flood Hazard Areas

A Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) is an area delineated on a National Flood Insurance Program map as being subject to inundation by the base flood. A base flood is the flood that has a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

Three types of flood hazard areas exist in Blue Island: AE Zone; Shaded X Zone; and Events contained in structures.

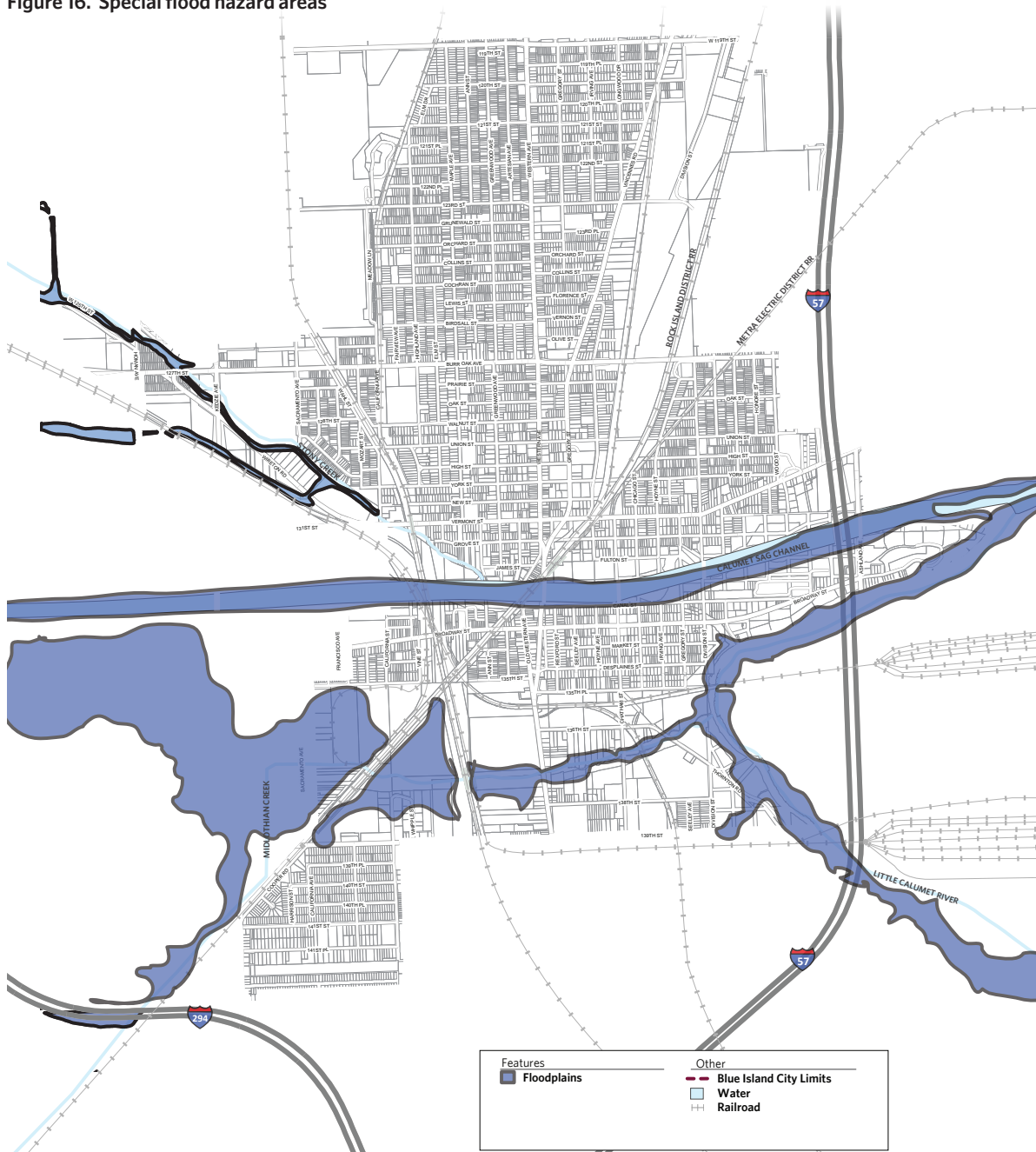
AE Zone — Areas subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event determined by detailed methods. Base Flood

Elevations (BFEs) are shown. Mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements and floodplain management standards apply.

Shaded X Zone — Areas that have a 0.2% probability of flooding every year (also known as the “500-year floodplain”). Properties in Shaded Zone X are considered to be at moderate risk of flooding under the National Flood Insurance Program. Flood insurance is not required for properties in Zone X.

Events Contained in Structures (channels, culverts, sewers) — These areas have a 0.2 % event.

Figure 16. Special flood hazard areas



Chicago-Calumet Watershed

The City of Blue Island is located within the Chicago-Calumet watershed. The watershed covers much of northeastern Illinois and northwestern Indiana and is part of the larger Illinois River basin. With drainage from three Illinois counties, the Illinois portion of the watershed has a total area of approximately 580 square miles. According to the IDNR, the Chicago-Calumet watershed is the most populous major watershed in Illinois, containing an estimated 3.3 million people. Within this watershed, residential and urban areas are the primary use of land but there still remains some agricultural areas to the far south and some forested lands scattered throughout the watershed.

Key Conclusions

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Blue Island's parks, open space and environmental features. Moving forward in the planning process, these key findings should help to shape (and to inform) the community's vision, goals and objectives, and ultimate recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Parks and Open Space Conclusions

- ***The existing neighborhood parks are in good physical condition and are well utilized.*** According to residents, the Park District has done an excellent job of maintaining existing parks, providing amenities at each park for kids, and programs that attract a large number of area residents.
- ***Blue Island is home to a number of high quality trees that create a unique sense of place.*** The existing inventory of trees throughout the community improve residents' quality of life for residents in terms of physical health and community aesthetics.
- ***There are a limited number of active recreation areas in the city.*** With exception to Centennial Park and Memorial Park, both excellent Park District facilities, neighborhoods south of the Calumet Sag Channel have limited access to public spaces for active recreation.
- ***The City, and more specifically, the Uptown District lacks a large central community event area.*** Currently, the City and others utilize Central Park as a central gathering area. Although the park is well-maintained and centrally located, it is too small to accommodate community events and activities. As a result it is sparingly used for outdoor events.
- ***The Park District is actively engaged in providing safe and well-developed recreational facilities.*** The 10 parks that account for 112 acres of open space maintained by the Park District provide a good balance of leisure and recreational activities for all ages.

- ***The city and its partners run a number of successful programs for their open spaces and recreational facilities.***

The City of Blue Island hosts special events each summer, including the well attended TGIF picnics with MetroSouth Medical Center. The Blue Island Recreation Center offers residents recreational programs along with the use of its basketball and volleyball courts, weight room, and computer room. The Park District has also created a number of highly successful programs for residents to participate in both summer and winter.

- ***Cook County Forest Preserve and Calumet Sag Channel provide excellent regional connections.*** Fay's Point includes a boat launch that connects the development to neighboring communities via the Little Calumet River and Calumet Sag Channel. Calumet Woods is part of the County Forest Preserve District and the largest woodland in the city, buffering residential neighborhoods to the south and east from adjacent communities.

Environmental Features Conclusions

- ***The Calumet Sag Channel acts as a physical north-south divider for Blue Island.*** The limited places to cross the Channel restrict vehicular traffic and isolate neighborhoods from one another. With the exception of the MWRD land north of the Channel, there are limited public rights-of-way along the Channel. This further lends to isolation of one side from another.
- ***The proposed Calumet-Sag Trail will act as a key regional connection and attraction.*** Open by 2012, the Calumet-Sag Trail will be a multi-use path built almost entirely along the banks of the Calumet Sag Channel and Calumet River. Along 26 miles of waterway from Lemont in the west to Burnham in the east, the Calumet-Sag Trail will link over 185,000 people in fourteen communities, one of them being Blue Island. It will connect regional trails, transit systems, retail areas, parks, forest preserves, marinas, residential neighborhoods, and recreational areas.
- ***There is significant public right-of-way along the Calumet Sag Channel and Little Calumet River*** that could be utilized for a variety of recreational amenities including bike trails, hiking trails, nature walks, and marine activities. The Channel itself has played host to rowing competitions in the past.

Section Ten

Community Services, Health and Infrastructure

The purpose of this section is to provide an inventory of community facilities and to ensure that public facilities are provided as needed. The City's current system of services includes a variety of facilities and governmental agencies.

Although a variety of facilities and services are provided, there are updated or new services to the existing facilities that are necessary to provide high quality service to residents and visitors.

Community Services and Facilities

A number of community facilities provide service to the residents of Blue Island. Community services are provided by governmental and public agencies such as Cook County, Blue Island Park District, and others. The following community service facilities are located in Blue Island:

- Calumet Township
- Chamber of Commerce
- City Hall
- Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA)
- Fire Department
- Metropolitan Family Services
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation Department (MWRD)
- Moraine Valley Community College
- Park District
- Post Office
- Police Department
- Progress Center for Independent Living
- Public Library and Tech Annex
- Public Works Department
- School Districts 130 and 218
- Salvation Army
- State Department of Human Services
- Tommy A. Brown Recreation Center

Educational Institutions

The City of Blue Island is split between two School Districts: District 130 and District 218. Cook County District 130 encompasses the northern portion of Blue Island between 119th Street and Broadway Street. Schools within the District include Greenbriar School, Veterans Memorial Middle School, Kerr Middle School, Horace Mann School, Lincoln School, Whittier School, and Revere Campus. Dwight D. Eisenhower High School is located within District 218. In addition to the public schools, St. Benedict Catholic School and St. Walter Catholic School are two private schools for kindergarten through eighth grade. Due to the configuration of schools districts, several residents are constricted in their choice of schools for their children. In some cases, students are travelling outside of the community for their educational needs.

Colleges

Moraine Valley Community College satellite campus is located in Uptown. The college occupies close to 8,500 square feet of space with 800-900 students currently enrolled. The college is currently in the process of expanding its facilities by adding classroom and laboratory space on the second floor of its building.

Religious Institutions

Many religious institutions are located within Blue Island which fulfills important spiritual and social needs of the community. Many institutions have been in the community for decades, while some new churches have been constructed which shows the desire for institutions to locate and remain in Blue Island.

Library

The Blue Island Public Library is located within the city's Uptown District. In addition to its extensive collection of books and electronic resources, the library also runs a highly successful Tech Annex. Located in the basement of the Public Library, the Tech Annex was jointly funded by the Blue Island Public Library Foundation and the Friends of Blue Island Public Library. The center contains computer stations devoted to teaching teenagers graphic design skills such as video editing, website creation, and audio production.



Community Health

The following is an analysis of the community-wide health initiatives in place within Blue Island. The City of Blue Island is also compared to the overall Chicago Region through baseline indicators.

Relationship between Healthy Communities and Planning

There is a strong relationship between health and planning issues such as transportation, open space, and healthy food. The dramatic rise in chronic disease rates in communities throughout the country has put the spotlight on the importance of the relationship between public health and planning. To help improve community health, planners and public health officials have begun to promote design and development patterns that accommodate/promote physical activity. In recent years, comprehensive plans have begun to add health components into their sections. Comprehensive plans are an excellent tool to help municipalities, such as Blue Island, to improve community health through better land use planning. For these reasons, the existing conditions report provides an analysis of current health related services, facilities, and programs in the City of Blue Island.

Major Health Problems

The following are some of the key health issues that are linked to environmental factors and land use planning:

• Obesity

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 30 percent of U.S. adults age 20 and older are obese, and approximately 65 percent of Americans weigh more than is healthful. Today, one in five children and one in three teens is overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

• Diabetes

One of every ten health care dollars spent in the United States goes toward diabetes and its complications. Between 1994 and 2004, the prevalence of diabetes increased more than 50 percent.

• Heart Disease

The leading cause of death for women and men in the United States is heart disease, according to the American Heart Association. In 2003, a total of 685,089 people died of heart disease, accounting for 28 percent of all U.S. deaths. Heart disease is one (out of many possible) indicators of community health, and is being used here as a proxy for overall health status. As shown in the following table, Blue Island's premature heart disease death rate of 0.3 per 1,000 people is comparable to the Chicago Region (0.34).



Table 10.1. Premature heart disease

	BLUE ISLAND	CHICAGO REGION
Premature heart disease death rate (per 1,000 people)	0.30	0.34

Source: Illinois Department of Public Health's Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs

Current City Initiatives and Programs

The City of Blue Island has completed a number of initiatives and has created a number of programs that are designed to improve community health. The following is a discussion of some of the key City initiatives and programs currently in place, or are being developed.

Complete Streets Ordinance

On July 12, 2011, the City of Blue Island adopted a Complete Streets ordinance. As stated in the City's ordinance: "Complete Streets are designed to improve mobility and connectivity, reduce obesity, increase safety, enhance neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions, and advance the quality of life for all Blue Island citizens and visitors."

Blue Island's Complete Streets policy applies to all public right-of-way projects and the planning of roadways, intersections, or other transportation facilities. Routes providing access to key destinations, historic districts, sites and significant streets are priorities for the complete streets policy.

The City plans to use Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS), Pedestrian Level of Service (PLOS) and Bicycle Compatibility Index (BCI) grades as a measure of success of Blue Island's Complete Streets policy. The Plan Commission shall adopt an official calculator to be used for a minimum of four (4) years. The BLOS, PLOS and BCI calculators developed by the League of Illinois Bicyclists may be used to evaluate these measures. Projects that score a grade of "B" or better shall be considered a successful implementation of Blue Island's Complete Streets policy.

The City of Blue Island Public Works Department and the Urban Forestry Board shall partner with the Plan Commission to report annually on the installation of new facilities, including but not limited to:

- Total miles of on-street bicycle routes defined by streets with clearly marked or signed bicycle accommodations
- Linear feet of new pedestrian accommodations
- Number of curb ramps installed along City streets
- Number of new street trees provided in the public right-of-way

Community Health Monitoring Program

The City of Blue Island's Community Development Department is working closely with Agency for Toxic Disease Registry (ATSDR), Cook County Public Health Department (CCPHD) and U.S. EPA Region 5 Brownfields to establish a Community Health Monitoring Program for the City of Blue Island.

The Community Health Monitoring program will provide local residents the opportunity to identify public health and quality of life issues that most concern them. ATSDR will develop corresponding indicators that will allow the City to measure and track improvements in the community identified issues as the City moves ahead with redevelopment plans.

Using the community identified public health concerns and the corresponding measures, ATSDR develops what they refer to as an "Action Model." The Action Model is a process to assess local health issues and addresses the ways they can be measured and eventually improved.

Blue Island Model Communities Program

In January 2010, following a competitive proposal process, Blue Island was awarded a \$75,000 CPPW Model Communities grant from the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and its partner, The Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC). The program allows the Community Development Department and its partners to:

- Create safe walking/biking routes or public transportation to grocery stores, farmers market, community gardens, food pantries and recreation through the development of a) Active Transportation Plan (sometimes called a non-motorized pedestrian plan or bike plan); and b) Complete Streets Policy;
- Increase the availability and equitable access of healthy, locally produced foods by creating a Sustainable Local Food System. Food System activities include: a) Completion of a community food assessment; b) Development and implementation of local food system improvement strategies; and c) Expansion local community gardens; and
- Improve support for Breastfeeding at local hospital and employers a) Develop a plan to train local health system management on 10 steps of becoming a baby friendly hospital; and b) Develop breastfeeding friendly policies for local businesses and organizations
- Build & strengthen partnerships through Blue Island's Model Communities Coalition a) Increase coordination between existing resources by strengthening and expanding partnerships; and b) Broaden the participation of individuals and organizations addressing community needs and enable us to move forward with future projects in a strategic and inclusive way.

Healthy Hot Spots

As a CPPW grant recipient, Blue Island Community Development Department has been linked with information and resources from the Healthy Corner Stores Network (HCSN), The Food Trust (non-profit organization piloting similar work in Philadelphia) and Cook County's Healthy Hot Spots initiative. HCSN supports efforts to increase the availability and sales of healthy, fresh, affordable foods through small-scale stores in grocery, underserved communities. A variety of resources including special reports, webinars and information archives can be found online at <http://healthycornerstores.org/>.

Community Gardening

Eating healthier foods — including more fresh fruits and vegetables — helps to reduce the risk of obesity and chronic disease. There are a number of community gardens throughout the City, some formal, some informal, and some open to the public while others are private. Blue Island's Memorial Park is an example of a public community garden.

Existing Health Care Facilities

Blue Island is home to a number of health care facilities including two major medical institutions, both located in Uptown: Pronger Smith Medical Care and MetroSouth Medical Center.

MetroSouth Medical Center

MetroSouth Medical Center is the largest employer in Blue Island. With over 350 physicians, the hospital attracts employees and patients from neighboring south suburban communities as well as Will County communities. The hospital is also one of the major landowners in the Vermont Street Station Area, currently utilized either as medical buildings or for parking.

Pronger Smith Medical Care

Established in 1947, Pronger Smith employs 150 physicians and staff at their facility in Uptown Blue Island. Pronger Smith is affiliated with MetroSouth Medical Center.

Heart Care Centers of Illinois - Blue Island

Located adjacent to MetroSouth Medical Center, Heart Care Centers of Illinois-Blue Island provides long term and comprehensive cardiovascular health care.

Fresenius Medical Services

Service at the Blue Island Dialysis Center include: in-center dialysis, home dialysis and transplant support.

Physical Therapy & Sports Injury Rehabilitation

The facility was established in 1976 and specializes in outpatient rehabilitation areas of in the areas of physical therapy, occupational therapy, industrial rehabilitation and work hardening.

Infrastructure

Water Supply and Treatment

Blue Island is served by a combined sewer system that conveys both sanitary sewage from stormwater runoff and domestic water consumption. Since 1991, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation Department operates an elevated aeration water system along the Calumet Sag Channel, aimed to improve the Channel's water quality for healthier aquatic life.

Law Enforcement and Protection

Blue Island's Police Department hires approximately 75 people that include 40 full-time and 20 part-time officers. The department runs and operates a regional 911 system that coordinates emergency response for the city and surrounding communities.

Fire Protection

Blue Island operates a 24 hour fire protection and emergency medical response service. The station is located at 2450 Vermont Street, adjacent to City Hall.



Figure 17. Community facilities



Key Conclusions

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Blue Island's community facilities, services, health, and infrastructure. Moving forward in the planning process, these key findings should help to shape (and to inform) the community's vision, goals and objectives, and ultimate recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Community Services and Facilities Conclusions

- A number of community services and facilities exist in the community, however, improved services and facilities are desired by residents to maintain high quality services.
- The City works primarily through the Chamber of Commerce to assist local businesses. No active official Uptown Business Association exists.
- Many types of religious institutions exist in the community that adds to the overall character and sense of community in Blue Island. Many of these institutions are located within residential neighborhoods.
- Educational facilities in the community provide open space and recreational amenities after school hours for students. School District #130 continues to improve walkability to its schools, most recently improved crosswalks through a Safe Routes to School grant.
- The employment generated by local institutions has continued to grow over the last decade (e.g. MetroSouth Medical Center, Moraine Valley Community College). For some institutions that are experiencing growth, parking issues have arisen or are likely to become issues in the near future.

Health Services

- Blue Island is home to a number of health care facilities including two major medical institutions, both located in Uptown: Pronger Smith Medical Care and MetroSouth Medical Center.
- A number of community gardens exist in the City. The City is currently working with Delta Institute to create a plan for local food growing initiatives.
- The City is working with other agencies to create a Community Health Monitoring program. The program will provide local residents the opportunity to identify public health and quality of life issues that most concern them. Based upon the results given, corresponding indicators will be developed that will allow the City to measure and track improvements in the community identified issues as the City moves ahead with redevelopment plans.
- The City's new Complete Streets Ordinance has been adopted to ensure that new streets and/or upgrades to significant streets in the community include complete streets features such as pedestrian/bicycle amenities.

Infrastructure

- The current water and sewer system is aging and is in need of upgrades and ongoing maintenance.
- The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (WWRD) owns property along the Calumet Sag Channel that the City is interested in acquiring for potential redevelopment. The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) and Center For Neighborhood Technology (CNT) have been actively working together on the WWRD land conveyance issue.

Section Eleven

Image and Identity



This section details the physical characteristics and distinguishing elements of the City of Blue Island.

Architecture

The urban fabric of a community is crucial to creating a sense of place. Blue Island's historic architecture and urban character is inconsistently preserved in its Uptown District and historic residential neighborhoods. Block upon block of Western Avenue displays a variety of architectural styles dating back to the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. The Blue Island Historical Society has created the Blue Island Landmark Tour that highlights architecturally significant homes in the community designed by famous architects such as Bertrand Goldberg, George Washington Maher, and Robert E. Sayfarth. A majority of the historic homes are located within the Uptown District with a few further north and south.



Cavalcade of Pride

The Blue Island FORUM, Blue Island Historical Society, the Historic Preservation Commission, and City of Blue Island have an annual competition called the Cavalcade of Pride. The group asks neighbors and visitors to nominate Blue Island's best homes and businesses for the annual Cavalcade of Pride awards. This year the awards celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Olde Western Historic District and the Historic Preservation Commission.



Branding

In 2008, Blue Island received a Preserve America Grant aimed to develop a comprehensive cultural heritage marketing strategy. The outcome of the initiative was a branding and marketing strategy that is helping Blue Island position itself as one of the premier heritage destinations in the Chicagoland area. This included creation of a new logo, tag line, marketing plan, website development, materials development, signage, and education program for residents.



Think Outside the Loop

History and Landmarks

Blue Island Landmark Tour

According to the Historical Society, at its founding, Blue Island was the most important settlement south of Chicago. Today a wealth of architecturally significant homes and history has been preserved and a Landmark Tour has been created to show important structures.

Prominent architects that have designed homes for Blue Island residents include George Washington Maher, Bertrand Goldberg, and Blue Island's Robert E. Seyfarth. The tour is based on *A Walking Tour of the City on the Hill*, produced by the Historic Preservation Commission and written by Ken Jellema. Additions come from John H. Volp's book, *The First Hundred Years: 1835-1935 Historical Review of Blue Island*.

Figure 18. Landmark Tour



Source: City of Blue Island, 2011



Blue Island's History

The City of Blue Island has a very rich history that adds to the overall character and pride of the community. The following are some key highlights of the City's history and its current efforts to support and promote history for residents and visitors.

Calumet Sag Channel

The community experienced a tremendous amount of development in the 1840s during the construction of the Calumet Sag Channel. The Calumet Sag Channel is part of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, established in 1984 by Congress.

Old Western Historic District

The Old Western Historic District contains the home of the town's first settler, Stephen Jones, and one of the first hardware stores in the city. Recently the Guildhaus, an alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation center, received a grant from the Historic Preservation Commission to improve structures on Old Western Avenue. The grant will be used to restore and improve facades to resemble early 20th century storefronts.

Preserve America Community

The City of Blue Island received Preserve America Community designation on October 22, 2007. The Preserve America program recognizes and designates communities that protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.

Blue Island Historical Society Museum

The Blue Island Historical Society museum has a large collection of local artifacts, records, photos, and memorabilia.

Historic Landmark & District Requirements

The owner of any landmark property or property located within a Historic District is required to receive a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) before a building permit is issued. The COA indicates that the Historic Preservation Commission has reviewed (and authorizes) plans for exterior alteration, construction, demolition in whole or in part, and/or the relocation of a Landmark or property, structure, site or object within a Historic District.



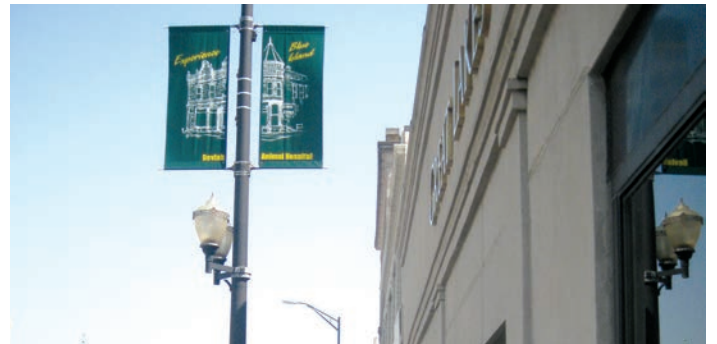
Blue Island landmarks

ADDRESS	HISTORIC NAME	ARCHITECT	STYLE	YEAR	HIST. DIST.	YEAR
2506 BURR OAK	THEODORE GUENTHER HOUSE		ITALIANATE	1856		1983
2546 BURR OAK	CHARLES & EMILY ROBINSON HOUSE		VERNACULAR	1840		2010
2620 BURR OAK	WADE ERRET HOUSE		FOUR SQUARE	1890		1983
2824 BURR OAK	RUSSELL HEACOCK FARMHOUSE		VERNACULAR	c. 1839		1983
2413 CANAL ST			SECOND EMPIRE		Y	1981
2336 COLLINS ST	AMERICAN HOUSE HOTEL		VERNACULAR	c. 1897		1983
2303 DES PLAINES ST	REIMER BOE HOUSE		VICTORIAN	1871		1983
12904 ELM ST	WILLIAM SEYFARTH HOUSE	ROBERT SEYFARTH	TUDOR REVIVAL	1926		1983
12908 ELM ST	WILLIAM BUENGER HOUSE	ELSA BUENGER	TUDOR REVIVAL	1928		1983
12944 ELM ST	WALTER JOHNSTON HOUSE		TUDOR REVIVAL	c. 1930		2008
12844 GREENWOOD AVE	ARTHUR SEYFARTH HOUSE	ROBERT SEYFARTH	COLONIAL REVIVAL	1929		1983
12850 GREENWOOD AVE	ROY E. GEYER HOUSE	ROBERT SEYFARTH	TUDOR REVIVAL	1923		1983
12904 GREENWOOD AVE	ROBERT KRUEGER HOUSE	ROBERT SEYFARTH	MODERNE	1913		1983
12905 GREENWOOD AVE	CHARLES YOUNG HOUSE		ITALIANATE	1886		1983
12917 GREENWOOD AVE	MATTHIAS HELBERG HOUSE		QUEEN ANNE	c. 1890		1983
12939 GREENWOOD AVE	WILLIAM HENKE HOUSE		VICTORIAN	1883		1983
12940 GREENWOOD AVE	ALDEN KLEIN HOUSE		GEORGIAN REVIVAL	1925		1983
12956 GREENWOOD AVE	WILLIAM WEBER HOUSE	GEORGE WASHINGTON MAHER	PRAIRIE	1898		1983
13020 GREENWOOD AVE	DR. AARON HEIMBACH HOUSE	BERTRAND GOLDBERG	INTERNATIONAL	1939		
13050 GREENWOOD AVE	KRUEGER FUNERAL HOME	ROBERT SEYFARTH	TUDOR REVIVAL	1927		1983
13050 GREENWOOD AVE						
13050 GREENWOOD AVE						
2021 HIGH ST	ELMER BENNETT HOUSE		FOUR SQUARE	1878		1983
2445 HIGH ST	JOSHUA P. YOUNG HOUSE		ITALIANATE	c. 1854		1983
2523 HIGH ST	WARD SEYFARTH HOUSE	ROBERT SEYFARTH	TUDOR REVIVAL	1926		1983
12738 MAPLE AVE	COL. WILLIAM RAY HOUSE		QUEEN ANNE	1890		1983
12852 MAPLE AVE	ROBERT SEYFARTH HOUSE	ROBERT SEYFARTH	PRAIRIE	1903		1983
12857 MAPLE AVE	WILLIAM SCHREIBER HOUSE	ROBERT SEYFARTH	COLONIAL REVIVAL	1950		1983
12900 MAPLE AVE	ALBERT ROCHE HOUSE		VICTORIAN	1878		1983
2431 NEW ST	DR. GERHARD SEIM HOUSE		QUEEN ANNE	c. 1885		1983
2451 OAK ST	FRED & MAMIE DORMAN HOUSE		COTTAGE	1903		2010
2520 UNION ST	WILLIAM VANDENBERG HOUSE		QUEEN ANNE	1890		1983
2626 VERMONT ST	WILSON/COOLEY HOUSE		VERNACULAR	1838		1983
2444 WALNUT ST	NICHOLAS STOLL HOUSE		ITALIANATE	1868		1983
2627 WALNUT ST	HERMAN NICKEL HOUSE		VICTORIAN	1895		1983
13013 WESTERN AVE	LUCHTMEYERS JEWELRY STORE		GREYSTONE	c. 1885		1983
13042 WESTERN AVE	WOOLWORTH'S BUILDING		CHICAGO SCHOOL	c. 1918		
13168 WESTERN AVE	SCHREIBER'S HARDWARE		QUEEN ANNE	1879; 87		1983
13222-26 WESTERN AVE	HENRY BAUER ROWHOUSES		VERNACULAR	1854		1983
13301 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1904	Y	
13307 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1895	Y	
13308 OLDE WESTERN					Y	
13311 OLDE WESTERN	JEBENS HARDWARE			1894	Y	
13316 OLDE WESTERN					Y	
13315-17 OLDE WESTERN					Y	
13318 OLDE WESTERN					Y	
13319 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1867	Y	
13325 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1867	Y	
13328 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1908	Y	
13336 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1888	Y	
13337-39 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1926	Y	
13340 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1879	Y	
13341 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1899	Y	
13344 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1902	Y	
13344 OLDE WESTERN					Y	
13351 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1897	Y	
13357 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1924	Y	
13362 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1893	Y	
13404 OLDE WESTERN					Y	
13404 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1910	Y	
13406 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1867	Y	
13411 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1892	Y	
13414 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1923	Y	
13416 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1867	Y	
13426 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1879	Y	
13430 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1896	Y	
13434 OLDE WESTERN					Y	
13434 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1888	Y	
13440 OLDE WESTERN				c. 1904	Y	
13442 OLDE WESTERN	GUSTAV SCHUMAN BUILDING			c. 1904	Y	
13635 WESTERN AVE	HENRY SCHUEMANN HOUSE		VERNACULAR	1840		1983
2537 YORK ST	WALTER P. ROCHE HOUSE		ITALIANATE	1857		1983
2551 YORK ST	CONRAD KICH HOUSE		ITALIANATE	1878		2008

These tables provide detailed information for each of the City's Landmarks. The tables are from the City of Blue Island's website.

Streetscape

The city has concentrated most of its streetscape improvements along Western Avenue, installing banner signs, crosswalks at intersections, benches, planters, and decorative street lights. There are portions of other major rights-of-way that have been improved for pedestrians, e.g. the stretch of Gregory Street along MetroSouth Medical Center.





Branding

In addition to the physical elements that create a sense of place, branding and marketing play a crucial role in distinguishing a community from its neighbors and identifying it to the greater region. Blue Island has a number of unique built and unbuilt resources to help market it that include the Calumet Sag Channel, Western Avenue corridor, rail infrastructure, etc.

Key Image and Identity Conclusions

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Blue Island's image and identity. Moving forward in the planning process, these key findings should help to shape (and to inform) the community's vision, goals and objectives, and ultimate recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Architecture Conclusions

- Although attractive buildings exist throughout the community, the Uptown District, and the residential neighborhoods to the west, are where the majority of the high-quality architecture exists.
- Examples of new projects with attractive architecture include the new *Fay's Point* development and the new *Aldi* grocery store. The design, architectural features and overall landscape design of the developments are very attractive.
- It does not appear that new construction, or building renovations are required to meet architectural design standards or guidelines.

History and Landmarks Conclusions

- The City has a rich history and utilizes a number of organizations, primarily the Historical Museum, to "tell the City's story".
- The Landmark Tour is a unique opportunity for residents and visitors to visit first hand the historical landmarks of the City.

Streetscape Conclusions

- The City has focused its streetscaping efforts in the Uptown District. Western Avenue consists of brick-paver crosswalks, decorative light standards with banners, benches, etc...
- Outside of the Uptown area, very little streetscaping has occurred.
- The Green River Pattern Book was created to provide a guide to the sustainable practices and techniques that are applicable to sites and conditions within the Calumet River Corridor. The City is encouraged to use the Pattern Book as a reference as they review, revise, and implement new zoning and development ordinances that support sustainable development in their communities.

Branding Conclusions

- Gateway signs do exist in Blue Island, however, the signage types and styles vary at each location.
- Community banners are part of the larger streetscape design along Western Avenue, however, banners do not exist outside of the Uptown District.



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

233 South Wacker Drive, Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606

(312) 454-0400
info@cmap.illinois.gov

www.cmap.illinois.gov



City of Blue Island
13051 Greenwood Avenue
Blue Island, IL 60406

(708) 597-8603
www.blueisland.org



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