

Dear Chicagoans:

Good environmental management is good for business, and good business development can also benefit the environment. Nowhere is this more true than for the Calumet region on Chicago's southeast side.

For over a century, the Calumet region has contributed to the prosperity of Chicago. It manufactures and processes products essential for industry and in the everyday lives of citizens. It serves as North America's busiest hub for intermodal transportation.

Today, opportunities are ripe for revitalizing the Calumet area. In a city where large tracts of vacant industrial land are needed but scarce, the Calumet area retains well over 1,000 acres suitable for manufacturing and other businesses. Almost 60 percent of land in Chicago that is available for industry can be found here.

This industrial land exists side-by-side with Chicago's most important wetlands. Approximately 4,000 acres are to be managed as the Calumet Open Space Reserve.

Prompted by enormous opportunities for both industrial revitalization and for protection of important open space, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) initiated the creation of the *Calumet Area Land Use Plan*, to determine appropriate land uses. DPD partnered with the City's Department of Environment and three non-government organizations, the Southeast Chicago Development Commission, Openlands Project, and the Calumet Area Industrial Commission. A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sustainable development challenge grant and a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service helped fund the plan's development, and the development of the *Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan* and the *Calumet Design Guidelines*

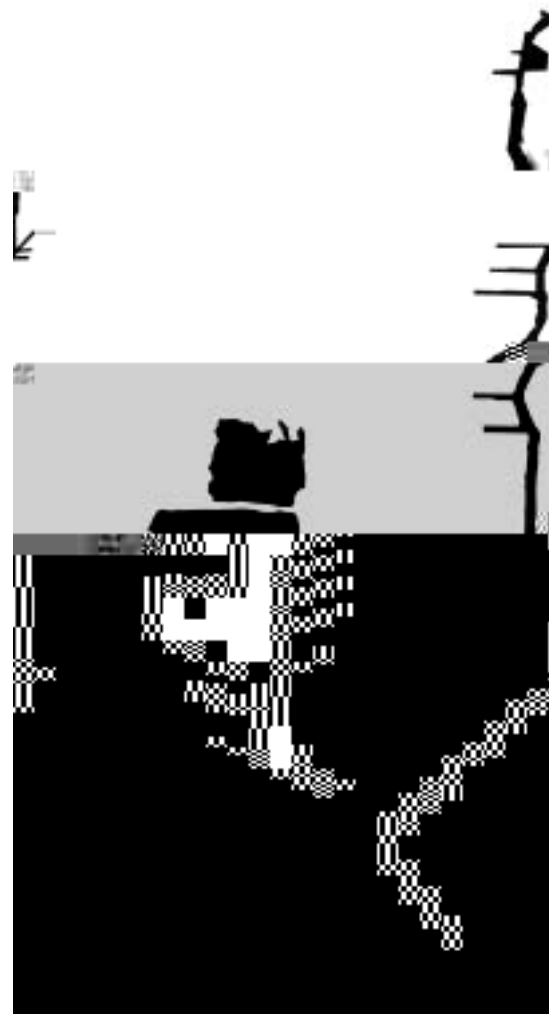


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City of Chicago
Department of Planning and Development

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Calumet Area Industrial Commission

City of Chicago
Department of Environment

Openlands Project

Southeast Chicago Development Commission

Names for landmarks of the area reveal its early history. For example, Stony Island Avenue received its name because it was a high, dry limestone ridge that cut across marshy prairies. (Stony Island's ridge is a truly ancient geological feature, an exposed coral reef left over from a time when tropical seas covered the region 400 million years ago.)¹ The name "Calumet" is believed to have been a Potawatomi word for "low body of deep, still water," but it might well have meant something else or have come from some other source now lost. The word was spelled in wildly different ways on early maps: Kennomic, Callimink, Calamic, and so on. Today's spelling of "Calumet" doesn't appear on maps until 1864.²

Over the past 125 years the bodies of water and the overall hydrology of the Calumet area have been altered dramatically. As some bodies of water were being filled up, other portions of Lake Calumet and the rivers were being dredged to make them navigable for deeper draft vessels. Beginning in 1876, the Calumet River channel was straightened, and during construction of Burns Ditch in 1926, the Little Calumet River was straightened as well. These and other changes shifted the natural drainage of the Calumet area from Lake Michigan back the opposite way toward the Illinois River.

Today lakes and marshes have been filled in with slag and other waste materials to the point where some no longer exist. Lake Calumet itself used to extend to 98th Street and Wed .9(ec0 Tir)9.8
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TRANSPORTATION

From the 1840s to the 1950s, the Calumet area's economy benefited from ever-improving transportation. Its role as a transportation hub was a strong attraction for industry. In 1848, the Illinois & Michigan Canal opened nearby, connecting Lake Michigan to the Illinois River, which flows into the Mississippi River. This water passage, which connected the Great Lakes for the first time with the Gulf of Mexico, fostered an enormous boom in population and commerce in the Chicago region.

In the 1850s, the first steel rails and wooden ties of railroads were laid across the Calumet

THE PEOPLE: OWNERS, INDUSTRIES AND COMPANY TOWNS

Native Americans traveled through the Calumet area for thousands of years before European-Americans began to build their factories here.

The first private business to open in the area in the early 1800s was a toll bridge across the Calumet River at 92nd and Houston. It was the first of what would be many commercial enterprises in the area.

Stephen A. Douglas was the first land owner in the area. He sold his holdings on the east side of Lake Calumet to James Brown, a man credited with being the founder of South Chicago. (Lake Calumet Harbor was once called South Chicago Harbor.)⁶ The holdings on the west side of the lake were sold to George Pullman, the manufacturer of Pullman railroad cars. By 1884, Pullman's railroad car plant and model town were completed along the Illinois Central railroad tracks. Once separate, Pullman became part of Chicago in 1889 after labor strikes forced the company to divest itself of the town.⁷

The region was a natural for pig iron and steel production, with Chicago a destination both

WASTE

In the late 1920s, large amounts of waste began to be dumped in the area. Licensed landfills didn't yet exist, nor did regulations related to garbage disposal. In the absence of technologies to lessen the impact of trash upon the land or the community, liquid wastes were poured directly into waterways. Solid refuse was deposited on top of earth. While some was benign, much was not. Fly ash left over from burning Illinois coal, for example, contains trace amounts of uranium. Over 130 years of industry has exposed the region to a wide range of contaminants, including polychlorinated biphenols (PCBs), a compound now known to be linked to cancer.¹² Around this time, municipal waste was also trucked in and dumped, and the Calumet area became a major repository for Chicago's garbage.



The Waste Management of Illinois
CID Recycling and Disposal Facility.

In addition, years of steel manufacturing added the most plentiful waste problem in the form of slag, the fused-together aggregate of minerals left over from steel making. Enormous amounts of slag were used to fill in lakes, including the shoreline of Lake Michigan, and some was re-used in cement and fertilizer production. But much of the slag was dumped out onto whatever open space was convenient, making it difficult for plants to grow.



Molten slag used to be disposed of by dumping it onto open ground; this practice continued into the 1950s. Today slag is the most common form of waste problem in the Calumet area.
Photo courtesy of Southeast Historical Society.

¹² U.S. EPA. *A Preliminary Environmental Assessment of Contamination*. February, 1988.

RECREATION

In the late 1800s, the region was bustling with hotels, social clubs, and various commercial enterprises. Industry continued to grow. Most businesses were clustered along the river and along the west side of Lake Calumet, and though population had increased, it didn't approach the boom of neighborhoods adjacent to downtown. Lake Calumet was so sparsely populated that the area enjoyed a reputation for excellent hunting, fishing and recreation. Up until the 1860s, residents hunted for sustenance, but in coming decades, hunting turned to sport.

Because it took only an hour to travel by rail from downtown, well-to-do businessmen set up private hunting reserves. Woodman's Tavern and Douglas's Duck Pond were prominent sporting retreats on land now occupied by the Acme Coke plant. In 1938, the Southeast Sportsmen's Club was established in Hegewisch, and it still exists today.¹³

Residents of Chicago's North Side traveled to Lake Calumet to vacation. Architect Dankmar Adler, one of the founders of the "Chicago School of Architecture," was one noteworthy figure who spent summers at Lake Calumet.¹⁴ In warm months, there was swimming and sailing. George Pullman sponsored regattas and a crew team. Rowboats could be rented from "Bohemian Joe Dvorak's" shop. In the winter there was skating and ice sailing on the lake.

In 1898, Frank Lloyd Wright designed a recreational facility for Wolf Lake. Though it was never constructed, this "amusement resort" included a band stand, a circular track and field, boat houses, bathing pavilions, gardens and a covered pergola with seating to watch races and festivals. The illustration for it shows the throngs of people expected to use and enjoy such a facility.

¹³ Cunningham.

¹⁴ Cunningham.

FORMER PLANS

Today's *Calumet Area Land Use Plan* is not the first attempt to conceptualize a future for the Calumet area.

In 1909, Daniel Burnham addressed the Calumet River and Lake Calumet specifically in his *Plan of Chicago*:

“The Calumet is an ample stream, and on every hand the silhouettes of steel industries give strong evidence of the coming importance of this channel as a harbor. Every effort, therefore, should be made to concentrate the vehicle traffic crossing this river at well-chosen points where great bridges might be constructed, in order to create as little friction as possible between the vessel and land traffic.”

“On the banks of the Calumet, in the neighborhood of One Hundred and Third Street, are large swamps capable of being developed into fine parks; the country is gently undulating,

Lake Calumet Today

The economy and communities of the Calumet area are still recovering from the loss of the steel mills, even during America's recent period of prosperity. From 1992 to 1997, for example, employment in the U.S. grew by 13 percent and the City of Chicago grew by 6 percent. But during this national boom time, the Calumet area experienced a net loss of 2,000 jobs, mostly in the steel and steel processing industry.

Many properties in the area suffer from some level of environmental contamination. Roads are deteriorated and some are inadequate for the weight and frequency of truck traffic needed for bringing in supplies and removing products from industries.

Yet there's also a possibility to shape the property for industry's needs in a way that doesn't exist in other portions of the city. In the 1990s, private and public initiatives for urban industry focused elsewhere: Goose Island on the Chicago River, the Stockyards, and other areas. These areas are dense, and options for large scale industrial development are limited. But the Calumet area has vast acres of open land for industrial development. In fact, it has at least 13 sites totaling 1,000 acres to work with. This is by far the largest amount of vacant industrial land in the city.

Currently the Calumet area has had less than 20 percent of overall demand for space for industry, but it has almost 60 percent of land available for industrial use in Chicago.

A bright spot for industrial development is in the area's role as an intermodal center. Currently it is by far the largest intermodal center in the United States. Over 9 million containers a year are shipped in and out of the Calumet area—over twice that of any other U.S. metropolitan area. In the world, it is third only to Hong Kong and Singapore.

Another hopeful sign is that the region is ideal for creating new power generating facilities.

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Planning for the Calumet Area Today



EVOLUTION OF LAND USE PLAN

In May, 1998, *CitySpace: An Open Space Plan for Chicago* was adopted. A joint project of the City of Chicago, Chicago Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, the

GOALS FOR THE PLAN

Because the industries of Lake Calumet are in the unusual situation of being situated side by side with significant wildlife habitat, it is necessary to consider the future of both industry and nature together, in a comprehensive and synergistic land use plan.

It is also critical to consider Lake Calumet's placement as a central component of a much larger ecosystem and trail network. There have been proposals for a "Calumet National Heritage Area" that would wrap around the southwestern end of Lake Michigan, reaching from the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore on the east to the Illinois and Michigan Canal National H

Over 1,000 acres are well suited for future industrial development in the Calumet area. In most cases, proposed sites for industry were once occupied by other manufacturers. The same attributes that attracted former occupants still exist in these properties: good transportation and accessible, buildable locations.

In addition to providing transportation for raw materials and finished goods, roadways provide transportation for workers. And it's hoped that in the future, bikeways, pedestrian paths and existing train lines will provide transportation for commuting workers as well, making Calumet a truly sustainable and exemplary industrial district.

The Role of a TIF District in Implementing the Plan

Concurrently with the development of this plan, DPD has established a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district for the Calumet area, which was adopted by the Chicago City Council on December 13, 2000. TIF is a tool used by the City to finance redevelopment in underuti-



lized or areas lagging in redevelopment activity. TIF enables the City to offer financial incentives to developers by drawing against revenues associated with increased property values. It also enables the City to assemble and consolidate land parcels to accommodate industrial development.

The site vacated by General Mills has excellent water, rail and road access, and is a good example of the type of industrial site available in the Calumet area.

The Calumet Industrial TIF covers roughly 12,000 acres, and is by far the largest TIF district ever created in Chicago. Approximately 4,600 acres are devoted to streets, alleys, rights-of-ways, and waterways. Another 1,500 acres consist of improved industrial properties. The remaining acreage is vacant.

TIF funds can be used for a number of pre-development activities, including acquisition of land, environmental remediation related to development and restoration, and the construction of public infrastructure, including open space.

Heavy Truck Route

To support industrial development, the *Calumet Area Land Use Plan* emphasizes the importance of implementing previous proposals that will improve routes for truck traffic. Seventy-six percent of industrial products shipped or received in the U.S. are transported by truck, making road improvements a critical component for success in retaining and attracting industry in the Calumet area. These include:

- Increasing the load capacity of existing streets and intersections from 80,000 pounds to 135,000 pounds. Currently Illinois regulations restrict weights to the lower amount, while Indiana regulations allow 135,000 pounds along a specially designated route. This creates logistical difficulties for transport of steel products and other materials between the two states, and is a major hindrance to Illinois industry. Increased load capacities will be accommodated by rebuilding the base of roads to increase the amount of weight trucks can carry, improving signals, changing the grade of a number of railroad tracks so tracks don't interfere with road traffic, and potentially allowing trucks to carry higher weights than what is currently permissible in Illinois.
- Completing an industrial road from Torrence Avenue to Avenue O at 126th Street to connect industry on both sides of the river at the southern end of Calumet River.

Conclusion

First there was nature's reign in the Calumet area. Then for 50 years after the first settlers, the area was a hunting and fishing paradise. Starting at the turn of the century came a seven-decade period of industrial construction and material prosperity. And then in the 1970s and up until now, there's been the difficult period of an industrial downturn.

Today the era of decline is ending, and it's possible to see what a new era will look like.

- Neighborhood residents, local employees and visitors will regain access to wild lands and restored landscapes that were unavailable for public use for half a century.
- New industries will spring up in the Lake Calumet area. Old environmental problems will have been addressed, and new businesses will be constructed in ways that don't harm the environment and may actually help improve it through thoughtful landscape management practices, water control projects, and other means.



- New jobs and tax revenues from industry will bring fresh prosperity to communities surrounding them.
- Former landfills will have been transformed into hilly prairies, where bobolinks can nest and blazing stars can bloom. Bird populations throughout restored wetlands will increase and flourish.
- People will arrive by bike, car, train or bus to visit significant sites that celebrate the area's industrial and labor history, to view the birds and other natural resources, and to fish. Tourism will bring both income and pride to the region.

The site of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District's aeration station, which increases the oxygen content of the Calumet River and improves water quality. The Ford plant can be seen here on the left.

The Calumet area hasn't quite reached that new era, but groundwork is being laid. Environmental and infrastructure problems are being addressed and solved. The current era is one where the proper plans, policies, financing vehicles and other incentives are being established to make a prosperous future possible for Lake Calumet.

It is in this spirit and with this vision that the City of Chicago has created the *Calumet Area Land Use Plan*—as one significant step toward a brighter future.

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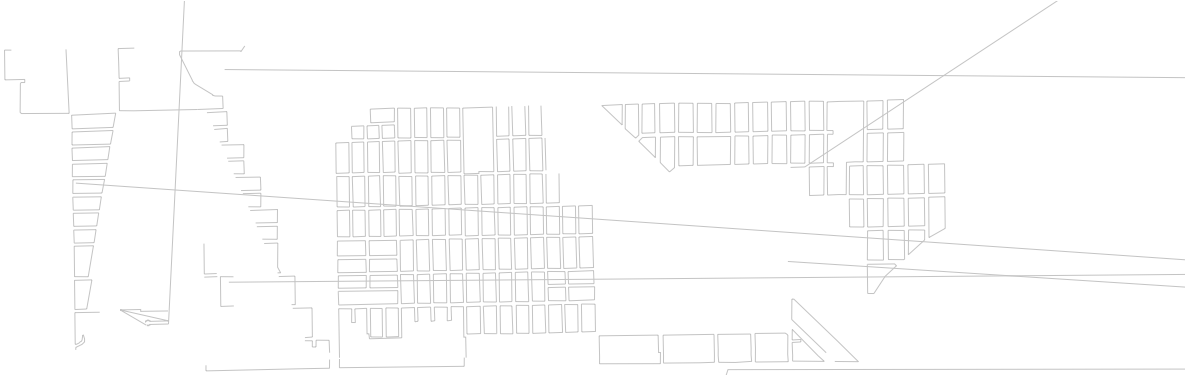
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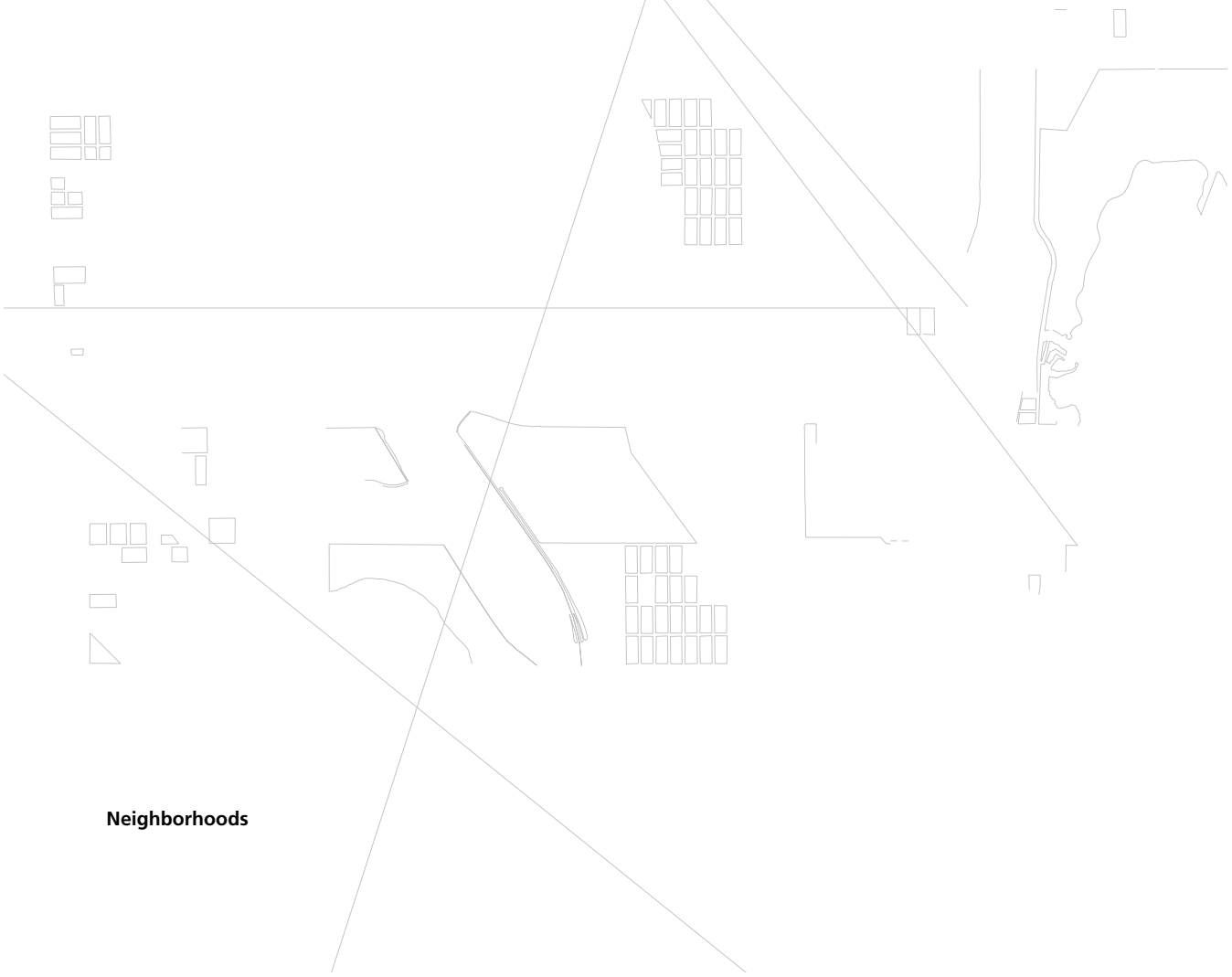
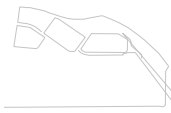
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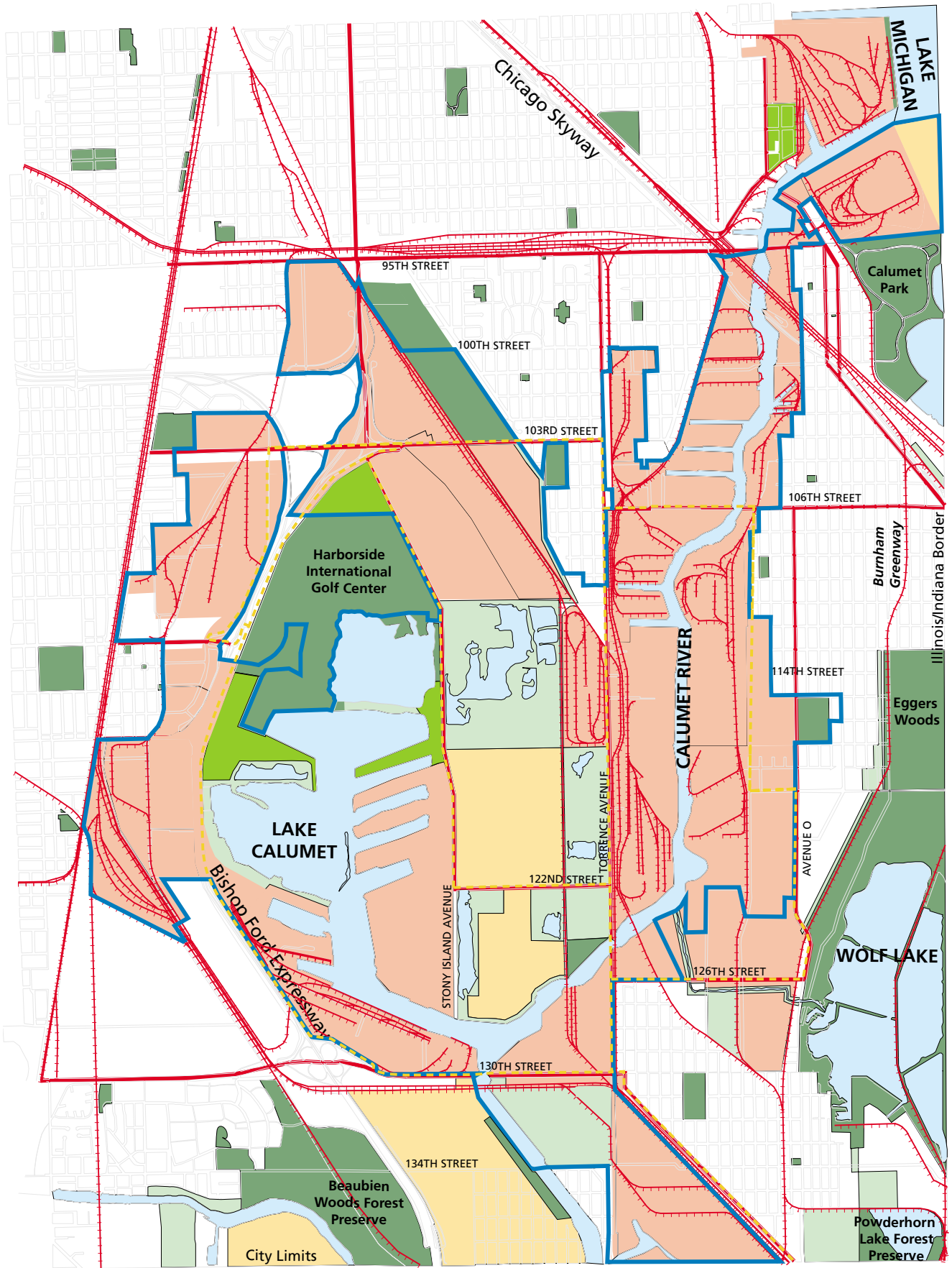


**Cottage
Grove
Heights**












Neighborhoods

Calumet Area Land Use Map



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
|  Industrial |  Open Space Preservation |  Major Roadways |
|  Public Open Space |  Open Space Recreation |  Railroads |
|  Heavy Truck Route |  Open Space Reclamation |  Calumet Tax Increment Finance Area |

Acreage calculations are for planning purposes only. The calculations are not based on platted survey information.

Approved by the Chicago Plan Commission
February 14, 2002.

