



ECONOMIC IMPACT

As a result of the program, the number of jobs in the transportation sector has increased by 15% since 2010. This growth is primarily due to the expansion of the transit system and the resulting need for additional staff to manage the increased ridership. The program has also led to a significant increase in the number of jobs in the construction sector, as the transit system has expanded its infrastructure. This growth has been particularly notable in the areas of engineering, architecture, and construction management.

The program has also had a positive impact on the local economy. The increased ridership has led to a significant increase in the number of jobs in the retail and service sectors. This growth has been particularly notable in the areas of food and beverage, retail, and customer service. The program has also led to a significant increase in the number of jobs in the education sector, as the transit system has expanded its infrastructure and the resulting need for additional staff to manage the increased ridership.

The program has also had a positive impact on the environment. The increased ridership has led to a significant reduction in the number of cars on the road, which has resulted in a decrease in air pollution and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This reduction in emissions has been particularly notable in the areas of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, which are major contributors to air pollution and climate change.

The program has also had a positive impact on the community. The increased ridership has led to a significant increase in the number of jobs in the community development sector. This growth has been particularly notable in the areas of housing, education, and social services. The program has also led to a significant increase in the number of jobs in the health care sector, as the transit system has expanded its infrastructure and the resulting need for additional staff to manage the increased ridership.

The program has also had a positive impact on the economy. The increased ridership has led to a significant increase in the number of jobs in the manufacturing sector. This growth has been particularly notable in the areas of transportation equipment, machinery, and electrical equipment. The program has also led to a significant increase in the number of jobs in the information technology sector, as the transit system has expanded its infrastructure and the resulting need for additional staff to manage the increased ridership.

The program has also had a positive impact on the environment. The increased ridership has led to a significant reduction in the number of cars on the road, which has resulted in a decrease in air pollution and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This reduction in emissions has been particularly notable in the areas of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, which are major contributors to air pollution and climate change.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CITY AND ITS PATTERNS

Blue Island is a 4.5 square mile, 170-year-old city of 23,500 people that touches the southwest corner of Chicago. Blue Island grew up as a transportation and industrial center with a main street that met local commercial needs. The present land use and infrastructure of Blue Island reflects this legacy:

Industrial Pattern: The northeast, west, and south edges of Blue Island are industrial areas, home to 98 industrial businesses that employ approximately 3,400 workers. These areas are served by several arterial highways, two expressways, five freight railroads, an intermodal freight terminal, and the Calumet Sag Channel that runs through the middle of town. While Blue Island retains a strong industrial base, plant closures over the last three decades have weakened it. Some 220 acres of vacant industrial land currently sit idle.

Main Street Pattern: Blue Island's central business district (locally called "uptown") follows a traditional pattern of businesses lined along a main street (Western Avenue) and serving the convenience retail and professional service needs of local residents and visitors. Uptown contains institutions that draw people to Blue Island, most notably St. Francis Hospital. The Pronger Smith Clinic, a branch of Moraine Valley Community College, quality restaurants and shops (especially a set of regionally well-know antique stores) also attract visitors. A pair of Metra commuter stations on Vermont Street just east of uptown, from which passengers may access three rail lines and different Chicago Loop destinations, also brings hundreds of commuters to the Uptown area daily. An active Chamber of Commerce and a dedicated Main Street Association have worked to preserve historic buildings and foster a value-added traditional atmosphere in uptown. But Blue Island has no department stores; these have been replaced by large shopping centers in nearby towns, and the main street district is not as busy as it once was or as its buying power and anchoring institutions suggest it should be today.

Blue Island is creating this economic development plan to revitalize the city's economy by building on its strengths. The core strategy of this plan applies two economic development concepts to Blue Island's situation:

- *Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)* involves the integrated development of homes, retail

GOALS, PRINCIPLES, S



Principles

In addition to this plan's goal there are several principles that have guided its development:

- **Affirm Blue Island's identity.** Blue Island is a city with 170 years of history, valued commercial and industrial businesses, a distinctive natural environment that figures strongly in every day life, and communities whose families represent a unique blend of economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Blue Island is a special place cherished by its residents, and the city's economic development plan should preserve and enhance its identity.
- **Plan to Capture Blue Island's real development potential.** Blue Island residents have a strong sense, confirmed by outside analysis, that their city has far more potential to create new jobs, businesses, and desirable homes than it currently displays. While remaining stolidly realistic, make the city's plan bold enough to capture its actual potential for economic development.
- **Make development inclusive.** Be sure that development benefits current residents and businesses as much as it attracts newcomers, and lower income residents as much more prosperous households. If there are situations where existing homes or businesses need to be replaced with new development, be sure that residents or business owners are adequately compensated and assisted in their relocation. Follow a "build first" principle by which homes or businesses are not removed until desirable replacements are available.
- **Make development work for business and the environment:** Development should not sacrifice the quality of life in neighborhoods to achieve business growth. In fact, business development in Blue Island should attract more investment and be more successful because environmental concerns are basic to the economic development plan.
- **Direct development planning and oversight from the community.** To ensure that the other principles are followed, be sure that all community residents have opportunities to participate in the planning process and that the proposals of the plan are formed and approved by legitimate representatives of the community. Build procedures for ongoing community input and review into the implementation plan.

- **Make a practical development plan.** At all costs be sure that the economic development plan does not just sit on a shelf. Make plans that the City can implement by leveraging investments from other levels of government and the private sector. Recognizing that a substantive plan will take years to implement, lay out a clear path for the plan's implementation.

Objectives

Objectives of the plan are specific are stated in Section IV, in the context of each of the plan's nine basic proposals for sustainable economic development.

Development Areas

TOD Area: Blue Island's TOD opportunities are centered around its Vermont Street Metra stations. The TOD area encompasses Blue Island's main street or central business district. So in Blue Island a TOD plan is also a plan to optimize the development of main street. Information about the city-wide population that uses the main street district is relevant to the plan, and the success of the TOD project will impact the entire city.

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

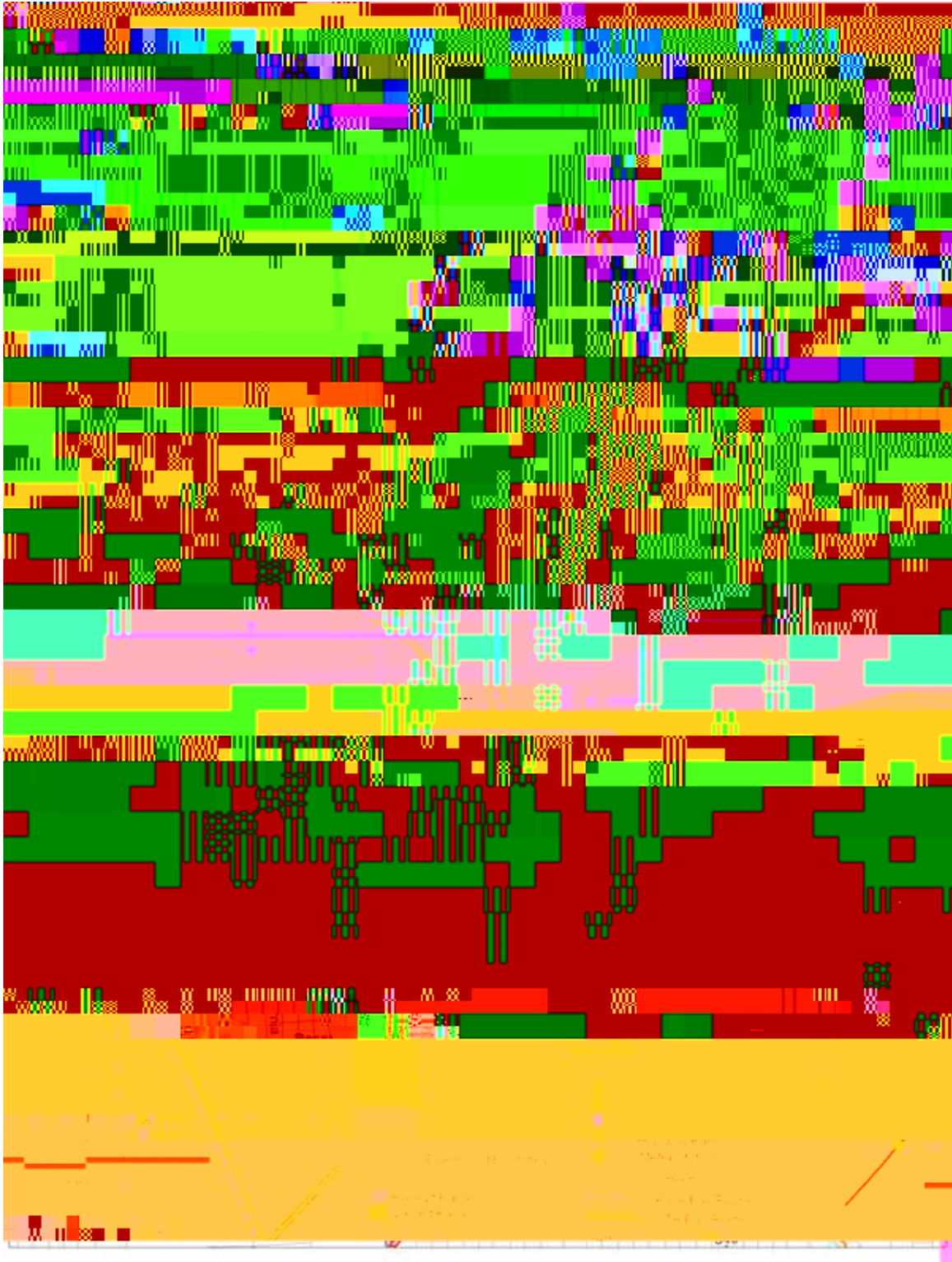


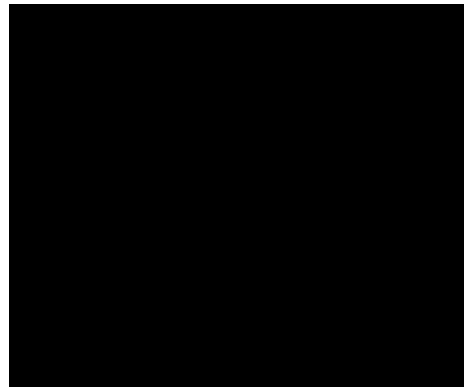
Figure 1. COD and TOD Areas in Blue Island

MARKET CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Blue Island's market opportunity for TOD is determined by these facts:

- The city's population and property values are growing rapidly. (e.g., the average home price rose by 39% and equalized assessed value grew by 17% since 2000.)
- Blue Island has more buying power per square mile (and so more capacity to support local businesses) than most south suburbs because its population is somewhat more dense. Workers and visitors drawn to Blue Island increase this buying power.
- None of the 25 large shopping centers within a five-mile radius of Blue Island are located in the city. The established position of nearby towns would make competition in the large shopping center arena difficult for Blue Island.
- Blue Island's main street district, with its historic preservation, anchoring institutions, and quality businesses gives the city a market identity in a niche that is difficult to replicate and has few competitors in the south suburbs.
- The dual Metra stations on Vermont Street should provide an important asset to Blue Island's main street district, but the actual contribution of these stations is less than it might be for two reasons: (1) The allocation of surrounding land for industrial uses or surface parking prevents hundreds of households from living in and contributing to this desirable area. (2) Conditions for walking in the station area and to the main street district are unpleasant and perceived as dangerous because of poor street and rail crossing design.
- The center of the main street district also presents uncomfortable situations for walking customers, e.g., crossing shopping streets that are fast one-way highways, finding little greenery or inviting public space.

Blue Island needs to overcome these problems of land use, residential density, and street design in order to prosper with a main street market identity and valuable transit resource.



Blue Island's market opportunity for COD is determined by these facts:

- Large economic trends associated with long-distance sourcing of products and just-in-time manufacturing and stocking, are making access to freight infrastructure more important than it has been for two generations, especially in the Chicago region, which is the hub of the North American freight transportation system.
- Despite decades of contraction, concentrations of businesses in several industrial fields occur in the Blue Island area. Their presence can help to attract similar businesses.

- Relative to other Chicago area communities, Blue Island workers are appropriately educated and prepared for industrial work. They are more likely to have a high school or community college education and industrial work experience.
- Despite Blue Island’s assets for COD, any industrial project in Blue Island must overcome three serious obstacles:
 - Brownfields conditions real and perceived;
 - Cook County tax rates that are higher than those of any other Illinois county;
 - The perception that Cook County industrial property values will not appreciate.

As a result of these impediments, approximately 223 acres of land in Blue Island are now vacant. Approximately 150 of these acres are in contiguous blocks. In some cases additional vacant acres are adjacent in neighboring towns.

In Blue Island the industrial development opportunity is to use the advantages of access to freight infrastructure, existing business concentrations, and a ready industrial workforce (the elements of a COD), with a careful application of incentives from the public sector, to overcome impediments and restore more than 150 acres of vacant land to productive use.

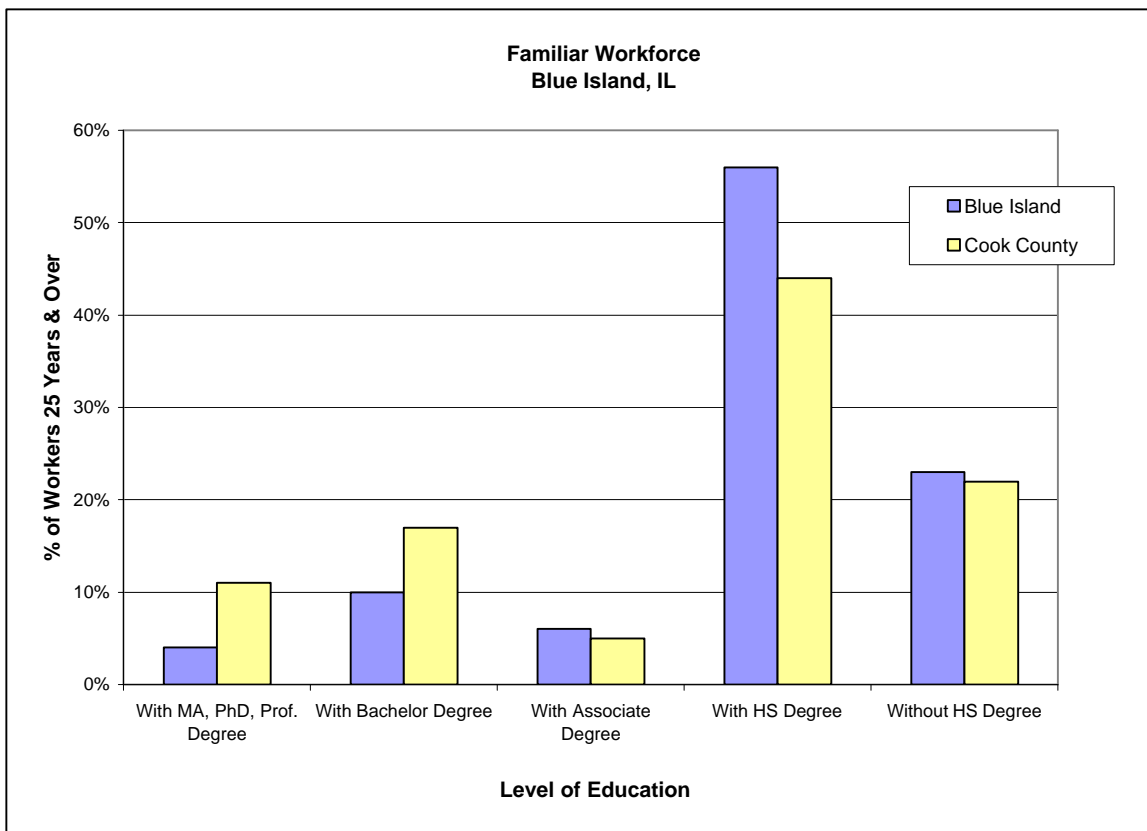


Figure 2. Education Level of Blue Island’s Workforce

COMMUNITY PLANNING I

AREA & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

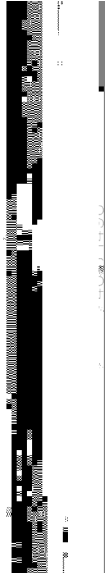
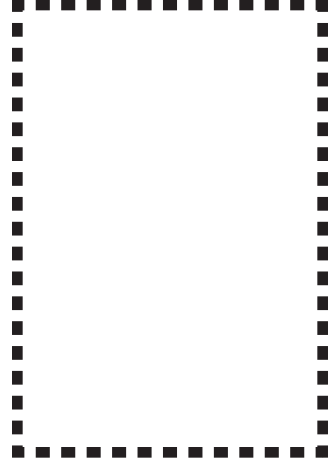
The Blue Island Plan presents nine basic proposals for development: proposals for development in three sectors of the TOD area, proposals for COD in all three of the city's industrially zoned areas, proposals for three city-wide programs that will guide and support development in TOD and COD areas.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Proposals

In the south station residential district, within a quarter-mile of the Vermont Street Metra stations, this plan proposes development of more than 400 quality condominiums and town homes overlooking the Calumet Sag waterfront, creation of a nature and recreation trail along the Cal-Sag Channel, establishment of a safe and pleasant pedestrian environment, and 37,000 s.f. of commercial space along a corridor of mixed use development connecting the stations to the main street district. Land for these improvements will be made available primarily by relocating highly valued industrial businesses from this area to land that better serves their needs and from shifting Metra surface parking to the industrial land that will be vacated. Up to 40 private homes would also need to be replaced by denser housing, with their present owners paid fair market value plus relocation costs.

In the hospital district and northern part of uptown this plan would create an improved environment for institutional and commercial development by measures that include: shifting parking lots from Western Avenue to "interior block" parcels, facilitating the development of mixed use buildings (with first floor retail and apartments or offices above) to increase residential density, establishing a town square on expanded park land, changing Western and Gregory Avenues from one-way to two-way streets, and adding greenery, improved lighting and crosswalks to the streetscape. Feasible and desired enterprises would be attracted to this upgraded mixed-use retail district including specialty clothing stores, children's product stores, a book store, a live theater, and additional or expanded quality restaurants.

In the south main street area the primary task will be to rebuild the Gregory and Western intersection to allow two-way traffic flow. This will entail addressing the Gregory overpass, either by retrofitting it as a street friendly to pedestrians and the surrounding landscape or by demolishing it. When this is accomplished, it will be possible to build a significant commercial or mixed use development overlooking the Cal Sag on the east side of Gregory at Vermont. It will also become feasible to stimulate the development of the James Street and Old Western Avenue neighborhoods by measures that include: extending the Cal Sag nature trail, facilitating the development of quality housing, and building a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the channel.

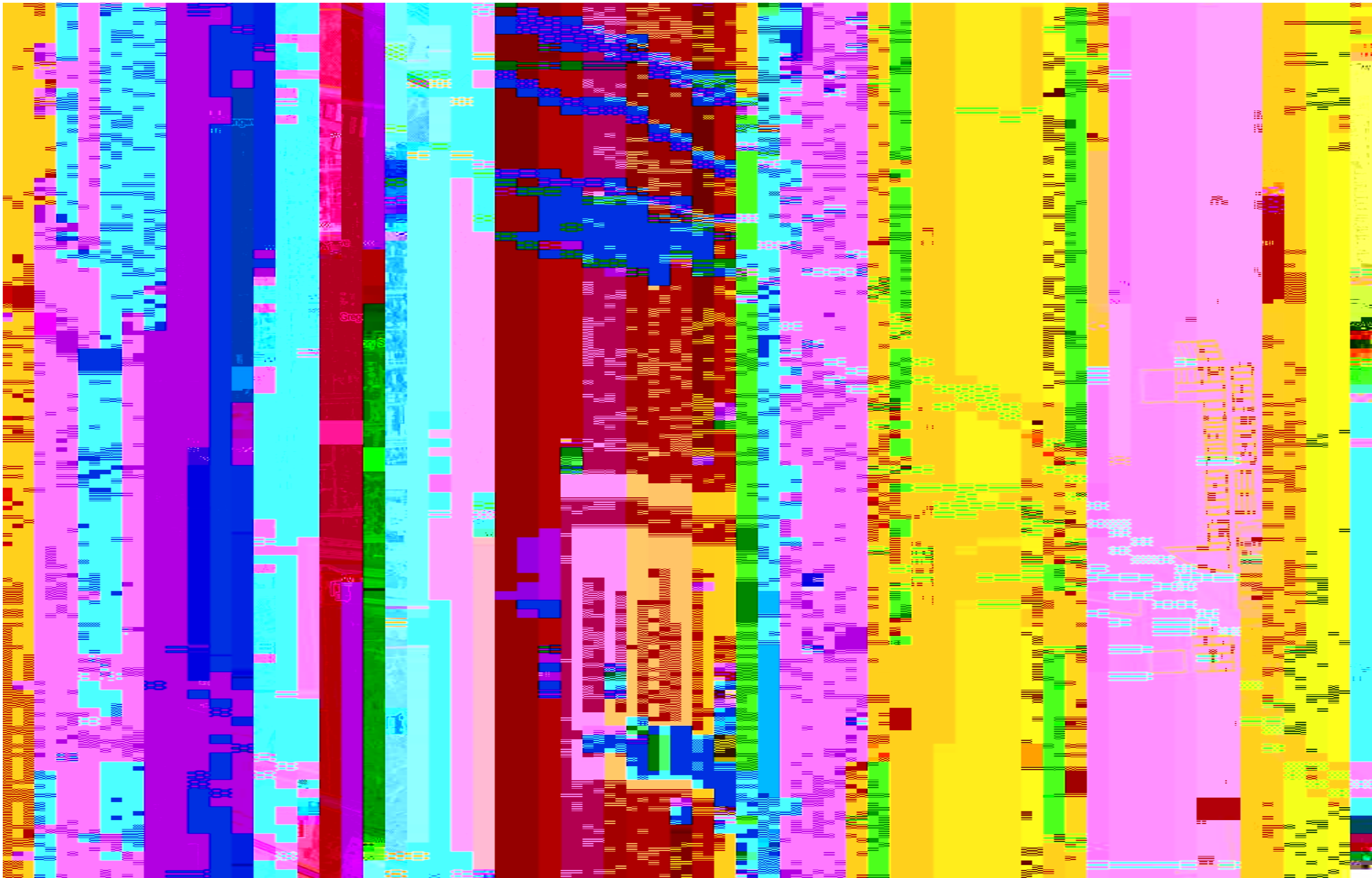


Cargo-Oriented Development (COD) Proposals

In the northeast industrial sector this plan seeks the redevelopment of 115 acres of vacant industrial land (90 acres of it owned by the City of Blue Island) at a site with excellent access to I-57 and freight railroads. This development will offer desirable sites to industrial businesses relocating from the TOD area, and should generate about 680 new industrial jobs. Businesses will be built along a dedicated truck road through industrial land, eliminating more than 5,000 heavy truck trips per month through Blue Island streets. Current limited uses of some of this land, for a soccer field and for outdoor industrial storage, must be relocated before these parcels are developed.

In the west industrial sector, which runs along Wireton Road, Blue Island's border with Alsip, and the Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) Railroad line, a primary objective is to locate complimentary ethanol and energy generating gasification plants on the old Premcor oil refinery site in neighboring Alsip. This development would establish a new employment center on the border of Blue Island and could lead to lower energy costs for Blue Island businesses. Whether or not these plant developments occur, the City will work with the marketing department of the IHB to fill in some six acres of vacant industrial land with businesses that would benefit from this location's access to rail.

In the south industrial sector, between 135th and 139th Streets, this plan proposes the redevelopment of some 60 acres of contiguous, vacant industrial land in an area served by several freight railroads. Development of the logistics/manufacturing enterprises for which this land is suited should generate approximately 600 new industrial jobs. In another part of the industrially zoned south sector, the City would need a long-term plan to relocate several dozen households to residential neighborhoods before the entire sector could be used for industrial development.



City-wide Program Proposals

Zoning and Design Standards: Blue Island's current zoning code does not include provisions for the type of intensive mixed use development that is necessary for TOD, nor design guidelines that would support commercial development of consistent quality and pedestrian-orientation in the main street district. Current ordinances also do not provide for buffering of industrial from residential neighborhoods that is desirable for COD. The City, therefore, needs to revise its zoning code and establish commercial design standards. This work should be one of the prime responsibilities of a city planner who should be hired to execute major tasks of this plan, along with the city's project management consultant and a planning commission of citizens. Because zoning code and design standards development is a major task, interim guidance based on this plan should be issued for the consideration and specifications of projects in the short term.

Worker Training and Job Placement: This plan seeks to maximize the number of city residents employed in Blue Island's current and new businesses. A proposed means of accomplishing this objective is a worker education, training, and referral service of benefit to local employers. To develop this service the City will need to establish a network of partnerships: with local education

Resources for Development

The City of Blue Island will strive to fund and execute all of the proposals of this plan through a series of partnerships with private developers and investors and with public agencies at the

Figure 5. Total Project Costs and Benefits: Low Capital Investment

Project	Private	Public (non-city)	Blue Island	Total Cost	Temp. Jobs	Perm. Jobs	Sales Tax Revenue	Total Property Tax Revenue	Prop. Tax Revenue to City	Prop. Tax Revenue to Sch. Dist.	Buying Power	Sale of Land	Future Annual Parking	Parking
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IMPLEMENTATION

Development Functions and Roles

As the preceding project descriptions and estimates indicate, the City of Blue Island will implement this plan primarily by working and investing as a catalyst of private and public resources. Carrying out this role for nine concurrently advancing projects will require the coordinated efforts of elected officials, professional staff and consultants, and residents. The concluding section of the plan describes the roles and internal management arrangements of this cooperative effort. Some key features of these arrangements are highlighted in the following points.

Plan Implementation Management (City Planner): The professional in this new position will have the responsibility for moving the implementation of this plan forward on a day-to-day basis. He or she should be the primary author of proposals for funding, cooperative development agreements, and requests for proposals involved in the plan's implementation. He or she should routinely manage the network of relationships that is critical for the plan's realization.

Project Review and Management (Project Management Consultant): The City has engaged a Blue Island professional firm with a combination of expertise in city planning, architecture, engineering, and project management, to review serious proposals for development, to assist approved projects as they go forward, and to ensure that quality standards are met in the execution of projects.

Community Participation and Ancillary Development Roles (Not-for-Profit Organizations): Not-for-profit organizations may perform some development functions that the City cannot carry out as effectively or flexibly. They may call on their members to volunteer in development efforts, bring significant groups of citizens into discussions of development policy and options, and solicit some philanthropic and public funds to support development more readily than the City.

Community Oversight and Participation in the Development Process (Development Commission and Plan Commission) The City Council will establish two citizen commissions. A "Development Commission" will organize stakeholder participation in actions taken to implement the Blue Island Plan. This commission will include standing committees working with staff to achieve each of the major aspects of the Plan. Every resident who wants to play a constructive role in the development effort is needed and can find a place in one of the committees of the Development Commission. The functions of the Development Commission are distinct from those of the "Plan Commission", which will be responsible for the evaluation and approval of individual projects, in keeping with the Plan, as they are proposed by developers.

Evaluation and Strategic Planning (Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)): Given adequate funding from its financial sponsors, CNT proposes that during the next two years its staff will attend regular meetings of Blue Island's Working Group and Steering Committee, coordinate semi-annual reviews of progress in implementing the Blue Island Plan and draft semi-annual updates of the plan document, and devote up to 200 hours per year of professional time to development tasks selected by the City.

Leadership and Executive Management (Mayor of Blue Island): The Mayor will be the executive of the professional development team and the leader of the voluntary effort to implement the Blue Island Plan.

Leadership and Fiscal Discipline (City Council of Blue Island): Initially the City Council will adopt the Blue Island Plan as the City's primary development policy. The Council will allocate the City's resources for implementation of the plan as they are needed and vote on major implementation decisions including amendments to the plan.

Figure 7: Blue Island Plan and Development Organization Chart

Project Quality Assurance, LLC
1 July 2005implementation01 1 July 2005

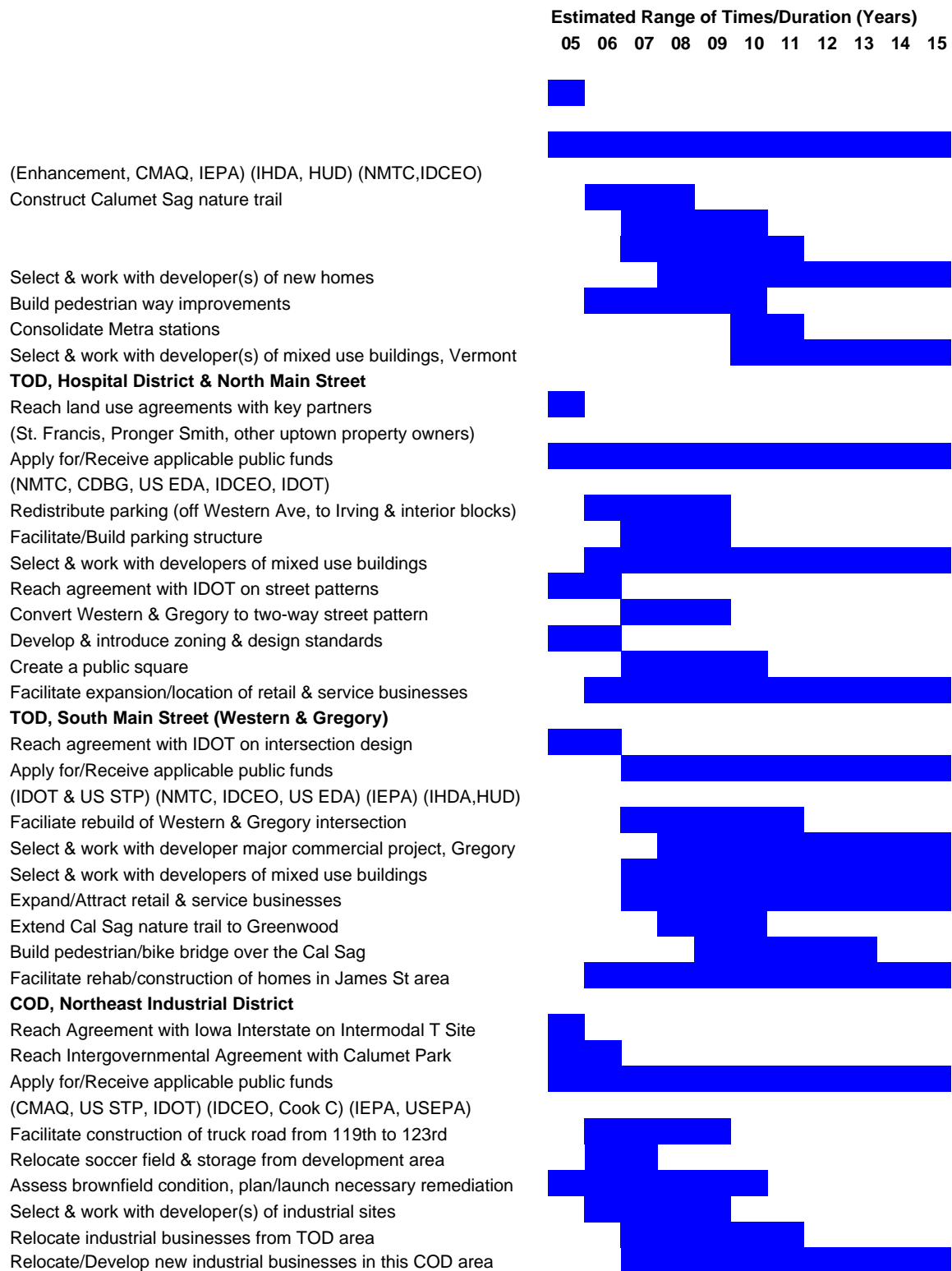
Evaluation and Revision of the Blue Island Plan

Any complex plan that extends over years requires periodic review and revision. This is especially true for a program such as the Blue Island Plan that involves alternatives for achieving major objectives and requires public and private partnership, accordingly:

- *The plan should be revised semi-annually.* Recommendations for revisions of the plan should be determined in quarterly meetings of the full Working Group. A winter revision should be modest and tactical. A summer revision of the plan should follow from an annual meeting to review the development process and the plan. All community residents should be invited and meetings should be heavily promoted. With the benefit of the input from this broad group, changes in outlook and basic strategy may be considered in revisions of the plan.
- *The City will also secure bi-annual evaluations of the plan from objective reviewers* who might come from a university, a public policy institute, a consulting firm, or a public agency in a distant location.
- *Substantive amendments to the plan will be approved by the City Council.*

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Figure 8. Blue Island Development Time Frame



**Blue Island Economic Development Plan
Development Time Frame**

Major Tasks	Estimated Range of Times/Duration (Years)											
	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	
COD, West Industrial Sector												
Reach agreements with plant developers/owners	█											
Reach intergovernmental agreements with neighboring towns	█											
Apply for/ seek assignment of public funds (IDCEO, Cook C, NMTC) (IEPA, USEPA) (IDOT)	█											
Facilitate opening of energy plants at proposed Alsip site		█	█	█								
Facilitate industrial retention & infill development	█											
COD, South Industrial Sector												
Apply for and receive of public funds (IEPA, USEPA) IDCEO, Cook C, US EDA, NMTC, IDOT	█											
Assess brownfield condition, plan/launch necessary remediation	█											
Secure site control of "triangle" development area	█											
Select & work with developer(s) of industrial sites in triangle		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Facilitate industrial retention & infill develop in all south sector	█											
Create & implement consistent land use plan for south sector		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Advocate better expressway connections for south sector	█											
City Wide, Capacity Building												
Hire Blue Island city planner	█											
Engage project management consultant	█											
Establish implementation Working Group & Planning Comm	█											
Retain capacity	█											
City Wide, Zoning Reform & Design Standards												
Seek funding for zoning & design standards (US EDA, professional services discount/ contribution)	█											
Issue interim guidance consistent with Plan	█											
Engage specialist consultant	█											
Revise zoning code & establish design standards	█											
Implement procedure for project review	█											
City Wide, Worker Training & Employment Program												
Establish Partnerships (local education & training institutions, comm organizations, public employ services, workforce boards)	█											
Apply for/ receive and assign public funding (IDCEO, USDE, IDE, private foundations)	█											
Interview major Blue Island employers		█	█									
Facilitate development of programs responsive to employer needs		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Implement new education & training programs		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Promote recruit for new programs		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
City Wide, IntraCity Transportation System												
Reach working agreements with key partners (Pace, CNT, CATS, CBF, business comm leaders forming TMA)	█											
Apply for and receive of public funds (CMAQ, new JARC, Pace service commitments)	█											
(Design & commit budget with local match & rider fees)	█											
Establish shuttle bus service		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Establish car sharing service		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Establish coordinated car/van pooling system		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Establish bike path system		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█