



## Overview

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 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.

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), approached the project by profiling current conditions, trends and emerging projects; identifying new possibilities; and engaging community and stakeholders through steering committee meetings and roundtable discussions. The team built on existing planning and development activities and information, such as the Brownfields Assessment Project, the Chicago Southland Tomorrow Initiative, the South Suburban Tax Reactivation Project, the 2040 Regional Framework Plan, and South Suburban Calumet Area Open Space Initiative. In addition, the team researched best practices in river corridor development, and conducted a workshop for stakeholders to help frame the vision statement and formulate recommendations.

Throughout the process, a twenty-one member steering committee provided information and feedback. The steering committee included representatives of the seven Calumet River Corridor communities, business, potential investors, and public and non-profit stakeholders. It met eight times in the course of the project and approved the content of the vision statement and the recommendations for next steps.

The report that follows is divided into four sections:

- Background description of the project area
- Vision for economic development
- Strategy and recommendations for next steps
- Appendices with technical memoranda and maps

## **The Calumet River Corridor: A Profile**

### ***Location***



or take advantage of scale economies in developing the core economic development skills and tools to support activities in each of the communities.





Creating a single voice to advocate for priority projects

Playing a leadership role on priority projects by bringing private and public sector players together, organizing the process and keeping it on track

Assuring coordination of economic development activities, including those in other key corridors (e.g. I-394, I-57, the southeast commuter rail corridors and multi-use trails) and facilitation of responses to sometimes competing needs, e.g. recreational vs. freight uses of the river

Helping raise public and private funding for detailed planning and implementation of projects, and providing technical assistance in financial packaging and use of financial tools

Establishing proactive/coordinated relationships with external agencies and organizations, e.g. the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency





## **2. Sponsor a Planning and Economic Development Academy**

Economic development in the corridor will depend upon the involvement and skills of key people in each of the communities and in organizations that have a role in economic development. It will be important to raise the skills of all of the individuals involved, increase their understanding of their roles and how they work with each other, and what is required to implement the vision and priority projects. A Planning and Economic Development Academy is therefore recommended to develop a shared u





art events (Chihuly at Garfield Park Conservatory in Chicago, the Gates in New York tours, and river clean-up efforts. A high profile, signature event would help raise the profile of the region, generate revenue, and provide a vehicle for collaboration among the communities and engaging businesses and residents. At the same time, an event (s) that is co-sponsored by all of the corridor communities is attractive because of relatively low capital requirements and a short period for planning and implementation.

Targeted events specifically designed to market the area to investors are also recommended. A luxury boat tour of the Calumet River Corridor, for example, originating at Navy Pier, entering the Little Calumet River, progressing through the Calumet River Corridor and west along the Calumet-Sag Channel, would highlight

