

100th Street Calumet River Project would create new recreational trail on Southeast Side — Streetsblog Chicago

Aug 9, 2022 09:49PM

Para leer este artículo en español, haga clic aquí.

The 100th Street Calumet River Project was suggested by community members during the 2016 South Chicago Commercial Avenue Revitalization planning process of 2016. It is in the initial stages of development. Residents identified the site as an opportunity for restoration of the natural riverbank habitat, a trail, and a public viewing area for river activity. If completed, the site would become a part of the greater network of transportation and recreation infrastructure on the Southeast Side. Currently the project team, headed by Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is conducting outreach to develop a community stewardship and governance plan for the site.

I discussed the 100th Street initiative with Jack Rocha, a Community Development Planner at GCI, and Alex Perez, Advocacy Manager at the Active Transportation Alliance, which assists with community engagement and transportation analysis of the project area. The interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

Ruth Rosas: Can you explain what the 100th Street Calumet River Project is?

Jack Rocha: The project comes out of organizing work that GCI started with the Commercial Avenue Plan that was completed and published in 2016. Along with that, the project comes out of the organizing work that the Metropolitan Planning Council has regarding rivers. Both organizations heard similar things as far as what kind of activation people want to see along the river. The Calumet River is an industrial zone so there is no legal public access along the river. The project would include activation of the Calumet River as well as connecting the site by a trail.

RR: So, who are the current owners of this area and how will the change of a non-public space into a public space happen?

JR: The area for the project is bordered to the east by the Calumet River, by a rail viaduct to the west, the Chicago Skyway to the north, and by 100th Street to the south. The area that makes up the site is owned by local utility companies. Historically, the north half of the site is owned by People's Gas and the south half of the site is owned by ComEd. Throughout the years, the site has been occupied by other smaller utility companies. However, for the north side of the site, we'll be working with People's Gas and its parent company, WEC Energy Group.

The process to get this to be public land is for companies to grant an easement to the city of Chicago. However, the owner of the site would be NeighborSpace which has its own land bank. It would get help from the community to bring the project to full implementation and management.

RR: Who are the communities that would be part of this project?

JR: The site is on the edge of different communities but is also separated from communities by the river and the rail line. Communities that would be impacted are South Deering, East Side, South Chicago, and Calumet Heights.

RR: What role is ATA playing in this project?

Alex Perez: There was community engagement happening before COVID and we had to switch from in-person engagement to online engagement. We did a study on the existing conditions of the site. We did a crash analysis map, looking at serious crashes. Fatal car crashes in the study area predominantly occur on busier streets like 100th Street. We also conducted a truck count as 100th Street is a major truck route.

We also heard from the community that there were a lot of [truckers] passing through the area, so we wanted to get those counts as well as traffic volume. This will help us understand access points at 96th Street and 100th Street. We are prioritizing improvements on 100th Street as a southern entrance point, not just for cyclists but for pedestrians as well. There is a bus stop on 100th St.

However, from our crash data analysis, we know serious car crashes are happening on 100th. 96th Street may be used as a smaller street entrance. It is more bikeable and pedestrian-friendly. Moving forward, ATA will take more of an active role in community outreach. For example, I will cohost a leg of the Big Marsh Bike Convergence. The Convergence is an annual event that Big Marsh Park uses to get the word out to surrounding communities about the park.

RR: Who are the other partners working on this project?

JR: ATA, Neighbor Space, Calumet Collaborative, and the National Park Service. The NPS has a program called River Trails Community Assistance that helps river activation projects as well as other kind of trail projects. And the 10th Ward Office has been a huge supporter of the project as well.

RR: What infrastructure improvements are planned for the site and surrounding streets?

AP: The infrastructure improvements will focus on opening entrances to the site because the site is closed off from the street right now. There's also a bike lane on 100th Street but it's not protected. So upgrading the bikeway with physical protection might be a recommendation. The bridge also had improvements recently. That was one improvement we wanted to see done. The 10th Ward has been very active and collaborative with identifying ways to improve access to the site and for future projects. The goal of the project is for 100th St to become a main connector from the site to the communities. The southern entrance point, which would be on 100th Street, would connect to the Burnham Greenway and to the Lakefront Trail.

RR: Were there any environmental findings in the site assessment?

JR: The Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment was completed. It is a surface level survey of the conditions of the site. There was nothing they found that stated there's any potential for heavy contaminants that would prohibit a trail or even a park from being built.

But the main recommendation for Phase 2 of the Environmental Site Assessment is soil testing.

RR: In terms of truck traffic, are there plans to mitigate the amount of traffic going through the area?

AP: We are planning future conversations with the 10th Ward about possible improvements to make it safer, possibly slowing down traffic and improvements on visibility.

JR: That is something that the 10th Ward Office has been talking about, how do we deal with the truck traffic there. There are other projects in their ward, not near this site, but they are working to ease the impact that trucks have on communities.

One thing I'd like to mention about why we are trying to talk about a trail that leads to 100th St. The Southeast Side is segmented by the Calumet River and the East Side community is an island. The only way to get from Indiana and the East Side community to the rest of Chicago is to cross one of these bridges that connects them to the city. All those bridges, 95th Street, 100th Street 106th Street, and Torrance Avenue are also truck routes. This area is on the scale of Lincoln Park in terms of size, so of course, activating the site by connecting to the Lakefront Trail and Burnham Greenway is important.

RR: How has the community responded to the suggestions of activating the Calumet River on 100th Street and making it accessible?

JR: Our initial feedback, reflected on the 2016 Commercial Avenue Plan, has been positive. We are fielding all potential

interests from the community, from a bike trail, to a hiking trail, to a boat launch, to a park on the southern end. There are concerns about safety. Sharing a space with an existing utility company, we have to assess the hazards.

AP: I'll add that from the initial responses from the community, they wanted a recreation space in the area. They have been trying to fight for more accessible open spaces in the community.

JR: People would like more off-street biking so they can get to different areas safer and not have to deal with truck traffic. Our overall goal with organizing behind the 100th Street River Project is to improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure to the surrounding area. Regardless if this site moves forward or not, we are hoping to bring better bike and pedestrian amenities to the communities.

Outreach for the next phase of the River Project is underway. The team from GCI and ATA hosted their first open house and community site visit Thursday, June 9 with 30 people in attendance. The second community event at the 100th Street River site will be on Saturday, September 10th from 3-6pm. Outreach will continue through spring and early summer. To stay up to date, please visit the GCI website or if you have any questions, please contact Jack Rocha at [jrocha3\[at\]uic\[dot\]edu](mailto:jrocha3[at]uic[dot]edu).

<https://chi.streetsblog.org/2022/08/09/100th-street-calumet-river-project-would-create-new-recreational-trail-on-southeast-side>

Op-Ed: Access to the Calumet River

May 13, 2021 08:08PM

The Southeast Side of Chicago is known for its industrial legacy, and the Calumet River is the foundation of that legacy, but this is an identity that many in the community would like to change. The City of Chicago identifies the Calumet as an industrial corridor and working river, and currently, there are no legal public access points to it, despite the river being identified as an official recreational water trail. The area along the river is zoned industrial and is privately owned.

The UIC Great Cities Institute is leading a project to create a public access point along the west bank of the Calumet River between 96th and 100th Streets. The 100th Street Calumet River project is focused on creating a community site concept developed from engagement and input through online conversations and digital events. Due to the limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, outreach has been largely through social media and word of mouth.

Working with private owners and government officials, the project team is helping to identify potential site restrictions. The site concept will share the wants of the community working within the regulations of the current owners of the site (a group made up of multiple utility companies). The final concept will then be used to work with the owners and the City to obtain an easement or community access point along the properties closest to the river.

Like any community, residents of Chicago's Southeast Side want better infrastructure, good schools, and green parks. One of the largest vacant industrial sites in the community, the former United States Steel

South Works near the mouth of the Calumet at 87th Street and the lake, contains three new underdeveloped parks: Steelworkers Park, Park 566, and Schafer Park.

Steelworkers Park on the south end of the site along Lake Michigan is largely a collection of different components piecemealed together since the park's opening in 2011. Park 566 is just north of Steelworkers Park and has yet to receive any development or even public access points. Schafer Park is on the far southwest corner of the former steel mill site. Once a part of the community and later consumed by U.S. Steel, Schafer Park used to be a parking lot at the south gate of the steel site. As a former parking lot, the park is flat with little to no features, though the south end of the park is controlled by the Urban Growers Collective, and the public area is a walking trail.

Over time, parks change and adapt features to fit with the changing needs of their communities. These Southeast Side parks will be updated one day, but will they meet the same levels of quality as North Side and downtown parks? As an example, only very recently did the Southeast Side receive a park feature that caters to dog owners, while dog parks are common on the North Side. Community residents worked with the 10th Ward aldermanic office to allocate funding for the creation of the dog park within Calumet Park. The fact is, right now the current residents are paying the same taxes for an area of Chicago that is currently underserved.

Before leaving office, former Mayor Richard M. Daley supported the creation of two new downtown parks. The first, Millennium Park, completed in 2004 quickly became a global draw and one of the jewels of Chicago. Maggie Daley Park followed suit almost 10 years later. It is clear, based on their downtown location, why Millennium Park and Maggie Daley

Park were so well planned and funded, but what about communities outside of the downtown area?

What if Steelworks Park, Park 566, and Schafer Park were designed with the care of Millennium Park, Maggie Daley Park, or even Palmisano Park? Palmisano Park, for example, which opened in 2009, was developed at the site of a former quarry. It is one of the most interesting parks in Chicago, and is an example of a great park that did not contribute to displacing residents. Bridgeport, the community that surrounds the park, has traditionally been a working class community. Now with more than ten years since the park's opening, the community has a growing Asian and Latinx population and the housing stock and commercial growth adjacent to the park has seen few changes.

The people of the Southeast Side would like to have the same amenities of the North Side and downtown. This lack of amenities, in combination with decaying infrastructure, and the continual loss of commercial development is contributing to population loss. There are some that are working to change the internal perception of the community with the goal of reversing these trends. They and many more in the community would like to see a change.

The 100th Street Calumet River site, and the U.S Steel site parks, *should* meet world-class design standards, as should any new or renovated Chicago park.

If you would like to share your input about the 100th Street Calumet River project, visit go.uic.edu/100thStreet.

Jack Paul Rocha is a community development planner at UIC's Great Cities Institute, where he helps facilitate community dialogue and engagement in the planning of communities.

Our Great Rivers: three projects on Transforming Land Use in the Calumet Region

> Metropolitan Planning Council

May 1, 2024 03:37PM

This is the fourth blog in our four-part series where we highlight the projects that are included as part of this cycle's Our Great Rivers grant program. Stay tuned for future updates about all these projects.

Since 2018, the Metropolitan Planning Council has been highlighting the progress of riverfront projects funded through The Chicago Community Trust's support for the Our Great Rivers vision. To date, 25 projects have been supported by The Trust, and are continuing to make impactful changes throughout the river system. Learn more about these projects in MPC's interactive story map.

Our Great Rivers 2023-2024 Cohort Spotlight

The Calumet region on the Southeast side of Chicago, home to the Calumet River and the Little Calumet River, has a long history of industrial use and a rich legacy of labor and community organizing. Five of the Our Great Rivers grantee projects in this grant cycle support communities in taking the lead to transforming the region into one with vibrant economic opportunities with thriving community and natural spaces

that promote wealth building and public health. This blog about Calumet area projects features projects focused on three integrated projects that are working with partners to change area land uses, while the other blog features two projects that focus on community development.

Community Vision for the Future Calumet Industrial Corridor: Calumet Connect

Advocates from Natural Resources Defense Council, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, and Southeast Environmental Task Force hand US EPA administrator the Calumet Connect Databook.

Photo courtesy of The Alliance for the Great Lakes

Stop General Iron Campaign Meeting
Photo Courtesy of Southeast Environmental Taskforce

The Calumet Connect is a local coalition of community and civic stakeholders focused on improving the health and well-being of communities and residents in Southeast Chicago by shaping the future of the Calumet region based on community vision. Funded by The Trust's *Our Great Rivers* grant, the partnership conducted community engagement and research to create the Calumet Connect Databook, highlighting the environmental and public health challenges in the Calumet Industrial Corridor. This initiative (along with years of organizing efforts by many other community groups and activists) helped inform the HUD investigation that found "the city of Chicago is violating the civil rights of its residents by relocating polluting businesses from white communities into Black and Latino areas that already are overwhelmed with environmental and health issues." The agreement settled from the investigation requires the City of Chicago to take

actionable steps to protect neighborhoods in the Calumet region that have been burdened by environmental harm and led to the creation of City's Environmental Justice Action Plans.

To build on the momentum fueled by the HUD ruling, SETF and partners are continuing community engagement to expand the stakeholders involved in Calumet Connect, including residents, businesses, and other community organizations. The goal is to build on existing community organizing efforts to ensure community members lead the charge for change in the region.

The Calumet Connect partnership is a part of three Our Great Rivers Cohort projects this year, including the update to the Calumet Design Guidelines and Calumet Area Land Use Plan, Schroud site remediation, and 100th Street site activation. Southeast Environmental Task Force intentionally brought these project partners together to ensure tight coordination of the community engagement needed to ensure resident voices are centered in each of these efforts

Calumet Design Guidelines and Calumet Area Land Use Plan

In 2016, the City of Chicago started an Industrial Corridor Modernization Process, acknowledging that land use and zoning designations in industrial corridors needed an update. Years of community advocacy and the recent HUD investigation laid the groundwork for Chicago's Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to review the Calumet Industrial Corridor, with a focus on ensuring the process centers community and resident voices. The planning process will include updating the Calumet Design Guidelines and Calumet Area Land Use Plan. These policy documents are more than 20

years old. Updates will include revisions to land use and zoning along with additional requirements and guidelines for future development in the area. The goal is to shape the industrial corridor in alignment with community, economic, and environmental needs.

The Alliance for the Great Lakes, UIC's Great Cities Institute, The Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF), Calumet Collaborative, Friends of the Chicago River, Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), and Calumet Connect partners are supporting community engagement efforts to ensure community leaders are driving the plan development. These efforts include conducting an industry survey to better understand industry needs (and their relationship to community needs), increase resident understanding of how land use and zoning impact their communities, and organizing stakeholders so that they are ready to fully engage in DPD's process, which will take place over a three-year period.

Schrood Site Remediation

Map of the Schrood Site. Source: EPA

The Schrood site was formerly Republic Steel's dump site, leaving behind waste (a lot of slag, but also other more volatile waste) that was generated through steel production. The waste contaminated the site, neighboring residential soil, Indian Creek, and the Hyde Lake Wetlands. Decades of community campaigning, much of it led by leadership at SETF, resulted in the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designating the site a Superfund site in 2019, a huge victory. The EPA will conduct a remedial

investigation to determine the immediate dangers on the site then conduct a Feasibility Study, where the EPA will consider options for cleaning up the site.

Collaborating with partners like Calumet Connect partnership, NeighborSpace, Active Transportation Alliance, Southeast Youth Alliance and more, SETF aims to engage residents in envisioning the future of the site and advocating for remediation that allows for this desired future use. Through events like boat tours and screening the documentary "The Hills," which sheds light on the Shroud site and community activism, residents are encouraged to participate in discussions and envision the site's post-remediation potential. This dialogue also raises awareness of the site's dangers, as many residents access the site for recreation. The goal is to ensure robust community engagement in the EPA's process so that the Feasibility Study generates clean up and land use options that align with community visions.

100th Street Site

June 2022 Site Visit
Photo Courtesy of The Great Cities Institute

There are virtually no legal access points to the river in the Calumet region. By transforming the 100th Street site along the Calumet River (which runs from about 96th Street to 100th Street), UIC's Great Cities Institute (GCI) aims to expand access to the river. In collaboration with Calumet Connect partners, NeighborSpace, the National

Park Service, Blue Marble, Active Transportation Alliance, and the site's private landowners (People's Gas and NRG Energy), GCI is building on ideas from the Calumet River Communities Planning Framework and the *Our Great Rivers* vision to activate the site for community use.

The site was previously home to utility production and distribution operations and is still privately owned by People's Gas and NRG Energy. GCI has hosted four activation events to get community input on future use of the site, with the aim to use it as a guide to develop and implement a plan for site activation which may include elements like a naturalized river edge, pedestrian trails, gardens, and public art installations.

Through strategic partnerships and community-driven engagement, the projects collaborating with Calumet Connect partnership seek to address long-standing environmental injustices and shape a more equitable and sustainable future for the area. These projects pave the way for a more vibrant Calumet region that supports an active industrial and commercial corridor, while also protecting environmental health, and expanding access to the river for communities to enjoy.

Looking for more information about past Our Great Rivers grantees?

Find the summary pages here:

<https://metroplanning.org/our-great-rivers-three-projects-on-transforming-land-use-in-the-calumet-region/>

Lens on the Calumet Corridor | The Need for More Community-Centered Land Use Planning for the Calumet Industrial Corridor > Metropolitan Planning Council

Jan 5, 2022 12:00AM

*An environmental justice collaborative in Southeast Chicago spent two years studying the lasting health impacts of industry in their community. **Lens on the Calumet Corridor: A blog series highlighting the research in the Calumet Connect Data Book** captures what they discovered, and why it's time for a change. This is the sixth blog in our six-part series.*

Land use and zoning in Chicago is due for a refresh. In Chicago, zoning regulates the types of uses that occur on parcels of land as well as land use volumes, such as density of development, and height, shape, and placement of buildings. It also determines parking requirements and other development activities. The city's industrial corridors have a type of designated zoning that allows for uses such as manufacturing and other industries. (1) These areas have evolved over time with many seeing more commercial and residential uses. In 2016 the city started an Industrial Corridor Modernization process, acknowledging that land use designations in industrial corridors needed an update. The process started with the North Branch Industrial Corridor, which was completed in 2017. Now, the Calumet Industrial Corridor is next in line for modernization. As part of creating the Calumet Connect Data Book, the project team did a deep dive into the corridor's current land uses and zoning to review what's happening on the ground. Based on this analysis, the team can offer

some recommendations to the City for a new approach to thinking about the types of uses permitted in communities where people live, work, and play.	19.06%
	12.39%
	↓
Corridor Land Use Changes	Residential
Through the analysis of current land uses, the team discovered that the Calumet Industrial Corridor's land use and zoning policies do not fully support the Calumet community's goals for a healthy and environmentally just corridor. In considering any land use and zoning changes, it is critical to acknowledge the corridor's placement: 1) within an environmental justice community and 2) in close proximity to Lake Calumet, which functions "as a central component of a much larger ecosystem and trail network."	14.70%
	10.77%
	↓
	Open Space
	4.85%
	9.82%
	↑
	Water/Other
The team's review of the most recent land use data (2013) compared with more historical zoning/land use data (1990) revealed that the Calumet Industrial Corridor increased in its viability for industrial transportation and institutional uses. From 1990 to 2013, the study area observed a notable increase in transportation facilities, terminals, and docks, which grew to be the largest land use allocation by share (22.43%) in 2013 (see Table 1, below). In addition, the Calumet remains the only industrial corridor that allows for storage and disposal of hazardous materials by right. (2)	14.53%
	7.49%
	↓
	Institutional
	1.18%
	2.02%
	↑
	Commercial
	2.59%
Land Use*	1.88%
1990	↓
2013	Agriculture
Transportation/Communication/Utilities/Waste	0
25.37%	0
40.97%	Total
↑	100.00%
Vacant/Under Construction	100.00%
17.72%	
14.66%	
↓	
Industrial	

*Note: In this table, 'Land Use' represents aggregates of the primary land use code categories.

Note: This table was retrieved from the Calumet Connect Databook, Page 103, Table 15

While conducting the land use analysis, the team identified a limitation in the ability to complete a truly rigorous comparison between 1990 and 2013 land uses, due to a change in methodologies in the source data. (3) Though the team was able to work around most of the technical and information access challenges encountered over the course of this project, it is clear that not all organizations would have the capacity or technical abilities to do so. These data usage challenges have the potential to limit informational access for community advocacy.

Beyond the data limitations presented in retrieving this information, the overall trend of increasing land uses toward transportation is not in line with many residents' desires to see more commercial and residential uses along with more separation from heavy industry. This, coupled with the data access challenges, often leaves the community feeling left out of the planning process. Through the course of our research, the team heard from community residents about their desire to be more included in land use decisions and processes. They have often felt denied a voice in how the Industrial Corridor changes. As one resident stated,

"It's hard for me to see the City would do anything for us because they've already got plans. And it's not for us. It's about us, but it's not for us. I don't see it at all. I don't."

This lack of meaningful City-led engagement in environmental justice communities means that, often, community organizing and planning occurs absent City involvement. Information access and data usage challenges also highlight the need for community-based planning processes to emphasize translation and clear articulation of the data so that the information is not only held by the City but shared widely with residents so that all parties are entering the conversation together with the same background knowledge.

Proactive, Participatory Planning

One of the biggest challenges of urban planning at large has been inconsistent standards and processes around participatory planning. This is seen not only in revisions to

industrial corridor land uses but also whenever any new development project is proposed in the city. The inconsistency makes it incredibly difficult for residents to engage meaningfully. Absent a formal City planning process, residents of the Southeast Side have expressed a desired vision for their community through various forums. This vision includes the revitalization of existing resources (such as parks, art, and small businesses), as well as a need for solutions for planning that accounts for both industry and sustainable, health-promoting decision-making. However, as was made clear through the project's community needs assessment, residents do not feel acknowledged or heard by the City. Residents have ideas, and they are interested in engaging on equal terms to see if those ideas can be realized. As one study participant noted:

"So before I could tell you what I want, I have to — I have to see what is doable, actually talk to — talk to a planner and just say, you know, "This is what we're — this is what we'd like to see, you know. What would it take?" And maybe he'd say, "Ah, you'll never do it." Well, then I don't want to talk to you. You're not a good planner. I want to talk to a planner that is willing to open up and see what our ideas are, you know, because we talk about the — we-we talk about the corridor and everything."

In order to build prosperous, equitable, and environmentally just spaces that are reflective of a collaborative vision between residents and the City, the planning process needs to be restructured to truly champion and honor the agency of disinvested communities. There are examples throughout the City of community- or civic-led participatory planning processes that have successfully engaged local residents in crafting a vision for their neighborhood's future. One example is the multi-stakeholder effort of the development of South Chicago's Commercial Avenue Revitalization Plan (led by UIC Great Cities Institute), which was a planning process that intentionally engaged and shared power with various stakeholders. Another example is being led by Alderman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa in Chicago's 35th ward. Through a community-driven process, a participatory model was developed to review

local requests for zoning changes. Community groups assist with the review process for zoning change applications and make recommendations about how the office responds. If the response is positive, a broader community meeting is held to review the project for additional feedback.

As the Calumet Industrial Corridor Modernization Process officially kicks off it is our hope that the City will incorporate some of the best practices in participatory planning that have been used locally and focus on equity-centered engagement strategies that prioritize entering into dialogue with residents on equal footing, acknowledging community members lived experience and working with the many stakeholders in the Calumet region to draft a people-focused, environmentally sustainable path forward for the industrial corridor.

References

Calumet Area Land Use Plan

Calumet Connect Data Book

Endnotes

(1) Want to learn more about zoning? Check out some of these resources that have been compiled by the Alliance for the Great Lakes used in their Elevating Justice curriculum: Zoning Video, Zoning Cheat Sheet, Chicago Online Zoning Map, Understand Chicago Zoning, Planned Developments, Planned Manufacturing District Zoning for Calumet.

(2) For more on land use planning and industrial corridors, please review our second blog in this series: Inequitable pollution exposure is rooted in land use planning.

(3) As per the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Land Use Inventory, land use polygons of the 2013 inventory are based on county parcel boundaries, while earlier inventories, such as the 1990 one, are polygon-based.

<https://metroplanning.org/lens-on-the-calumet-corridor-the-need-for-more-community-centered-land-use-planning-for-the-calumet-industrial-corridor/>

Time To Beautify Chicago's Other Riverfront, Group Says

Dec 7, 2016 06:09AM

[View Full Caption](#)

Google

SOUTH CHICAGO — A plan to make the Calumet River more inviting to fishers, walkers and even swimmers is moving forward and is seeking input from the public.

The South Chicago Chamber of Commerce is teaming with the Metropolitan Planning Council to find ways to make the Calumet River more recreation friendly, which could create a new green space for residents and an attraction to help bring people to South Chicago.

"It's been a commercial river since the late 1800s, and there's no public space," said Jack Rocha, a researcher with Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "At least we want to make it more welcoming to fisherman ... and so people can watch river activity."

[View Full Caption](#)

Google

The groups are looking at a few sites that could be turned into recreation areas: a stretch of city-owned land near the 92nd Street Bridge and the green space near Calumet Fisheries.

RELATED: *Steel Mills Gone, South Chicago Looks To Revitalize Its Downtown*

On Dec. 15, the chamber and its urban planning partners will walk from 92nd Street and Commercial Avenue to the 92nd Street Bridge (Ewing Avenue) to inspect the property and determine a way to turn it into a "pocket park," the groups said.

"This is a site that the [chamber] has been looking at for years and trying to get the political will to get something done," Rocha said.

Calumet Fisheries, already one of the area's main attractions, is seeking an easement on its riverfront property that will allow it to set up more seating along the river, Rocha said. That's right next to the 95th Street Bridge, which the Bluesmobile famously jumped in the "The Blues Brothers" movie. Movie fans still visit the bridge.

Turning sites along the Calumet River into green space will not only create new recreation activities for the area, but also could help revitalize South Chicago after years of economic hardship.

South Chicago officials are working on a plan to jump start the neighborhood's commercial corridor after the loss of three steel mills lead many small business on Commercial Avenue to close down.

Without a large industry, the neighborhood is looking to make a new name for itself using its history, culture and location near the river and lake.

That plan, led by the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce and the Great Cities Institute, is still largely in the

planning phase, said Dan Lira, president of the chamber of commerce. But the group is also looking to capitalize on a citywide plan to boost recreation offerings along Chicago's rivers.

Called "Great Rivers Chicago," the effort seeks to make all Chicago rivers swimmable by 2030, as well as turn specific sites along the river into accessible green spaces.

Officials think the Calumet River project can help with their commercial district efforts. A few blocks walk from the commercial hub of 92nd Street and Commercial Avenue, the 92nd Street Bridge pocket park could give Chicagoans a reason to visit and stop in the neighborhood.

"It plays a role in the whole revitalization," Lira said. "It's having access to the river. It's beautification. Hopefully it can lead to tourists down the road."

Officials are also working to turn 91st Street into the "heart and soul corridor," which would host a hub of artist and creative spaces as well as public murals and outdoor art installations, Rocha said.

To join the tour of the 92nd Street Bridge site at 10 a.m. Dec. 15, RSVP by calling the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce at 773-768-1221.

For more neighborhood news, listen to DNAinfo Radio here.

<https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20161207/south-chicago/calumet-river-south-chicago-chamber-of-commerce-fisheries-park-greenspace/>