



PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPES IN CHICAGO AND THE SOUTHLAND

A Framework for Fostering a Vibrant Community-Based
Urban Agriculture Cluster

July 2017

This report was made possible by support from the Illinois Coastal Management Program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Thank you: This report could not have been completed without the input and guidance from all those who took the time to attend the meetings. Many thanks to the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association and the City of Blue Island for being gracious hosts for the meetings.

Special thanks to:

- Joe O'Meara and Larry O'Toole, Farmers at Bios Farm who shared their time, experiences, hopes and plans.
- Jason Berry, Planner of City of Blue Island, for arranging meeting space, time and commitment to the vision.
- Suellen Burns, Special Projects Manager at IL Department of Natural Resources for her support, guidance, input, participation and belief in the vision of this project.
- Nate Ela, Editor, for his flexibility, insight and eye for detail and concept.
- Tesh Silver, Designer, for her ability to take dry text and enliven the ideas with her imagery.

Attendees:

Erika Allen, Chicago and National Projects Manager, Growing Power
Jason Berry, Deputy Director of Community Development, City of Blue Island
Daniel Block, Professor, Chicago State University
Emy Brawley, Vice President of Conservation, Openlands
Kristen Brock, Senior Program Specialist, Chicago Park District
Rick Bryant, Chief of Staff, Office of US Representative Robin Kelly
Suellen Burns, Senior Advisor, IL Department of Natural Resources
Margaret Catania, Resilience, Affiliate Alliance for the Great Lakes
LeRoy Chalmers, Strategic Partnerships Manager, Habitat for Humanity Chicago
Rodger Cooley, Executive Director, Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Sarah Coulter, Acting Executive Director, Calumet Collaborative
Matt Didier, Brownfield Project Manager, EPA Region 5
Zachary Grant, Extension Educator- Local Food Systems and Small Farms, University of IL Extension - Cook County
Ben Helphand, Executive Director, NeighborSpace
LaSandra Hutchinson, Office of IL Rep Sonia Harper
Sarah Kobetis, Planner, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association
Abraham Lacy, Executive Director, Far Southside Community Development Corporation
Mary McDonnell, Senior Project Administrator, Chicago Housing Authority
Leanna McKeon, Senior Energy Analyst, Chicago Housing Authority
Viviana Moreno, Community Organizer, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
Kimberly Morris, Community Development Planner South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association
Larry O'Toole, Farmer, Bios Farm- Blue Island
Joe O'Meara, Farmer, Bios Farm- Blue Island
Margot Pritzker, President, WomenOnCall
Kelsey Pudlock, Assistant Planner, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Cedric Robertson, Sr., Principal Civil Engineer, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
Jen Rosenthal, Farmer, PLANTED Chicago LLC
L Anton Seals, Jr., Lead Steward, Grow Greater Englewood
Ken Smith, Office of IL Rep Sonia Harper
Andrew Szwak, Planning & Policy Analyst, Openlands
Jessica Zianiolo, Farmer, Anarchy Organic

Credits:

Author- Rodger Cooley, Executive Director, Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Editor-Nate Ela, Doctoral Candidate in Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Designer- Tesh Silver, Owner, Tesh Silver Design

SUMMARY

The Millennium Reserve Area, covering Chicago's South Side and suburban municipalities in southern Cook County, holds enormous potential for a system of productive landscapes. Over the course of six months, between October 2016 to March 2017, 31 participants took part in a series of conversations concerning how various stakeholders could help foster the growth of urban agriculture in this area.

Out of these conversations—which included representatives of 27 organizations including farms, non-profits, universities, land trusts, community organizations, funders, and federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments—it became clear that there is both the opportunity and interest to create a organizational and policy framework that supports the growth of productive landscapes. This report outlines this framework, based on insights and outcomes from these conversations.

The framework is grounded in a set of values—equity, sustainability, and collaboration—that participants strongly believe must inform the efforts of existing and new organizations working on productive landscapes. In particular, participants were adamant that residents of impacted communities have control over decision making, particularly regarding local land use and access, and reap the benefits of urban agriculture and food systems projects and programs located in their communities.

The framework is intended to achieve four desired outcomes: local food for locals; community engagement; economic and resource development; and environmental improvement.

The framework aims to foster the growth of the regional economic cluster of urban agriculture and food systems in the greater Chicago area, which has been emerging over the past 20+ years. This could be achieved through a systemic focus on locally interconnected project sites and related services—offered either by existing organizations or new organizations—to support the work of growers, processors, and distributors while connecting them to community outreach, services, and networks.

Participants identified the need to develop four broad types of services that would help Greater Chicago's urban agriculture cluster to grow and flourish:

- **Matching** - identifying available land, prospective users, and community priorities; ensuring users' plans are consistent with community priorities;
- **Land management** - preparing land for use; helping land users/growers and institutional landowners enter into leases and usage agreements;
- **Community connections** - helping users/growers partner with community organizations to ensure use supports local priorities; monitoring community benefits agreements (as appropriate)
- **Pooled Funding** - assist users/growers and community organizations access sources of capital for growing productive landscapes, including public and private grants, loans, and investments.

Two Recommendations for Framework:

Out of the process, came the two primary recommendations below:

1) Developing localized interconnected projects and programs.

Building on the concept of regional industrial clusters and the Chicago regionally food manufacturing and connected urban agriculture cluster, more localized “sub-clusters” would focus efforts on project sites relatively close to each other, and provide complementary functions, uses, and outputs. The goal will be to develop a holistic ecosystem of projects, organizations, programs and resources.

2) Developing essential services.

The “missing pieces” of support services and organizations are needed not only to support the build-out of sub-clusters, but also for later expanding and connecting to new sub-clusters. These support services would include: Matching Land, Producers, and Community Priorities; Land Management; Community Connections; and a Funding Pool.

Identified next steps:

1. Publicly share this report and recommendations with interested local governments, related organizations, and interested communities:
 - Communities including those listed in the report: Blue Island, Englewood, Altgeld Gardens, South Chicago and others interested in exploring a similar vision.
 - Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, and South Suburban Land Bank
 - NeighborSpace
 - Cook County Social Innovation Commission, Cook County Land Bank, Cook County Forest Preserve, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
 - Calumet Collaborative Board of Directors and Steering Committee
 - City of Chicago Departments and Agencies

2. Organize a “Chicago Area Community-Based Urban Agriculture Working Group”, to propose, create and support the implementation of processes, services, and policies. These would potentially include a community based vetting process, a community land bank, and a land manager to coordinate with municipal and institutional landowners, while connecting to other related initiatives and opportunities such as the Good Food Purchasing Policy and the Chicagoland Food and Beverage network.

Contents

Summary	4
Introduction	7
Values and Desired Outcomes	14
Cultivating Greater Chicago's Urban Agriculture Cluster	16
Recommendation: Grow the Calumet River Urban Agriculture Sub-Cluster	18
Recommendation: Provide Needed Services	19
Next Steps	27
Appendix	
Resources	

INTRODUCTION

This report builds on previous research and interviews used to develop the 2015 Cultivating Productive Landscapes in the Millennium Reserve report looking at the potential for urban agriculture and productive landscapes in the Millennium Reserve, and more expansively, in the areas covered by the new Calumet Collaborative. The process to develop this report was facilitated by the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, through a series of five meetings convened between October 2016 and March 2017.

The Millennium Reserve, and now the Calumet Collaborative, each provided a core group of committed partners already focused on the economic, environmental, and social re-development of this region. The Reserve area covers the lakefront of Chicago south of the Loop to the Indiana border, expanding west to cover a wide swath of southern Chicago and south suburban Cook County. The new Calumet Collaborative includes the Reserve as well as portions of northwest Indiana's Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties. *(see Side Bar with Map on pg. 13)*

The initial focus on the Millennium Reserve and Calumet Collaborative area flowed out of high interest in how productive multipurpose landscapes could solve multiple issues, by making green infrastructure investments on underutilized land in order to provide multiple benefits to communities. The features of the region related to

productive landscapes include:

- Lower housing costs for potential producers;
- Available land - particularly institutional- and municipally-owned/managed parcels;
- Proximity to Chicago area and local markets, with good transportation infrastructure;
- A history of vegetable production;
- Green infrastructure momentum - storm water, recreation (bike trails, water, hiking, parks), green energy, composting, native habitat;
- Lower-wealth areas that could benefit from urban agriculture and its related benefits.

(Cultivating Productive Landscapes, 2015)

There are many opportunities for activating underutilized land for food production and other uses across the south, southwest, and western areas of the City of Chicago and nearby suburban areas in Cook County and northwest Indiana. These areas have an abundance of available land due to a long history of discrimination, disinvestment, deindustrialization, and depopulation (figure X shows the distribution of vacant lots in the City of Chicago's inventory as of May 2017). At the same time, these predominantly African-American communities in Chicago and the Southland are beset by high rates of unemployment and poverty, and have been identified as food deserts *(see figures III-V)*.

FIGURE I. CITY OWNED VACANT LOTS, 2016

Source: City-Owned Land Inventory, City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development.

<http://bit.ly/1vBT67a>

Data updated August 2, 2016; Map created May 13, 2017 (accessed May 19, 2017)

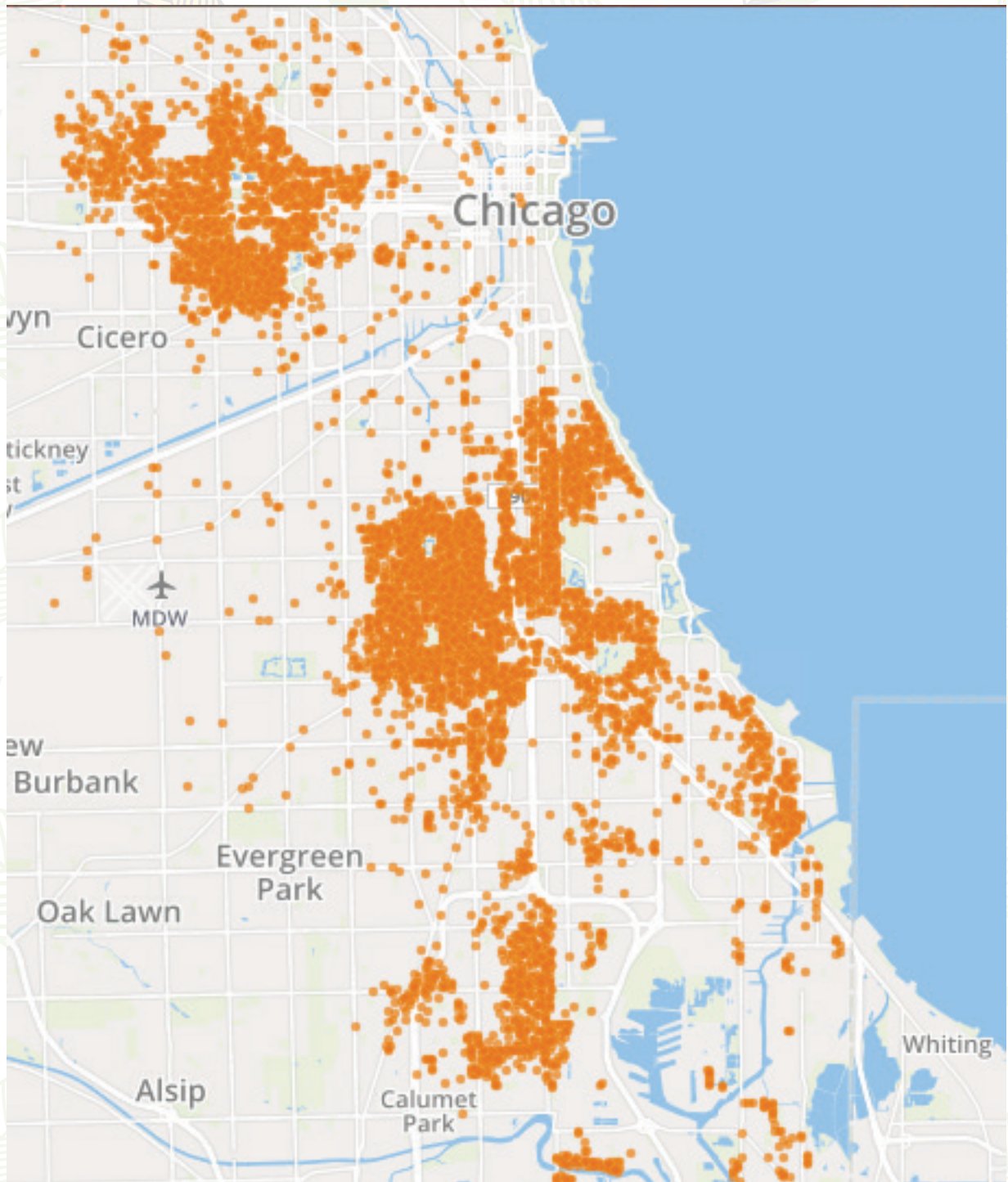
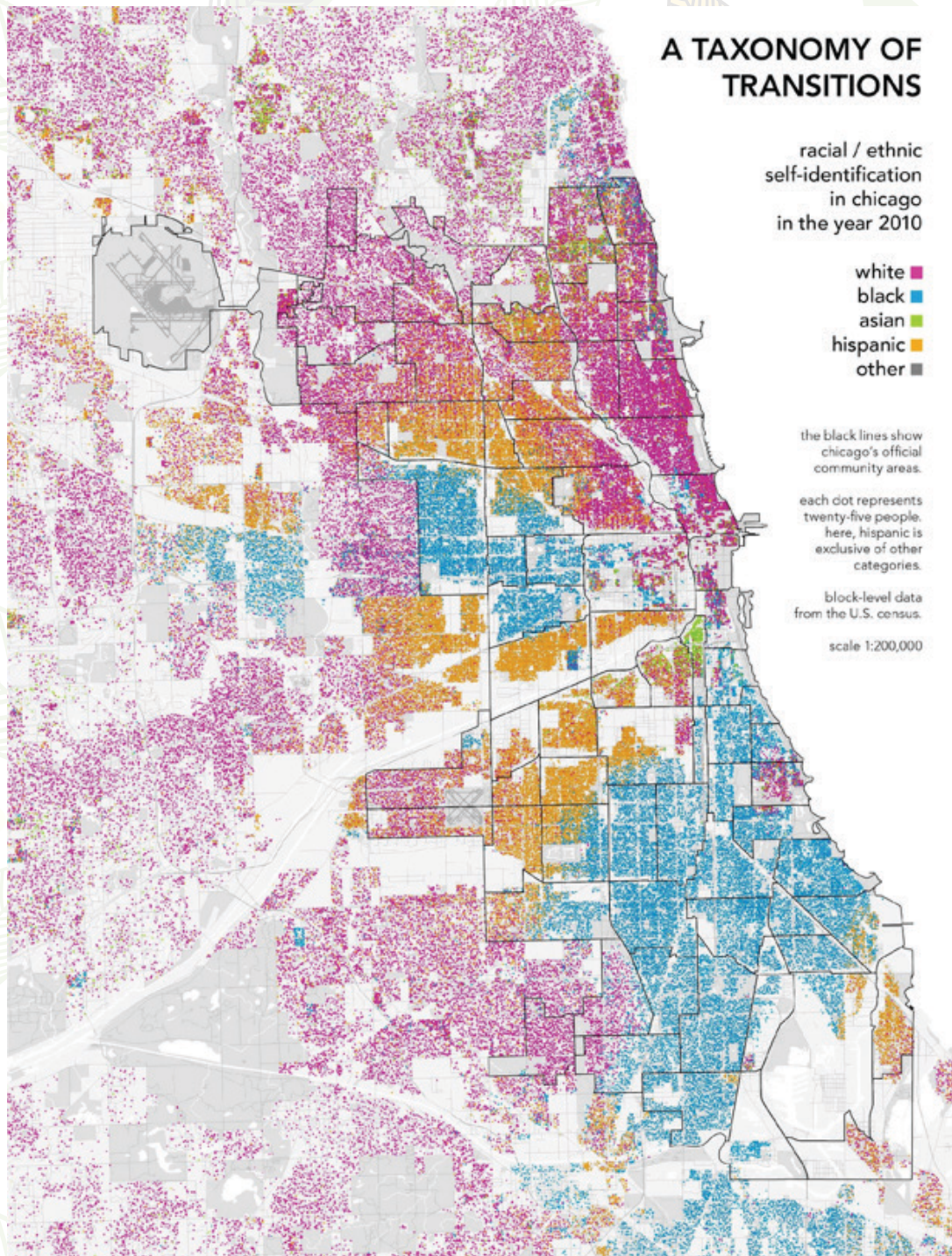


FIGURE II. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY RACE, 2010

Source: Bill Rankin, www.radicalcartography.net



These communities have long been on the receiving end of plans for redevelopment with a very mixed record of success. This makes it all the more important to give residents control and a lead role in decision making concerning what areas should be redeveloped, what visions pursued, and the details of who stands to benefit, and how (such as through access to low-cost rents and usage fees).

FIGURE III. FOOD DESERTS IN CHICAGO, 2010

Source: Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group

<http://bit.ly/2x60N7m>

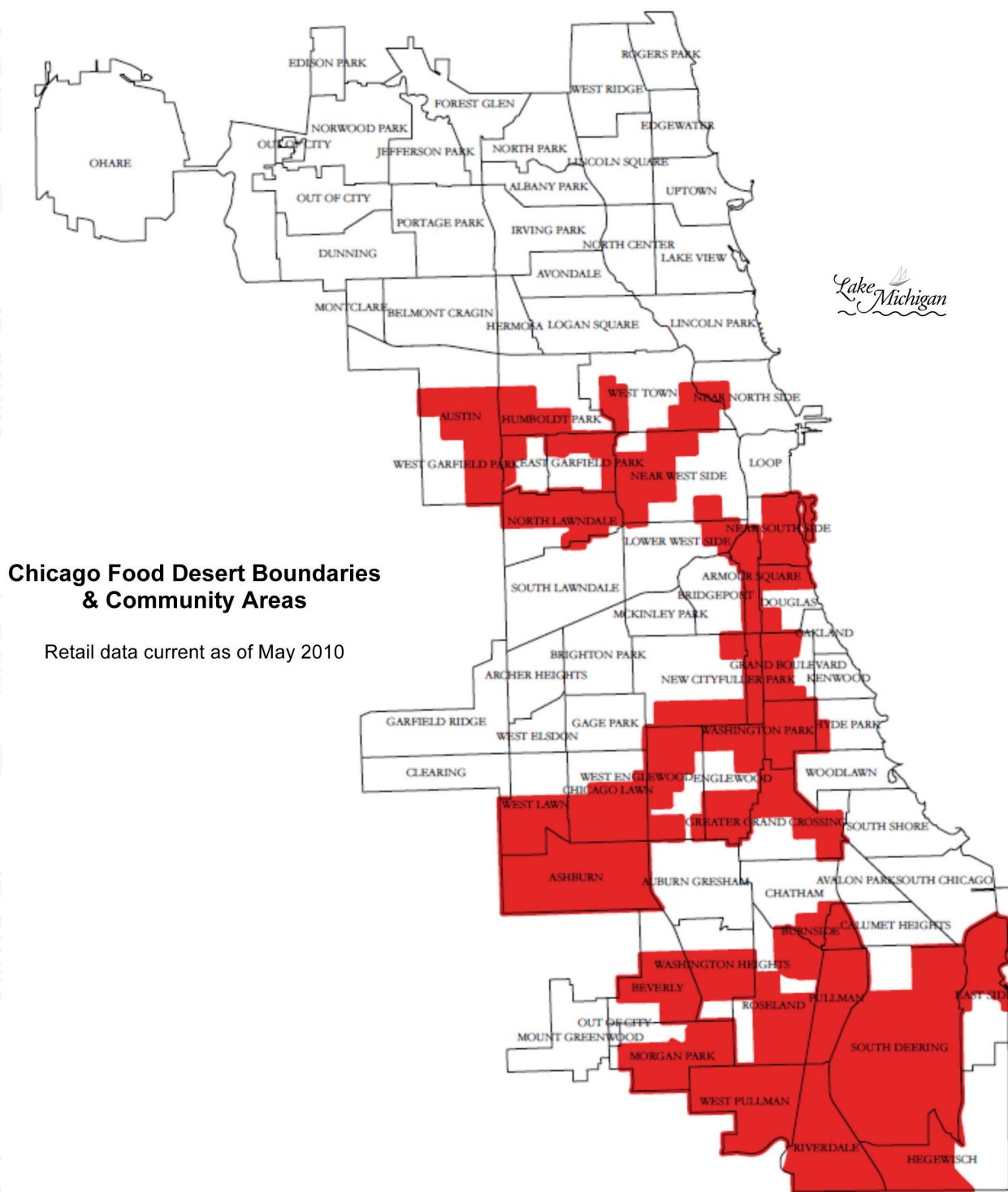


FIGURE IV. POVERTY RATES, 2008 THRU 2012

Source: "Mapping Poverty in America," *The New York Times*, 5 Jan. 2014.

<http://nyti.ms/1cQZkUD>

Data: 2008-2012 American Community Survey

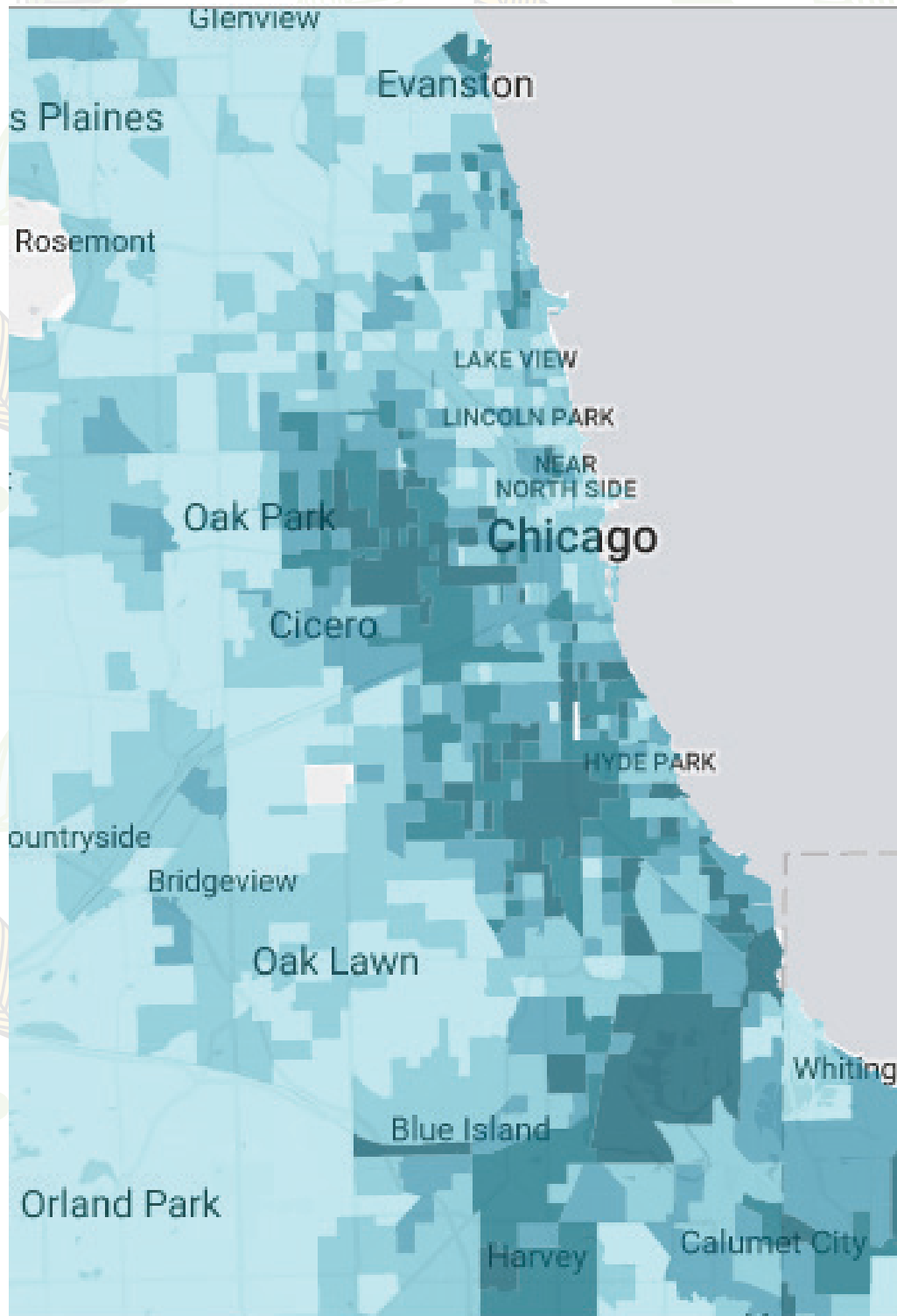
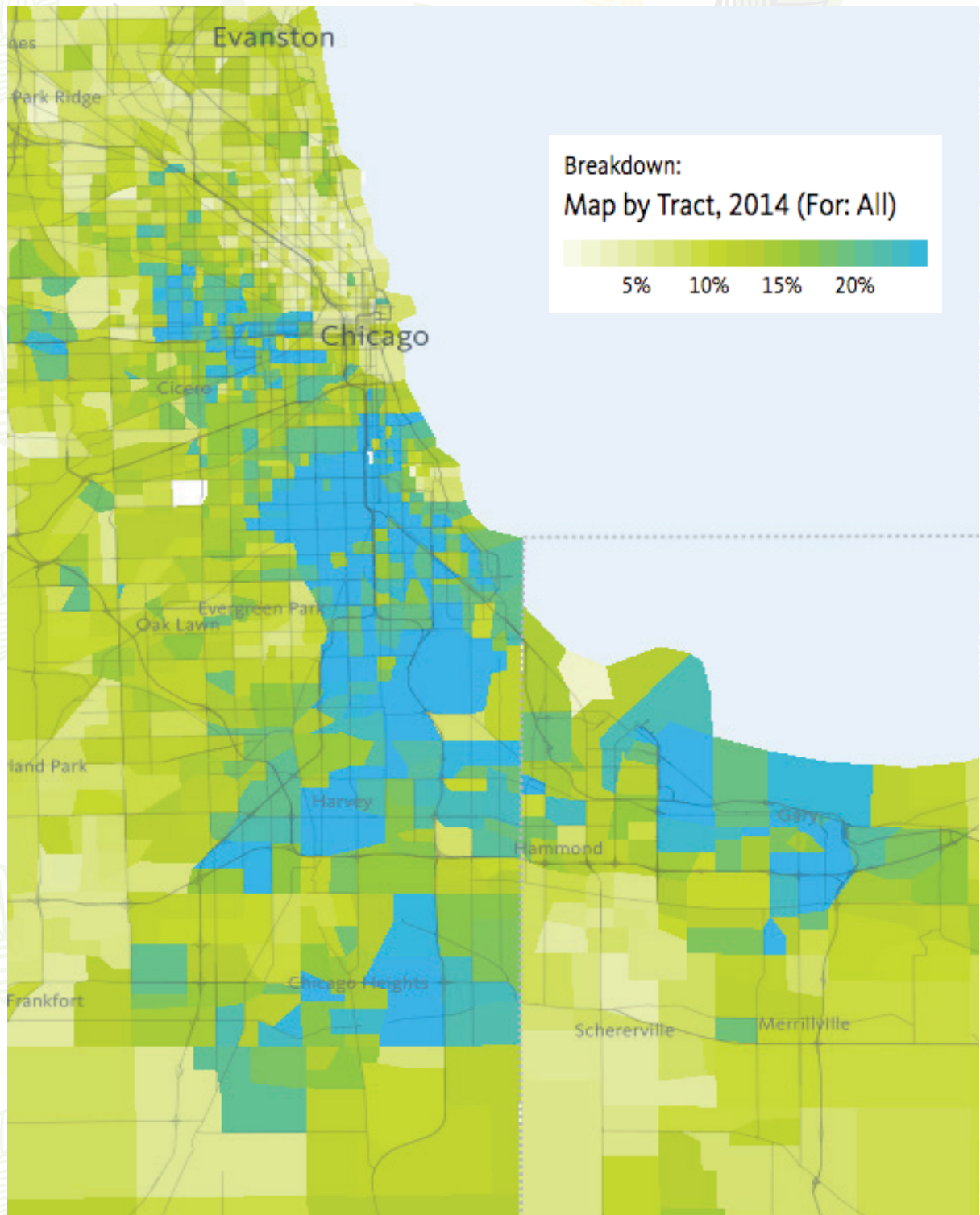


FIGURE V. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2014

Source: National Equity Atlas (Accessed May 22, 2017)

<http://bit.ly/2x6eaEN>



SIDE BAR

Description and map of Millennium Reserve and Calumet Collaborative

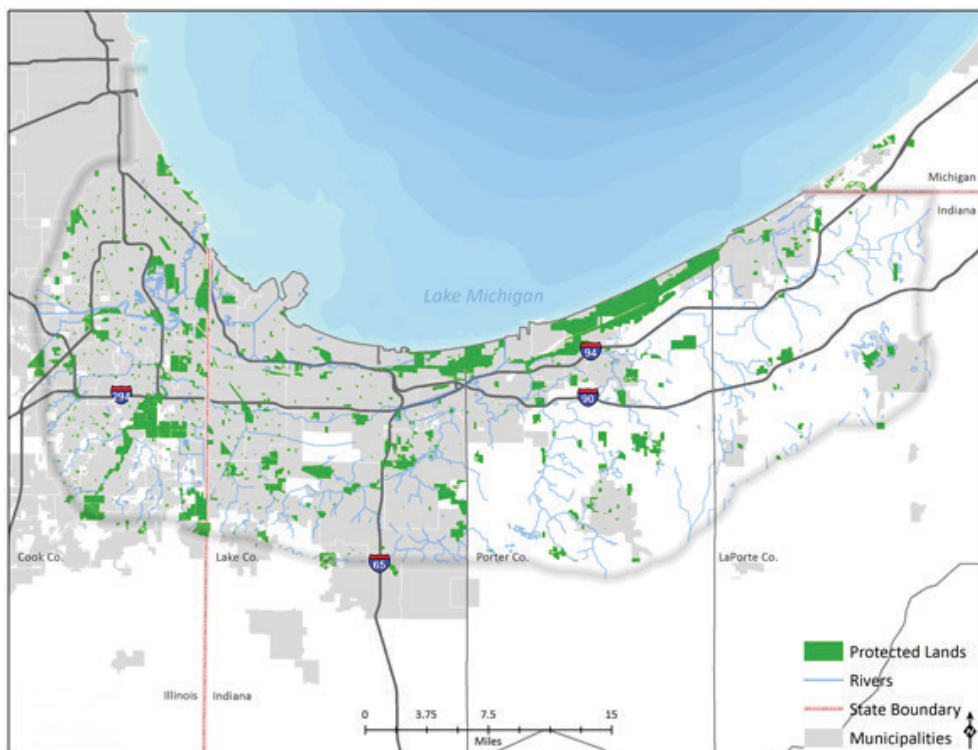
Millennium Reserve is taking important steps to evolve into an independent nonprofit organization. On July 14, 2016, Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner signed an executive order that opened the door for the creation of a voluntary bi-state entity. In the last three months, dozens of stakeholders representing Illinois and Indiana have come together to strategize about needs of the Calumet and southeast Chicago lakefront region and address key elements of the new nonprofit.

A cross-section of stakeholders has recommended that the new organization be dedicated to achieving regional prosperity by focusing attention and resources of diverse stakeholders on significant regional priorities and on-the-ground work that integrates community, economic and environmental values and goals. Participants in this process include the Millennium Reserve Steering Committee as well as numerous other thought leaders from Illinois and Indiana.

<http://www.millenniumreserve.org/about/organizational-evolution-update-october-2016/>

The Calumet Collaborative catalyzes innovative partnerships between Illinois and Indiana community, government, business and nonprofit stakeholders to advance a thriving Calumet region. Spanning southeast Chicago, south Cook County and northwest Indiana, the bi-state Calumet region boasts proud and diverse communities, important natural ecosystems, and a powerful industrial heritage. As the region builds on these assets toward a vibrant future for people, wildlife and businesses, the Calumet Collaborative is fostering a new level of collaboration in sustainable development.

<http://www.calumetcollaborative.org/>



VALUES AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Many participants recalled other processes, plans, and reports that despite emphasizing “fair” outcomes during the drafting and visualizing process, resulted in poor execution—the original drafters’ values, intentions, and ideas were lost during implementation. Attendees that any actions, organizations, and resources generated by this report and framework must take into account both values and the desired outcomes. Expediency and efficiency should not be prioritized over well-thought-out, vetted, and considered efforts that reflect these values and outcomes—even if this ultimately adds time to the planning and decision-making processes.

Values

Participants stated that future projects, programs, and policies should be grounded in three overarching values:

Equity. People and communities who stand to benefit the most should be given greatest access to the resources and services needed to improve their potential and conditions. Planning, programming, and projects must provide tangible benefits to these individuals and communities. Implementation must embrace and address the diverse needs of all audiences. It is not enough to simply locate projects in a particular area—resources and benefits must also improve equity in that area. This recognizes that certain areas and communities have historically been underserved, and aims to avoid reproducing these inequities.

Sustainability. To promote and address economic, social, and environmental sustainability, projects should serve as a community resource by making long-term, if not permanent commitments that help to address historical trauma within communities.

Collaboration. Building trust in the community requires partnering with existing community members and supporting local stakeholders. Partners must be committed to coordination and collaboration in developing projects and allocating resources. Implementation plans should be designed using community input and leadership to build ownership by residents.



Desired Outcomes

From the conversations organized through this process, it became clear that participants hope to see urban agriculture projects in the Millennium Reserve and Calumet Collaborative areas achieve four main outcomes:

1. Local Food for Locals.

Healthy food produced in Reserve communities needs to be affordable and made available to local residents. This can be achieved through multiple channels, including but not limited to farmer's markets, community-supported agriculture (CSAs), mobile produce vending, corner stores, day care centers, senior housing, and schools. Food that is grown should be healthy and targeted to meet the tastes and budgets of residents living in these areas. The expression "local foods for locals" is not intended to exclude "outsiders" but recognizes that the vast majority of agriculture in Illinois is not aimed at growing fresh produce for local consumption. As a result, many communities struggle with limited access to fresh local produce. Potentially available agricultural land should be viewed primarily as a means to benefit nearby lower-income communities, rather than simply as a commodity for growing food for high-end markets.

2. Community Engagement.

Urban farms should be connected to local communities through youth and senior support and engagement, providing positive identities for local areas, and stabilizing neighborhoods. Residents should play an active role in vetting projects appropriate for their communities. Community members must play an active role in vetting potential users for available land.

3. Economic and Resource Development.

Urban agriculture is a channel for educational pathways, job training and development, and food industry development including food processing and marketing. This goes beyond simply growing food, to encompass processing, marketing, retail, and restaurants. It also creates opportunities for agri-tourism and branding, as well as activating underused property. The opportunities created by these activities should be safeguarded for local residents and community members through community benefits agreements and local ownership/control models such as community land trusts.

4. Environmental Improvement.

Productive landscapes support environmental improvements, such as reuse of brownfields, better stormwater management, restored wildlife habitat, and renewable energy. They also connect communities to the outdoors through food and recreation (such as walking and biking trails). To ensure ecological management and protection of community environmental resources, sustainability standards and guidelines (such as organic certification and Good Agricultural Practices) should be adopted as baselines.



CULTIVATING GREATER CHICAGO'S URBAN AGRICULTURE CLUSTER

Over the past two decades, urban agriculture has re-appeared on available or surplus land in Chicago and Cook County. City and county government, along with community members, farmers, land trusts, funders, and local education organizations have taken an increasingly deliberate approach to developing a regional cluster of specialty agriculture.

The conversations in this report have led to a recognition of the potential of existing organizations and institutions and the creation of new ones to further the growth of Greater Chicago's urban agriculture larger industrial cluster connecting to larger food economies and connecting smaller geographic based clusters across the area (sub-clusters).

Economic development policy has focused on the importance of clusters since the late 1990s. The original definition of clusters was proposed by Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter: "geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field." As economic development experts have grown increasingly interested in clusters and public policies to support them, the focus has often been on how to spur or boost regions that are hubs of high-tech industry, such as Silicon Valley. But Professor Porter's original view was broader: "Clusters encompass an array of linked industries and other entities important to competition... Clusters also often extend downstream to channels and customers and laterally to manufacturers of complementary products and to companies in industries related by skills, technologies, or common inputs. Finally, many clusters include governmental and other institutions—such as universities, standards-setting agencies, think tanks, vocational training providers, and trade associations—that provide specialized training, education, information, research, and technical support."¹ Although cluster-based approaches to economic development have often focused on manufacturing, one of Porter's original examples—California's winemaking cluster—was based in regional agriculture.

1. Michael E. Porter. "Clusters and the New Economics of Competition." Harvard Business Review, Nov-Dec. 1998. <https://hbr.org/1998/11/clusters-and-the-new-economics-of-competition>



Q: What would a cluster-based economic development approach look like for urban agriculture in the Millennium Reserve/Calumet Collaborative and surrounding areas?

First, it would involve appreciating how urban agriculture has been emerging as a cluster of economic activity in the Chicago area over the past couple of decades. This involves firms—a mix of nonprofits and for-profits—that locally produce specialty crops. It includes collaborative public-private efforts to improve training and skills, from the urban agriculture courses offered through Chicago-area community colleges to the incubator farms being started up through the Farmers for Chicago Program by Growing Power Chicago and Windy City Harvest. The cluster also encompasses firms that process and distribute this produce, through farmers markets, wholesalers, high-end restaurants, and institutions such as the Chicago Public Schools.

Organizations have emerged to help ensure that standards and public policies foster the growth of this cluster. Since 2011, Chicago's zoning and composting ordinances have been amended to provide for commercial growing and efficient large-scale reuse of organic waste. NeighborSpace has begun to hold land in trust for commercial farming operations, in addition to community gardens. The Chicago Food Policy Action Council, Advocates for Urban Agriculture, and other groups are working with the city to create business licensing and local purchasing regulations that support local and regional agricultural producers.

Most recently, the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) is being adopted by the City of Chicago and sister agencies such as the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Park District; early conversations have explored how GFPP could be adopted by Cook County, working with the County's Social Innovation Commission. The GFPP offers a vehicle for using local government food procurement dollars to support emerging small- and medium-sized food producers, processors, and suppliers based in low-income communities in Chicago and Cook County.

The discussions looked at what other services could help further the development of urban agriculture sub-clusters in Greater Chicago—particularly the west and south sides of Chicago and the southern suburbs—and to ensure the necessary resources and development benefit local communities.

Two key elements can help foster the growth of urban agriculture sub-clusters:

1) Developing localized interconnected projects and programs.

Sub-clusters would focus efforts on project sites relatively close to each other, and provide complementary functions, uses, and outputs. The goal will be to develop a holistic ecosystem of projects, organizations, programs and resources.

2) Developing essential services.

The “missing pieces” of support services and organizations described in detail on pages X-X are needed not only to support the build-out of sub-clusters, but also for later expanding and connecting to new sub-clusters.

RECOMMENDATION 1. GROW CHICAGO AREA URBAN AGRICULTURE SUB CLUSTERS

The framework would complement and help to catalyze a cluster of agriculture initiatives that have been growing on Chicago's South Side and south suburban communities in recent years. To recognize the emerging cluster (and sub-clusters) of urban agriculture, it helps to step back and see these existing projects and how their development has been supported by public goods, particularly access to underutilized institutionally-controlled land. Together with projects currently under development, they offer points of reference for further development of urban agriculture in the Millennium Reserve area and larger bi-state Calumet region.

Thanks to several years of planning and on-the-ground efforts, the long-term potential of these agriculture projects has become tangible. The projects have largely sprung up on land held by public and quasi-public entities. Intervening in parts of the city and southern suburbs that have the most to benefit from economic and community development efforts, they stand out as core sites for further developing an urban agriculture sub-cluster in the Millennium Reserve area.

This process specifically looked closely at what is needed to help catalyze urban agriculture in communities along the Calumet River. The group primarily examined sites in Blue Island but potential sites could be included in Robbins and Alsip as well. This sub-cluster would build on the existing BIOS Farm site (see description below), and involve several sites combining production, processing, and distribution activating unused land and resources in the area. This model could be used in other neighborhoods and communities.

The following section details the potentially different elements of other sub-clusters, provides a vision of how the Blue Island Sub-cluster could be developed, and gives an overview of existing projects that could become nodes for sub-clusters in their respective communities.



Potential Sub-cluster elements:

The elements listed are not an exhaustive or mandatory list for a sub-cluster but a tool for envisioning a variety of interconnected and complementary sites, projects and programs in relatively close proximity to each other.

High-profile “model” site:

A model farming site should be established near a relatively dense area with high public visibility. This site would need to be well managed visually and be accommodating to public while being good location for a farm stand as well as classes and tours demonstrating the potential of urban agriculture. Re-purposed shipping containers could provide room for classroom space and offices, alongside greenhouses, hoop houses, and a farm stand.

Incubator site:

This parcel could host an incubator farm for beginning farmers who share equipment. Farmers could start by accessing $\frac{1}{4}$ acre parcels, and grow to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre and 1 acre parcels as they mature, build their market, and expand. Facilities would include a greenhouse, tool storage, large equipment, shared irrigation, packing shed, classroom/office space, and composting.

Urban Agriculture Hub:

An indoor facility providing growers, processors, and distributors access to cold storage, packing, washing, and aggregation facilities.

Farm sites:

These will likely be the most common form in the urban agriculture sub-clusters, where individuals or multiple growers or organizations farm a parcel of land. This use requires a storage shed, access to water and electricity, space for composting, a farm stand, and vehicle access.

School and community gardens:

These sites are important spaces for a wide range of ages, abilities and interests to become involved hands on in farming, science, nutrition, cooking while being in a community building and sharing experience. These gardens can support small scale composting, farm stands, native habitat while connecting across generations and a diversity of residents within communities. They serve as an introduction and “gateway” for potential farmers or other professions in the food system.

Backyard and private gardens:

Backyard gardens do not require access to publicly or institutionally controlled lands. They are small and scattered but can provide significant benefits collectively. Backyard gardeners get exercise and add biodiversity while feeding themselves, family members and neighbors. They can be supported with training, seeds, plants, compost and other resources while celebrating their knowledge and role contributing to the well being of their communities.



CHICAGO AREA URBAN AGRICULTURE SUBCLUSTER EXAMPLES

BIOS Farm

Established: 2014

Location: Canal Street at Hoyne Avenue, Blue Island, IL

Partners: BIOS/City of Blue Island/Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

Community: Blue Island



Panorama of BIOS Farm field in Blue Island

Source: BIOS Farm Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/BiosFarm/photos/a.1421699904801067.1073741829.1390975157873542/1694654654172256/?type=3&theater>

BIOS Farm is a Blue Island based community farm that grows organic vegetables, greens and herbs for local consumption. In their third year of production at BIOS, farmers Joe O'Meara and Larry O'Toole have collectively farmed for more than 25 years. BIOS Farms is utilizing land under an agreement arranged with the City of Blue Island who has a long term lease agreement with the Metropolitan Water Resource District who is the land owner. BIOS Farm has been working in the Blue Island Community since the fall of 2014. Since that time BIOS has had two successful seasons growing organic produce for hundreds of local residents and many businesses. Despite the hardship of growing on a poorly drained acre of land with limited water access and inadequate facilities, BIOS has managed to grow, process and distribute over 20,000 pounds of quality organic produce (over 95% of which is distributed in Blue Island); supply 30 CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) subscriptions; create a monthly food market featuring local and regional meat, produce, prepared food and entertainment, and more. BIOS Farm has ambitious plans to double the amount of food grown and available to the local community; develop a Food and Farming Hub; continue its mission of healthy food access; and develop educational programs and projects local schools and community groups.

More information about BIOS Farm and its work and plans are available at <http://biosfarm.org/>

BIOS Farm is pursuing conversations with MWRD and the City of Blue Island to expand to the Metra parking lot - located just across the Cal-Sag Channel from their existing farm- is about 3.5 acres, and consists of largely intact but old asphalt. The lot has been mostly vacant for 25 years. This site would serve as a High-profile "model" site.

BIOS FARM



High-profile “model” site

Location: potential Metra Parking lot, 3-4 acres, Blue Island, north side of Cal Sag just east of the MWRD aeration facility.

Incubator site

Location: Blue Island, just west of downtown, north of Cal Sag, 7 acres, remediated brownfield, owned by ComEd, may be vehicle access issues)

Urban Agriculture Hub

Location: Blue Island, available empty buildings

Farm sites

Location: BIOS farm, Blue Island; other locations in Blue Island and Robbins TBD

The two-acre BIOS site is leased from MWRD to Blue Island, which maintains a use agreement with BIOS. Similar arrangements could be created along the Cal-Sag Channel in Blue Island and Robbins.

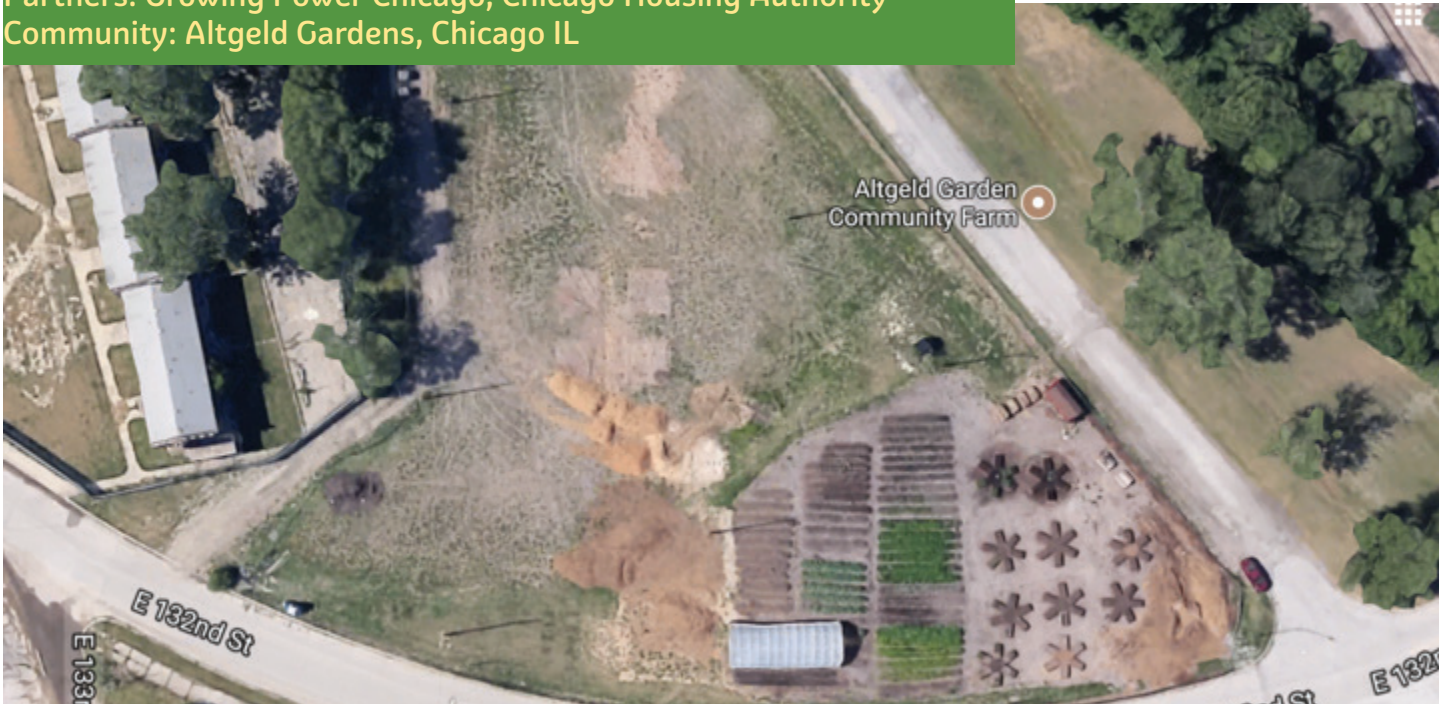
Altgeld Gardens Community Farm

Established: 2010

Location: 132nd Street and Ellis Avenue, Chicago

Partners: Growing Power Chicago, Chicago Housing Authority

Community: Altgeld Gardens, Chicago IL



Aerial view of Altgeld Gardens Community Farm (Google Maps)

This dynamic urban farm is a Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) project with over three acres of growing space. The site has eight hoop houses for year-round production and an active apiary. During the summer months, 100 teens are employed on the site, learning farming, culinary, composting and active transport of produce. During the school year, in partnership with Carver High School and After School Matters, 15 teens are employed on the site.

Altgeld produces a variety of culturally appropriate vegetables and herbs for the 5,000 residents living in CHA housing. The produce is distributed through our Fresh Moves Mobile Market program on a former Chicago Transit Authority bus converted into a mobile farmers' market. In collaboration with the Experimental Station, LINK dollars are matched up to \$20.00 for individuals buying produce on the bus. The bus makes multiple stops throughout the Altgeld-Sawyer neighborhood.

South Chicago Farm (Farmers for Chicago Incubator)

Established: 2015

Location: Clara Schaffer Park

Partners: Growing Power Chicago, Chicago Park District

Community: South Chicago

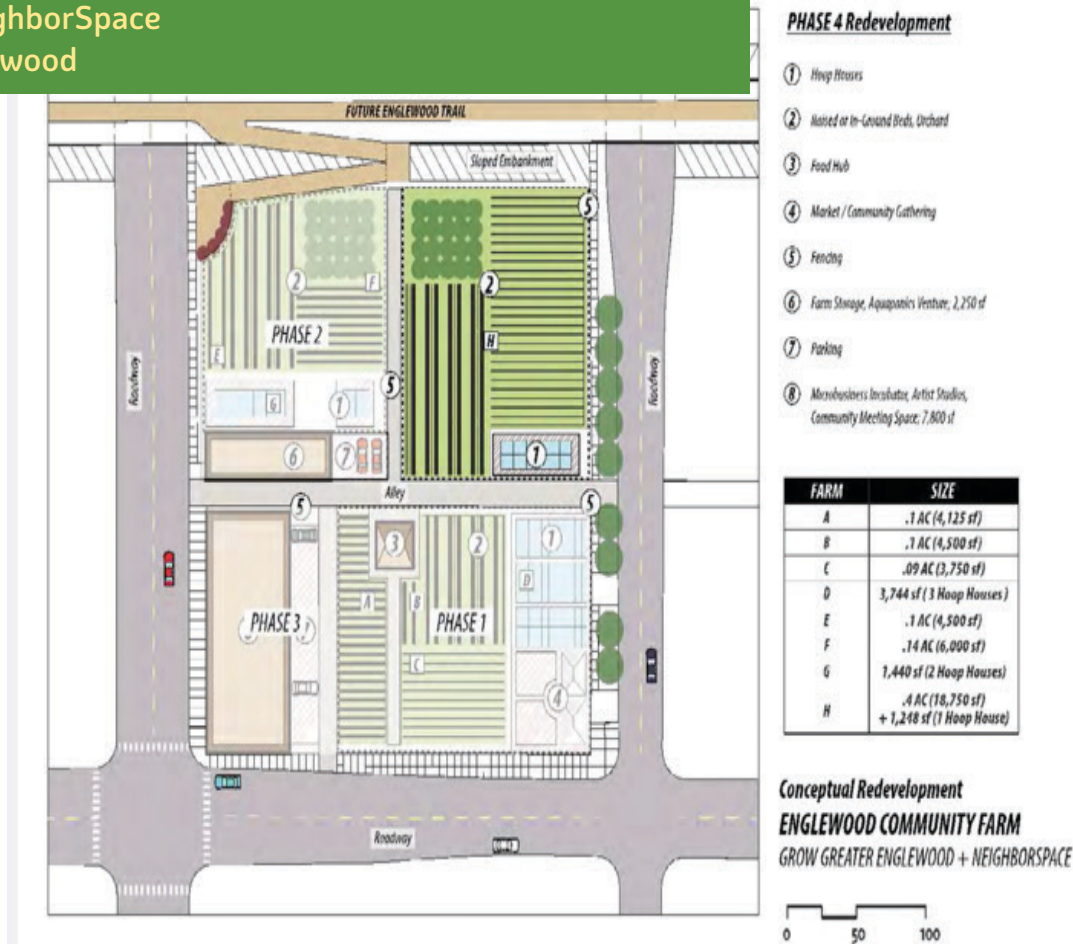


Randy Tolanzo, incubator farmer at Growing Power's South Chicago Farm
Source: Englewood Community Farms Prospectus and Business Plan, p. 21. Dec. 21, 2015.

Clara Shaffer Park was established in 2015 to serve the residents of South Chicago. This 15-acre site is designed to engage residents in both food and fitness activities. The park has walking trails, along with an urban farm and community garden managed by Growing Power, Inc. In 2015, Growing Power, along with two incubator farmers, began to develop the urban farm site. In 2016, Growing Power will engage 15 to 30 area teens in a summer job training program and create an acre of community garden space to begin programming the park and engage the broader community. The organization is also expanding the number of incubator farmers to five individuals, as well as adding up to 100 plots for neighborhood gardeners.

South Chicago Farm at Clara Shaffer Park provides training, mentoring, and coaching for individuals to obtain increased agricultural and growing capacity, with a focus on individuals from economically disadvantaged 'food desert' communities. The goal of the initiative is to support emerging farmers and provide resources, training, and networking for the urban agriculture industry in Chicago. One of the biggest challenges, for any new farmer, is to secure farmland. This is almost impossible in large metro areas without a great deal of capital and political support. There are many training programs locally and nationally, but few that incubate urban farmers who are ready to start their operation, on land they can farm for the long term.

Englewood Community Farms
Location: Englewood, City of Chicago
Partners: Grow Greater Englewood/Teamwork Englewood/Ujaama Land Trust/Chicago Department of Planning and Development/NeighborSpace
Community: Englewood



Conceptual layout for Phase 4 of development for Englewood Community Farm
 Source: Englewood Community Farms Prospectus and Business Plan, Figure 10, p. 31. Dec. 21, 2015.

Englewood Community Farms is a collaboration focused on its farmers and the network of partners brought together through Grow Greater Englewood (GGE). GGE served as the foundation for the creation of the neighborhood focused Ujaama Land Trust. GGE is building out the infrastructure to support the farmers and arrange partnerships for technical assistance. GGE is facilitating community-led decision making processes with the goal of employing local residents while providing opportunities to grow the technical and entrepreneurial skills of both the organization and the individual farm enterprises. The farms will help transform the Greater Englewood area into a hub of local food production and a driver of economic and community development, eventually connected by a linear park along the elevated Englewood Line (between 58th and 59th Streets).

Phased development will allow Englewood Community Farms to grow over time adding new farmers, additional growing spaces and ancillary businesses. An initial two-acre site is envisioned to begin with four growing spaces and a shared hoop house, later adding features such as an orchard, more hoop houses, additional small farms and related indoor facilities. This growth will provide space for approximately 6-10 farmers. The vision is for urban farming to expand in Englewood over time, providing permanent farm sites and increasing economic opportunities for the Englewood community.

RECOMMENDATION 2. PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

To help farms and sub-clusters take root and grow connections in the Greater Chicago urban agriculture cluster, several essential support services are needed. Through discussions with growers and others, the consensus is there is unmet need for community decision making and control; holding land in trust; managing land use; connecting urban agriculture to the community; and securing funding. These services could be provided by one new organization—a “Cook County Productive Lands Council”—or they might be taken on by existing organizations. In either case, organizations would have to work to ensure space is made for community-led initiatives and ideas.

BIOS Farm’s experiences did provide some good background for learning and reflection on the challenges facing producers when there is not adequate preparation and consideration of their unique needs to be successful in a very challenging and demanding market even when the necessary conditions, resources, regulations and legal frameworks are in place. Their experiences are not unique when speaking to the other producers in the above sub-clusters.

1. Matching Land, Producers, and Community Priorities. There is a need for an organization to help identify land that is available for productive land/urban agriculture in various community areas, and then work with producers to find best matches for the priorities of each community. This organization could help understand, set, and review parameters for sustainable production practices and good neighborhood practices. This could involve developing and monitoring agreements between producers and community organizations, as well as developing a farmer council to ensure producer needs are addressed. Some communities may want to develop a community land trust to provide for localized management and control over farmland. In Englewood, for example, the process of developing Englewood Community Farms contributed to the creation of the Ujamaa Community Land Trust.

2. Land Management. A new or existing organization is needed to manage land reserved for urban agriculture. This would involve working with both landowners and leaseholders (whether municipal, private, or institutional) and with producers (individuals, partnerships, and organizations). This land manager will develop standardized agreements with both parties, which can be tailored to suit particular community and production contexts.

Such an organization could provide several possible services:

- Holding leases for agricultural use (and other green infrastructure), and arranging sub-leases or other use agreements with producers;
- Supporting environmental assessments, to understand the history of sites and coordinate brownfield cleanup where necessary;
- Maintaining property and recruiting new producers;
- Preparing the land for producers including access to water and electricity and building out storage for equipment, season extension, and farm stands;
- Offering legal, financial, planning, and community outreach expertise, grounded in an understanding of urban agriculture, local food systems, and green infrastructure;

- Stitching together localized clusters of sites and resources, such as incubators, high-profile sites, composting, cold storage/distribution, marketing, greenhouse space, office space, tool storage, and shared heavy equipment;
- Coordinating liability insurance for growers;
- Monitoring and enforcing best management practices and agreements.

The land manager would help manage and bring into agricultural production properties owned by MWRD, the Cook County Forest Preserve, local municipalities, and other public and institutional landowners (such as railroads, utilities, park districts, the Chicago Housing Authority, the Chicago Transit Authority, and the Illinois Department of Transportation). Such coordinated land management could help address complementary priorities across several existing projects in the Millennium Reserve area, including the Calumet Stormwater Initiative, the Calumet Land Conservation Partnership, the Cook County Land Bank, and the Illinois Green Infrastructure Revolving Loan fund.

3. Community Connections. A new or existing organization is needed to help create and coordinate stakeholder groups to connect and maximize potential of all the related urban agriculture projects in a geographic “cluster,” and potentially beyond. This would include creating and supporting an online resource or portal with information about land availability and access.

The community connector, which could be an extension of the land manager role, would develop links to and between:

- Organizations working on green infrastructure, stormwater, bike trails, and natural habitat;
- Organization providing support to farmers, such as composting and other extension topics;
- Representatives of municipalities
- Landowners
- Transportation
- Marketing/Storage
- Health care and prevention
- Youth and teen programming
- Job training
- Education
- Food Access (SNAP, WIC, Seniors, food pantries, gleaning),
- Cooking/shopping classes

4. Funding Pool/Trust. A funding pool could help coordinate fundraising for urban agriculture projects, as well as related green and other infrastructure. This could include operational start-up and ongoing costs (especially programming directed at offering social services). The funding pool would help producers, community groups, as well as the land manager and community connector organization(s) identify and access resources such as grants, loans, and investments. There would be a close relationship with the land management and community connector organization(s) described above.

NEXT STEPS

CFPAC is committed to coordinating next steps of the process in collaboration with other interested communities, organizations, individuals, institutions and funders. Public sharing of this report and organizing the next working group to move forward on the recommendations will take place in the fall of 2017.

Identified next steps:

1. Publicly share this report and recommendations with interested local governments, related organizations, and interested communities:

- Communities including those listed in the report: Blue Island, Englewood, Altgeld Gardens, South Chicago and others interested in exploring a similar vision.
- Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, and South Suburban Land Bank
- NeighborSpace
- Cook County Social Innovation Commission, Cook County Land Bank, Cook County Forest Preserve, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
- Calumet Collaborative Board of Directors and Steering Committee
- City of Chicago Departments and Agencies

2. Organize a “Chicago Area Community-Based Urban Agriculture Working Group”, to propose, create and support the implementation of processes, services, and policies. These would potentially include a community based vetting process, a community land bank, and a land manager to coordinate with municipal and institutional landowners, while connecting to other related initiatives and opportunities such as the Good Food Purchasing Policy and the Chicagoland Food and Beverage network.



APPENDIX I

Resources

Maps, reports, and plans

MWRD Land for Lease map:

<https://gispub.mwrld.org/leasingproperty/>

South Suburban Mayors and Managers Assoc (SSMMA)

GIS Homepage:

<http://ssmma-gis.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

Stormwater maps: <http://ssmma-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=778b7bd-764d940a8ba313172e9254157>

Green Infrastructure maps:

<http://ssmma-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0a19aee2fda94110b-da95cd23d2d780d>

Green Infrastructure online training:<http://training.ssmma.org/>

Committee meeting list (incl. Little Calumet River Watershed Planning Council)

<http://ssmma.org/sample-page/meetings-and-special-events/>

South Suburban Calumet Area Open Space Initiative (plan 2004):

<http://ssmma.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/South-Suburban-Calumet-Open-Space-Initiative.pdf>

Chicago WildernessMidlothian Creek Watershed Plan (includes Blue Island and Robbins):

http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.chicagowilderness.org/resource/collection/EB8F77AC-1FD0-4E00-8DB6-17735C478208/1_Midlothian_Final_GI_Report_6-27-13.pdf

Green Infrastructure Vision: (full set of resources at CMAP)

<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/livability/sustainability/open-space/green-infrastructure-vision>

Green Infrastructure Vision 2012 update:

<https://datahub.cmap.illinois.gov/dataset/48462ade-9c42-47d3-9b4f-5bb4ca8c1e47/resource/30f03ee5-a97c-40b4-93a5-6eb20b662000/download/giv20finalreport201206.pdf>

Far South CDC 119th St Corridor Plan (urban ag, aggregation, distribution):

<http://farsouthcdc.org/119th-street-corridor-plan/>

Friends of Cal Sag Bike trail:

<http://www.calsagtrail.org/>

Urban Agriculture - Chicagoland

Growing Power Farmers for Chicago, information sheet and application:

<http://www.growingpower.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Farmers-for-Chicago-2016-Application.pdf>

Food:Land:Opportunity Englewood Land Access Project
<http://www.foodlandopportunity.org/projects/englewood-land-access-project>

Englewood Community Farms Prospectus and Business Plan
http://www.foodlandopportunity.org/downloads/Englewood_Prospectus_Business-Plan.pdf

Ujamaa Community Land Trust
<http://ujamaaclt.com/>

Grow Greater Englewood
<https://www.growgreater.org/> [NOTE THAT THIS WEBSITE SAYS “COMING SPRING 2017...”]
OR: <https://www.facebook.com/GrowGreaterEnglewood/>

Good Food Purchasing Program
https://www.facebook.com/GFPPChicago/?hc_ref=PAGES_TIMELINE&fref=nf
[NICE PHOTOS!]
AND/OR: <http://goodfoodcities.org/cps-announcement/>

Urban Agriculture - Beyond Chicagoland

American Rivers- Urban Farms: a Green Infrastructure Tool in the Chesapeake Bay Area:
http://americanrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/AmericanRivers_UrbanAgricultureReport_final.pdf

RUAF- Urban Ag and Green Infrastructure New York City:
<http://www.ruaf.org/sites/default/files/p16-19.pdf>

Possible USDA NRCS Conservation Funding: (next grant window late 2017)
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/>

Greg Rosenberg and Jeffrey Yuen, “Beyond Housing: Urban Agriculture and Commercial Development by Community Land Trusts” Lincoln Institute for Land Policy Working Paper, 2012.
<http://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/working-papers/beyond-housing>

Nate Ela and Greg Rosenberg, “Land Tenure for Urban Agriculture: Toward a Scalable Model.”
Forthcoming in Good Food, Strong Communities: Promoting Social Justice
Through Local and Regional Food Systems, edited by Steve Ventura and Martin Bailkey. Iowa City:
University of Iowa Press. Content available at <http://www.urbanagland.com/>

Equity Trust. “Secure Land for Urban Agriculture: Developing models of secure tenure for urban community farms and gardens.” December 2014. Available at <http://equitytrust.org/2014/04/urban-agriculture/>

Equity Trust. “Secure Land for Urban Agriculture: Seeking funders’ perspectives.” April 2016. Available at <http://equitytrust.org/2014/04/urban-agriculture/>





This report was made possible by support from the Illinois Coastal Management Program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Copyright 2017