



# Village of Alsip Comprehensive Plan

Adopted, April 2013



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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region's official comprehensive planning organization. Its GO TO 2040 planning campaign is helping the region's seven counties and 284 communities to implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See [www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov) for more information.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Alsip Comprehensive Plan outlines the community's vision for its future from a physical and economic standpoint as well as the roadmap that will allow it to realize that vision. In addition to providing a well-defined framework for the community's development and investment goals, the Plan seeks to explore new opportunities to cater to changing community trends.

The Alsip Comprehensive Plan is written to provide guidance for the community to work towards its vision over the next 10 to 15 years. Although the Plan should be viewed as a long-term document, its implementation is incremental and needs to begin immediately upon Plan adoption. Keeping this in mind, it is critical for Village officials to refer to the Plan on a regular basis to assist with land use and development decisions. The Comprehensive Plan is a flexible document that is meant to be modified as needed based on changing socio-economic conditions. At the required stage, Village officials can and should update the Comprehensive Plan to accurately reflect changes in local needs, interests, or opportunities. It is recommended that Alsip update its comprehensive plan every five years to keep it as accurate as possible.

### Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is composed of a series of distinct yet interrelated elements defined within the Illinois Local Planning Assistance Act (Public Act 92-0768). The key elements addressed in the Alsip Comprehensive Plan are based upon those outlined in the State Statute, and include land use and development, economic development, housing, natural resources, transportation, community facilities, image and identity, and implementation strategies. Under the Illinois Municipal Code [(65 ILCS) 5/11-12-5(1)], a municipal plan commission is responsible for preparing and recommending a "Comprehensive Plan for the present and future development or redevelopment of the municipality."



Figure 1. Study Area

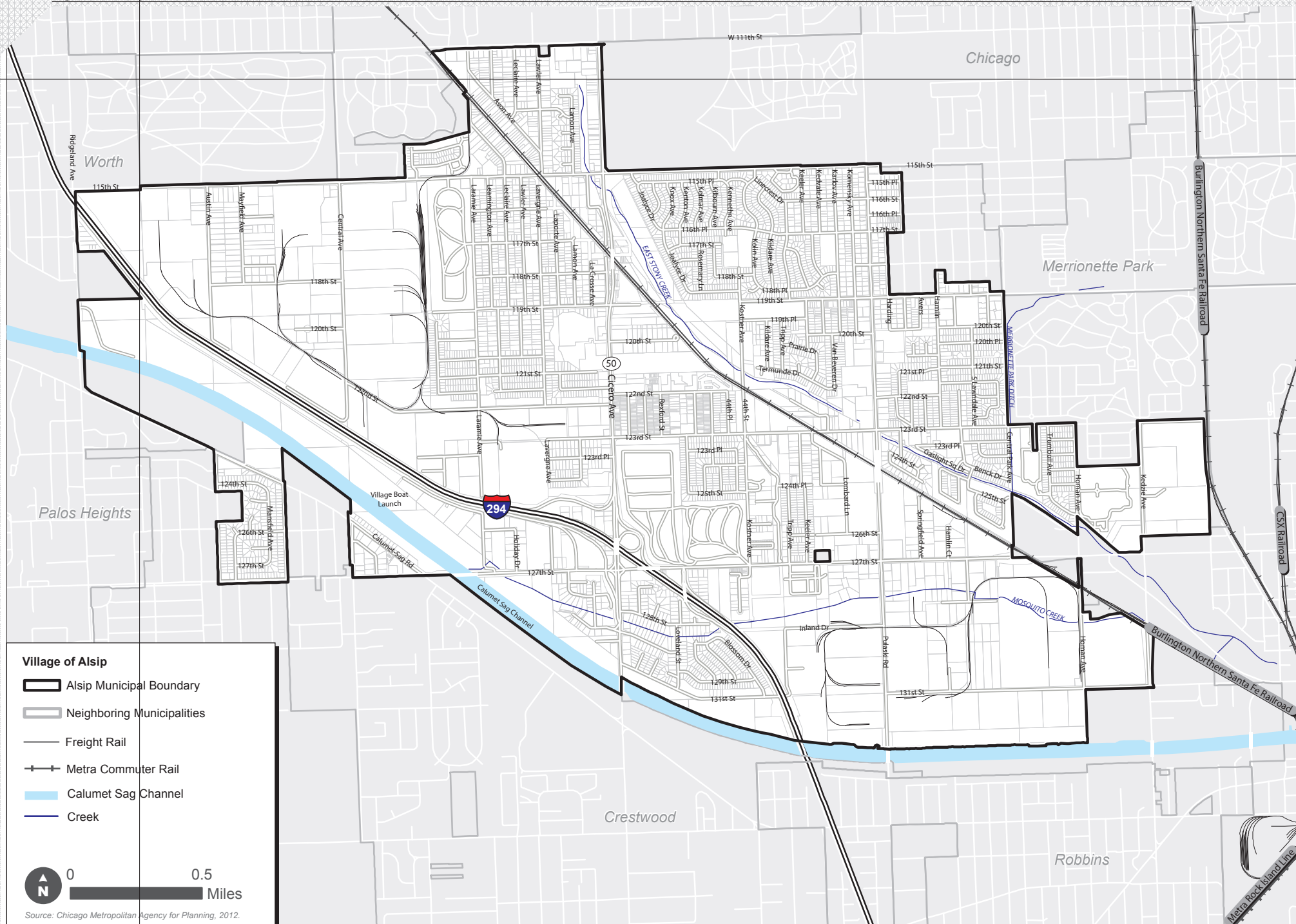
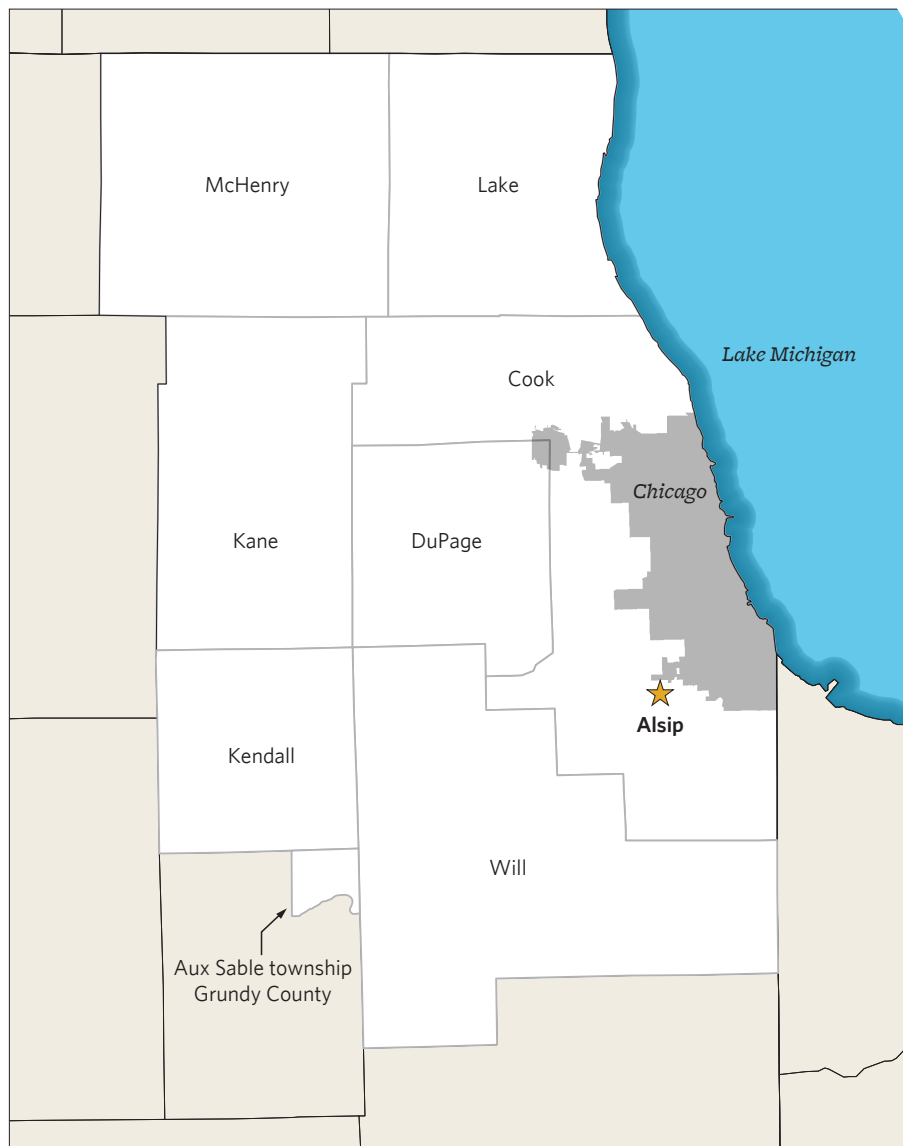




Figure 2. Regional Location



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## Why does Alsip Need a Comprehensive Plan?

Being a built-out community with limited undeveloped parcels, Alsip will need to turn towards vacant and underutilized parcels within its boundaries for future development. Infill development over the course of the next several years will shape the community's physical, economic, and social character. As a result, Village officials will face numerous near- and long-term decisions. Having an up-to-date comprehensive plan in place provides a context in which decisions affecting the future of Alsip can be made with some certainty that today's choices — whether large or small — contribute to achieving the long-term goals and vision of the community.

A few preliminary issues that were identified during the planning process are addressed in the comprehensive plan. The Village has a large number of industrial businesses that employ 66 percent of workers in Alsip. Although the majority of industrial properties are utilized, some vacancies do exist and the plan provides recommendations to help support industrial uses and to help attract new industrial businesses. Additionally, the lack of designed streetscape and building facades in commercial and industrial areas has created an uninviting and detrimental environment for residents and visitors alike.

Alsip's strong industrial base and close-knit residential community have been unable to support a real 'downtown' or 'town center'. The Village has completed previous plans aimed at developing the Pulaski Road corridor as the community's 'Main Street'. Unfortunately, given current economic conditions, accomplishing a vibrant 'Main Street' will require a thorough evaluation of prior recommendations and modifications as needed. The Comprehensive Plan identifies these actions along with potential funding mechanisms for implementation.

Although the Village has quality parks and recreational opportunities, there is a lack of safe and convenient non-motorized connections within the Village. The future multi-use Calumet-Sag Trail will run along the southern limits of the Village, connecting residents to neighboring communities and offering new recreational opportunities. The Plan helps identify preferred bicycle route connections within the Village and actions for continued development of the Calumet-Sag Trail.

The new comprehensive plan will serve as a guide for elected officials, municipal staff, community residents, business owners, and potential investors, allowing them to make informed administrative and implementation decisions about community development that affects land use, transportation, infrastructure, and capital improvements throughout the entire Village.

## Planning Process

The planning process to create the Village's Comprehensive Plan included multiple steps that were undertaken over approximately 12 months. The process was crafted with assistance from Village staff, and was designed to include resident and business owner input throughout.

At the beginning of December 2011, Village staff met with CMAP staff to develop a Scope of Work for the project. The work plan established program tasks, a timeline for the program and recommends participation by a community steering committee to assist CMAP staff in developing the final plan and recommendations. The key steps in the planning process are illustrated in the following flow chart.

**Figure 1.3 Planning Process**











# Chapter 2

## A Vision for Alsip: Alsip 2040

In the year 2040, Alsip is a bustling community with a growing population and prosperous economy. The strong retail and recreational assets built over the past two decades, combined with continued success of the Village's housing and industrial sector, have improved quality of life for Alsip's residents and resulted in the Village becoming a major regional draw.

### Vision

The Village's industrial sector continues to innovate and grow, adding successful businesses that utilize cutting-edge technology to produce a variety of commodities while consciously decreasing their environmental footprint. Energy-efficient retrofits in existing buildings, along with various site level best management practices have enabled business owners to save significantly on their energy and maintenance costs, allowing them to reinvest their savings into the local economy. The physical character of industrial areas has undergone an extensive makeover with attractive new facades lining arterial and collector streets. The improved image of the industrial areas has resulted in an attractive gateway into the Village while having an indirect positive impact on the retail and housing market. The completion of major infrastructure projects such as the I-294/I-57 Interchange and 115th Street grade separation project, combined with local roadway improvements such as managed access and designated truck routes, has resulted in a seamless movement of traffic for all modes of transportation.

A variety of local and national retailers have opened stores that now serve Alsip residents and employees. Assisted by the Pulaski Road Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district and

revised zoning ordinance, the corridor is home to several attractive retail establishments including sit-down restaurants and entertainment uses arranged in an aesthetically pleasing and vibrant 'Main Street' environment. Streetscape improvements along Cicero Avenue have also attracted businesses, adding to the economic vitality of the community while increasing housing and shopping choices for residents and re-connecting the entire community. The marketing initiatives headed by the Chamber of Commerce have exposed Alsip businesses to the greater Chicago region, drawing in enthusiastic weekend diners and shoppers into the Village.

The Village of Alsip and Alsip Park District's proactive interaction with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation Department (MWRD) and South West Special Recreation Association (SWSRA) has resulted in the opening of new recreational facilities along the Calumet-Sag Channel. In addition to adding open space locally, the Village has also created additional bike connections to regional open areas that are part of the Cook County Forest Preserve District. The much anticipated Calumet-Sag regional bike trail has also been completed and is bringing a number of visitors into the community on a daily basis to patronize local businesses and join in community activities.

Alsip's residential stock has expanded to accommodate the growing diversity in its demographic profile. Mixed-use developments along Pulaski Road offer multi-family units to young professionals and seniors looking to live close to retail amenities and transit. Rehabilitation of older housing stock continues to improve the overall quality of housing and increase median home values across the board. This has further resulted in the influx of new residents that include Chicago workers, young families, and senior citizens to the community in search of high quality housing at an affordable price.

**Figure 2.1. Examples From Previous Village Plans and Studies**











# Chapter 3

## Future Land Use

The future land use plan presented in this chapter serves as the foundation for the recommendations contained within the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this chapter is to translate the community's vision into physical terms by providing a general pattern for the location, distribution, and characteristics of future land uses in Alsip. Given that the community is built-out, the future land use plan builds upon the existing land use pattern while proposing a combination of redevelopment and better utilization of specific areas to help the Village realize its vision over the next 10-15 years.

### Residential

For the most part, Alsip's residential neighborhoods should retain their established character and intensity of use. The Comprehensive Plan does not recommend any significant changes in the Village's existing housing stock. The Plan recommends maintaining the existing residential types while adding multi-family units as part of townhomes/ row homes and mixed-use developments. Recommendations for residential areas are further detailed in Chapter 4.

**Single-Family Detached Residential:** The predominant housing type in Alsip will continue to serve a majority of the community's residential needs in the future. As parcels become available for redevelopment, they should be utilized for single-family homes that respect the architectural scale and overall neighborhood character. In general, no new single family detached homes are recommended except as part of infill development in existing neighborhoods.

**Single-Family Attached Residential:** Although limited in quantity (approximately 5.5percent of total housing units or 428 units), townhomes and duplexes are important to retain as an alternative to single-family detached homes. While retaining these units, it is

important for the Village to focus on the maintenance and upkeep of these homes. The plan recommends that the planned townhome development north of 122nd Street be completed. This would add approximately 4 acres of townhomes.

**Multi-Family Residential:** Apartments and condominiums are distributed throughout the community and cater to a wide demographic. Retaining these units is important to provide both aging residents with an alternative housing choice as well as young professionals looking for their first home in Alsip. The plan recommends the conversion of approximately 5 acres of underutilized industrial property north of 122nd Street and south of 120th street to new multi-family units. New multi-family in this location would be located adjacent to the planned townhome development to the south, and a future park site to the east along the rail line.

**Mixed-Use:** The mixed-use corridors along Pulaski Road and Cicero Avenue are envisioned to contain a variety of uses laid out in a pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically pleasing manner. From a residential standpoint, the corridor should accommodate multi-family units either in the form of stand-alone buildings or mixed-use buildings with residential units above retail storefronts. The units would appeal to existing

residents looking to transition into smaller units as well as attract new residents given the convenient access and location close to retail and transit. As there currently are no significant mixed-use developments in the Village, the future land use plan supports an increase in this type of land use. As discussed throughout this chapter, mixed-use is recommended along Pulaski Road and Cicero Avenue. In total, the Plan recommends approximately 175 acres of mixed-use development or redevelopment.

## Commercial

A majority of Alsip's commercial uses are placed along three corridors; Pulaski Road, Cicero Avenue, and 127th Street. Recommendations for commercial areas are further detailed in Chapter 5. The Comprehensive Plan envisions two types of commercial districts with distinctive characteristics: commercial; and mixed use.

**Commercial:** These parcels should accommodate a wide variety of retail and office uses in terms of size, scale, and type of ownership. While it is important to retain existing commercial uses that are strategically placed and successful, it is equally important to encourage a shift towards node-centric commercial development that enables the Village to provide residents with pedestrian-friendly, compact, and attractive retail environments. This approach will support economic growth, enhance community image, improve safety, and alleviate transportation concerns.

**Mixed-Use:** These parcels should contain a mix of residential, retail, office, and institutional uses arranged in a compact and pedestrian-friendly development pattern. Buildings could be configured as single-use buildings interconnected in a pedestrian-friendly manner and with complementary uses in close proximity (e.g., a residential building next to a commercial and office building), or could mix uses within the same building in appropriate locations. The Plan recommends creation of new mixed-use areas, many of which are on existing commercial properties. This results in total acreage devoted to stand-alone commercial use dropping significantly and increase in the future mixed-use land use.

## Industrial

It is important to support the Village's stable industrial sector, recognizing its enormous contribution to the local economy in terms of generating revenue and creating jobs. Proximity to I-294, major arterials such as Cicero Avenue and Pulaski Road, I-294/Cicero Avenue interchange, and the future I-294/I-57 interchange will continue to be primary factors in the location of industrial businesses. Keeping this in mind, vacant and underutilized parcels that are currently located in the midst of industrial areas are recommended for industrial use in the future.

The future land use plan recommends that the amount of acreage devoted to industry remain the same. Although some industrial sites are recommended to be converted to a new use such as commercial, open space, or residential, when factoring in the vacant industrial properties that are recommended to become new industry, the acreage is approximately the same. Recommendations for industrial areas are further detailed in Chapter 6.

## Transportation/Utilities

The two major rights-of-way that influence the Village's land use pattern are the I-294 expressway and the Burlington North Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad. Both of these require a significant amount of right-of-way that breaks up the village visually, physically, and in some cases perceptually. Although not necessarily attractive or desirable, the acreage devoted to these is necessary. Therefore, the future land use plan preserves the necessary right-of-ways required for these uses. Recommendations related to transportation are further detailed in Chapter 7.

## Park and Open Space

There are three distinct types of open areas identified within the Plan. With limited opportunities for creating new open space within the existing built environment, the Plan recognizes the need to maximize the utility of underutilized open areas, specifically along the Calumet-Sag Channel. Recommendations for parks and open spaces are further detailed in Chapter 8.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation Department (MWRD) Open Space: MWRD owns a



majority of the open areas along the Calumet-Sag Channel, leasing out some parcels to industrial businesses and the Alsip Park District. Moving forward, the Village should coordinate with MWRD to convert additional parcels to public areas for recreation. The future land use plan identifies a large amount of MWRD acreage (approximately 125 acres) to be used as public open space.

**Open Space:** Parks and recreational areas identified in the future land use map include neighborhood parks, trails, natural buffers, school playgrounds, and a golf course. These are distributed throughout the community and serve local residents, and should therefore be maintained in the long run. Not including the conversion of MWRD property to open space, there is a slight increase in the amount of future park acreage which would replace some vacant residential areas and underutilized industrial acreage. Approximately 10-12 acres of new open space is recommended in the future land use plan.

**Cemeteries:** There are three cemeteries located in the Village that will continue to serve their existing function.

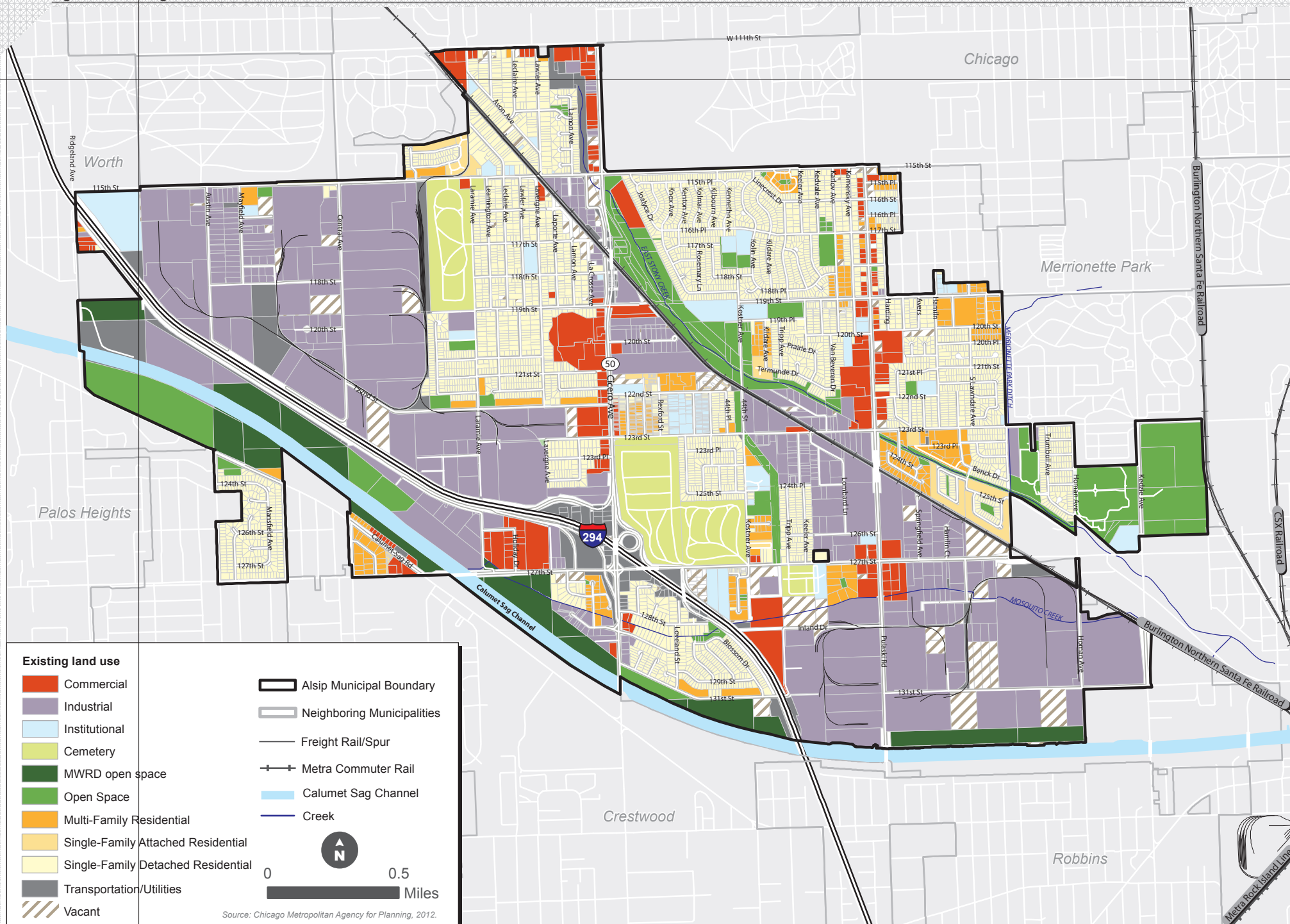
## Institutional

The future land use map identifies major institutions within the community. Institutions include schools, religious institutions, medical institutions, and municipal buildings. There may be additional opportunities to locate institutions within the mixed-use corridors along Cicero Avenue and Pulaski Road. The Plan does not contain a separate chapter with recommendations for institutional uses.



The Alsip Public Library. Photo by CMAP

Figure 3.1 Existing Land Use





Chicago Ridge  
**Figure 3.2. Future Land Use Plan**

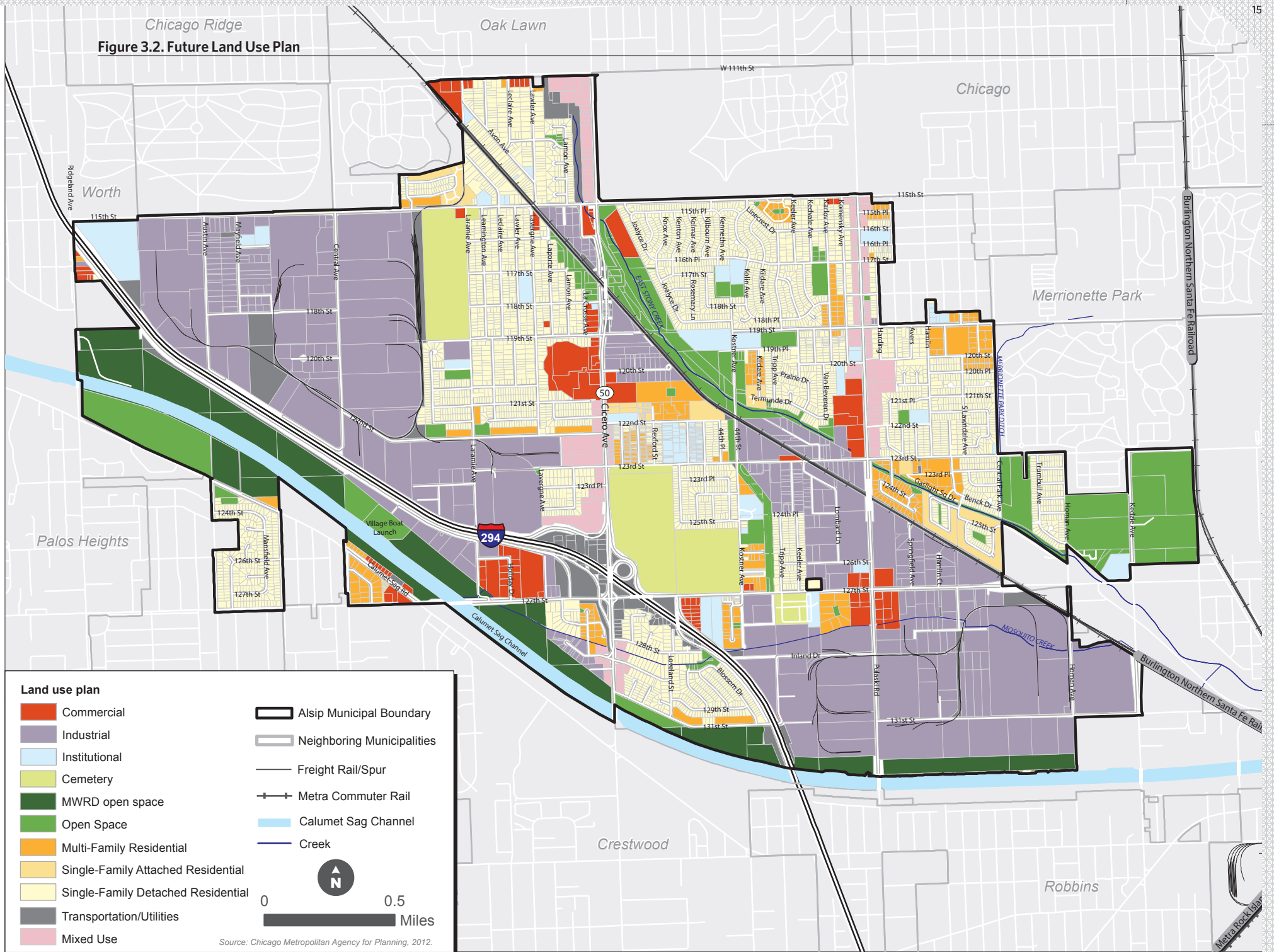
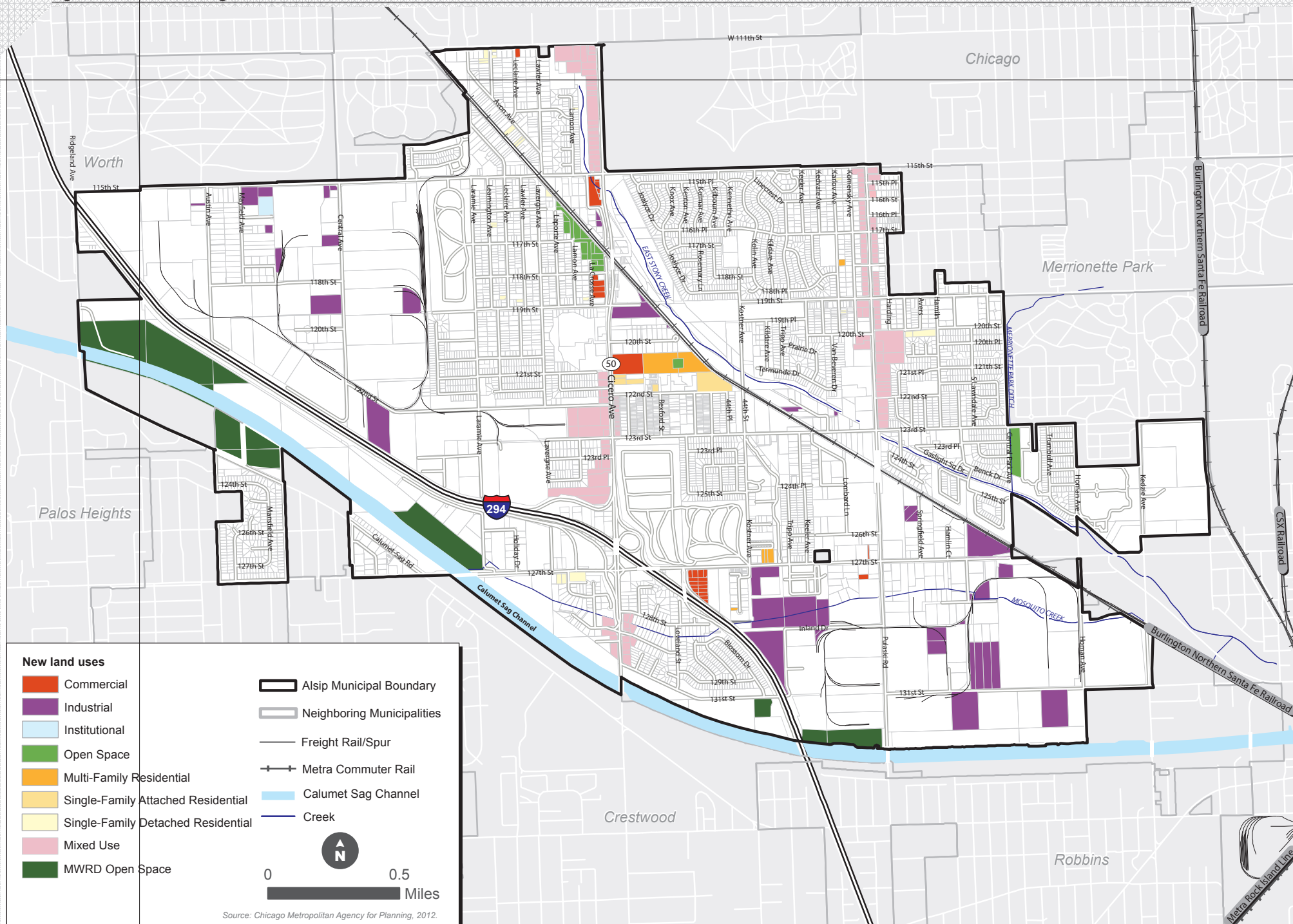


Figure 3.3. Land Use Changes









# Chapter 4

## Residential

**Goal:** The Village of Alsip will preserve its established neighborhoods and housing diversity while seeking opportunities for attractive, higher density developments around major commercial corridors with the goal of creating compact, walkable neighborhoods.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

Typical of most suburban communities, Alsip's housing stock is a mixture of predominantly single-family homes and some multi-family homes. However, the pattern of development varies significantly from one neighborhood to another. Single-family neighborhoods west of Cicero Avenue are generally built on a grid-network of roads, allowing for smooth movement of vehicles and pedestrians. However, the dendritic road network in neighborhoods east of Cicero Avenue makes these residences isolated within the same neighborhoods as well as disconnected from neighboring uses. In addition to the local street network, a combination of rail lines, roadways, and waterways isolate certain neighborhoods, especially residences south of Interstate 294. Multi-family units, including owner occupied condominiums, senior housing, and rental apartments, are dispersed throughout the Village.

#### Key Findings

The following are key findings based on an assessment of Alsip's residential areas. These key findings have helped shape and inform the recommendations outlined in this section.

Residential parcels cover less than 25 percent of the total land area in Alsip. Industrial properties are the predominant land use within municipal boundaries. Residential properties, typically the largest generator of property value in suburban communities, make up only 32 percent of all property value in Alsip. There are very few opportunities in the form of vacant land that will become available for housing expansion in the future; therefore, Village officials will need to focus efforts on infill housing.

The overall physical condition of housing units and neighborhood infrastructure in Alsip is good. Almost 60 percent of Alsip's housing was built after 1970. This percentage is twice the number for the County at 31 percent and also much higher than the region at 44 percent. This has resulted in a relatively lower number of issues related to maintenance and physical appearance. According to community stakeholders and Village officials, there is however a need to ensure that the condition of multi-family units is maintained as some areas of the community have seen a decline in the last decade.

There is a need for greater diversity in Alsip's predominantly single-family housing stock. Out of the 7,805 housing units in the Village, more than 50 percent are single-family detached homes. In the past decade, the Village has purchased and converted two



apartment buildings into one senior housing complex. This has provided the Village with 512 units of senior housing that are fully occupied but still inadequate to serve the community needs. There is a waiting list currently that shows the need for additional senior housing in the Village. Similarly, there are very limited single-family attached or mixed-use developments in the Village that would attract a younger population looking for their first home while being close to retail and transportation amenities.

Alsip continues to see housing foreclosures both in the single-family and multi-family sector. As per data provided by the Woodstock Institute, there were a total of 213 foreclosure filings in Alsip in 2011. This number includes all types of housing units, and represents almost 3 percent of the entire housing stock of the Village. Compared to neighboring Blue Island, Chicago Ridge, Crestwood, Merionette Park, and Robbins, this is a relatively high number. Foreclosure filings have decreased by 7 percent in the first quarter of 2012 compared to the first quarter of 2011.

## Recommended Strategies

### Near-Term (1-3 Years)

#### Identify foreclosure trends in the Village

Public Act 96-0856 requires that banks and other mortgagees provide foreclosure notices and sale confirmations to municipalities. While such information can be useful in targeting property maintenance and other issues associated with foreclosures, few municipalities use such information. Therefore, it is recommended that the Village's Building Department proactively collect information provided by the notices, allowing Village officials to map and monitor the number and location of foreclosures along with the type of unit.

If the Village sees an increase in foreclosure filings, it is important to move these properties to new occupants as quickly as possible. Currently, the Village lacks the relationships necessary to use the foreclosure information gathered to speed the transition of foreclosed properties. Some private real estate investors, however, do have sufficient connections and resources. It is recommended that the Village build off of the foreclosures data by providing this information to local rental property owners and managers.

#### Adopt and implement a rental licensing program

There are a number of rental properties in the Village that are in varied physical conditions. Additionally, the economic downturn's impact on the housing market in the region indicates that a growing number of owner occupied housing units that enter foreclosure are being converted to rental units. To ensure that the Village's quality of housing is maintained, the Building Department should institute a rental licensing program that works in conjunction with the crime-free housing program. Registered landlords would be responsible for maintenance of the units and property. An example of a well-written and implemented ordinance the Village should review is the Village of Addison's Rental Housing Manual. (<http://addisonadvantage.org/residents/pdf/Housing%20Manual%202011.pdf>)

The purpose of the Rental Licensing Program would be to provide for the annual licensing and inspection of residential rental property so as to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community stakeholders. The ordinance would require the owner or operator of the premises to maintain the structures and exterior property in compliance with requirements in the ordinance. Required standards for the following elements should be outlined in the ordinance:

- Light, ventilation, and occupancy requirements
- Plumbing facilities and fixture requirements
- Mechanical and electrical requirements
- Fire safety requirements

No individual should be allowed to rent or lease a dwelling unit unless a residential rental license has been obtained from the Village's Building Department. Additional licensing and inspection procedures should be drafted in a public participation driven process that includes existing landlords and enforcement departments such as the Building Department and Police Department.

### Mid-Term (4-7 Years)

#### Coordinate with neighboring communities to undertake a Homes for a Changing Region Study

The Village should apply for CMAP technical assistance to undertake a *Homes for a Changing Region* (Homes) study in collaboration with its neighbors. The Homes initiative

charts future housing demand and supply trends for participating communities, and develops long-term housing policy plans for each community. These plans aim to create a balanced mix of housing types, serve the needs of current and future residents and workers, and enhance livability. The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), and CMAP are jointly supporting the evolution of Homes by encouraging neighboring communities to work together to develop interjurisdictional solutions to housing challenges and by using transparent community engagement strategies to develop these solutions. The Village should undertake this initiative by partnering with neighboring communities that face similar housing challenges.

## Ongoing/Long-Term (8-10 Years)

### **Continue to implement crime free housing program**

The Alsip Police Department has created and executed a highly successful Crime Free Multi-Housing Program that has resulted in improving neighborhood safety and building maintenance standards. The three-phase certification program applies to rental properties of all types including single family homes, condominiums, and rental apartments. The Village should continue to implement this program and include new rental properties that are being added on a yearly basis. The Village's Building Department should also consider creating a Landlord Committee comprised of property owners with regular monthly or bi-annual meetings to address any specific issues and host educating and training sessions.

### **Create new multi-family housing opportunities including senior housing**

In addition to adopting policies that maintain the quality of Alsip's existing housing stock, the Village should continue to explore opportunities to create new housing types that may appeal to a wider demographic. Mixed-use developments that contain housing units above retail establishments or mixes of uses on the same site should be encouraged in the Pulaski Road corridor. This would further advance the Village's goal of creating a 'Main Street' environment along the corridor. The Pulaski Road Corridor Plan identifies specific redevelopment sites along the corridor with the possibility to convert some of them to three-four story mixed-use buildings. The housing in these mixed-use developments should include a variety of price points and types such as rental apartments, condominiums, and senior housing.

The Pulaski Road TIF and Cook County Tax Incentive Program are two financial tools that are in place that will make the corridor a priority area for mixed-use redevelopment in the future. The Village should focus its residential additions in this corridor in the near future while rehabilitating existing housing in other areas of the community.

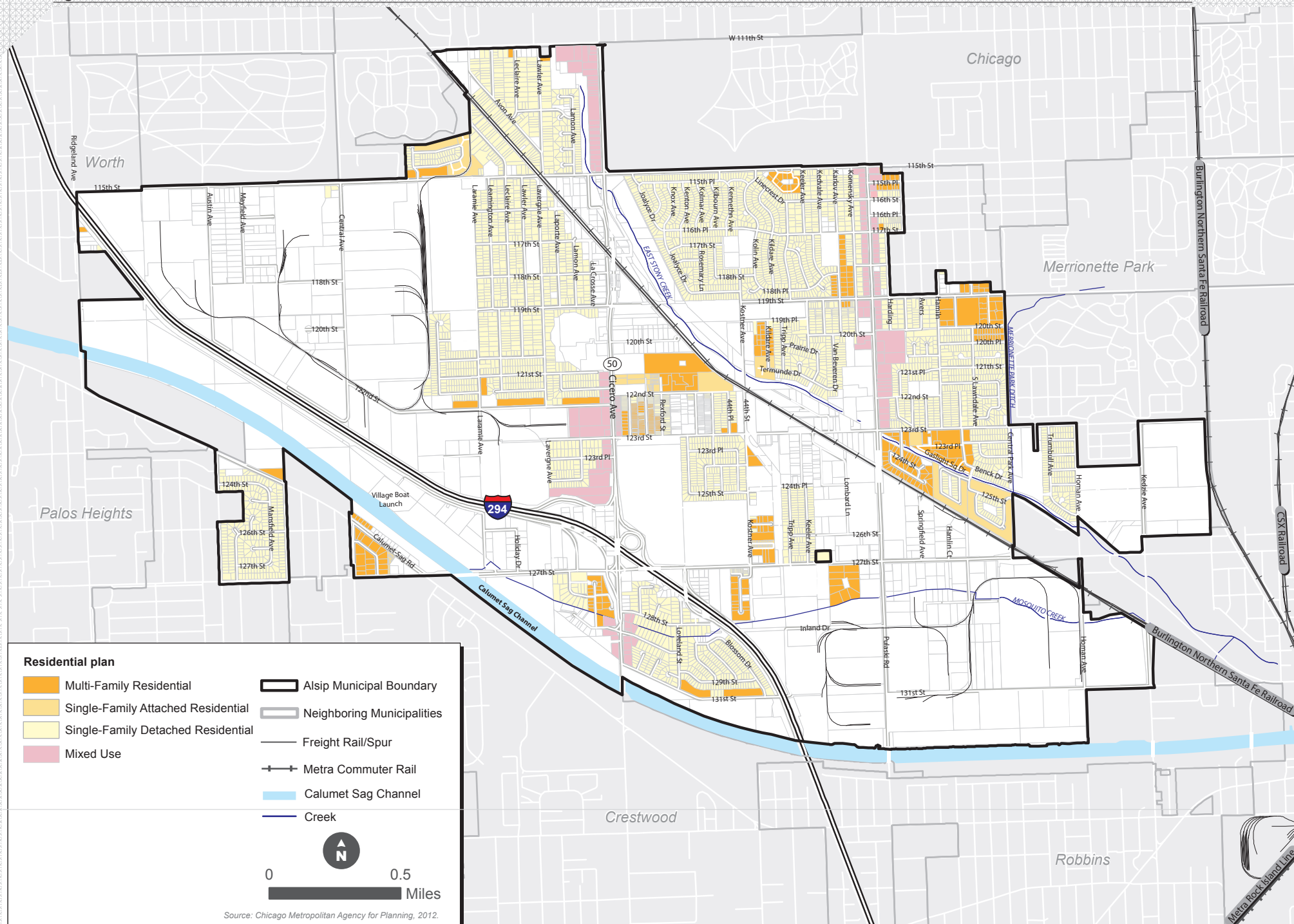
### **Coordinate with regional partners and non-profits**

The Village should continue to participate in sub-regional housing initiatives through the South Suburban Housing Collaborative and Southwest Conference of Mayors. The success of the South Suburban Housing Collaborative and West Cook Housing Collaborative has demonstrated the need for communities to work together in resolving housing concerns. The Village should also actively coordinate with non-profit organizations such as the Preservation Compact that have expertise in neighborhood revitalization and stakeholder (landlords, homeowners, and community based organizations) engagement.



An example of a single-family detached home in an Alsip neighborhood. Photo by CMAP

Figure 4.1. Residential Plan













# Chapter 5

## Commercial

**Goal: The Village of Alsip will continue to foster a positive business environment that will lead to a vibrant ‘Main Street’ environment along key corridor that will attract visitors and enhance the sense of pride among residents.**

### Summary of Existing Conditions

Cicero Avenue and Pulaski Road are the Village’s two main commercial corridors due in part to the high volume of traffic they accommodate, high level of visibility, and convenient access they provide for local and out-of-town shoppers. This has also resulted in an auto-oriented retail environment that is not conducive for transit riders and pedestrians. In addition to the two corridors, retail is also successful at major street intersections that include 127th Street and Pulaski Road, 123rd Street and Pulaski Road, and 123rd Street and Cicero Avenue.

Commercial uses in the corridors and elsewhere in the community consist of one-story retail stores, restaurants, and professional office in stand-alone buildings or in strip centers. Large format retailers such as Home Depot and Menards are also located along the Cicero Avenue corridor to take advantage of higher traffic volumes. There are very few mixed-use buildings that consist of small-scale retail establishments with residential units above or sites that contain mixtures of uses.

### Key Findings

The following are key findings based on an assessment of Alsip’s commercial areas. These key findings have helped shape and inform the recommendations outlined in this section.

Alsip’s commercial sales are significantly influenced by industrial businesses that pay retail sales tax locally. Alsip’s retail sales per capita numbers are higher than the regional average, mostly due to some industrial operations that pay retail sales taxes to the municipality. In 2010, Alsip generated approximately \$292 million in general merchandise retail sales, or more than \$15,000 per resident. The per capita rate of retail sales exceeds that for Cook County (\$10,700) and the region (\$9,700). However, much of the retail sales per capita rate is due to the presence of retailers like Home Depot, Aldi’s and Fox Home Center on the Village’s Cicero Avenue corridor, and Alsip actually lacks a vibrant locally-oriented retail sector.



**Table 5.1. General Merchandise Retail Sales, 2010**

	ALSIP	COOK COUNTY	CHICAGO REGION*
<b>Retail Sales</b>	\$292,047,341	\$55,847,620,847	\$81,925,804,488
<b>Retail sales per capita</b>	\$15,150	\$10,751	\$9,717

Source: CoStar.

Alsip's retail and office spaces have experienced increased vacancies over the past decade. Although the overall commercial space profile (includes retail office, and industrial sectors) of the Village suggests that there has been a decrease in the amount of vacancies, a closer look into the retail and office sector reveals that vacancies have increased. The decreasing vacancy rate for industrial spaces has skewed the overall commercial vacancy rates. The retail space vacancy rate increased from just under eight percent in 2006 to 12 percent in 2011, while the office vacancy rate increased from just over eight percent in 2001 to nearly 22 percent in 2011. These increases are consistent with the experience of most communities during the recent recession.

**Table 5.2. Retail and Office Vacancy Rates, 2000 and 2011 (4Q)**

	Total Retail SF, 2006	2006 Vacancy Rate	Total Retail SF, 2011 (4Q)	2011 (4Q) Vacancy Rate
<b>Retail Vacancy Rate</b>	718,588	7.9%	1,175,500	12.0%
<b>Office Vacancy Rate</b>	135,916	8.2%	135,916	21.8%

Source: CoStar.

There is a lack of marketing efforts to promote Alsip businesses to local and regional shoppers. The Chamber of Commerce has been providing a number of services to its members for the past 40 years, and currently maintains a website with information for businesses. The Chamber offers educational workshops to businesses on a regular basis and works to attract and retain business in Alsip. However, stakeholders have expressed a need for greater staff resources to be able to more effectively market businesses to and reach out to key local and regional investors.

Alsip businesses are unable to cater to needs of the vast daytime population in the Village. According to the Chamber of Commerce, Alsip is home to over 850 businesses that include corporations such as Coca Cola, Griffith Laboratories International Headquarters, Crown Cork and Seal Inc., and Landis Plastics. These industrial businesses employ workers in large numbers, with more than 35 businesses employing more than 100 employees, only 5 percent of whom live in Alsip. This huge influx of employees and visitors on a daily basis to the Village more than doubles its resident population to nearly 40,000 people. This displays a huge opportunity for the Village's retail sector, but one that is currently missed due to the community's lack of locally-oriented retail.

## Recommended Strategies

### Near Term (1-3 Years)

#### **Expand the Cicero Avenue TIF to 123rd Street**

The Cicero Avenue TIF district has received interest from developers in the past few years. The site is slated to be a mixed-use development project that will include a hotel and supportive retail uses. The Village is considering modifying the TIF District to extend further north up to 123rd Street. This would make the site more lucrative for interested developers and improve development potential. The Village should initiate the process to eliminate the existing TIF and create a new expanded TIF for a renewed term of 23 years. This would also buy the Village additional time to revitalize the area in a manner aligned with its vision.

#### **Maintain and market inventory of vacant commercial parcels**

In order to effectively market available sites, as well as to identify sites that could be assembled for redevelopment, the Village and Chamber of Commerce should work closely with Cook County Assessor's office and the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development to create and maintain a database of vacant commercial properties. ComEd might be another organization that the Chamber should reach out to as they maintain and have historically shared Costar data with municipalities.

The parcels could be advertised on the Chamber of Commerce and Village websites. The parcel records will help the Village identify potential sites for redevelopment as well as allow the Chamber and Village market them effectively to potential developers.

The database should be updated regularly by the Chamber in coordination with the Village. In order to inventory businesses and vacancies along specific corridors such as Pulaski Road, the Village should investigate the use of CMAP's Full Circle community mapping tool. The web-based tool was developed by CMAP to collect real-time data at the block, parcel, and business level to support a variety of planning purposes. It utilizes wireless hand-held devices operated by individuals on the field to input data in real-time. Using this tool, the Village would be able to create an accurate map of businesses along Pulaski Road corridor. This in turn will help identify specific areas for redevelopment, consolidation, and improvements.

From a marketing perspective, commercial redevelopment efforts in Alsip would receive a significant boost by the partnership of the Village, Chamber of Commerce, Park District and Alsip Industrial Association (AIA) to create a collaborative marketing strategy for specific sites and/or developments. The benefits of marketing collaboratively are multifarious. They would allow the Village to reach a much larger volume of investors and greater range of demographics, therefore improving their visibility in the region. Increased marketing would eventually benefit the Chamber, Park District, and Industrial Association as more businesses will bring more people that will use more of the services provided by the Village, boosting revenues for all.

### **Boost municipal capacity**

The current capacity at the municipal level is limited. Alsip currently does not have a community development professional to lead several of the initiatives proposed in the Comprehensive Plan and therefore depends on the support of a variety of individuals including the Mayor's office to accomplish necessary tasks. In order to accomplish the aforementioned data collection and coordination efforts, it is critical for the Village to establish a community development department that will lead implementation of the overall Plan as well as specific components. The Village should consider hire personnel with working knowledge of municipal planning as well as technical aspects of planning such as GIS, preferably in the greater Chicago region.

Similarly, in order to support an effective marketing campaign for commercial development as well as boost economic activity in the Village, the Chamber of Commerce should consider boosting their capacity by hiring a professional with considerable marketing experience to assist ongoing efforts. The dedicated staff person would attend marketing events in the region and nationwide such as International Convention of

Shopping Centers (ICSC), and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) conference.

### **Update the zoning ordinance to support high quality redevelopment**

The mixed use corridors identified in the future land use map are envisioned as pedestrian-oriented areas that contain a mix of uses and higher development densities. Similar, the commercial districts are envisioned as attractive developments that are pedestrian and transit-friendly.

For both these districts, it is critical to move forward with the planned revision of the zoning ordinance to clearly communicate development expectations to potential business owners and developers, while limiting impediments to growth. The Pulaski Road Corridor Study contains recommended zoning modifications to allow for desirable commercial redevelopment. Recommendations are provided for allowed uses, site requirements, building requirements, parking, stormwater, and signage. These recommendations should be referred to in redrafting the zoning ordinance for commercial districts. The ordinance should also be designed to permit and encourage development that meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) standards. LEED-ND standards support the development and retrofit of neighborhoods that create positive change by integrating smart location choice, strong neighborhood design, and green infrastructure and buildings.

## **Mid-Term (4-7 Years)**

### **Adopt a vacant storefront ordinance**

There are a number of vacant commercial properties that have gone into a state of disrepair. The Village should adopt an ordinance for vacant and underutilized properties that requires landlords to install some form of decorative display to obstruct direct view into the first floor of vacant properties within 60 days of the tenant vacating the premises. Potential options for screening could include:

- Decorative paper applied to the window
- Public art displays
- Art and historic imagery displays
- Seasonal decorations

The display may be utilized by local businesses to promote their merchandise as long as they are not large advertisements or signage. The ordinance should provide illustrative examples of acceptable and unacceptable types of displays. The Village of Blue Island adopted a similar ordinance in 2012 and could be referred to as an example by Alsip officials.

#### **Create education opportunities for Village officials and stakeholders**

Effective implementation of the Village's Comprehensive Plan and supporting regulatory documents such as the zoning ordinance will require education. The Village should coordinate with CMAP to organize training programs to better educate the community and its elected officials. Examples of programs that would be beneficial include:

- **Planning and Zoning Commission training:** Offered through the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association (ILAPA), this program is conducted by planning professionals to help educate planning and zoning commissioners. The training is currently provided at no cost to the municipality and has been conducted at several locations throughout the State. The workshop would be designed to educate and inform the Alsip Planning and Zoning Commissioners about the importance of their work and the breadth of their responsibilities.
- **Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program:** This program is administered by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). US EPA staff work in collaboration with four non-profit organizations to help government officials understand tools that could help stimulate growth and development in their community. The one-day workshop is open to the public as well.
- **Business owners' meetings via Chamber of Commerce:** The Chamber of Commerce should reach out to non-profit organizations such as Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) and Metropolitan Preservation Council (MPC) to help business owners better understand various aspects of commercial revitalization.

### **Ongoing/ Long-Term (8-10 Years)**

#### **Encourage business owners to undertake low-cost improvements**

The Village should work with existing businesses and the Chamber of Commerce to identify programs to assist businesses in completing improvements. Because many older businesses that are in need of improved maintenance and upkeep are located in highly

visible locations along key corridors, the Village should work to improve their appearance. The Village should consider the creation of a Façade and Site Improvement Program. The intent of such a program would be to improve the appearance of the façades, the street-facing exteriors of a building, of commercial buildings located throughout the Village. Eligible improvements may include improvements that contribute to the visual enhancement of the property as viewed from the public right-of-way. Examples include painting, new lighting, new storefront windows, installation of awnings, and new parking lot screening/trees.

#### **Focus 'Main Street' commercial redevelopment along Pulaski Road corridor**

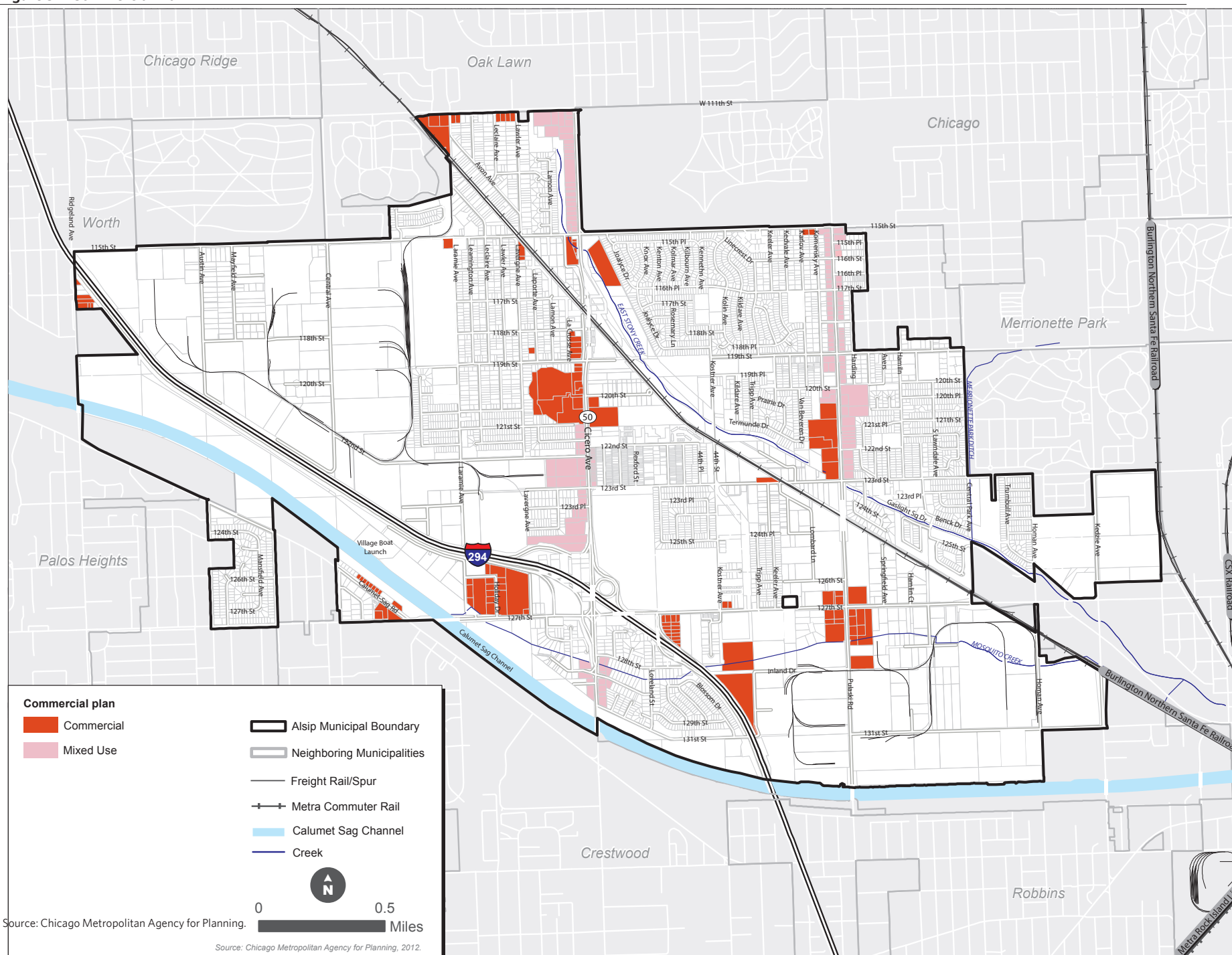
The Village and Chamber of Commerce should work together to implement the vision for Pulaski Road to become a "Main Street". The agencies should evaluate redevelopment and consolidation potential specifically within the Pulaski Road corridor based on a variety of parameters including, but not limited to:

- Size of parcel
- Location of parcel
- Land use and condition of adjacent parcels
- Site remediation costs
- Parcels under single or multiple ownership
- Recommendations of the 2007 Pulaski Road Corridor Study

This analysis will allow the Village to prioritize specific sites within the Pulaski Road corridor for redevelopment and if required, consolidation. In the near-term, Pulaski Road corridor should be the focus of commercial revitalization efforts given its existing assets, ongoing redevelopment initiatives including the new library and retail stores, and a clearly defined vision already in place to help guide Village officials.



Figure 5.1. Commercial Plan







# Chapter 6

## Industrial

**Goal: The Village of Alsip will implement policies and programs that allow its industrial sector to flourish and expand within the community, create new jobs for the local populace, and support growth in other sectors of the Village's economy.**

### Summary of Existing Conditions

Based on a number of measurements that include amount of land coverage, size of labor force, and revenue generated, it is safe to conclude that Alsip's industrial areas are a critically important part of the community. Industrial businesses have spearheaded the community's economic growth and prosperity for the past several decades and continue to do so. Approximately 30percent of the Village's land cover is utilized by industries that take advantage of the Village's easy access to the interstate system and rail lines to transport raw materials and distribute finished goods in a timely and cost-effective manner. Industrial buildings are clustered together in two primary areas of the community, both along Cicero Avenue: one to the northwest and the second to the southeast. These locations allow businesses easy access to Interstate 294 via the Cicero Avenue access ramp and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad via several spur lines.

#### Key Findings

The following are key findings based on an assessment of Alsip's industrial areas. These

key findings have helped shape and inform the recommendations outlined in this section.

Alsip's industrial infrastructure is aging and lacking in maintenance. According to business owners and Village officials, upgrading the existing stormwater and roadway infrastructure will be critical in ensuring the success of Alsip's industrial sector. Although the Village has proactively undertaken certain stormwater repairs, funding limitations have restricted their capability and resulted in areas with poor physical conditions. As identified in the existing conditions analysis, the stormwater and sewer system has not been upgraded in several decades. There are certain areas of the community where this has led to flooding and these areas need to be prioritized for infrastructure upgrades. The Village's Pavement Management Program, the primary mechanism for maintenance of local streets, is in need of new funding sources to effectively serve its function. The program is currently funded through a combination of Build America Bonds, Gas Tax, and Motor Fuel Tax.

The industrial sector has continued to grow at a steady rate over the past decade. The Village has approximately 14.3 million square feet of commercial space, with the large majority of that (13.2 million square feet) being industrial space (92 percent of the total).



While retail and office spaces have experienced increased vacancies, a low industrial space vacancy rate dominates Alsip’s commercial space profile.

Table 6.1: Industrial Real Estate Square Footage and Vacancy by Type, 2011 4Q

	Alsip		Near South Cook Submarket*		Region**	
	Total RBA	Vacancy Rate	Total RBA	Vacancy Rate	Total RBA	Vacancy Rate
Industrial	13,159,473	8.3%	81,446,150	10.5%	1,117,236,680	11.1%
Total	14,277,539	8.8%	112,982,778	10.2%	2,073,482,286	11.3%

Source: CMAP Analysis of CoStar data

\* Submarket includes Alsip, Summitt, Orland Park, Blue Island, Merrionette Park, Chicago Ridge, Oak Forest, South Holland as well as other communities

\*\* CoStar’s Chicago Region includes portions of northwest Indiana and southwest Wisconsin

The rebounding of the manufacturing sector has buoyed the Village. The vacancy rate for industrial space was nearly 10 percent in 2001 but dropped to eight percent by 2011, all while adding more than 450,000 square feet of industrial space during that time.

Table 6.2: Change in Industrial Vacancy Rates, 2001 and 2011 (4Q)

	Total Industrial SF, 2001	2001 Vacancy Rate	Total Industrial SF, 2011 (4Q)	2011 (4Q) Vacancy Rate
Industrial Vacancy Rate in Alsip	12,704,191	9.9%	13,159,473	8.3%

Source: CoStar.

According to the Chamber of Commerce, the daily influx of employees to industrial businesses contributes to doubling of the Village’s daytime population. The major employment sectors in Alsip include manufacturing, wholesale trade, transportation, warehousing, and the administrative functions that support them. With nearly 66 percent of its jobs in the above sectors, the Village has more than twice as many manufacturing, wholesale trade, transportation and administrative jobs on a percentage basis as the County (30 percent of County jobs) and the region (30 percent).



The Village should promote the use of rail use in its industrial areas. Photo by CMAP

**Table 6.3: Employment of Workers by Industry Sector, 2011**

	Alsip Count	Alsip Percent	County Percent	Regional Percent
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>3,969</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	<b>2,222</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
<b>Administration &amp; Support, Waste Management and Remediation</b>	<b>1,490</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>
<b>Retail Trade</b>	<b>1,234</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
<b>Transportation and Warehousing</b>	<b>1,169</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>
<b>Construction</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>
<b>Health Care and Social Assistance</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>
<b>Accommodation and Food Services</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
<b>Other Services (excluding Public Admin.)</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
<b>Professional, Scientific, and Tech. Services</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
<b>Information</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>
<b>Finance and Insurance</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
<b>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Educational Services</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
<b>Management of Companies and Enterprises</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,495</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security

Industrial properties account for nearly half of all property value in Alsip. According to

data from the Illinois Department of Revenue, 49 percent of Alsip's total property value came from industrial properties in the Village. Additionally, the unique position Alsip enjoys as an industrial suburb is further illustrated in the EAV per capita table below.

**Table 6.4: Alsip Industrial Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) and EAV per capita, 2008**

Property Type	Estimated EAV	EAV PER CAPITA		
		Alsip	Cook County	Region
<b>Industrial EAV</b>	<b>\$393,569,332</b>	<b>\$20,207</b>	<b>\$4,019</b>	<b>\$3,430</b>
<b>Total EAV</b>	<b>\$801,937,100</b>	<b>\$41,174</b>	<b>\$33,427</b>	<b>\$35,357</b>

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue.

The general appearance of older industrial properties and rights-of-way in industrial areas is uninviting. A lack of aesthetically appealing streetscape and buildings in the industrial and commercial areas has resulted in a negative image of the community especially due to the fact that many of the areas are located along the Village's primary arterials. At the same time, vacant and underutilized properties within the industrial areas are, according to business owners, negatively impacting real estate values for neighboring properties. Improving the visual character of industrial areas has been identified as one of the foremost priorities of Village stakeholders.

# Recommended Strategies

## Infrastructure Improvements

### *Near-Term (1-3 Years)*

#### **Coordinate efforts between Village and industrial businesses to support the Pavement Management Program**

The Public Works Department has created and successfully runs a multi-year program that establishes guidelines, with the Board's approval, for street maintenance and repair. The program is only applicable for local streets under the Village's jurisdiction, not for those under State jurisdiction that include arterials such as Pulaski Road and Cicero Avenue. A combination of motor fuels tax (MFT) and general obligation bonds fund the program currently. The Public Works Department should continue to implement this program while identifying new sources of funding to narrow the gap between required and available funds, e.g. within the industrial areas, the Public Works Department should work with the AIA to create a cost sharing agreement for roads that are frequently utilized by trucks serving industrial businesses.

#### **Incorporate stormwater best management practices in ordinances**

During the analysis of existing conditions, Village officials acknowledged the need for creating an ordinance that would reduce stormwater runoff from new and existing developments. Within the industrial areas, businesses have addressed this issue by creating detention and retention ponds on individual sites. While this has been effective to a certain extent, there is a wide array of innovative options the Village should continue to explore. The Village should adopt an ordinance to control stormwater run-off in developed and open areas. The stormwater ordinance should stipulate measures to control stormwater run-off for new developments and existing developments looking to expand. The Village should either create a stormwater ordinance or adopt the Cook County stormwater ordinance into the Village's municipal code. Examples of stormwater ordinances that have been successful in addressing stormwater run-off using innovative measures are the Village of Antioch Stormwater Management Plan and the Village of Warrenville Stormwater Management and Flood Plain Ordinance.

#### **Create an Industrial Revitalization Plan**

The AIA should undertake a comprehensive industrial revitalization plan that would outline solutions for present-day issues and lay out a blueprint for the sector's sustainable growth moving forward. As identified during the existing conditions analysis, industrial businesses are a major contributor to Alsip's economic well-being. However, there exist a number of challenges that need to be addressed in the near term to make sure businesses continue to invest and grow within the Village.

The Industrial Revitalization Plan should address the functional obsolescence that occurs with aging infrastructure and buildings, outdated technology, smaller size of buildings and lots that do not meet the needs of modern day industries, and rights-of-way adjustments to support freight needs. The Plan should contain, but not be limited to, the following major components:

- **Market Analysis:** understand existing business mix, gaps in the market, and economic strengths to build upon.
- **Transportation:** address traffic congestion, linkages throughout, and truck maneuverability.
- **Land Use and Urban Design:** address landscape enhancements for public and private property, off street parking, loading areas, and wayfinding. This will be one of the most important components of the Plan, given the overwhelming desire from stakeholders for aesthetic improvements to the physical environment.
- **Site-specific recommendations:** identify changes to private properties in order to remain competitive in current market. This element should focus on vacant, underutilized, and small lots that could be consolidated.
- **Implementation:** include cost estimates associated with recommended improvements, phasing plan to undertake improvements, and methods of funding the various elements of the Plan.

#### **Align Capital Improvement Program (CIP) with recommendations of Industrial Revitalization Plan**

Given the current economic constraints, Village officials have been prudent in allocating funds to capital expenditures that are needed to maintain the current level of services.



As the general economy of the Village continues to improve, the Village should identify and incorporate elements identified within the Industrial Revitalization Plan into their Capital Improvement Program. The AIA should work closely with the Public Works Department, Village's Finance Director, Board of Trustees, and Mayor's office throughout the creation of the Industrial Revitalization Plan, specifically the implementation strategy, in order to ensure that there is agreement on funding mechanisms identified for implementation.

## Mid-Term (4-7 Years)

### **Undertake a phased upgrade of stormwater/sewer/water main system**

Alsip's sub-surface infrastructure is in need of critical upgrades. Two of the priority areas are the Mather and Avon Avenue neighborhoods north of 115th Street. Both these streets should be included in the first phase of storm water system upgrades in order to prevent further flooding of single-family homes.

The recommended methods to fund this project include Village-issued general obligation bonds, Special Service Area (SSA) revenue, and grants through the State's Business Development Public Infrastructure Program (BDPIP).

**General Obligation Bonds:** As of 2012, the Village has initiated the process to create a bond program to fund storm sewer improvements. Given the Village's AA bond rating, it should be relatively easy for the Village to issue taxable Build America Bonds, similar to the ones used to fund street improvements as part of the Village's Pavement Management Program.

**Special Service Areas (SSA):** These have been created successfully in the past in the Village to finance infrastructure upgrades. The Village should work closely with the AIA to evaluate the feasibility of creating additional special service areas in areas of need. As a first step, the Village should conduct workshops and informational sessions with business owners to explain the need and benefits of the program.

**Business Development Public Infrastructure Program (BDPIP):** The BDPIP program is administered through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The grant program is designed to help communities undertake major infrastructure projects that will help businesses in the community.

## Ongoing/Long-Term (8-10 Years)

### **Support Cook County tax reform**

Cook County is the only county in the State that assesses commercial and industrial properties at a higher percentage of market value than residential properties. The most significant impact of this arrangement in Cook County is to shift the property tax burden toward commercial and industrial businesses. The disparity in this taxation across counties in the Chicago region has partially contributed to businesses relocating out of Alsip and into other counties. Furthermore, it impedes broader development goals for the region as a whole, as some businesses choose to relocate completely outside of the Chicago region or the State to avoid the higher tax burden.

The Village of Alsip's elected leadership should participate in efforts to reform the residential and commercial tax structure in Cook County. This includes supporting policies that phase out the discontinuity in taxation across the region over a period of years, allowing residential taxpayers in Cook County to adjust to their increased burden over time, as they become aligned with the residential taxation found in other counties across the region. Supporting reforms to Cook County's classification system may help boost economic development in the County by encouraging businesses to locate on the abundance of vacant or underutilized commercial and industrial properties in communities like Alsip. This, in turn, could improve the economic vitality of the entire region.

### **Pursue coordinated investments**

Communities nationwide are realizing the benefits of working with their neighbors to resolve common issues that cross municipal borders, e.g., housing, transportation, transit, infrastructure, and workforce development. Alsip has successfully worked with other south suburban and south west suburban communities on transportation and land use projects in the past and should continue to reach across its borders to work on such initiatives. Specifically to support industrial growth, the Village needs to create a robust and educated workforce. The Village's leadership should work with non-profit organizations such as the Chicago Jobs Council to identify workforce development services available to Alsip residents. The Village should also coordinate with educational organizations such as Moraine Valley Community College to create education and training program in collaboration with Alsip's industrial businesses, allowing them to hire locally.



Figure 6.1. Areas Prone to Flooding





# Physical Growth and Development

## Near-Term (1-3 Years)

### Update zoning ordinance

Upon completion of the Alsip Industrial Revitalization Plan, the Village should use the land use and development section as a guiding document to update the industrial districts within the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance update should include design standards to regulate the quality of industrial development in the community. Design standards contained in the Industrial Revitalization Plan should be utilized for this purpose. Elements to be addressed include:

- **Site Design:** location of building, parking, loading areas, setbacks, sidewalks, and landscaping.
- **Building Design:** new construction as well as renovation of existing facades including building scale, proportions, and building heights
- **Signage:** location of signs, size, materials, and overall character.

The ordinance should be designed to permit and encourage development that meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-New Construction (LEED-NC) and LEED-Existing Building (LEED-EB) standards. The LEED-NC and LEED-EB Rating System integrate the principles of smart growth, urbanism, and green building design at the site level. Among other things, LEED will help the Village establish standards for water conservation, energy efficiency, and other green infrastructure to support sustainable industrial development.

### Incorporate energy efficient retrofits in existing buildings

Innovation is key for any business to succeed in the current economic climate. For industrial businesses, creating innovative energy efficiency programs is a strategy that will help cut costs significantly as well as improve marketability. The Village should consider providing resources to businesses to improve energy efficiency in existing buildings. In terms of direct impact, the U.S. Green Building Council estimates that energy efficient retrofits will allow businesses to save between 10% and 50% savings of their energy costs.

A number of industrial buildings in Alsip were built several decades ago. Due to this, there are a number of energy efficiency improvements that could help reduce energy consumption and costs. The Village should consider using existing programs such as Energy Impact Illinois to assist building owners in obtaining professional energy audits. Cost of retrofits could vary depending on the type and scale of improvement. The Energy Impact Illinois program is the joint effort of various public and private agencies aimed at helping individuals reduce energy consumption to make their homes, neighborhoods, and communities a better place. The program is meant for homeowners, businesses, and non-profit organizations looking to conserve energy while also reducing costs in the long-term. Through the program, the aforementioned groups are provided with information, financial mechanisms, and workforce resources to help save energy. A few of the incentive programs available to Alsip businesses include:

- Nicor Gas Economic Development Program
- Large-Customer Energy Analysis Program
- ComED Lighting Projects
- Nicor Custom Incentive Program

There are several additional programs that the Village and businesses can learn about through the program website at [www.energyimpactillinois.gov/waystosave/business](http://www.energyimpactillinois.gov/waystosave/business). The AIA should work closely with the Village and business owners to create an energy efficiency retrofit program that encourages business owners to undertake comprehensive measures in a proactive manner. The primary role of the Village and AIA in this program would be to act as a resource board for businesses seeking information on the various components of the program including auditing, funding, and implementation.

The Village could utilize the Energy Impact Illinois program to jumpstart the retrofit activity. Green building programs such as those created by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) feature a rating system (LEED) that measures the degree of energy efficiency achieved. To encourage this practice, the Village should evaluate offering incentives such as fast track permitting, property tax credits, and fee waivers to industrial businesses that meet the criteria established in the LEED-NC rating system.



## Mid-Term (4-7 Years)

### Create incentives to encourage rehabilitation of older properties/sites

The quality and speed of physical improvements to private property as well as public rights-of-way will depend a great deal on the funds available. To help with the rehabilitation of older properties, the Village currently operates two programs that offer financial incentives to businesses located in certain areas of the community. These programs should be continued while new ones identified to spur additional investment and rehabilitate existing facilities. The existing programs to be continued are the Cal-Sag Enterprise Zone and Special Service Area.

For the purpose of undertaking site work that include green infrastructure (e.g. permeable pavers, bio-swales, trees and native plantings) and building façade improvements, the Village should consider the following options:

- **Industrial revolving loan fund:** this program could offer a certain percentage or up to a fixed amount, whichever is lower for projects that create or retain jobs. Applicants would need to provide a detailed plan to the Village and the Village would work with a lender to negotiate a low fixed interest rate loan for the business. This program would be administered through the Village's Finance Department.
- **Façade improvement grant:** This program would focus on improvements to the facades of older industrial properties with the goal of improving building appearance and bringing older sign, parking, and landscaping into conformance with new standards as per the revised zoning ordinance. The program would provide a 50/50 matching grant up to a certain amount. The Village of Skokie created a similar program for its Southeast Industrial Area and approximately 18 facades have been completed thus far.

## Ongoing/Long-Term (8-10 Years)

### Maintain and market inventory of vacant industrial parcels

Collection and analysis of data related to industrial properties is important for two reasons: making Village officials aware of the current health of the industrial economy, and marketing key strengths and opportunities available to outside investors.

The Village should obtain records of vacant industrial parcels through the Cook County tax assessor's office. This information should be field verified and mapped by the

Chamber of Commerce. Parcels could be classified into categories based on size (less than one acre, greater than one acre), type of business (warehousing, manufacturing, and distribution) or other parameters that the Chamber of Commerce may deem appropriate. The resulting database of parcel records will help the Village and Chamber identify potential sites for redevelopment, as well as market them effectively to potential developers and existing businesses looking to expand their facilities.

This inventory should be advertised on the websites of the Chamber of Commerce, Village of Alsip, and AIA. Information for parcels and/or buildings should include location, Parcel Identification Number (PIN) number, size of parcel, size of building, condition of building, age of building, current zoning, property taxes, and photos of the property. Once the data is collected, proactive marketing will play a vital role. In order to promote the Village's industrial assets and infrastructure, Village officials should continue to work closely with the Alsip Chamber of Commerce and AIA. The three entities should work together not only to create materials and access different media outlets, but also in identifying regional partners to collaborate with and effectively reach out to. The Village should also coordinate with the Cook County GIS department for additional data needs and Cook County Bureau of Economic Development for marketing on the Bureau's website.

This activity could be funded by the Village or Alsip Chamber of Commerce within either organization's annual budget. Funds would be utilized to hire a GIS technician or consultant to create an inventory of vacant and underutilized parcels, field verify the information, and create a map.

### Dedicate staff to educate and empower the Alsip business community

In order to effectively implement the changes recommended in the Comprehensive Plan, education is a key component. It is important for the Village to communicate the benefits of the various programs proposed in the Comprehensive Plan to business owners and their employees. The AIA and Chamber of Commerce will act as an essential conduit in achieving this goal.

The Village should consider hiring an individual with knowledge of planning to work closely with the Chamber and AIA and discuss components of the Plan's recommendations with local businesses. Information can be disseminated at monthly meetings or annual events. The individual should also reach out to businesses directly in an attempt to help with implementation, e.g. meeting with a specific business owner to

explain the details of the Energy Impact Illinois program and how the specific business could benefit from it, connecting the business owner with the program coordinator and facilitating the discussion.

This strategy will play a key role in the success of the Plan. Hiring dedicated staff to implement the Plan's recommendations will ensure that the document does not sit on a shelf, moves forward in a timely fashion, and stays consistent with the community's set goals.



Examples of industrial areas and businesses in Alsip. Photos by CMAP













# Chapter 7

## Mobility

**Goal: The Village of Alsip will provide each resident, business, and visitor with a viable option to choose among multiple modes of transportation that enable them to safely and efficiently navigate the community and connect to regional transportation systems.**

### Summary of Existing Conditions

Alsip's transportation network has been both a great asset and constricting liability for the community's residents and businesses. As an asset, the Village is well-positioned to take advantage of the Chicago region's transportation infrastructure. The roadway network including I-294, Cicero Avenue (IL Route 50), Cicero Avenue/I-294 interchange, and Pulaski Road provide the Village with accessibility to major employment centers, hospitals, universities, parks, and major airports such as Midway International Airport and O'Hare International Airport. Industrial businesses have thrived in this environment which has allowed them to transport goods in and out of their facilities in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The same ease of regional access has also been detrimental to cohesive and safe movement locally. High volume and high speed traffic has discouraged pedestrian activity along commercial corridors while the extensive roadway infrastructure has divided the Village into smaller isolated sections. The Village has proactively undertaken initiatives to help resolve some of these local issues and their continued implementation will be critical in the upcoming years.

### Key Findings

The following are key findings based on an assessment of Alsip's transportation and circulation network. These key findings have helped shape and inform the recommendations outlined in this section.

Alsip is divided by a number of major roadway, waterway, and railroad rights-of-way that crisscross the community. With major north-south arterials like Pulaski Road and Cicero Avenue cutting through the residential neighborhoods, there is a lack of cohesiveness and convenient access between local destinations. Similarly, I-294, the Calumet-Sag Channel, and BNSF freight railroad cut diagonally through the community, making it difficult to access neighborhoods in a safe and efficient manner.

One specific example of this disconnect is Cicero Avenue that creates an east-west divide in the Village. With an average annual daily traffic (AADT) count of approximately 40,000 vehicles the north-south corridor is the busiest transportation corridor in the Village (not including I-294). Pulaski Road is the next busiest with approximately 20,000 AADT. Although this is beneficial from an economic standpoint for large retailers located along the corridor, it has created a negative social impact by dividing neighborhoods to the



east and west. A lack of safe connections across Cicero Avenue for pedestrian, bikes, and in some cases vehicles, has resulted in residential neighborhoods on either side of the corridor being isolated, with limited community interaction to a certain extent.

The large volume of truck traffic operating on local roadways and passing through the community has been detrimental to pedestrian safety and overall community character. Given the fact that Alsip’s industrial sector is the key driver of the Village’s overall economy, the Village’s leadership has continually struggled to balance the need for businesses to move their goods in and out of the community efficiently with the need for safer and more inviting streets for residents and visitors. Residents expressed the need for regulating truck movement such that it does not conflict with vehicular traffic and lead to traffic congestion in the future. Also, the unregulated movement of trucks through the community also discourages bicycle and pedestrian movement due to safety concerns.

There is a lack of safe and convenient bike-pedestrian connections in the community. Cicero Avenue and Pulaski Road are Alsip’s main commercial corridors, drawing in heavy traffic that supports retail businesses. The high volume and high speed of traffic, numerous entry and exit points that break sidewalk continuity and decrease safety, and unattractive streetscape character makes pedestrian use of the street unpleasant. Similar challenges exist when it comes to developing a bike network. High-volume traffic on arterials such as Cicero Avenue, Pulaski Road, and 127th Street, discourage residents from traveling in and across town by bicycle. The Village has undertaken improvements to the Pulaski Road corridor including intersection improvements and sidewalk extensions. The recently completed Pulaski Road Corridor Study and Park District Bicycle Plan outline recommendations to aid Alsip in becoming a multi-modal community. When making the improvements recommended in Comprehensive Plan, it is important for Alsip to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make infrastructure and public facilities accessible to all.

Alsip’s public transportation system does not adequately serve the current needs of residents and employees. At present, two CTA bus routes and three Pace routes provide bus service to the Village. The highest ridership Pace route serving Alsip is Pace Route 383, which connects to Midway Airport on the north (including connections to the CTA Orange Line) and Oak Forest Hospital on the south, using Cicero Avenue for most of its route.

**Table 7.1: Pace Route Ridership\*, 2010**

Bus Route	Weekday Ridership	Saturday Ridership	Sunday Ridership
<b>Pace Bus 383 South Cicero</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Pace Bus 385 87th / 111th / 127th</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Pace Bus 877 South Suburban Oakbrook Limited</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>CTA Bus 52A South Kedzie</b>	<b>4,722</b>	<b>2,203</b>	<b>1,390</b>
<b>CTA Bus 53A South Pulaski</b>	<b>8,120</b>	<b>3,815</b>	<b>2,306</b>

Source: Regional Transportation Authority Mapping and Statistics (RTAMS)

\* Ridership is averaged over the course of the year

While Metra Commuter lines do not travel through Alsip, there are six stations within 5 miles of the village in neighboring communities. There are however no public transportation connections from the Village to any of the Metra stations at this point. Employees that use public transportation to reach the seven industrial parks in Alsip need better public transit connections. Pace’s bus service and vanpool programs do not reach within two miles of the industrial cores in Alsip, making it a challenge for workers without cars to get to their place of employment. An analysis of sidewalk from public transit stops to workplaces also revealed gaps that would need to be filled in order to increase access and transportation options for employees working in Alsip.

The Village has undertaken several initiatives aimed at improving mobility. The Pulaski Road Corridor Study completed in 2008 presents a vision of a new “Main Street” along

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.



Pulaski Road from 115th Street to 123rd Street. The Cicero Avenue Corridor Plan is a programmed initiative to be undertaken through the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). The Plan will develop strategies to increase transit usage along Cicero Avenue from Midway Airport in Chicago on the north to I-294 in Alsip on the south. The study will address mobility and accessibility through a comprehensive transportation and transit analysis. The Alsip Park District Bicycle Plan was completed in 2009 and contains recommendations to provide safer, more convenient, and more enjoyable bicycle connections for Alsip's residents to park facilities and the planned Calumet-Sag Trail.

## Recommended Strategies

### Freight Network

#### Near-Term (1-3 years)

##### **Modernize municipal truck ordinance and overall traffic ordinance**

The Village of Alsip's truck ordinance is outdated and in need of modernization. A well written truck ordinance establishes the rules for truck routes, truck restrictions, truck permits, as well as the designation of those streets. Several communities have created truck ordinances that contain several of the aforementioned elements in their truck ordinance. Truck ordinances the Village's Engineering Department should review as case studies include those created by the City of Aurora, Village of Downers Grove, City of Elgin, and City of Geneva.

##### **Identify truck parking areas /waiting areas to alleviate peak hour traffic volumes**

Alsip should consider ways to facilitate truck parking near businesses as truckers wait to load and unload goods and materials. This would also contribute to fewer traffic conflicts between trucks and cars competing for right-of-way during peak hours. Village officials should work with Alsip industrial businesses and MWRD to identify potential sites for truck parking. The opportunity to create a joint truck parking area should also be explored with neighboring Palos Heights and Blue Island. Another strategy to mitigate traffic conflicts is to encourage businesses to establish off-peak delivery and pickup windows so trucks are not traveling in peak periods.

#### Mid-Term (4-7 years)

##### **Establish Class II truck routes in coordination with IDOT and Cook County**

Currently, there are no locally designated Class II truck routes in Alsip. IDOT has designated Illinois Route 50 (Cicero Ave), Illinois Route 83 (127th Street), and 127th Street east of Cicero Avenue as designated Class II Truck Routes. As per IDOT regulations, if the Village desires to operate full-length 53' domestic trailers on a street that is more than one mile travel-distance from the I-294/Cicero Avenue interchange, that street is required to be a locally-designated Class II truck route. As an initial step, the Village Engineer should undertake an assessment of potential routes for Class II designation. The proposed routes could include roads that are under the jurisdiction of IDOT and/or Cook County. In such cases, the Village will need to coordinate with the relevant jurisdictional agency. IDOT routes within Alsip include:

- 111th Street,
- 115th Street east of Cicero Avenue
- Pulaski Road north of 127th Street

County routes include:

- Ridgeland Avenue,
- 115th Street west of Cicero Avenue
- Central Avenue north of 115th Street
- 119th east of Pulaski Rd
- 123rd east of Cicero Avenue
- Pulaski Rd south of 127th

In order to help Village officials identify truck routes for Class II designation, the following guiding guidelines should be referenced:

- Roadway functional classification – higher classification roads should be selected from among alternative routes to a site.



- Pavement and bridge conditions and postings: assure that no weight limits preclude designation as a truck route.
- Vertical clearances: Generally, designated class II truck routes should not have vertical clearances less than 14'.
- School areas: should be avoided.
- Minimize residential and recreation area exposure.
- Avoid designated bikeways without some separation (e.g., buffered lanes or an off-street facility).
- Minimize exposure to pedestrian-oriented town centers.

The Village should undertake the truck route classification by ordinance, and use an established procedure to inform IDOT and add the route to IDOT's map for truckers. Procedures are laid out on IDOT's website and can be found at: <http://www.dot.il.gov/blr/manuals/infocirculars/CL2006-06.pdf>

## Ongoing/Long-Term (8-10 years)

### Continue to support 115th Street CREATE project

The CREATE program is a joint venture of the U.S. DOT, State of Illinois, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and national freight railroads to invest in critically needed improvements that increase the efficiency of the Chicago region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for Chicago-area residents.

The program is funding a number of critical improvements aimed at increasing efficiency of the region's commuter and freight rail infrastructure.

Alsip has one CREATE project that is currently in the Phase 1 Preliminary Design phase. This project is looking to construct a grade separator at the intersection of 115th Street and the Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) railroad. The IHB line runs through Alsip and is the one of the region's busiest in terms of number of trains/ day, leading to traffic backups throughout the day. The 115th Street CREATE project will consider eliminating the at-grade crossing of 115th Street and the two Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad (IHB) tracks by creating either an overpass or underpass for vehicles. According to the project factsheet,

there are 13,600 vehicles passing through this crossing currently. 115th Street is a primary arterial roadway and this project will reduce roadway congestion and improve safety at this location. The grade crossing separation will eliminate delay to over 2,800 vehicles daily, resulting in alleviation of over 35,000 annual motorist hours of delay. It will also eliminate the potential for collisions between vehicles and trains.

The Village should continue to monitor the progress of this project and support its implementation. Besides this local project, there are a number of infrastructure projects to be undertaken in neighboring Blue Island and south suburban region that would positively impact the Village of Alsip businesses and residents. The Village should monitor the progress of these projects and support their neighbors in their advocacy efforts. Projects include the I-57/294 Interchange, signalization of Blue Island yard running tracks, and installation of bi-directional computerized traffic control systems on CSX rail line along the Western Avenue Corridor.

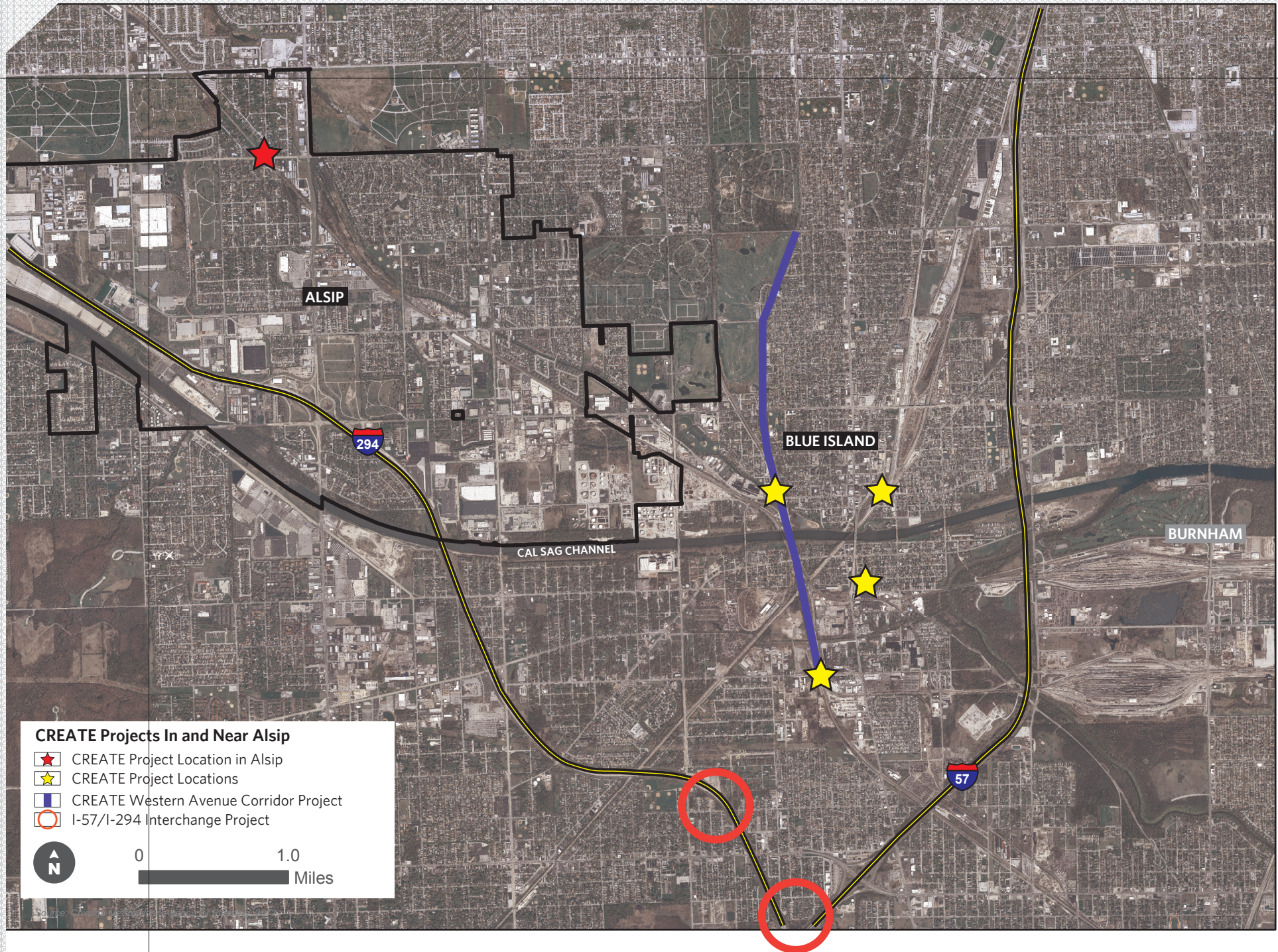
### Support creation of regional freight authority

As described in the GO TO 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan, the Chicago region has not traditionally had a champion to look out for its freight needs. National discussions and decisions about the movement of goods are dominated by port cities and states, partly because the Chicago region's lack of a leading representative, despite being the nation's hub of truck and rail freight. There is a tremendous amount at stake for all municipalities and the movement of freight can have a wide range of potentially positive or negative effects, including economic ones.

One potential solution to the leadership challenge recommended in the GO TO 2040 Plan is the creation of a self-financed Regional Freight Authority. This organization would be designated to establish a balance of interests and a mandate to address needs and lower operating costs by upgrading regional infrastructure.. Alsip should continue to support the creation of this authority and monitor the progress of the initiative.



Figure 7.2: Infrastructure projects to improve freight movement





## Roadway Network

### Near-Term (1-3 years)

#### **Coordinate with partners to enhance the Pavement Management Program**

As mentioned previously in the Industrial Areas chapter, the Village's Public Works Department creates and administers a Pavement Management Program to help keep local Alsip streets in good working condition at all times. This program is currently underfunded by a significant amount. The continuation of this program is important not only from the perspective of maintaining convenient and safe circulation, but also reinforcing the Village's commitment to maintaining residents' quality of life and providing a supportive business environment.

A potential strategy to expand the Pavement Management Program would be to link it to programs and/or organizations that may see mutual benefits from maintenance of local streets. Examples include:

- **School District(s):** improving pavement conditions adjacent to local schools will benefit not only the Village but the school districts as well. The Village should consider entering into a cost-sharing agreement with the School Districts to maintain streets adjacent to schools. Additionally, projects funded through the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program may also help improve pavement conditions and in the process help reduce Village costs.
- **Park District:** the Park District will benefit from the maintenance of streets adjacent to their various facilities. The Village should approach the Park District to consider a cost-sharing agreement for maintenance of streets adjacent to Park properties.

#### **Continue to support and actively participate in Cicero Avenue regional study**

The Cicero Avenue Corridor Study was initiated in 2011 by the Southwest Conference of Mayors in conjunction with the City of Chicago to create a transportation and economic development plan for the Cicero Avenue corridor. The study will provide concepts to reduce congestion, improve mobility, and create land uses that support transit. It is funded through a grant from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). There are six communities along the corridor participating in the study including Chicago, Bedford Park, Oak Lawn, Burbank, Hometown, and Alsip. The project will be similar in scope and detail to the recently completed Harlem Avenue Corridor Study, also funded through the RTA.

The Mayor of Alsip is on the project Steering Committee. It is recommended that the Village stay actively involved in this project and work with participating communities and the Southwest Conference of Mayors throughout the planning process. The Chamber of Commerce should communicate regularly with member businesses to keep them informed about the study and allow for businesses to participate in creation of the plan.

### Ongoing/Long-Term (8-10 years)

#### **Focus on access management to promote safety along major thoroughfares**

The GO TO 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan supports access management as an effective program for improving the region's thoroughfares. It is a tool to help improve traffic safety, aesthetic appearance, and pedestrian convenience by implementing a variety of strategies. With respect to Alsip, access management will help reduce arterial road conflict points along Pulaski Road and Cicero Avenue, thus improving traffic flow and traffic safety. Additionally, it will also help in the development of the Pulaski Road 'Main Street' district that will be friendly to walking, cycling, and transit. The challenge will be to assure mobility on these roads while providing sufficient access to assure prosperous businesses in planned commercial and mixed-use areas.

The Village should create an access management manual focusing on enhancements to Pulaski Road and Cicero Avenue. The Transportation Research Board's Access Management Manual (should be referred to for this purpose and can be purchased online at <http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/152653.aspx>).

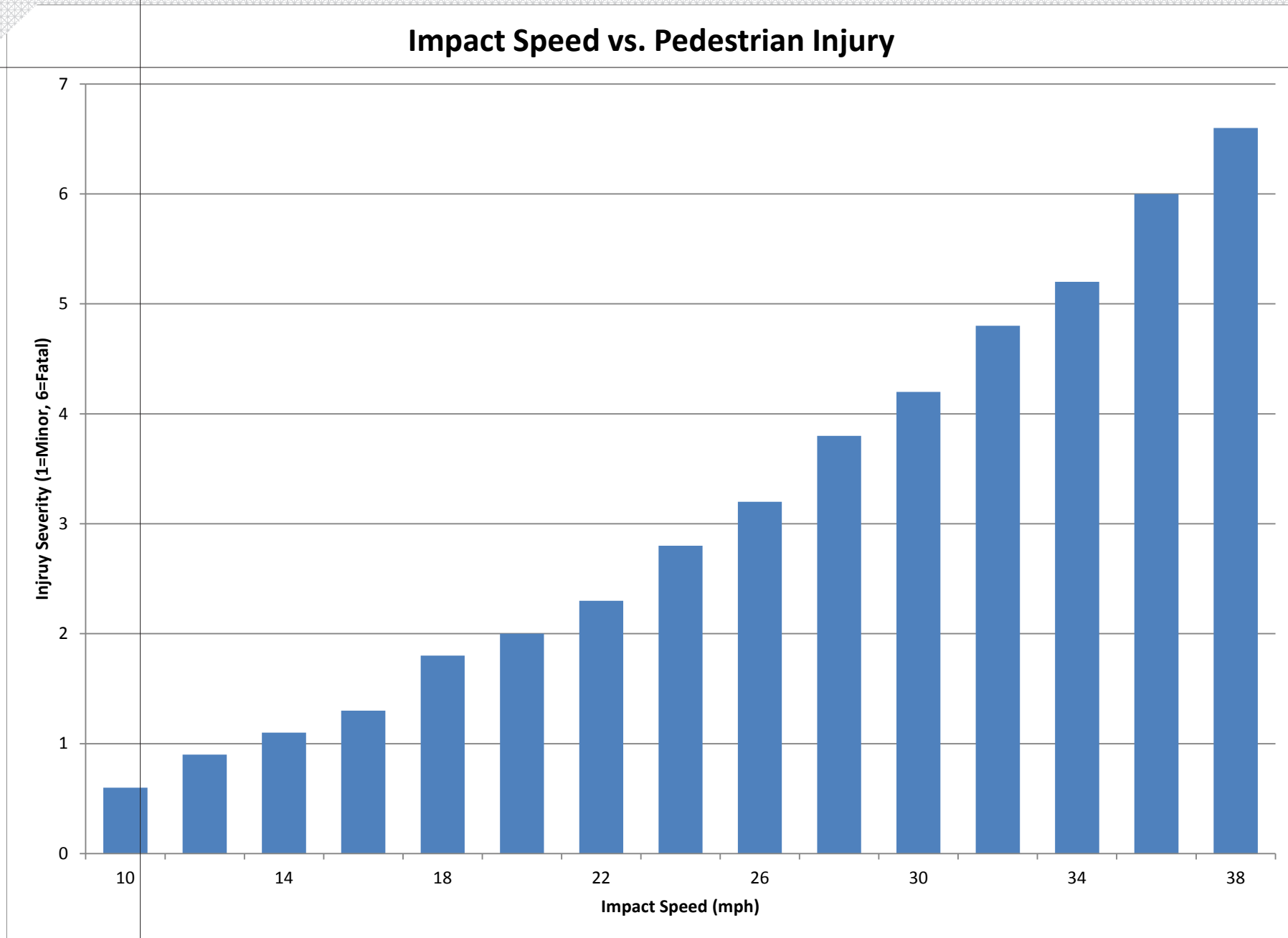
#### **Install traffic-calming features on local streets**

Traffic calming is an effective way to increase safety on local roads. It is a common misconception that streets with a high volume of traffic are less safe for pedestrian activity. While volume of traffic may be a contributing factor, vehicular speeds and width of streets are the primary factors in pedestrian fatalities nationwide. As a general practice, the Village should also comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when making any infrastructure improvement.

Village officials should undertake a public engagement process whereby residents and businesses help the Village identify 'hotspots' of pedestrian-vehicle conflict. The Chamber of Commerce, AIA, and Park District should engage their members by distributing surveys to gather similar information. This information will allow the Village



Figure 7.3: Relation of Vehicular Speed to Probability of Fatal Injury



to prioritize installation of traffic-calming features on local streets. For improvements along non-Alsip jurisdiction roads, the Village will need to coordinate with IDOT and Cook County prior to installation. Potential traffic calming measures include:

- Speed humps
- Reduced vehicular speeds
- Increased policing/fines/penalties
- Visible pedestrian crosswalks
- Street trees/landscape

#### **Work closely with transportation committee of Southwest Conference of Mayors**

For a number of recommended transportation actions outlined in this chapter, the Village should work closely with the Transportation Committee of the Southwest Conference of Mayors. The level of interaction and coordination will vary by action, but it is important for the Village to be aware of, support, and if possible participate in initiatives undertaken by the Conference of Mayors and vice versa. This is even more so required in cases where the success of recommended actions relies on intergovernmental cooperation.

#### **Monitor and support regional transportation projects**

While the 115th Street CREATE project (detailed earlier in this chapter) will help alleviate local traffic congestion and improve safety at the rail road crossing, the I-294/I-57 project will positively impact the southland region. The \$719 million interchange project is a joint effort between the Illinois Tollway and IDOT, expected to increase economic development, create and sustain jobs and enhance mobility and access throughout the Chicago Southland. According to IDOT, the first phase of the I 294/I 57 Interchange Project will create access from northbound I 57 to northbound I 294 and southbound I 294 to southbound I 57, including a new interchange at 147th Street, and is scheduled to be completed in 2014.

The interchange is expected to serve more than 76,000 vehicles per day and provide direct freight access to Chicago's south suburbs – saving drivers \$4 million annually in fuel. Alsip employees taking I-57 from the southwest suburbs will save considerable time with the interchange.

## **Near-Term (1-3 years)**

### **Coordinate with Oak Lawn for extension of Stony Creek trail**

The Stony Creek trail runs through portions of Oak Lawn and Alsip with gaps at various points. The existing path closest to Alsip runs from Long Avenue in Oak Lawn in a southeast direction along the creek till the shopping mall at the northwest end of 111th street and Cicero Avenue. Oak Lawn has proposed extending this trail further south along the Casimir Lithuanian Cemetery until it connects to Alsip. The Village of Alsip and Alsip Park District should assist the Village of Oak Lawn in seeking funds to complete this missing link of the trail. Potential opportunities for funding include Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Surface Transportation Program (STP), or Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grants.

In the short-term, the Village of Alsip should also construct a bike connection from the north end of the existing Stony Creek trail to 115th Street. Building this connection will significantly boost Oak Lawn's likelihood of receiving funds to build the northern portion to be known as Casimir Trail. There are two potential paths for this proposed connection, one being in the form of a bike lane on Joalyce Drive, and the second being a bike path running along the Creek and on the grounds of the Chateau Bu Sche banquet facility.

Surveys and meetings with the home owners association and banquet facility should be scheduled to gauge interest and identify potential issues. The Village should reach out to the Village of Oak Lawn to gain support for this initiative and share resources, if available and where needed.

### **Implement Bicycle Master Plan and Complete Streets Ordinance**

For the most part, Alsip's residential neighborhoods have a well-connected network of pedestrian sidewalks and crosswalks that allow safe movement. However, there is a need to improve pedestrian movement between neighborhoods and commercial areas, especially high traffic north-south corridors such as Cicero Avenue and Pulaski Road that restrict pedestrian movement from one neighborhood to another. The Pulaski Road Corridor Study completed in 2007 contains recommendations to help improve the pedestrian and bicycle experience throughout the corridor.

The Complete Streets Policy Ordinance and Park District Bicycle Plan provide policy and programming recommendations to help improve pedestrian and bike movement through the community. The Bicycle Plan identifies implementation priorities in the near, mid,



Figure 7.4. Trails Map



and long term. The Village should prioritize the implementation of near-term actions identified within the Plan and ensure that they are funded within the Village's annual budget or apply for grants identified in the Plan. Near-term policies to be accomplished within three years include establishment of a Bicycle Task Force and Bicycle Coordinator, installation of signs along the proposed bike network, installation of bicycle parking at existing parks, schools, and municipal facilities, striping of selected on-street bikeways, and marking traffic signal pavement detectors. The Bicycle Coordinator responsibilities could be accomplished by an existing staff person within the Park District. The Comprehensive Plan supports these actions and recommends that the Village pursue them expeditiously.

#### **Continue to participate in Calumet-Sag regional trail development**

The Calumet-Sag regional bike trail will connect Alsip to thirteen communities along the Calumet-Sag Channel, allowing residents to access amenities outside its boundaries, and attracting visitors from throughout the region. The Park District is actively involved in development of the trail and should continue to play their leadership role. The next steps in development of the trail involve finalizing the alignment of the trail and raising the 20 percent match for CMAQ funding that has been secured for the trail.

### **Ongoing/Long-Term (8-10 years)**

#### **Enact ordinances and educate law enforcement officials to protect bicyclists and pedestrians**

In addition to physical improvements, the Village could consider adopting regulations that would protect bicyclists and pedestrians from vehicular traffic. Examples of ordinances that have been adopted by Illinois communities include:

- ***Distracted Driver Ordinance:*** The Village should consider adopting and publicizing a distracted driver ordinance restricting the use of mobile communication devices while driving on local roadways. Safety goals could be further bolstered by a partnership with neighboring communities as well as the Southwest Conference of Mayors to pass similar policies throughout the region.
- ***Safe Park Zone Ordinance:*** To ensure safe access to neighborhood parks, school playgrounds, and recreational facilities, the Village should adopt a Safe Park Zone

ordinance. As per Active Transportation Alliance, a non-profit bicycle advocacy group, this strategy entails setting 20 mph speed limits and enforcing higher penalties for traffic violations when children are present on streets adjacent to parks. The Illinois Vehicle Code section 5/11-605.3, allows municipalities to use revenue generated from the higher fines to establish and maintain safety infrastructure within the zone and to fund safety programming.

- ***Bicycle Parking Ordinance:*** In order to encourage residents to ride their bikes, a key component is to place adequate supportive infrastructure. Bicycle parking is one such component. The Village should therefore revise the zoning ordinance to require bike parking at key commercial, residential, and industrial sites. Minimum bike parking standards can be correlated to existing motor-vehicle parking standards, e.g. requiring that at least one bicycle parking space for each ten of the required off-street automobile parking spaces be provided in all districts.

In addition to adopting these ordinances, the Alsip Police Department should designate a staff person to communicate with the bicycling community in Alsip, lead coordination of bicycle safety, and conduct enforcement training within the department. As per the adopted Alsip Park District Bicycle Plan, enforcement training should be geared towards creating a safe bicycling environment as outlined in the Plan.

### **Transit Network**

#### **Mid-Term (4-7 years)**

##### **Identify preferred locations of future bus shelters/stops**

In 2013, Pace will embark on a 3-year study to evaluate the location of bus stops throughout its existing network. The project is intended to improve the movement efficiency of buses by identifying specific location of bus stops for all existing routes. The Village should proactively undertake an assessment of preferred bus stop locations along Cicero Avenue, Pulaski Road, and 127th Street as they serve the greatest number of residents and businesses along the corridors. The future land use map should be utilized as a base for this assessment as it demarcates areas for higher intensity development



Figure 7.5: Calumet-Sag Regional Trail Latest Alignment (July 2012)





and therefore high transit need in the future. The results of this assessment should be discussed with Pace so that the agency can take them into consideration in their system wide planning effort.

## Ongoing/Long-Term (8-10 years)

### Coordinate with Pace to implement South Cook County-Will County Service Restructuring Initiative

The restructuring initiative utilized a combination of market research, stakeholder outreach, and public involvement to recommend changes in Pace suburban transit services in southern Cook County, southwestern Cook County, and Will County. According to the final report, the study area covers approximately the southern third of Pace's six-county service area in northeastern Illinois. This area includes portions of two counties, 82 municipalities, three Pace divisions, 46 Pace fixed-route bus services, and approximately 40 percent of Pace's ridership. The results from the study recommended that twenty-nine existing Pace routes be revised, seven routes be deleted, and twenty-one new routes be added.

The study's recommendations are organized into three timelines: short, mid, and long term. Short term recommendations include:

- **Route 383:** Extend all trips to Lincoln Mall on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- **Route 385:** End route at Blue Island and replace Blue Island to Crestwood service with an extended Route 348.

Long-term recommendations include:

- **Route 383:** Run the entire route along Cicero Avenue and extend another route to pick up the Western segment along 127th Street.
- **New Alsip Dial-a-Ride:** Create general public dial-a-ride service to improve access to jobs in the industrial areas north of the Calumet-Sag Channel and west of Blue Island.

The Village should continue to support these recommendations and stay involved through the Southwest Conference of Mayors as the planning process moves forward.

### Support the proposed I-294 express bus service

In 2009, Pace partnered with the Tollway to develop a report that discussed the creation of an I-294 Express Bus Service. As per the report, the goal of the proposed bus service

is to connect high unemployment areas to an estimated 85,000 jobs throughout the proposed system's service nodes. The implementation of High Occupancy Toll lanes on a portion of I-294 would provide an innovative multi-modal corridor that not only provides guaranteed bus service travel times, but also incentives for motorists to shift into ridesharing or vanpool programs.

There are a total of twelve nodes proposed in this service, with Alsip being one of them. The Alsip proposal included the creation of a Park and Ride facility at the intersection of I-294 and 127th Street for a future Pace flexible feeder service. This would have immediate benefits to both Alsip residents and businesses, providing easy and fast access from northwest and south suburbs in Cook County.

### Explore alternative transit options in coordination with Pace

Pace offers a 'family' of bus services to suburban communities that do not have access to traditional transit service. Alsip's resident as well as daytime workforce population will be able to benefit from some of these services.

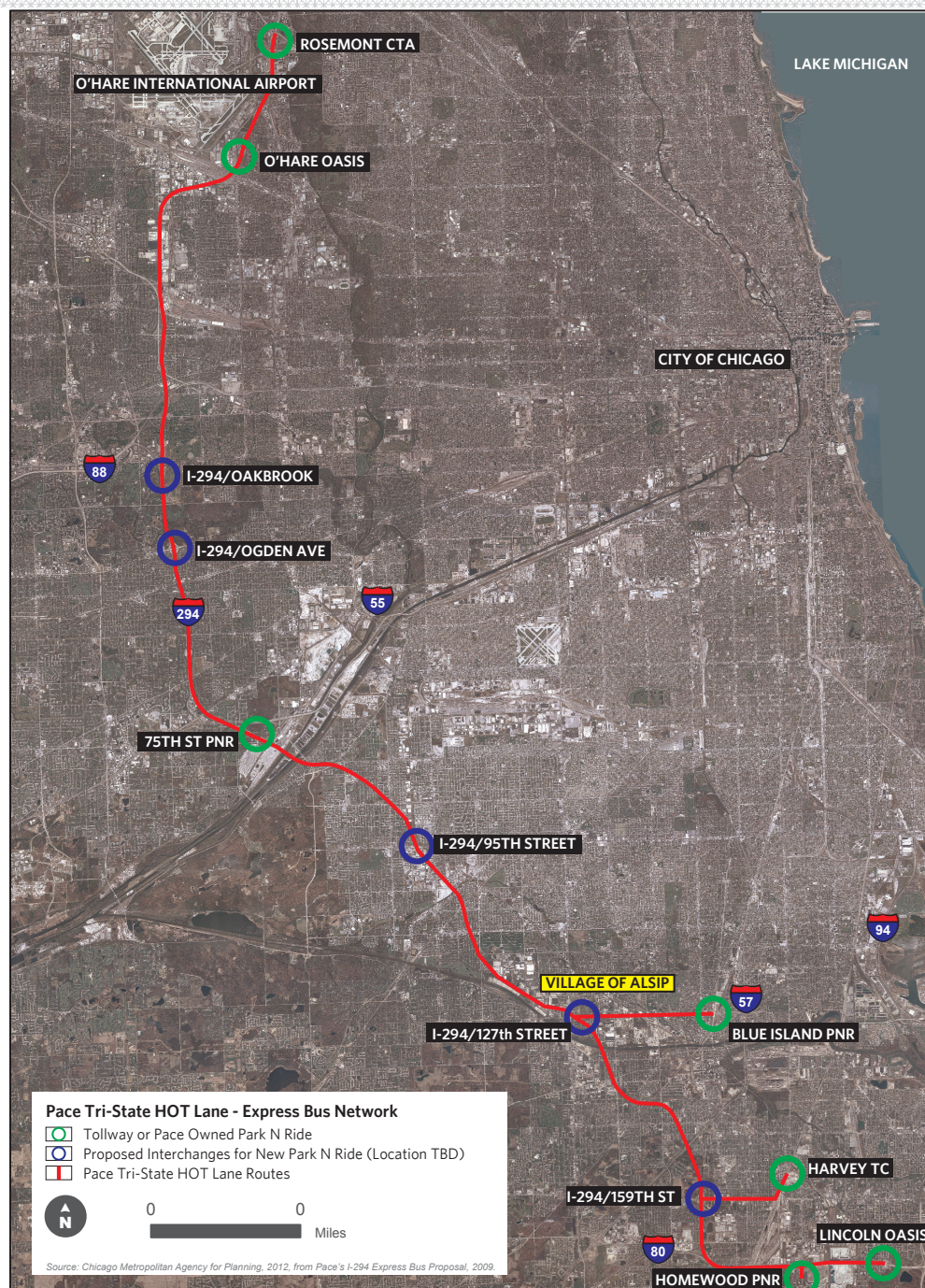
- **Community Vehicle Program:** this flexible program could provide Alsip industrial employees with a cost-effective transit option to connect from their place of employment to Metra stations in Chicago Ridge and Blue Island. It allows Alsip to determine the specifics of the service while leasing a vehicle from Pace on a monthly basis. The program also allows municipalities to determine fares, select service contractors, and determine who operates the preferred transportation service. Village officials should work closely with the AIA to undertake a survey of businesses and/or employees that would be interested in using such a service. Based on the results of the survey, Village officials should work with Pace to create the appropriate program.
- **Dial-a-Ride:** Pace currently operates a dial-a-ride service through Worth Township that serves Alsip residents. The service is available up to two miles outside Township borders to select area medical facilities. This service is mostly utilized by senior citizens and should continue to be provided in the future.
- **Call-n-Ride:** this transit option picks up and drops off riders anywhere within a designated service zone. The small, wheelchair-accessible Call-n-Ride bus services people on a first come first serve basis and trip reservations can be made via the phone. Illinois communities currently offering this service include Joliet, St. Charles, Vernon Hills, and Arlington Heights among others. For Alsip, the geographic area would be determined by key destinations that residents and or business owners frequent the







Figure 7.7: Proposed I-294 Express Bus Service



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.



most. Examples of destinations that this service could connect include the Alsip public library, MetroSouth Medical Center in Blue Island, and Apollo Recreation Center. Additional destinations should be determined by gaining community input on destinations they would like to access via transit.



The Village should improve pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and commercial areas such as the Pulaski Road Corridor. Photos by CMAP









# Chapter 8

## Natural Environment

**Goal: The Village of Alsip will lead a multi-jurisdictional effort to enhance the community's quality of life by developing an extensive network of parks in the community and enhancing access to regional open spaces and recreational amenities.**

### Summary of Existing Conditions

Despite nearly one quarter of the community being covered by parks and open space, there are several limitations that prevent the Village from utilizing its open areas to their maximum potential. From a recreation standpoint, residents have access to 189 acres of parks and recreational facilities operated by the Alsip Park District. Excluding the 66-acre public golf course that serves mostly out-of town visitors, the usable public open space used to compare with national park acreage standards is 123 acres. Alsip provides 9.8 acres of open space for every 1,000 residents which is slightly below the 10-acre national standard. A majority of public parks are located east of Cicero Avenue in the eastern portion of the community. By contrast, residents on the west side of the community have limited access to public open space. There are, however, large land holdings of open space owned by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) along the Calumet-Sag Channel in the community. Many parcels in this area owned by the MWRD are leased to the Alsip Park District for public open space.

In addition to public open space, the Park District owns and operates Fountain Hills Golf Course. The golf course is considered by the Park District to be a regional draw for golfers.

When added together, the Village's public parks and golf course account for nearly 14percent of Alsip's land area.

In addition to parks and the golf course, one of the most unique land use qualities in the village is its large number of cemeteries which account for over 10percent of Alsip's land area. Alsip is also surrounded on three sides by cemeteries that include the Oak Hill Cemetery, Lincoln Cemetery, Saint Casimir Lithuanian Cemetery, and Chapel Hills Gardens South Cemetery.

There are also three water bodies that traverse the municipality: Stony Creek, Mosquito Creek, and the Calumet-Sag Channel. The east branch of Stony Creek runs parallel to the railroad tracks, buffered in most places by open space which helps prevent flooding. Mosquito Creek runs predominantly through the industrial areas south of I-294, connecting with Stony Creek after entering Blue Island to the east.

At the time of drafting the Comprehensive Plan recommendations, the Alsip Park District is in the process of creating a Parks and Open Space Master Plan. The natural environment chapter herein builds upon the analysis and information provided by the consultant and supports, to the extent possible, their findings and recommended actions.



It is important to note that although the following section recommends locations for new public parks and open space areas that these may be acquired and maintained by many potential entities including the Village, the Park District, Forest Preserve District, or homeowners associations.

## Key Findings

The following are key findings based on an assessment of Alsip's natural resources. These key findings have helped shape and inform the recommendations outlined in this section.

There is a need for greater collaboration among various entities to resolve open space and recreation issues faced by residents. The Park District has entered into sharing agreements with the school districts for use of their playgrounds for a user fee. Similar agreements have also been created with the local businesses to allow for the use of detention/retention facilities for recreation. However, there is a need for greater coordination with neighboring communities, the Forest Preserve District, and South West Special Recreation Association. The collaboration exhibited between the municipalities in the planning for the Cal-Sag Recreational Trail should serve as a model for Alsip.

The Village has lost several thousand trees over the past few years to the emerald ash bore (EAB) insect infestation. According to the Public Works Department, the loss of trees has not only strained Village resources to tackle the problem, but has also been detrimental to the community's physical character. Local rights-of-way have been impacted the greatest as infected street trees are removed and in some cases, not replaced with new trees. The Public Works Department, in its current configuration, does not have the capacity or institutional knowledge to effectively address this problem. The Park District administers a tree program that allows Alsip residents the opportunity to honor and/or memorialize relatives and/or friends with the planting of a tree in one of the Alsip Park District Parks.

MWRD has opened up a limited amount of open space along the Calumet-Sag Channel for public recreation. The Alsip Park District currently leases 22 acres of open space from MWRD, seven of which are used for parking. In addition, the public golf course also maintained by the Park District is mostly used by non-residents. Taking these two large areas (MWRD owned land and golf course) out of the total open space inventory has a significant impact, with residents overly relying on the remaining 123 acres of

neighborhood parks to meet their passive and recreational park site needs.

Although the Village has an off-street multi-use trail it only serves a relatively small area of the community. The Apollo Recreation Center walking path runs north-south between 116th Street and 127th Street connecting neighborhoods with the Recreation Center and the Aquatic Park; however, many residential neighborhoods elsewhere in the village have no trails. The future Calumet-Sag regional trail will be an asset for the Village. The Calumet-Sag regional trail will run along the southern limits of Alsip and connect to other regional trails and destinations. A similar trail is proposed along Stony Creek to connect the Village of Oak Lawn to Alsip. It is important that the Village make local connections to these future regional trails. The Millennium Reserve Initiative, a project that aims to protect the Calumet region's unique environmental assets including open areas and water resources, also identifies several trail connections that will help Alsip residents take advantage of the Chicago region's natural infrastructure.

The Park District has been proactively participating in local and regional efforts to improve community health. In May 2012, the Park District hired a consultant to undertake a comprehensive master plan to improve recreational amenities for Alsip residents. This study is anticipated to be completed in 2013. The Park District is also an active participant in the creation of the Calumet-Sag regional trail that will run along the southern limits of Alsip and connect to other regional trails and destinations. The trail, when completed, will be a 30 mile multi-use path connecting 14 municipalities along the Calumet-Sag Channel and Calumet River.

# Recommended Strategies

## Parks and Open Space

### Near-Term (1-3 Years)

#### Create sharing agreements between School and Park Districts

The Park District currently leases some open space from School District 126. This agreement should be expanded to all schools and other Districts in Alsip to maximize the amount of open space available to the residents of Alsip. Intergovernmental agreements between the Park District and schools will allow the general public to access a wide variety of recreational programs for all ages after school hours. This agreement will

Figure 8.1: Community Facilities Map

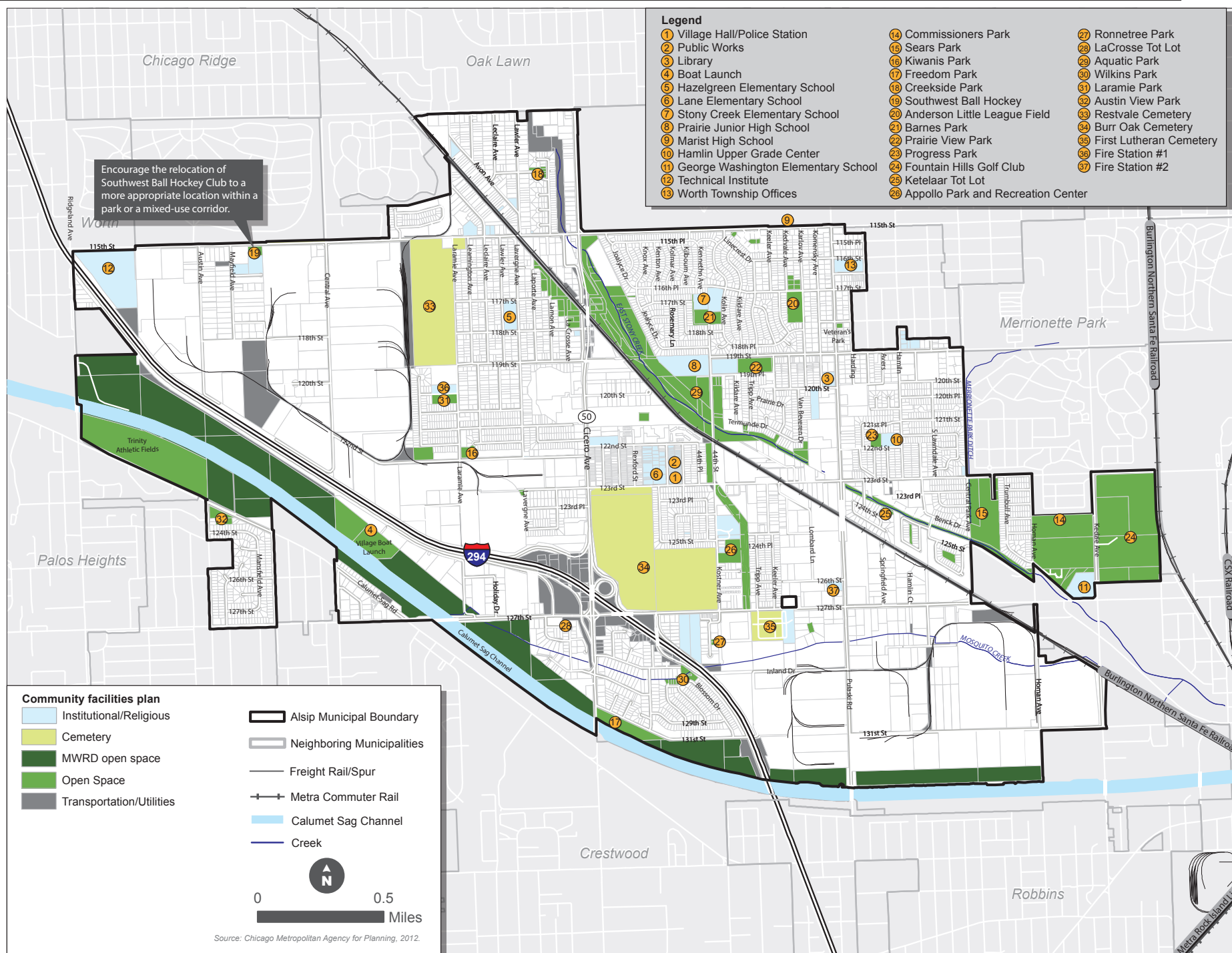
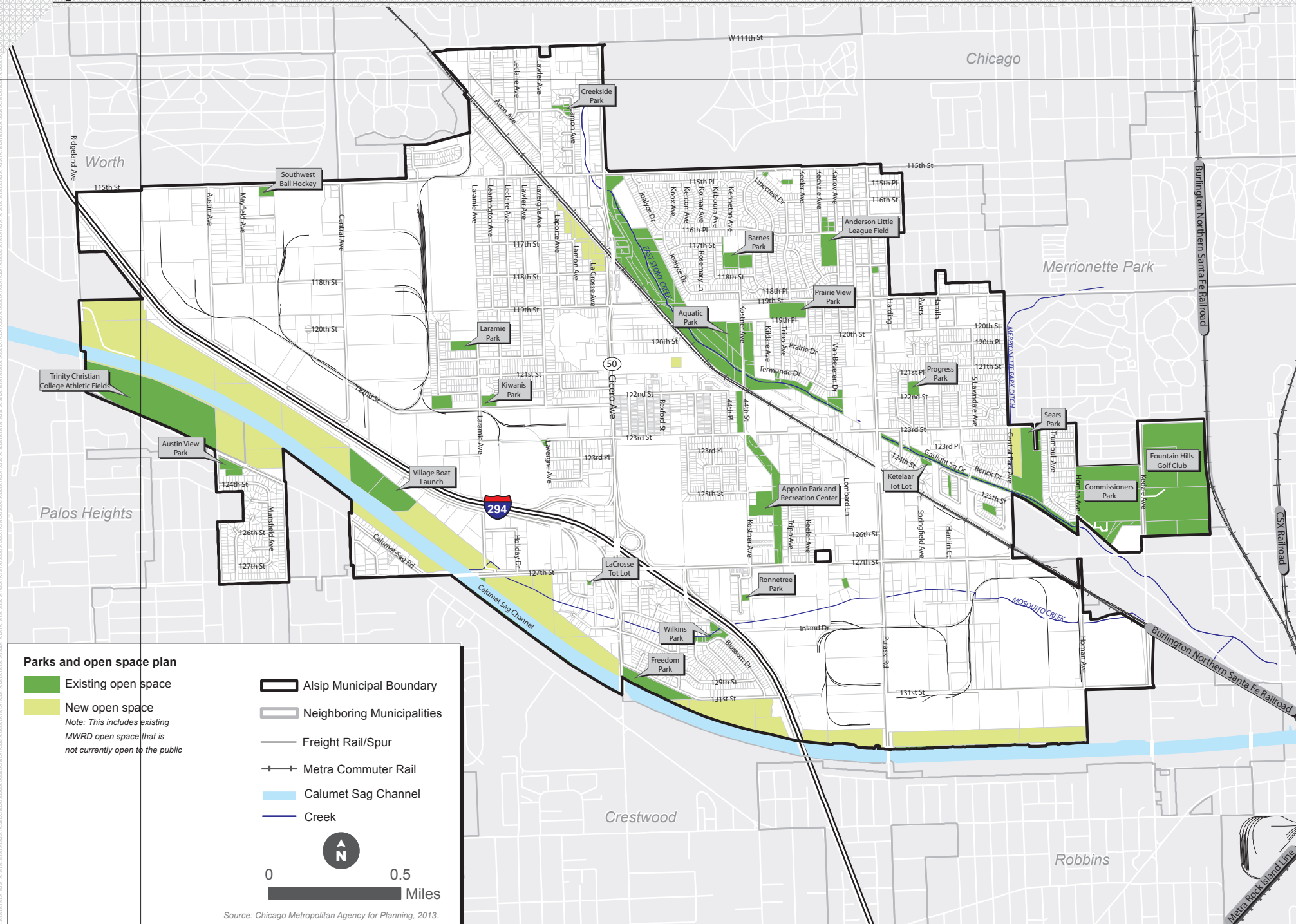




Figure 8.2: Parks and Open Space Additions



also allow the Village to provide its residents with activities that would be otherwise prohibitive. In return, the participating schools will reduce their maintenance costs while improving the safety of school grounds. This excellent model of government cooperation, which is designed to maximize use of resident tax dollars, should be continued and enhanced over time.

### **Create a community gardening program**

There are many benefits to developing community gardens in Alsip, including enhanced neighborhood character and sense of community, increased access to locally grown produce, and decreased Park District costs associated with maintenance. The Alsip Park District should create a community gardening program to facilitate garden development in appropriate locations, such as within open space areas and available portions of schoolyards. Moving forward, the Village should also ensure that its development regulations permit community gardens within most or all zoning districts. The Park District should be responsible for maintaining and managing the gardens, even in cases where the property is leased from MWRD.

There are many different ways to organize community gardening programs. Some communities offer garden space at no cost to residents in return for maintenance and upkeep. Another approach is to establish a lease program whereby a not-for-profit organization, or group of individuals with a not-for-profit sponsor, creates gardens for a low fee. Alsip should pursue grant opportunities as they arise, preferably as a joint effort between the responsible parties and the municipal agency, in this case the Alsip Park District.

### **Create an action plan to remove and replace infected trees**

Similar to communities throughout the Chicago region, Alsip is facing a dramatic decline in its canopy cover due to infestation by the emerald ash borer (EAB) insect. According to the Public Works Department, the Village has lost several thousand trees over the past few years due to this infestation.

The Public Works Department currently lacks the capacity in terms of personnel to effectively remove infected trees and replant new trees. According to Village officials, the entire project would cost the Village close to \$500,000.

There are two types of actions that should be undertaken by the Village to help combat this issue: ensure the health of existing trees, and remove and replace infected trees.

According to Morton Arboretum, an environmental organization dedicated to the protection of the Chicago area's trees, insecticide treatments have been effective in preserving trees that are generally good health. Maintaining the trees in good health is essential by way using fertilizers in the fall and spring along with providing supplemental irrigation during periods of drought. Another key component of ensuring the health of existing trees is educating community stakeholders. Morton Arboretum offers education and training programs to help residents, business owners, and municipal representatives better understand how to maintain the community's tree canopy and detect early signs of infestation. The Village should reach out to the organization and set up workshops with members of the AIA, Chamber of Commerce, School Districts, Park District, and the general public.

To expand removal and replacement efforts, the Village will need to hire additional personnel to assist the Public Works Department. In order to undertake an inventory of trees that are infected, a survey should be undertaken by the Public Works Department. Temporary employees or part-time interns could be employed to accomplish this task. The Public Works Department should also work closely with the Park District to coordinate efforts and share resources, wherever possible. One potential method to obtain funding to undertake these actions could involve seeking a Tree City USA designation. The Tree City USA Program is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with USDA Forest Service and National Association of State Foresters. It provides direction, technical assistance, public attention, and national recognition for urban and community forestry programs in several communities throughout the nation. Among the many benefits of being a Tree City, financial assistance is a critical one for Alsip. Preference is sometimes given to Tree City USA communities over other communities when allocations of grant money are made for trees or forestry programs. The Public Works Department should complete the application available on Arbor Day Foundation website and complete the requirements outlined in the document. Village officials should reach out to neighboring Blue Island to help navigate this certification process and troubleshoot any obstacles.

## **Mid-Term (4-7 Years)**

### **Coordinate with MWRD on parcels along Calumet-Sag Channel**

There are a number of reasons why the Village and Park District need to work closely



with MWRD. Firstly, MWRD owns a majority of non-programmed open space in the Village that could become available for recreation use in the future. These open areas are currently being leased by MWRD for a number of purposes, some less appropriate for open space than others. Industrial business Ozinga currently leases MWRD property just north of 127th Street for storage purposes. While this is a revenue generator for MWRD and supports the Village's valuable industrial sector, the Park District and Village should work with businesses such as Ozinga that are located along the Calumet-Sag Channel to designate the portion of their developed sites along the Channel as public open space. This would allow industrial businesses to utilize their sites while providing unobstructed public access along the length of the Calumet-Sag Channel to the general public.

Secondly, the future Calumet-Sag trail will need to pass through several MWRD owned parcels as per its current configuration. The Village and Park District should therefore work closely with MWRD officials as they determine the exact alignment and engineering details of the proposed trail as it goes through Alsip.

#### **Develop a community-wide Public Rights-of-Way Enhancement Plan**

One of the foremost elements that enhance or diminish a community's sense of place is the visual appearance of public rights-of-way. Alsip stakeholders identified the lack of appealing rights-of-way as one of the primary issues faced by the community. The Village should undertake a study in collaboration with the Park District to identify streetscape improvements including tree planting and landscaping to local roadways. The Public Rights-of-Way Enhancement Plan will also provide recommendations for creating attractive gateways along major roadways in order to enhance the community's image and identity. This program should be coordinated with the Village's Pavement Management Program wherever possible.

#### **Utilize open areas for stormwater management**

While improvement of the Village's aging infrastructure will be an ongoing and long-term project, there are several non-structural and cost-effective measures to reduce the burden on the existing infrastructure. Parks and open spaces can play an important role in stormwater management and the Village and Park District should work together to capture these benefits. By merely preserving the existing parks such they retain their permeable surfaces, the Village can significantly reduce stormwater management costs by capturing precipitation and slowing its runoff. The Park District should ensure that any construction of facilities or amenities in public parks does not cause an increase in

the amount of run-off by creating more impervious surfaces.

Innovative design elements could be introduced in parks to assist with stormwater management such as native plantings, community gardening beds, planting beds, drainage swales. Similar efforts should be pursued with the schools, where they can also serve a valuable educational purpose. Installations for stormwater management can be used by school teachers as outdoor classrooms to aid in teaching lessons about the natural environment. Stormwater management features can be used to demonstrate to high school students how civil engineering and landscape architecture shape the built environment and mitigate the effects of urban development.

### **Ongoing/ Long-Term (8-10 Years)**

#### **Support the Park District in implementation of its new Parks and Open Space Master Plan**

The Alsip Park District initiated the process of creating a community-wide Parks and Open Space Master Plan in 2012. The intent of this exercise is to identify physical and organizational issues faced by the Park District and potential partnerships to create solutions. The Plan will evaluate all existing facilities and natural resources, assess public needs via surveys and workshops, and develop recommendations related to pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation to parks, parking, recreational activities, and options for facilities.

One of the key issues that should be addressed within the Plan is access to open space and creation of new open space within the community. There is an excellent opportunity for the Park District to engage MWRD in discussions to help to improve the quality and amount of open space for recreational purposes. The Park District has devised innovative partnerships such as the one with industrial businesses to utilize dry detention ponds for recreational activities. There are additional partnerships with the Cook County Forest Preserve, Southwest Suburban Recreation Association (SWSRA), and School Districts that should continue to be explored through this planning process.

The Park District should continue to apply for grants such as KaBOOM!, Open Space and Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grants, and Park and Recreation Facility Construction grant (PARC) that will allow it to build additional open spaces as well as new facilities within existing parks. KaBOOM! is a national non-profit dedicated to developing the nation's recreational infrastructure for children. The OSLAD and PARC

grants are offered through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and provide funds to acquire and develop land for parks and open space purposes as well as construct recreational facilities.

#### **Continue to monitor and participate in the Millennium Reserve project**

The Millennium Reserve initiative (MR) is part of the federal Great Outdoors Initiative to restore and protect the Chicago region's environmental assets. The project's intended goal is to protect the Calumet region's unique environmental assets including open areas and water resources and enhance them for future generations. Besides restoring the region's ecological balance, there are a number of economic, social, and quality-of-life benefits that make this initiative critical for the sustainable future of the region. The Village's leadership should continue to monitor the development of this initiative and participate in future events as opportunities arise.

## **Water Resources**

### **Near-Term (1-3 Years)**

#### **Encourage residents to participate in MWRD Rail Barrel Program**

The MWRD is encouraging residents living in its service area to purchase rain barrels. Homeowners can collect and reuse stormwater by installing a rain barrel that are now available for a nominal price year-round. The price includes an installation kit and home delivery for all residents living in the MWRD's service area.

Rain barrels are repurposed plastic barrels designed to collect rainwater from rooftops for reuse. The rain barrel program is a part of the MWRD's green infrastructure initiative to help municipalities with managing stormwater and reducing water pollution. The Village's Water Department should advertise this program to its citizens using a variety of techniques such as announcements on the Village, Park District, and School Districts websites community newsletters, water bills, Village and Park District bulletin board displays, etc.

### **Mid-Term (4-7 Years)**

#### **Incorporate best management practices for storm water detention and retention**

In terms of policies, adopting best management practices would allow Village officials to keep the water bodies clean and prevent flooding at the local level. As per MWRD analysis of FEMA data, there are a few developed areas within the Stony Creek floodplain.

As the Creek and Calumet-Sag Channel are accommodating surface water and stormwater run-off, the Village should implement and also encourage businesses and residents to implement water conservation measures that reduce runoff including construction of bio-swales, dry wells, pervious pavements, rain barrels, and others.

The stormwater ordinance should stipulate measures to control stormwater run-off for new developments and existing developments looking to expand. The Village should either create a stormwater ordinance or adopt the Cook County stormwater ordinance into the Village's municipal code.

### **Long-Term (8-10 Years)**

#### **Support efforts to clean-up the Calumet-Sag Channel**

Clean-up of the Calumet-Sag Channel will allow Alsip residents to not only utilize the water for recreational purposes, but also utilize land adjacent to the Calumet-Sag Channel's right-of-way for complementary uses. In the long run, clean-up will make the Calumet-Sag Channel an asset to the community, rather than a barrier. The clean-up will be beneficial to the Village and all communities along the Calumet-Sag Channel in that it will strengthen the case for development of a series of public greenways for active and passive recreation. The proposed Calumet-Sag regional bike trail would benefit greatly from the clean-up.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has recommended clean-up of the Calumet-Sag Channel and other canals in the region. The Village should continue to monitor regional trends and take steps at the local level that would help influence decision makers to begin the clean-up process in the short-term.

Given the scale and multijurisdictional impact of this initiative, it is recommended that a coalition be formed. As recommended within the Green River Pattern Book, a Calumet River Corridor Council (CRCC), comprised of public and private sector leaders and organizations, should be created. The Council would play a leadership role in prioritizing projects along the Calumet-Sag Channel corridor and help raise funding for detailed planning and implementation of projects. Municipalities along the Calumet-Sag Channel



should be represented in the Council as well. Once created, the CRCC should proactively meet and discuss ways to move forward with organizations such as MWRD, IEPA, IDOT, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, among others. Initial efforts should be focused on MWRD as they are responsible for water treatment, own large parcels along the waterfront that are ideal for redevelopment for public use.

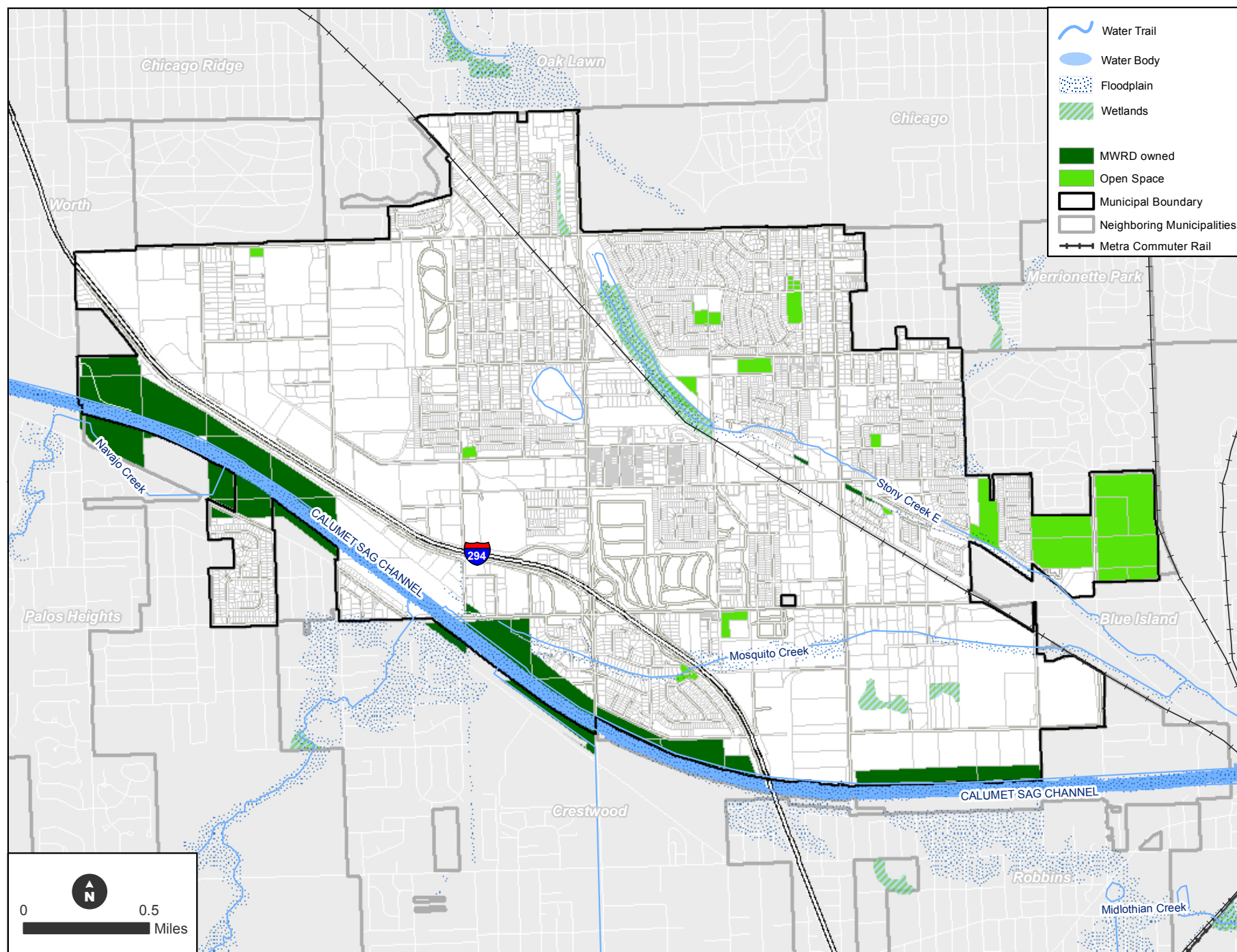
To initiate clean-up, the first step to be undertaken by the CRCC, under the leadership of the MWRD, would be to commission a study that examines the types of pollutants in the Calumet-Sag Channel, their effect on water quality and plant species, and solutions to help improve water quality and natural areas along the waterway.



Examples of open space in the Village of Alsip; provide by the Village and the Alsip Park District. Photos by CMAP



Figure 8.3: Stony Creek Floodplain Map (Source: FEMA)



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2012.







# Chapter 9

## Moving Forward

In a community with limited resources and municipal capacity, creating a Comprehensive Plan that outlines policies, programs, and funding mechanisms to support those policies and programs is only one part of the planning process. In order to ensure that the implementation of the Alsip Comprehensive Plan will be closely tied to its initial vision and occurs in a timely manner, it is important for the Village's leadership to understand the next steps they need to undertake immediately after the Plan's adoption.

The concluding chapter of the Alsip Comprehensive Plan outlines two major tasks that need to be completed prior to any other recommendations identified in the Plan. The completion of these two tasks will lay the foundation for the Village to successfully kick-start implementation of the rest of the Plan. The time-frame for completion of these tasks should be two years.

### Building local capacity

Each recommendation outlined in the Plan will require municipal leadership from an individual or group of individuals within the Village, Park District, or Chamber of Commerce. The Village departments/individuals identified for leadership roles in the Plan include:

	Zoning Administrator	Building Department	Village Engineer	Police Department	Public Works Department	Water Department	Parks District	Chamber of Commerce	Finance Department	Community Development Department **
Residential Areas		X		X						X
Commercial Areas	X							X	X	X
Industrial Areas	X	X	X		X			X	X	X
Mobility	X		X	X	X		X			X
Natural Environment	X				X	X	X			X

\*\* The Community Development Department does not currently exist.



The planning process intimately involved each of these departments and ultimately informed the recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The planning process also revealed that in many cases, the lead departments lack resources in terms of personnel to effectively administer or monitor the progress of actions they are expected to lead. In fact, in most communities, plan oversight and implementation is led by a Community Development Department – a department that does not currently exist in the Village.

The Village should consider creating a Community Development Department to guide the implementation of the comprehensive plan as well as future planning activities. Ultimately, the new department should be staffed with planning professionals that can help implement and provide oversight for the various planning initiatives completed by the Village; this may not be possible immediately due to budget limitations, but should be pursued as a goal.

Once formed, the Community Development Department would be responsible for coordinating with all municipal departments to ensure the Comprehensive Plan is being implemented as per the community's vision. In addition, a majority of the multi-jurisdictional coordination required for Plan implementation would be forged by staff from this department. The Community Development Department would also take a leadership role in moving past and planned initiatives forward. The two high priority projects include moving forward the recently completed Pulaski Road Corridor Study and active participation in the creation of the Cicero Avenue Corridor Plan.

In addition to creating the Community Development Department, one of the first actions that the Village's elected officials should undertake upon adoption of the Plan is to assess the needs of Village departments. The Mayor and Finance Director should lead these efforts to understand what the staffing and resource needs are for each department and make hiring decisions accordingly. Given the overlapping functions of some roles identified below, it may be possible for the Village to initially share resources across multiple departments, e.g. between the Chamber of Commerce and Community Development Department, Chamber of Commerce and Park District. Although this may limit the number of implementation actions that each department can undertake in the near-term, it will allow the Village's leadership to kick-start the Plan implementation in a cost-effective manner and ensure progress at the same time.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the Village enhance municipal capacity

and add new skillsets that are currently unavailable and will be required for effective implementation. The skillsets or expertise the Village should be lacking can be classified into the following categories:

- **Community Development:** There are a number of tasks, several of them in a leadership capacity, that will be undertaken by Community Development officials. Accomplishing these tasks will require expertise and municipal experience with Plan implementation, GIS mapping, and data collection and management.
- **Public Works:** Tasks that would assist existing personnel in forwarding the Plan's recommendations vary from undertaking field surveys to data compilation and grant research. These tasks do not require dedicated resources year-round but instead could be undertaken on an as-needed basis.
- **Business Development:** One of the capacity gaps in business development, headed up by the Chamber of Commerce, is the lack of marketing. Filling this gap will require expertise in municipal marketing, economic development, and graphic design.
- **Code Enforcement:** To effectively enforce policies adopted by the Village after Plan adoption, the Village needs to boost its code enforcement abilities, specifically for effective and accurate implementation of the revised zoning ordinance.

While a majority of the funds required to boost municipal capacity will need to come from the Village's annual budget, there is a possibility to utilize TIF funds for hiring personnel that will be involved in moving the redevelopment projects along Pulaski Road and Cicero Avenue forward. Additionally, the AIA should be approached to help fund positions that may benefit businesses in the Village. For example, the Community Development Department and Public Works Department will be major players in creation of the Alsip Industrial Revitalization Plan, a document that will exclusively benefit industrial businesses.

## Revision of the zoning ordinance

As seen in **Table 9.1**, regulatory refinements and additions are a common theme throughout the Comprehensive Plan. From the revitalization of commercial properties to the preservation of natural features, well-written regulations and their effective enforcement will be key. For the purposes of implementing the Comprehensive Plan, the most important regulatory document will be the zoning ordinance.

The zoning ordinance regulates, among other things, the permitted uses of land, lot sizes, density, yard requirements, building heights, parking, accessory uses and buildings, and other requirements. Combined together, these standards can either enhance or diminish the quality of development that occurs within the community and define its image and identity. The current Village of Alsip zoning ordinance is outdated and insufficient to implement the community's future vision as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, elected officials should prioritize the comprehensive revision of the Village's zoning to be in sync with the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The revised ordinance will not only provide Village officials with the tools to regulate the types and quality of development, but also make it easier for private sector developers to understand the Village's needs and be encouraged to work with a community where the administrative processes are streamlined.

CMAP has committed its resources to undertake an audit of the Village's existing zoning ordinance and provide recommendations on sections that need to be modified. However, this will not include a full revision of the entire ordinance; a full revision will take further resources beyond what CMAP has committed. CMAP's audit should be used as the starting point for revising the zoning ordinance.

As stated earlier, building staff capacity and revising the zoning ordinance are the foremost actions to be undertaken after plan adoption. Once these two have been accomplished, the Village should then embark on the near-term recommendations outlined in each of the Plan's chapters.





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