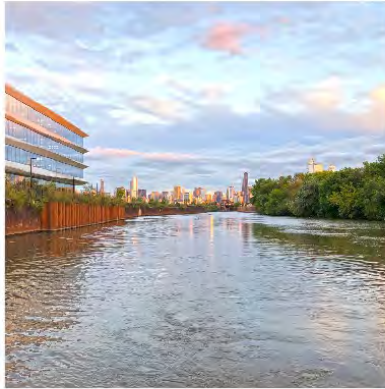




Chicago Rivers – Partner-Gathered Context Information

Collected from workshops of the City of Chicago's
**River Ecology &
Governance Task Force**



North Branch of the Chicago River at Webster Avenue
(source Friends of the Chicago River)



Bubbly Creek and South Branch of the Chicago River
(source Friends of the Chicago River)



Hegewisch Marsh on the Calumet River
(source Friends of the Chicago River)

About the River Ecology and Governance Task Force

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force (Task Force) is a volunteer coordinating and advisory body that was created in early 2019 through an Executive Order to work with the City of Chicago on further transformation of Chicago's river system into a thriving, accessible, and ecologically healthy natural corridor. The Executive Order that created the Task Force calls for the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to work with multiple agencies to support river issues and projects including the Chicago Park District, Forest Preserves of Cook County, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. The Task Force consists of local, state and federal agencies, as well as environmental justice, nonprofit organizations, and residents with interests in planning for river health and resiliency, shaping river edge development, and informing city-led policy and planning priorities. The Metropolitan Planning Council and Friends of the Chicago River provide leadership and administrative support for the Task Force.

Thanks to the Contributors

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- Alex Perez, Active Transportation Alliance
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- Carson Poole, fmr. North River Commission
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- Jack Paul Rocha, UIC Great Cities Institute
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- Paula Acevedo, El Paseo Trail Advisory
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- Rowan Obach, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
- Seth Magle, Lincoln Park Zoo
- Sevin Yildiz, UIC Urban Planning and Policy
- Sharon Waller, River Park Advisory Council
- Tim Gustafson, HNTB
- Tom Minarik, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District



Note: The Calumet River area was part of a more extensive partner coordination process, that is ongoing, so it is not included in this resource document. Please view the links on page 5 to view Calumet resources and maps.

Purpose and Process

The desire to collect the data outlined in this document was established in annual work plan discussions of the System Plans Working Group, which is a sub-group of the full River Ecology and Governance Task Force. The System Plans Working Group focuses on exploring innovative approaches to river corridor planning through research, data collection, and community engagement activities. Over the course of six months, workshops were held with Working Group members and other river partners to collect the contextual qualitative data outlined in this document. The overall goal of the process is to better document issues, ideas, and opportunities that are relevant to river edge projects.

The primary question that the group wanted to answer with this process is:

If a project was proposed within this stretch of the river, What would you want the involved developers, property owners, designers, partners, and/or agencies to know that isn't documented in existing City plans and polices?

The outcomes of these workshops are documented in the following maps and summary notes organized by river reaches within the City of Chicago municipal boundary.

Links and Resources

River Relevant Community Plans By Geography:

North Branch:

- [Lakeview Roscoe Village Master Plan \(2023\)](#)
- [Avondale Neighborhood Plan \(2023\)](#)
- [Confluence Vision Plan \(2021\)](#)
- [Wild Mile: Framework Vision \(2019\)](#)
- [Upper North Branch River Audit \(2019\)](#)
- [North Branch Framework Plan \(2017\)](#)
- [Riverbank Neighbors](#)

Main Stem:

- [Chicago Riverwalk Main Branch Framework Plan \(2009\)](#)
- [DuSable Park](#)

South Branch:

- [South Branch Community Engagement Outcomes \(2022\)](#)
- [McKinley Park Neighborhood Plan \(2021\)](#)
- [Bridgeport and Canaryville Priorities Plan \(2019\)](#)
- [South Branch Parks Framework Plan \(2018\)](#)
- [Pilsen and Little Village Action Plan \(2017\)](#)
- [South Branch Parks Access Study \(In Progress – Chicago Department of Transportation\)](#)

Calumet River System:

- [Calumet Area Land use Plan \(2002\)](#)
- [Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan \(2004\)](#)
- [Calumet Design Guidelines \(2004\)](#)
- [Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan \(2023\)](#)
- [Little Calumet River Conservation Action Plan \(2022\)](#)
- [Calumet River Communities Planning Framework \(2019\)](#)
- [Calumet Connect Databook \(2021\)](#)

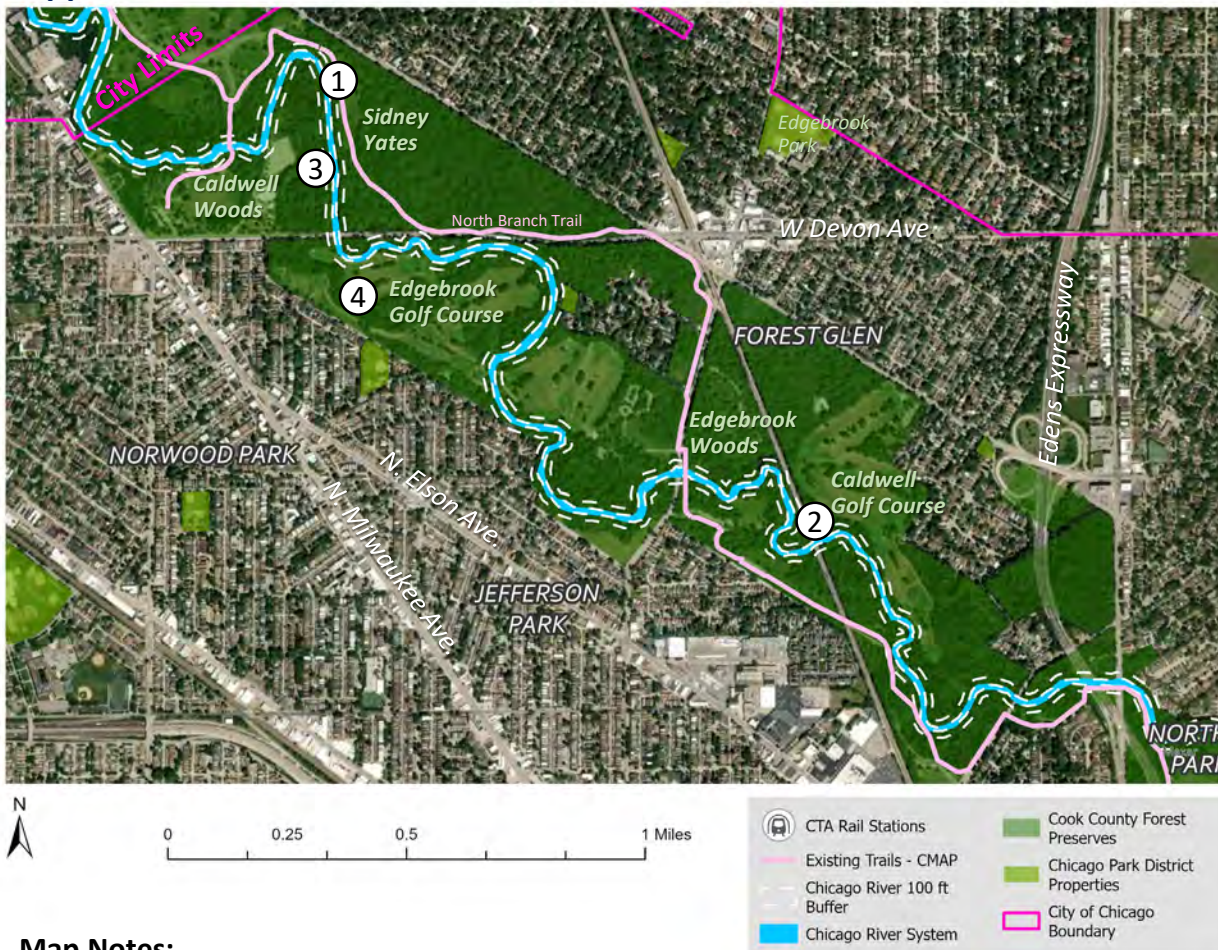
River System Wide Resources:

- [US Army Corps of Engineers - Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Master Plan](#)
- [US Army Corps of Engineers – Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework StoryMap](#)
- [Chicago River Design Guidelines](#)
- [Calumet Design Guidelines](#)
- [Our Great Rivers Vision Plan](#)
- [Friends of the Chicago River - Developer Resource Guide](#)
- [Bird Friendly Design Chicago](#)
- [Active Transportation Alliance - Chicago River Trail Action Plan](#)
- [Forest Preserves of Cook County - Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan](#)
- [H2NOW Real Time Water Quality Data](#)
- [City of Chicago Barge Study \(2015\)](#)

River System Maps and Databases:

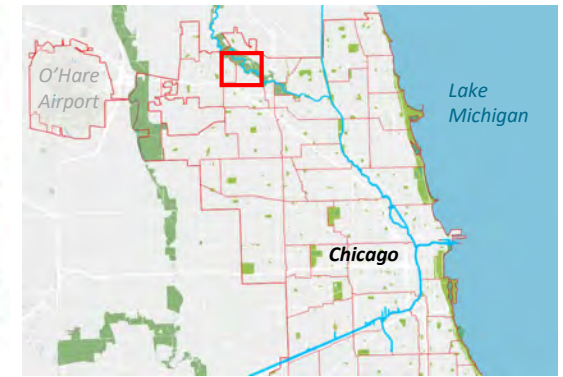
- [Calumet River Coordination Map \(2022 - REGTF\)](#)
- [Explore the Chicago-Calumet River Data Map \(Friends of the Chicago River\)](#)
- [Habitat Connectivity Action Plan \(2021, Friends of the Chicago River\)](#)
- [Natural Solutions Tool \(Greater Chicago Watershed Alliance, Friends of the Chicago River, Trust for Public Land\)](#)
- [The Chicago Wilderness Alliance Hub](#)
- [Our Great Rivers Story Map \(Metropolitan Planning Council\)](#)

Upper North Branch



Map Notes:

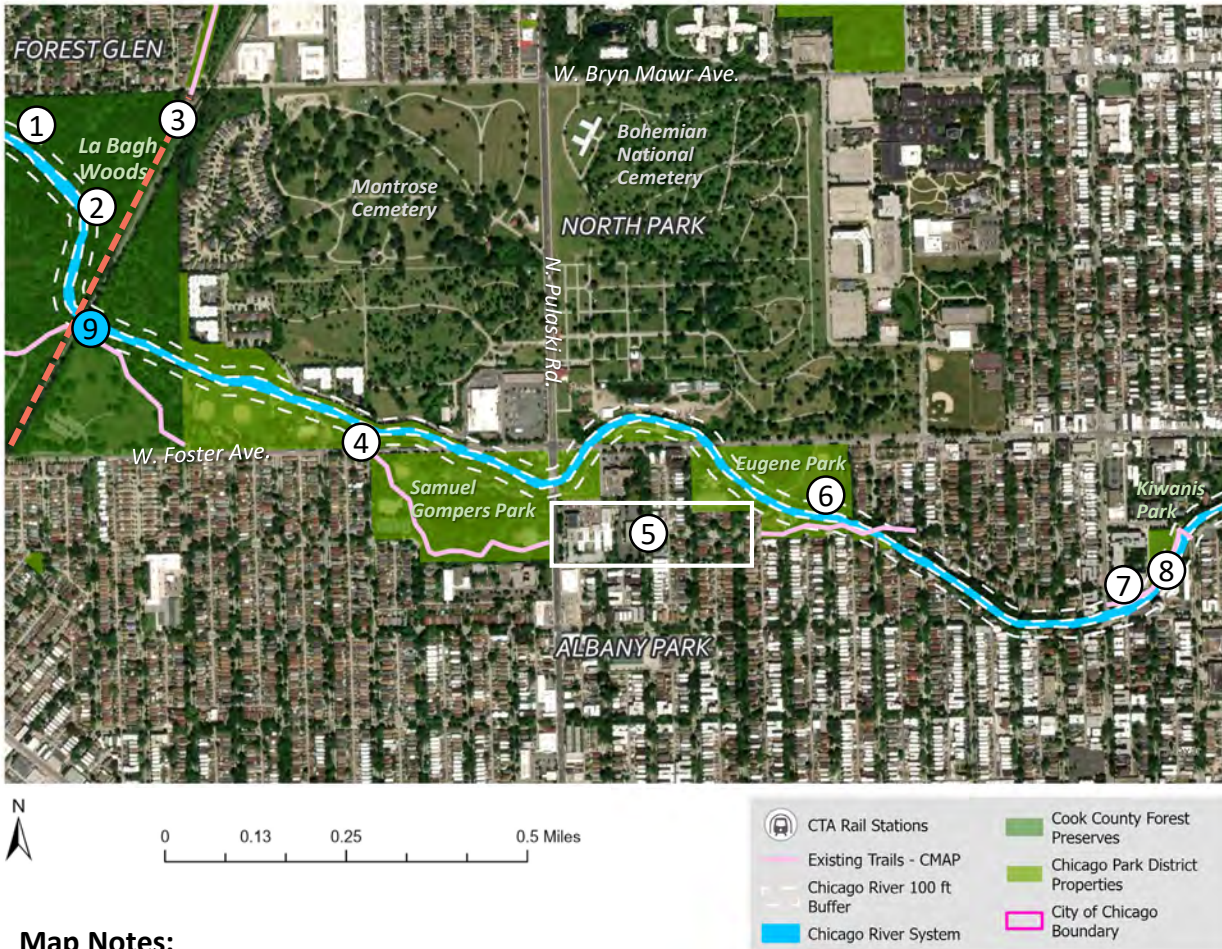
1. The Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) will be doing a restoration project at Sidney Yates Flatwoods.
2. Caldwell Golf Course has known flooding issues. (see *Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Plan*)
3. There are opportunities at Caldwell Woods for added overlooks, trail improvements, and to remove in-stream infrastructure. (see *Gateways to Nature*)
4. The Forest Preserves of Cook County are conducting a study of Edgebrook Golf Course to guide future improvements there.



River Segment Notes:

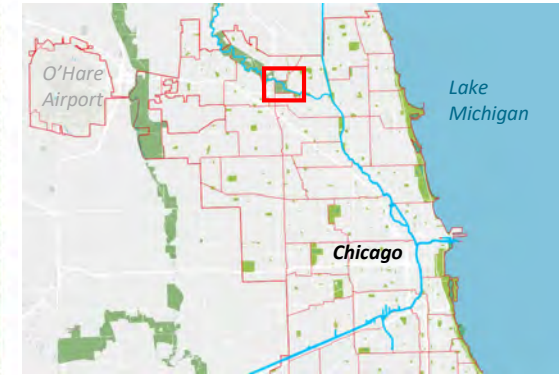
- A study of Edgebrook Golf Course is being completed by the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Their long-term strategy includes a transition to a nature-compatible recreation amenity with disc golf and high-quality nature-focused rental facility with an outdoor lawn, garden, and picnic space. This is a two and a half year project with design development and community engagement.
- The [Gateways to Nature Plan](#) details more accessible ways to be engaged with nature and includes many opportunities in this area.

Upper North Branch



Map Notes:

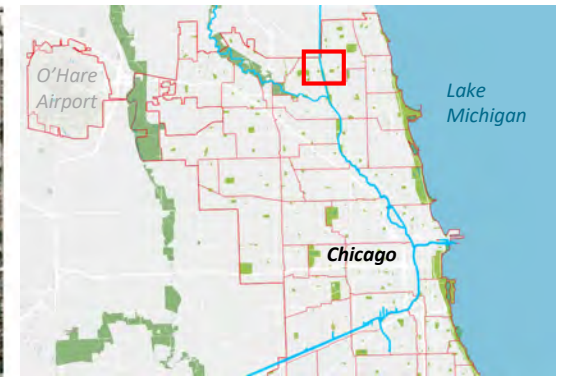
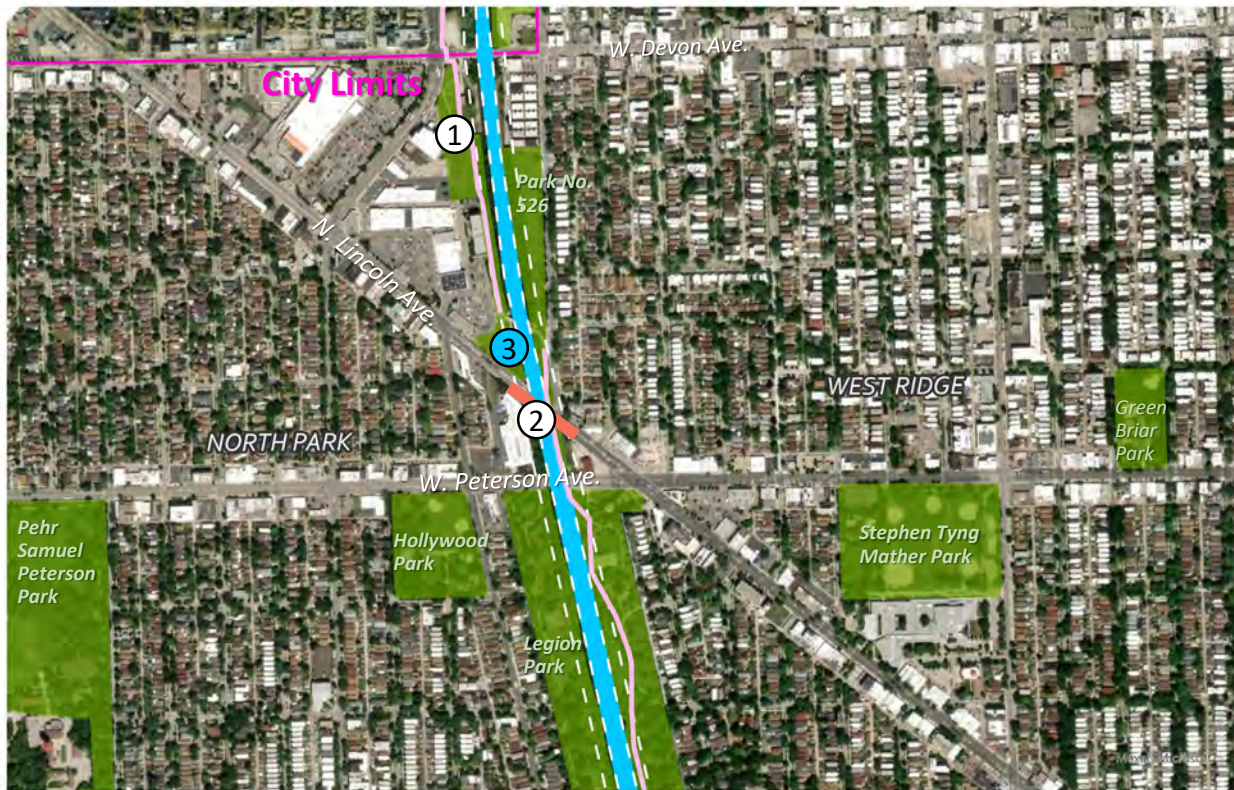
1. Should improve entrance messaging to La Bagh Woods (*noted by FPCC*)
2. La Bagh Woods Restoration is being done by the FPCC and partners
3. The Weber Spur Trail project will create a future connection to Sauganash Trail.
4. Existing river edge fencing, makes river edge inaccessible to the public.
5. Trail connection opportunity identified (*see Upper North Branch River Audit*)
6. Restoration at Eugene Field Park being done by the Chicago Park District. Future opportunities exist for in-stream habitat restoration in this area.
7. Existing concrete-lined area along Kiwanis Park (*see Upper North Branch River Audit*)
8. Opportunity to improve existing informal access point in Kiwanis Park (*see Upper North Branch River Audit*)
9. La Bagh Woods Waterway Access Point



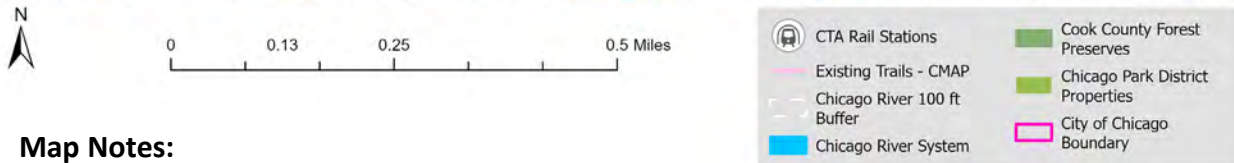
River Segment Notes:

- [See the Gateways to Nature](#) (from FPCC) for additional information about opportunity for improved entrance messaging at La Bagh Woods.
- See the Upper North Branch River audit for additional Partner-Gathered data about this area.

North Shore Channel



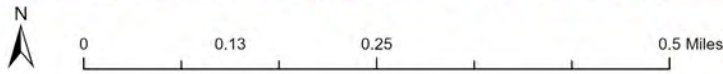
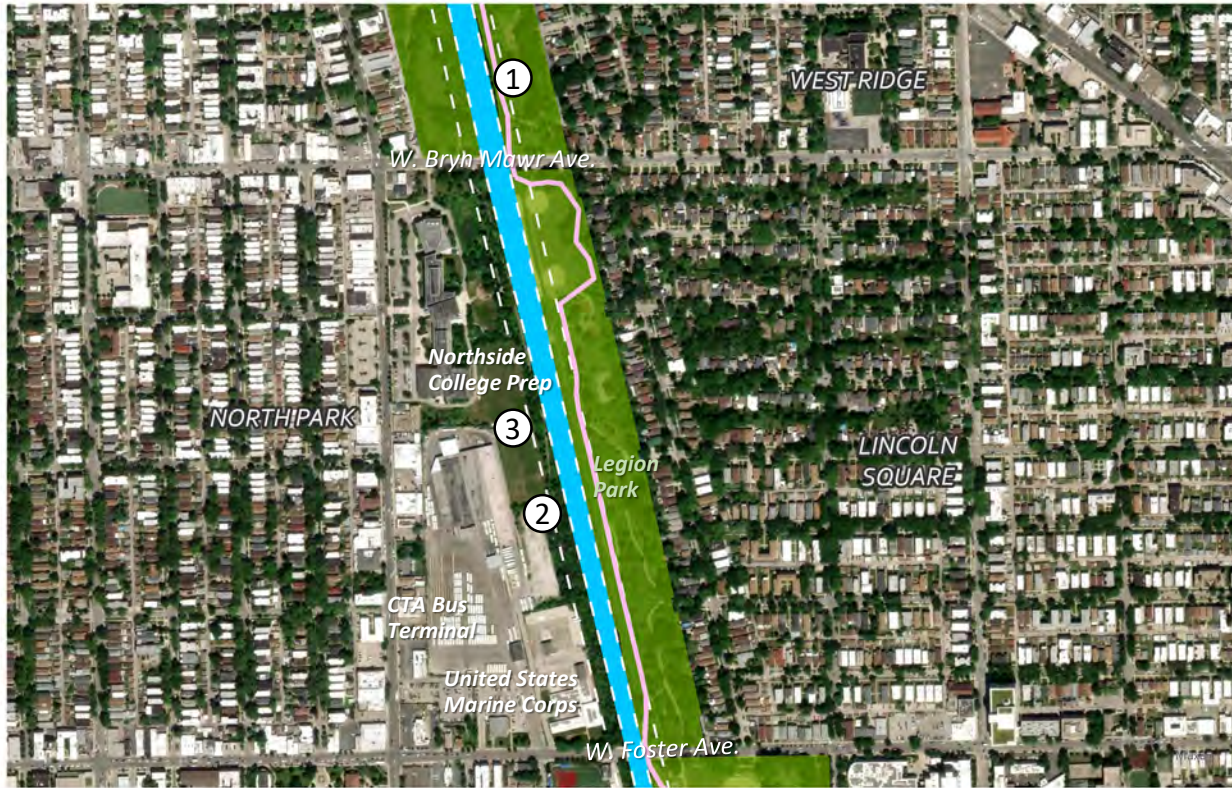
River Segment Notes:



Map Notes:

1. The Chicago Park District is completing renovations here including a bio filtration system and a rain garden.
2. The Lincoln Village Pedestrian Bridge connects the river trail and was completed in 2020.
3. Lincoln Avenue Waterway Access Point

North Shore Channel



| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| CTA Rail Stations | Cook County Forest Preserves |
| Existing Trails - CMAP | Chicago Park District Properties |
| Chicago River 100 ft Buffer | City of Chicago Boundary |
| Chicago River System | |

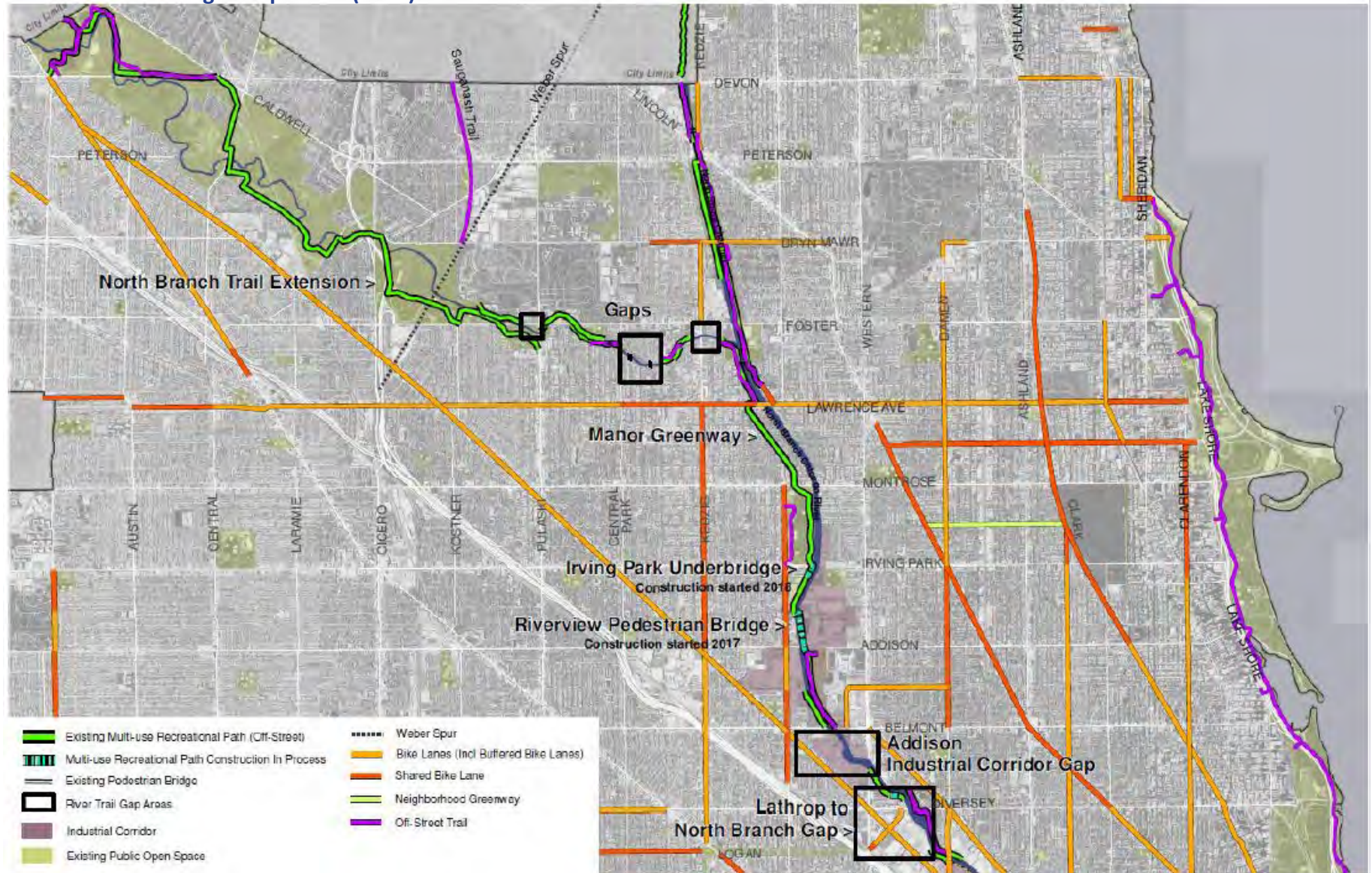
Map Notes:

1. There is an ongoing effort to remove invasive plants and replant this area.
2. There is an opportunity to connect the river edge trail system along the Marine Corps property, feasibility should be explored further.
3. A soccer field reconstruction project was proposed by Northside College Prep.



River Segment Notes:

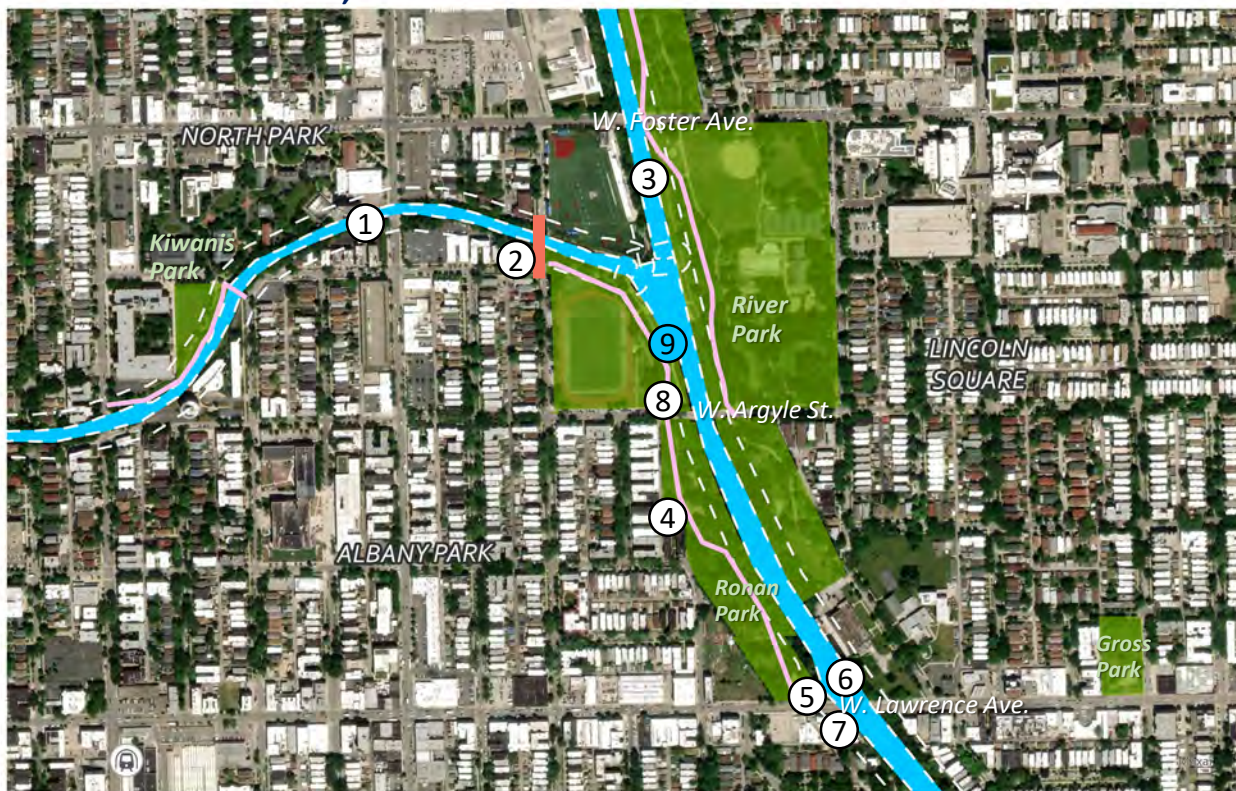
REGTF Trails Working Group Notes (2019)



In 2019, a workshop with the River Ecology and Governance Task Force “Trails Working Group” (which is now combined with the System Plans Working Group) focused specifically on documenting river edge trail gaps and opportunities on the North Branch Area. The resulting updated map is shown above. Remaining trail connectivity gap areas are outlined with a black box. Additional trail connectivity information can be found in the Chicago River Trail Action Plan, published by the Active Transportation Alliance:

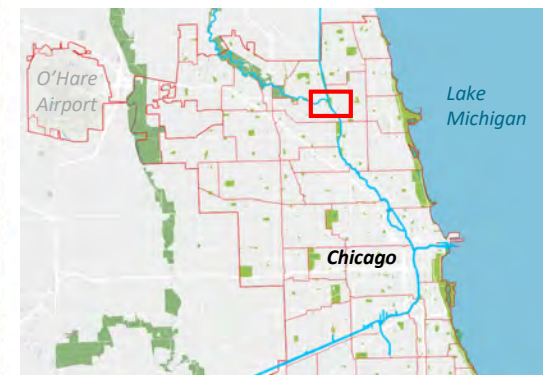
<https://activetrans.org/sites/files/ChicagoRiverTrailActionPlan.pdf>

The Confluence of the Upper North Branch, North Shore Channel, and the North Branch



Map Notes:

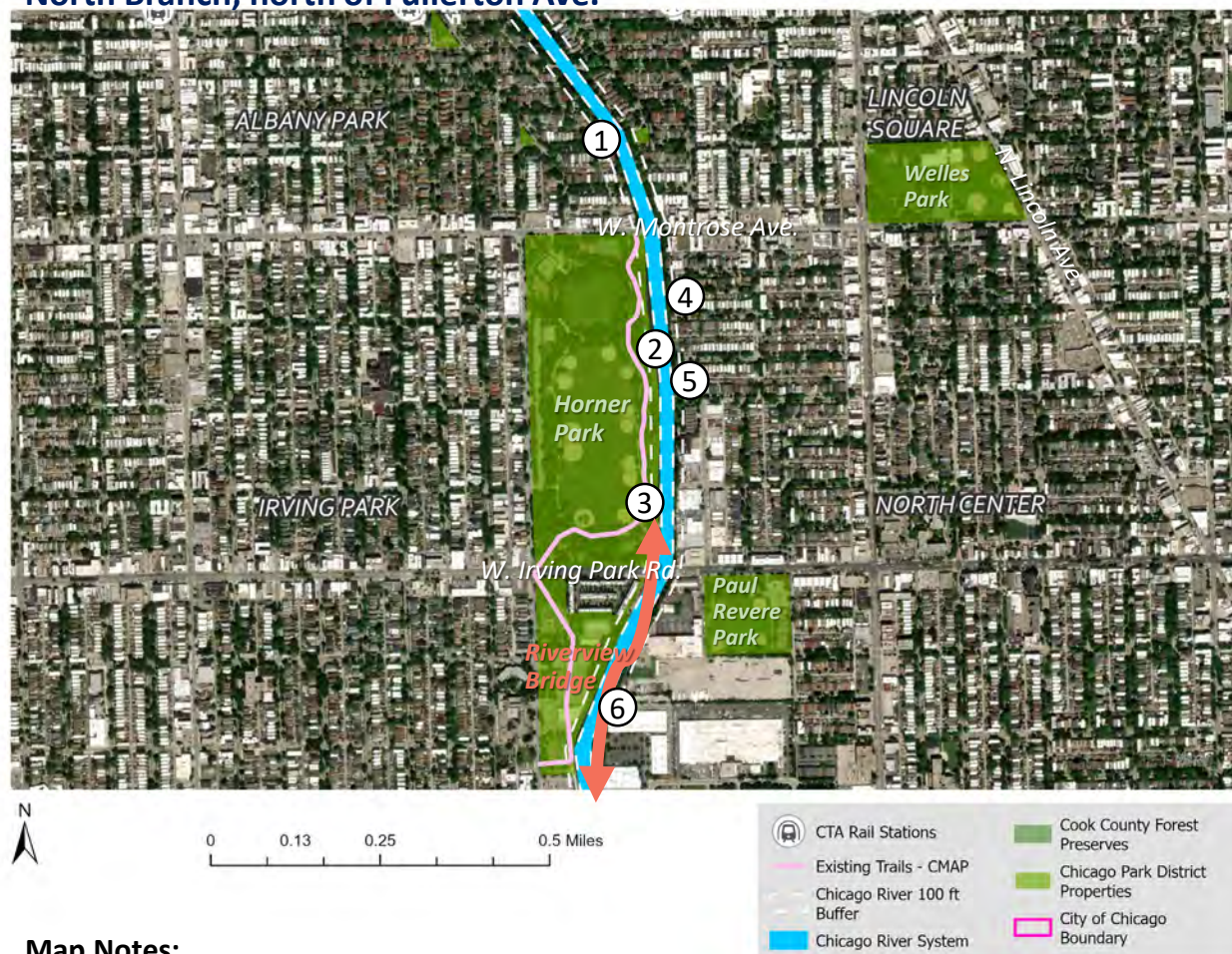
- Existing concrete-lined area (see *Upper North Branch River Audit*). Future instream restoration opportunity within shallow areas.
- In the area of the Albany Pedestrian Bridge, the Chicago Department of Transportation is looking for potential river crossing improvements, the existing connection is inadequate.
- Floating gardens are planned here by Urban Rivers.
- Ronan Park: Park improvements in progress (see *"Confluence" vision plan*)
- New development project proposal at this site planned for residential with ground floor retail.
- Large sewer outfall location north of Lawrence Avenue.
- Trail connectivity and safety improvements being examined to Manor Bikeway.
- River Lab (Chicago Park District facility)
- River Park Waterway Access Point



River Segment Notes:

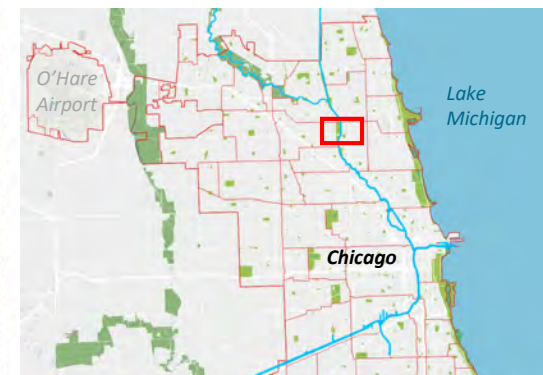
- The Chicago Rowing Foundation has concerns over boat traffic in the river in this area due to lots of access points and existing docks.
- Future consideration is needed to balance and accommodate all active users.
- Potential tension here with motorized and non-motorized users.
- There are some personal safety concerns by River Park. How can we activate spaces with programming and make them safer?
- Urban Rivers project will include programming and other activities occurring over the next two years.
- Major outfall north of Lawrence Avenue causing erosion of the riverbed.
- Data requested about the pre/post dam removal statistics regarding river flow. The Chicago Park District would find this useful.

North Branch, north of Fullerton Ave.



Map Notes:

1. Degraded private docks exist along this stretch of Ravenswood Manor.
2. Potential opportunities exist for instream habitat exist with decayed wooden structures.
3. There is extensive new bike traffic here. There is expressed interest in better organizing traffic to separate bikes from pedestrians.
4. Waters Elementary does a lot of programming at this site.
5. Community seems open to more restoration opportunities in the area (*noted by the Chicago Park District*).
6. Erosion issues present, existing opportunities for vegetation improvements and instream plantings around the bridge.



River Segment Notes:

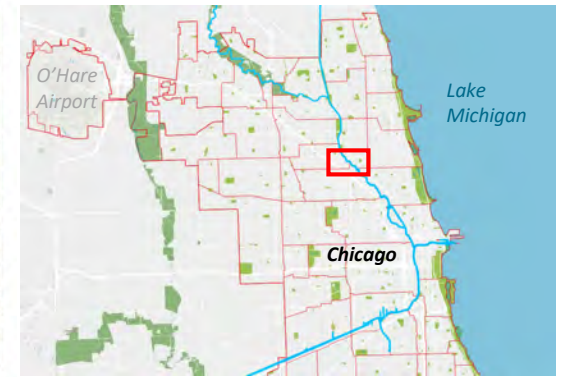
- Aquatic habitat opportunities at Horner Park next to the river bank.
- Note that instream habitat by Horner Park is not managed by the Chicago Park District.
- River Bank Neighbors site: Very activated by programming, maintain their stretch of the river, existing low seawall.
- New and more extensive bike traffic in Horner Park because of the new connection to the south (Riverview Bridge). There is interest in better organizing traffic to accommodate all users.
- Data Request: Investigate and document the different widths of river sections and call that out in a future study.

North Branch, north of Fullerton Ave.



Map Notes:

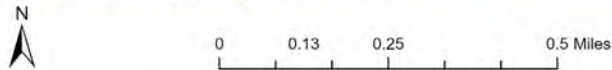
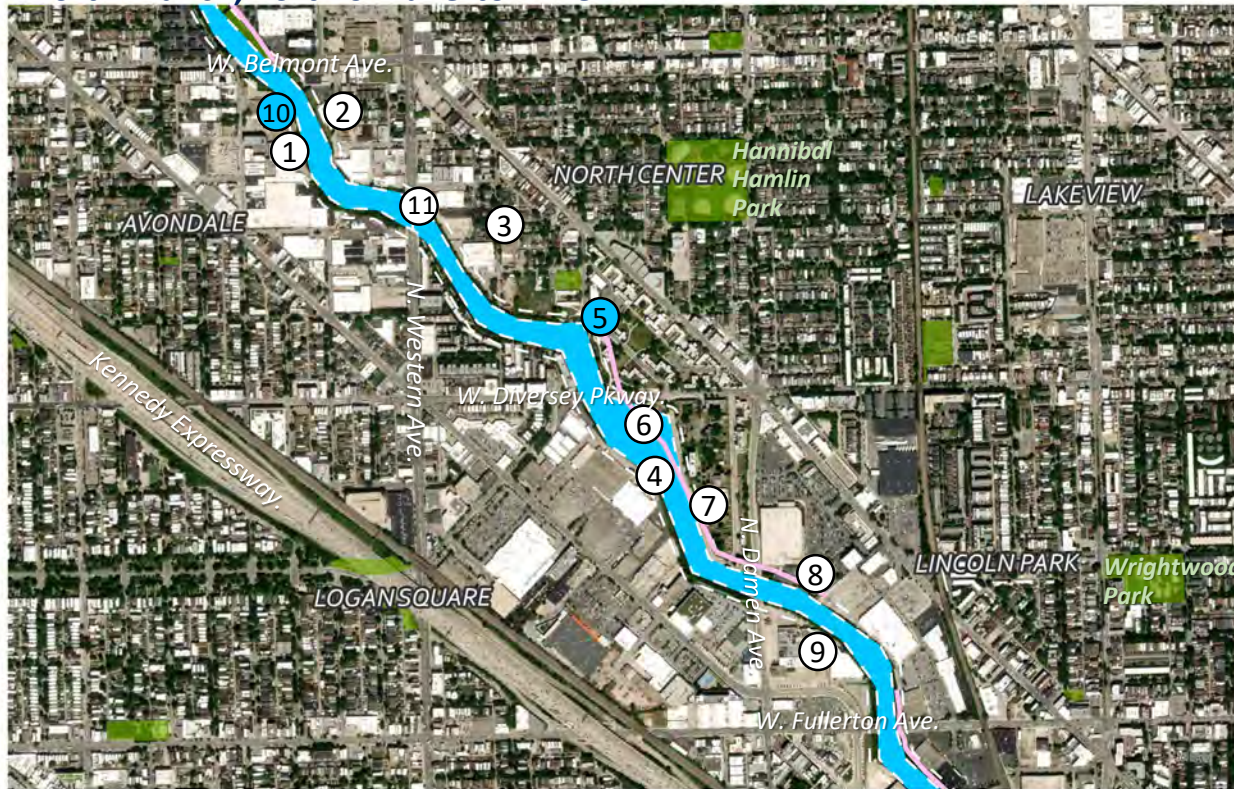
1. Community wants to see continued river access here as well as the trees maintained.
2. Vacant high school site here with lots of existing habitat (former DePaul College Prep site).
3. Extent of Navigable Portion of the River (noted by The US Army Corps of Engineers).
4. Existing cement slab overlook across the Boathouse at Clark Park.
5. Community interest in urban agriculture.
6. Belmont River Club residences have current erosion issues and river edge trail collapse risk, need improvements.
7. Existing Nature Play Space by the Chicago Park District.
8. Clark Park Waterway Access Point



River Segment Notes:

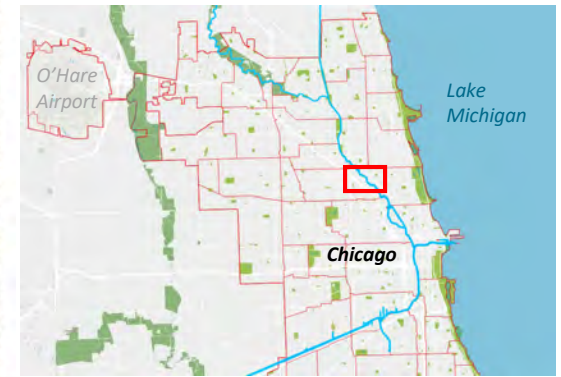
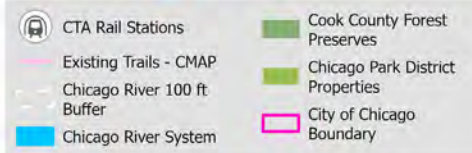
- Current opportunities to restore river edge in a way that stands up to storm events, with erosion control, but also provides habitat benefits.
- The community expressed that the Belmont River Club trail is well used, and there is interest in improving it (noted by North River Commission).
- At the vacant DePaul College Prep property there are strong community feelings about new river access at the site, maintaining existing vegetation and trees.
- Future developers should know these key concerns about this site with a lot of interest from community members and advocates.

North Branch, north of Fullerton Ave.



Map Notes:

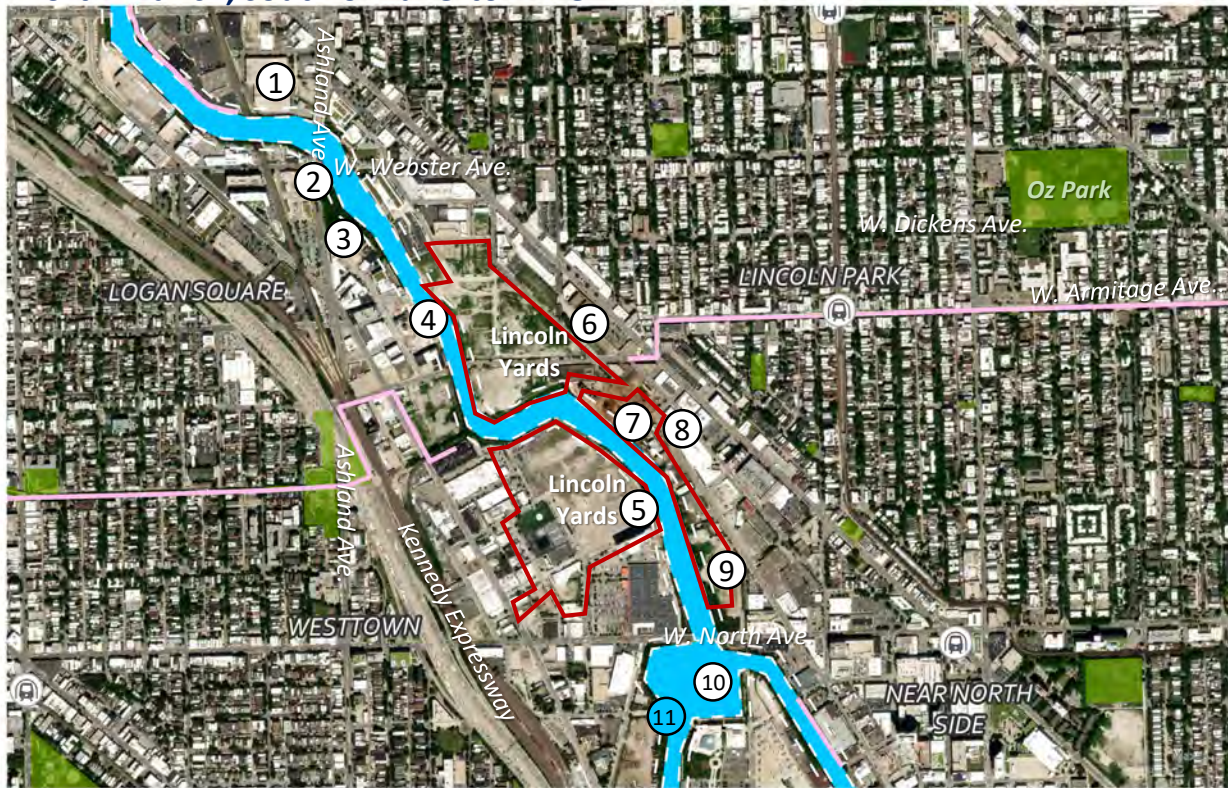
1. River edge parcels (below Belmont Avenue) have extensive existing vegetation.
2. Parking lot redesign to include river edge connectivity improvements are desired here.
3. The Active Transportation Alliance is conducting a trail assessment here from Belmont Avenue to Lathrop Homes.
4. Seawall area here holds opportunity for river edge improvements.
5. Lathrop Homes Waterway Access Point (Very popular for fishing).
6. Shallows exist here (low river depth) opportunity for aquatic habitat. Also lots of existing wildlife in this area.
7. Phase 2 of Lathrop Homes
8. The Costco development proposed project will include parking lot adjustments.
9. This 9.3 acre site has a large riverfront stretch and is owned by Vienna Beef.
10. Rockwell on the River Waterway Access Point.
11. Western Avenue Improvement Project by the City of Chicago's Department of Transportation.



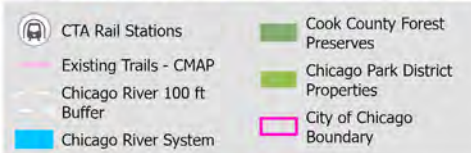
River Segment Notes:

- There is low tree canopy in this area and a desire for a tree canopy expansion between Diversey Avenue and Fullerton Avenue.
- The Active Transportation Alliance (ATA) has not had much contact with property owners after their Belmont Connectivity Study. The outcomes of the trail assessment were primarily on-street crossing improvements and floating / on-river trails.
- The City's Department of Planning and Development along with their Department of Transportation are investigating connections on Rockwell for bikes and pedestrians.
- Western Avenue Improvement Project - https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdot/supp_info/western_avenue_improvementprojectwesternviaductatbelmont.html

North Branch, south of Fullerton Ave.

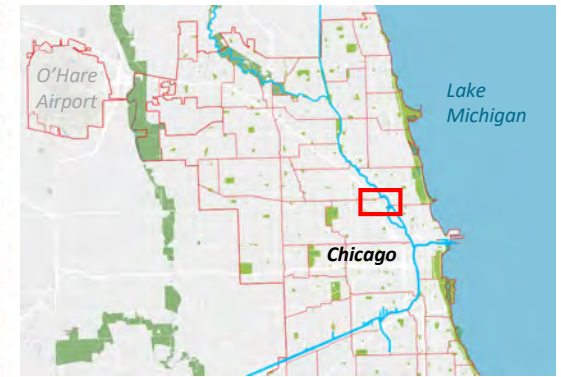


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Map Notes:

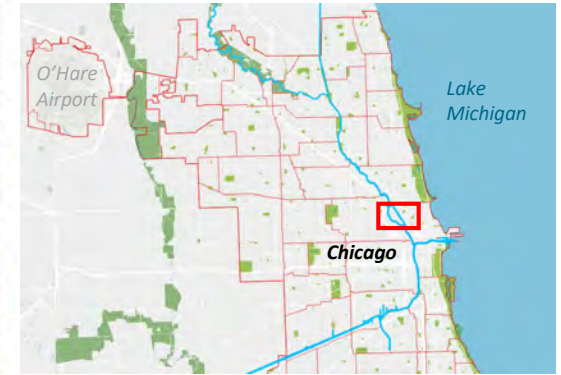
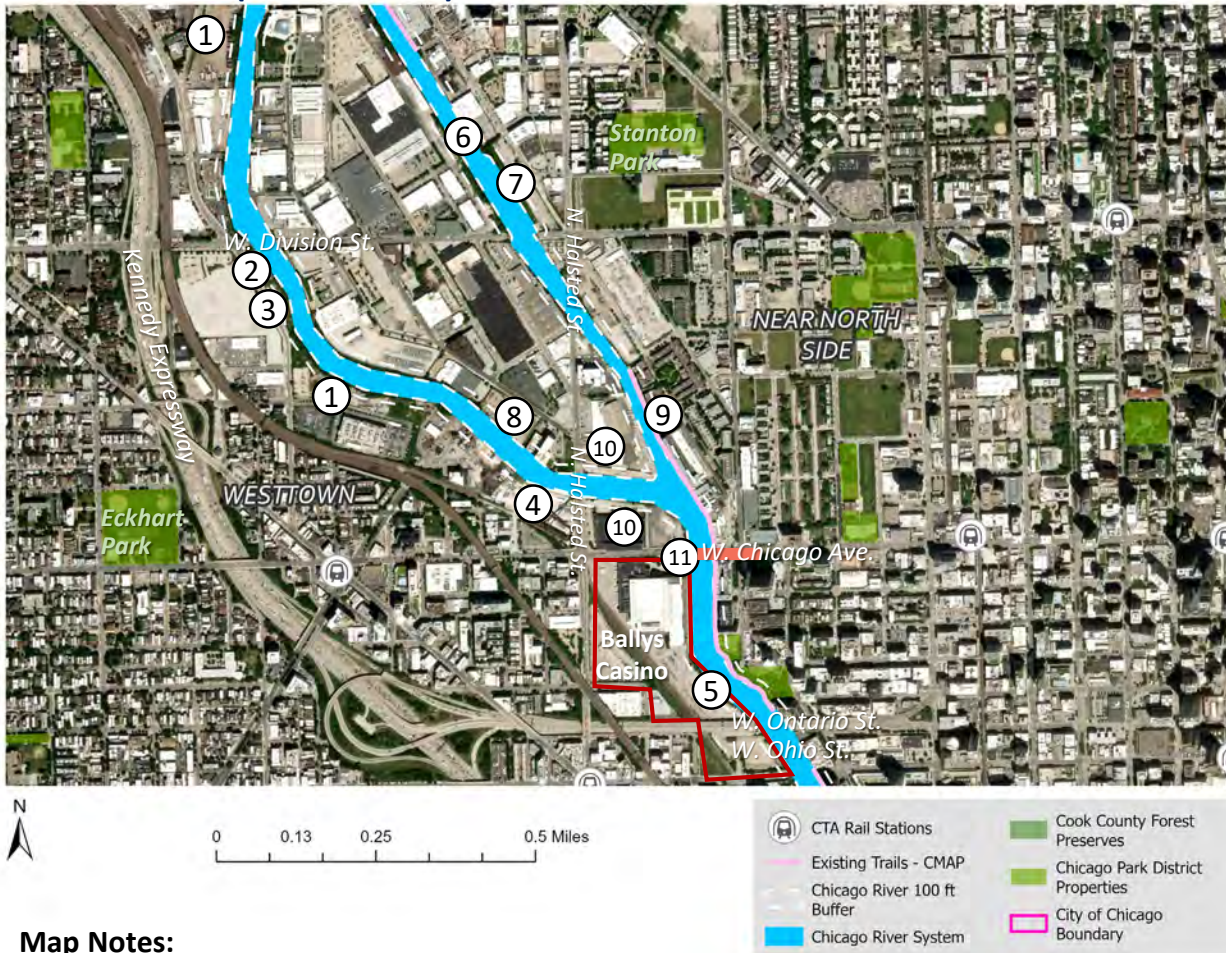
1. City Material Recovery Facility
2. River Aeration Station
3. Quality habitat patch by Webster Avenue.
4. Lincoln Yards planned future bridges improvements and connections.
5. Completed life sciences tower (Lincoln Yards Parcel G).
6. TARP Improvements: New drop shaft for Deep Tunnel to serve this area with combined sewer overflow issues.
7. North Branch Park and Preserve concept has been proposed here with a 24-acre riverfront park (privately owned site).
8. Bike trail connection opportunity to the rail line.
9. Vacant river edge property.
10. The turning basin here has shallows, making it a key aquatic habitat opportunity area.
11. Kayak Chicago Waterway Access Point



River Segment Notes:

- Ozinga is a barge user in this river area.
- The turning basin is very important for the wintering waterfowl (*noted by the Chicago Bird Alliance*).
- Aeration station at Ashland Avenue and Webster Avenue.
- North of Webster Avenue there is very little large boat traffic. This offers great opportunity for instream habitat improvements.

North Branch (Goose Island)



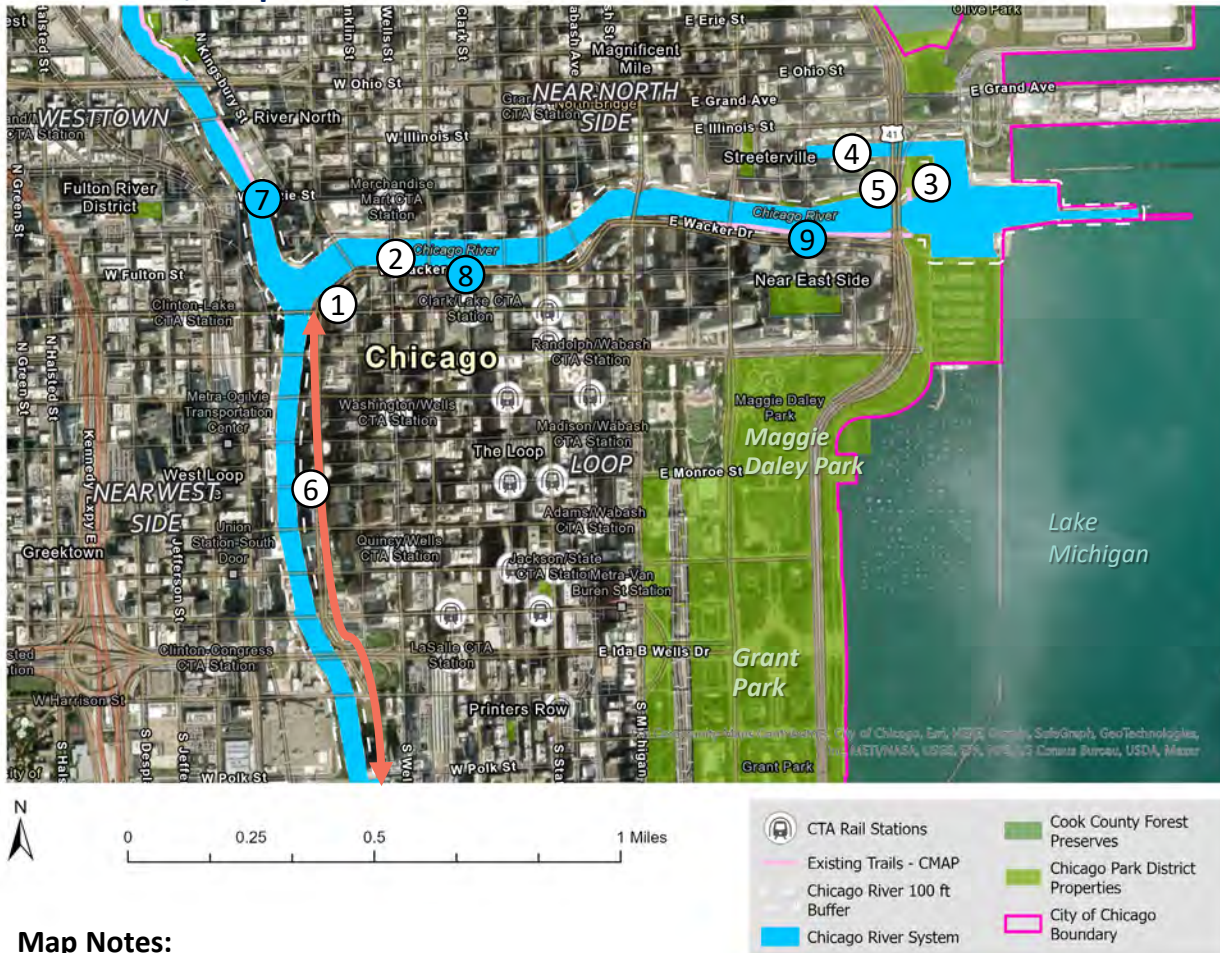
River Segment Notes:

- Prairie Materials is a barge operator in this river area.
- The potential for a future bike connection from 600 W. Chicago to the north is difficult due to uses in this river area.
- Waste Management has a river edge improvements project planned to restore / improve their riverfront. They are currently in the permitting phase.

Map Notes:

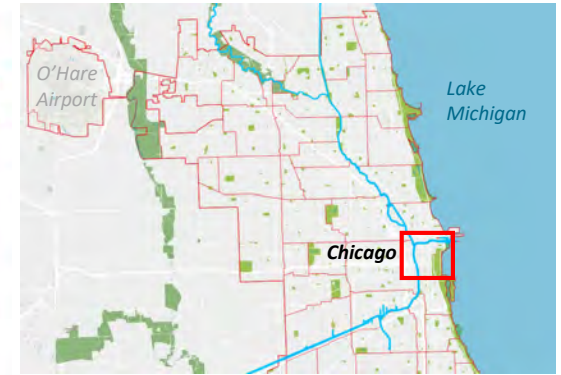
1. Existing vacant parking lots
2. Chicago Boat Rentals location
3. Goose Island overlook: An important site of interest to river edge advocates.
4. Prairie Materials location.
5. Existing vegetation/habitat at this site.
6. Wild Mile: Floating park and wetlands here, phase one complete with plans for expansion.
7. Vacant parking lot site. Currently, it serves as construction staging easement for Division Street Bridge update.
8. R2 owned property.
9. Private boat docks along this area.
10. Onni mixed-use developments being proposed here (Halsted Pointe and Halsted Landing).
11. Chicago Avenue bridge replacement with under bridge connection planned here.

Main Stem, Loop



Map Notes:

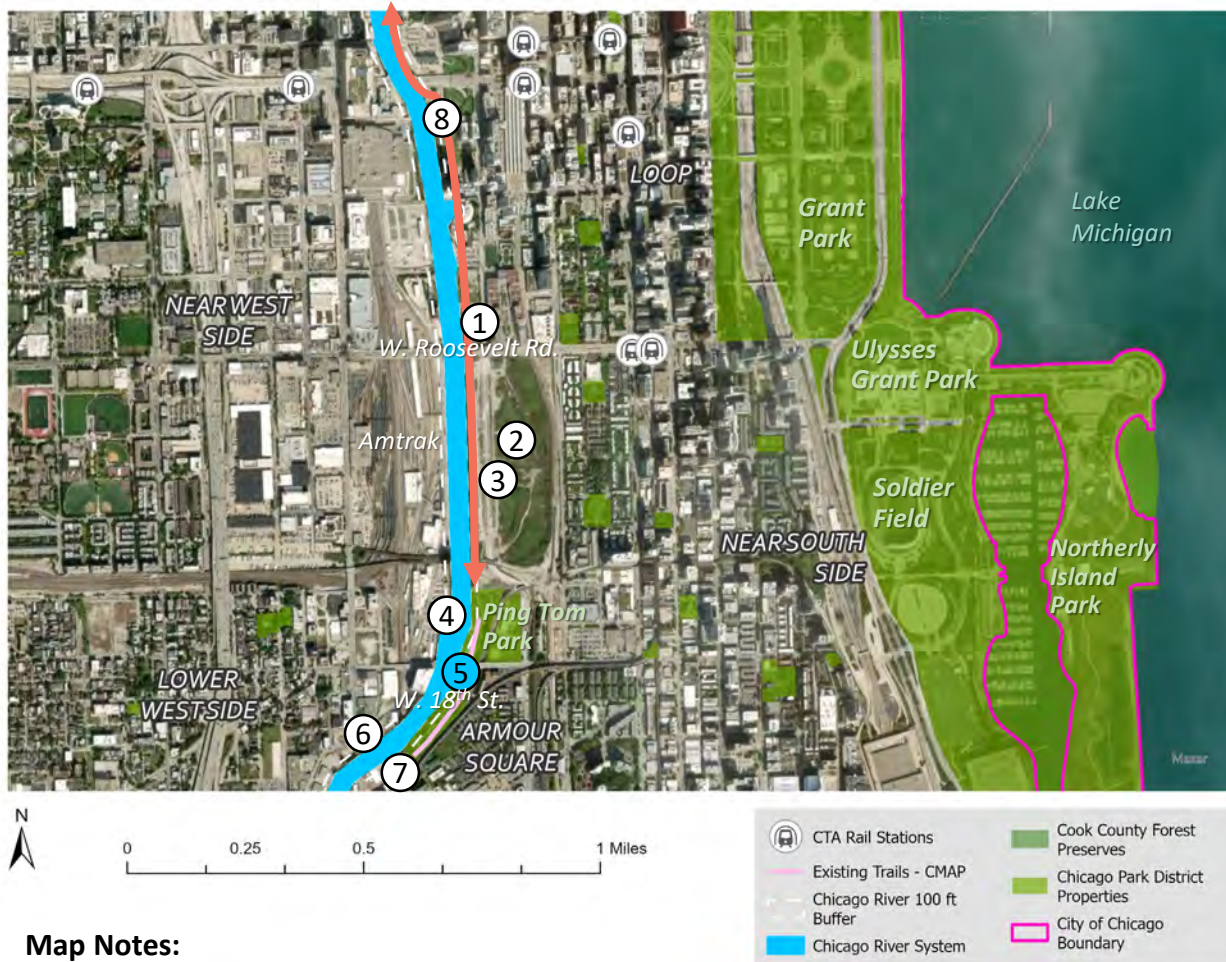
1. Riverwalk “Room” enhancement project proposed here by the City.
2. H2NOW water quality monitoring by Current.
3. DuSable Park design process, is being led by the Chicago Park District
4. Aquatic habitat opportunity in the Ogden Slip.
5. 400 North Lake Shore Drive project construction permit issued.
6. The Chicago Department of Transportation’s South Branch Riverwalk Extension framework feasibility work in process.
7. Wateriders Waterway Access Point
8. The Cove Waterway Access Point
9. Urban Kayaks Waterway Access Point



River Segment Notes:

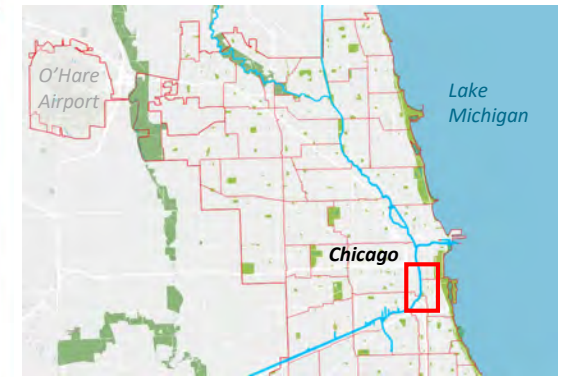
- There is a need to make downtown safer for birds. The City’s updated Sustainable Development Policy will include bird-friendly design measures but existing buildings still pose risks for bird mortality. Bird friendly design should be a priority in this area, where the river system meets the lake.
- The Chicago Bird Collision Monitor has available data to support these concerns.

South Branch



Map Notes:

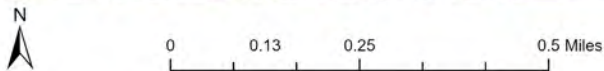
1. Vacant site, at one time planned for residential development – future unknown.
2. The 78 Development: Future location of the Discovery Partners Institute and other to be determined mixed use development.
3. Wells Street connection from the Loop to Chinatown is completed.
4. Shallows in this area provides opportunity for aquatic habitat projects.
5. Ping Tom Park Waterway Access Point – REI managed kayaks
6. Boat Yards.
7. Lakeshore Marina and Canal Street Marina
8. The Chicago Department of Transportation’s South Branch Riverwalk Extension framework feasibility work in progress.



River Segment Notes:

- Amtrak just rebuilt their seawall, this represents a long portion of riverfront that could be enhanced from an ecological perspective.
- A lot of boat yard properties in this area of the river.
- River City residences with their marinas, are a current barrier to the trail connectivity.
- The “South Branch Connectivity Project” will examine the stretch of river from Ping Tom to the Daley Boat Launch, and is being conducted by the McKinley Park Development Council.
- This whole river stretch is almost void of aquatic habitat, the fish tracked here move very quickly through this area to other habitat spots like the Main Stem, Bubbly Creek, and the Wild Mile (*Noted by the Shedd Aquarium*).

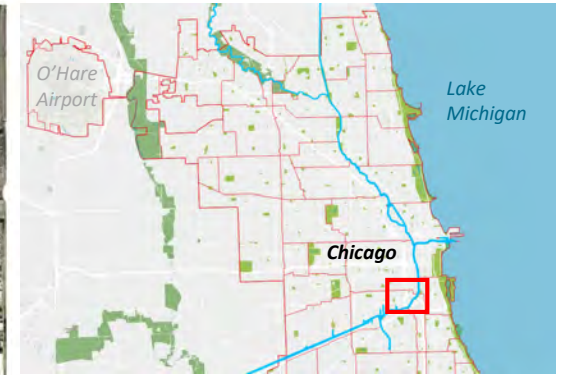
South Branch, South of Ping Tom Park



| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| CTA Rail Stations | Cook County Forest Preserves |
| Existing Trails - CMAP | Chicago Park District Properties |
| Chicago River 100 ft Buffer | City of Chicago Boundary |
| Chicago River System | |

Map Notes:

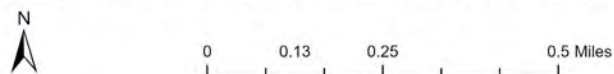
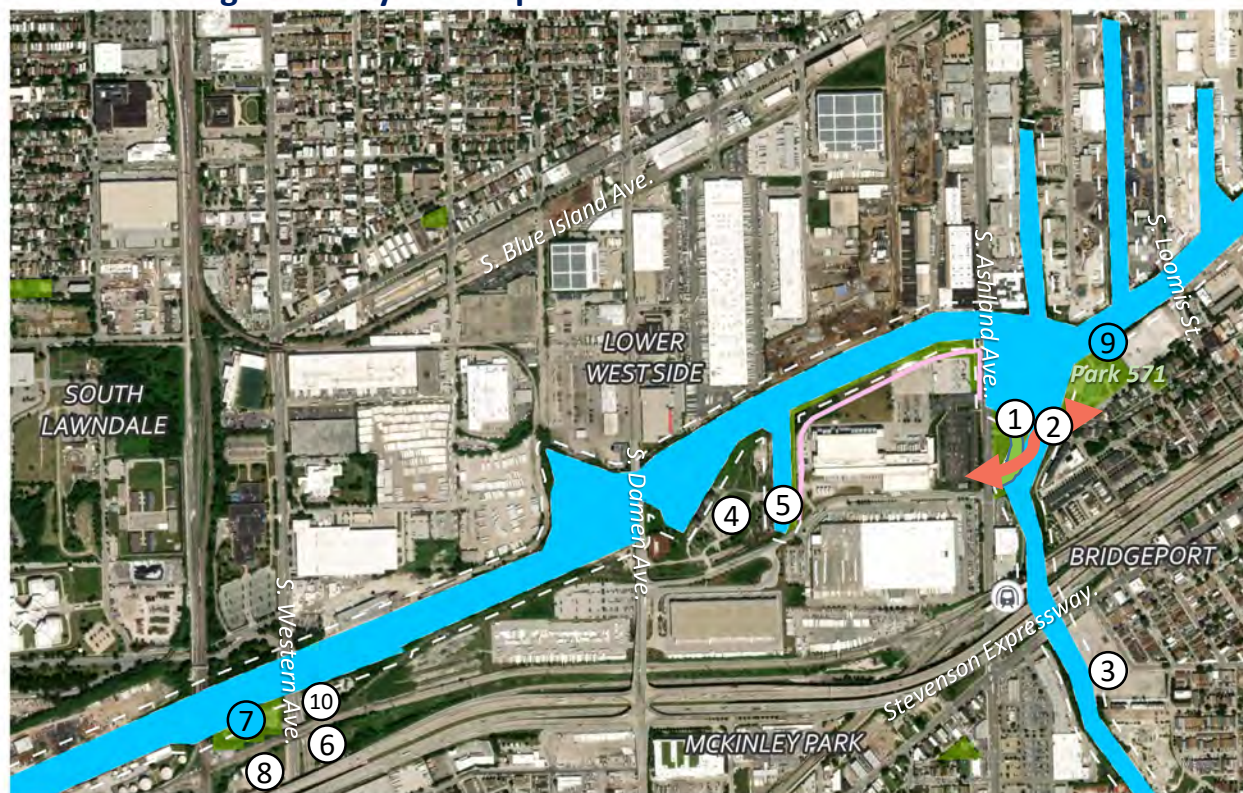
1. Opportunities for aquatic habitat (Noted by Shedd Aquarium)
2. Vacant property, City of Chicago tracking for future development.
3. Loomis River Extension proposed as a segment of the El Paseo Trail (See Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Master Plan)
4. ComEd substation
5. Former Peoples Gas site – South Station
6. Opportunity riverfront at Prologis development (See Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Master Plan)
7. Residents express desire for safer biking near Prologis development (See Bridgeport and Canaryville Priorities Plan)
8. Existing gravel road, an opportunity for future biking infrastructure, negotiations in progress.
9. Barge Traffic
10. Opportunity site South of Lawrence Fisheries (See Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Plan)
11. Amtrak South Branch Bridge (low clearance).
12. A development called Pacifica of Chicago, is in the planned development process with plans to be an Asian lifestyle center.



River Segment Notes:

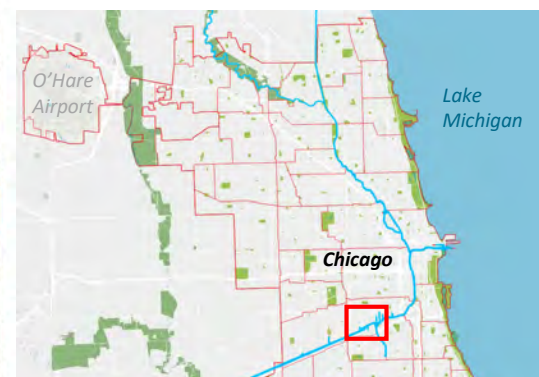
- The completed development at 2430 South Halsted Street includes a landscaped riverwalk, a multi-use path, native plantings, and aquatic habitat. *Noted in the [Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Master Plan](#).*
- The intersection at Halsted Street and Archer Avenue is concerning to cyclists in the area.
- There are a lot of People's Gas sites with remediation concerns in this river area to be aware of.
- Pacifica of Chicago - <https://pacificachicago.com/>

Confluence of the South Branch, Bubbly Creek and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal



Map Notes:

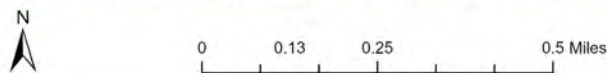
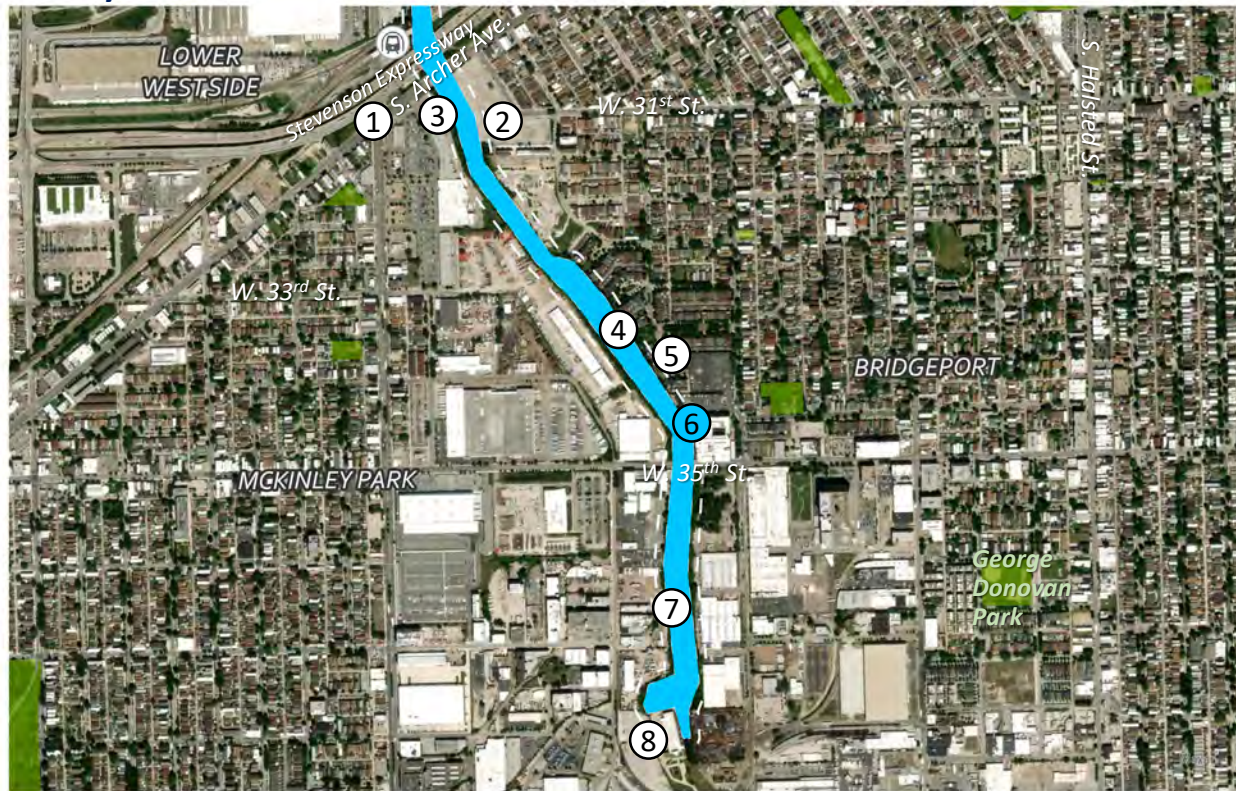
1. Existing floating wetlands by Urban Rivers and the Shedd Aquarium.
2. Proposed bridge concept here included in the South Branch Parks Access Study (CDOT).
3. Pending development proposal for a housing center at 3000 S. Pitney Court (Former Peoples Gas site) by the Chinese American Service League.
4. Damen Silos site undergoing a Section 106 process led by the USACE.
5. Slip should become activated for public use (see *Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Plan*).
6. Community desire to improve ecological health and recreational connections to surrounding community using these remnant sites.
7. Daley Launch Waterway Access Point
8. Potential remediation and future development occurring here.
9. Park 571 Waterway Access Point
10. SkyNet lot for sale.



River Segment Notes:

- Existing slip between Damen Silos and the Canalport Riverwalk could have the addition of a dock, boat storage or other water recreational amenities (noted in *Chicago Waterways Restoration Framework Plan*).
- CMAP is working in the communities of Chinatown and Brighton Park to study biking and pedestrian connectivity.
- Railroad poses challenges south of the river for access and connectivity.
- Access to the Daley Boat Launch is challenging, due to surrounding roadways geometry.
- Damen Avenue access to the river is challenging, the only existing access is informal using the truck ramp by Marketplace Access Road.

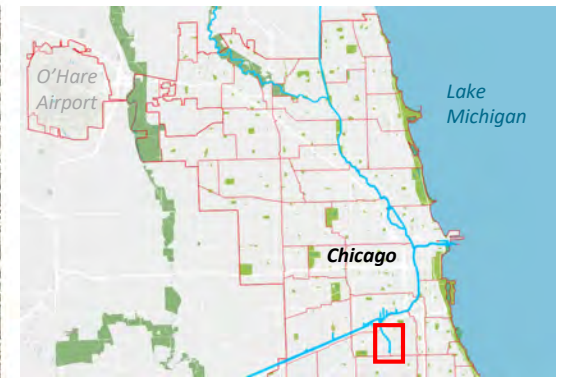
Bubbly Creek



| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| CTA Rail Stations | Cook County Forest Preserves |
| Existing Trails - CMAP | Chicago Park District Properties |
| Chicago River 100 ft Buffer | City of Chicago Boundary |
| Chicago River System | |

Map Notes:

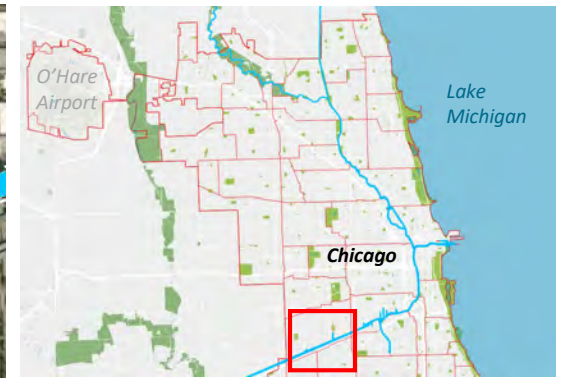
1. S. Archer Avenue/S. Ashland Avenue: Noted as a dangerous intersection for pedestrians and cyclists (see McKinley Park Neighborhood Plan).
2. There is a desire for trees by residents, as this site gets very hot in the summer months (see 2022 South Branch Community Engagement Outcomes).
3. Existing heavily vegetated section.
4. Bubbly Creek – an opportunity to restore approximately 40 acres of riparian areas to habitat.
5. There is a private residential path here that has a dead end. Potential future opportunity to connect this to new development at 3000 S. Pitney Court.
6. Bridgeport Art Center Waterway Access Point
7. This is a low velocity water area with low oxygen levels, fish, and aquatic life loss (noted by Urban Rivers/Shedd Aquarium).
8. Racine Avenue Pump Station, an active combined sewage outfall.



River Segment Notes:

- Current access to CTA station here is challenging (noted in the South Branch Access Study).
- There are frequent combined sewer overflows here, most recently summer of 2023 due to storm events.
- There are regular fish kills in this river area.
- However, diverse wildlife is frequently observed in this area, including beavers and herons.
- A concept for a 33rd Street pedestrian bridge was considered in the past to improve connectivity.
- There are existing sunken boats in boat slips. The Shedd Aquarium is trying to get a grant to remove these.
- Existing dead end paths exist north of the Bridgeport Art Center on the east bank of the river.
- There is a future opportunity to connect this path to the new development at 3000 S. Pitney Court.

Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal



River Segment Notes:

- The Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal will be emphasized in Friends of the Chicago River’s future work, along with other less invested river areas.
- Southwest of Daley Boat Launch, there is a 4 way railroad intersection that will make any land based interventions difficult.
- Little Village Collateral Channel Report:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZqqUBZS3KFaTe5HR5U53qscXaiMKf2yN/view?usp=sharing>

1. Lakeshore Recycling property, improvements to the riverfront and addition of barge loading facility proposed.
2. The Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) is examining the future of the Collateral Channel future with the Environmental Protection Agency.
3. South Kedzie Open Space: Vacant lot owned by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), [EPA funding received to restore and remediate this site.](#)
4. Job Corps Riverbank is an opportunity for habitat.
5. Naturalized inlet, currently functions as passive recreation and habitat
6. Daley Launch Waterway Access Point

This document was compiled by
Friends of the Chicago River, a co-facilitator of the
River Ecology and Governance Task Force.

Friends of the Chicago River
