

Calumet Area Land Use Plan Kickoff Open House – Meeting Summary

January 30, 2025 | 6:00-8:00pm | South Chicago Salud Center (3039 E. 91st St.)

Prepared by MUSE Community + Design

BACKGROUND

Through the Calumet Area Land Use Plan and Design Guidelines update, the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is studying industrial uses on Chicago's Far South Side, including the Calumet, Burnside, and Pullman industrial corridors; Lake Calumet; the Illinois International Port District; portions of the Calumet and Little Calumet rivers; along with hundreds of acres of protected open spaces.

Initiated in the spring of 2024, the study evaluates industrial corridor effectiveness as economic engines and vital job centers. The process includes numerous opportunities for community-based collaborations with the City to guide future growth and investment.

On Thursday, January 30, 2025, DPD hosted an open house from 6:00-8:00pm at the South Chicago Salud Center (3039 E. 92nd Street) to publicly kick off the Calumet Area Land Use Plan and Design Guidelines update. This community meeting had three goals:

- Educate and inform the public about the planning initiative
- Garner insights success and challenges of the existing land use and infrastructure within the study boundary.
- Inform draft objectives that will guide the land use vision for the next 10-20 years



Figure 1. The Calumet Area Land Use Plan Kickoff Open House

The event featured a series of stations to inform the participants about the planning process and the area's existing conditions, along with three interactive engagement activities facilitated by DPD and its consultant team led by MUSE Community and Design, along with SB Friedman Development Advisors and Rudd Resources.

Representatives from the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th ward offices, the Calumet Connect Partnership (CCP), the Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC), the Chicago Department of Environment (DOE), the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) were present at the event to staff resource tables and participate in the process.

ATTENDANCE

The event had approximately 200+ attendees. Among them, 29% were residents of the area, 33% worked in the area, and 25% visited the Calumet region. Chicagoans representing over 30 zip codes attended the event with the highest attendance coming from 60617 in South Chicago and 60628, which includes Pullman and parts of Burnside.

Participants with organizational affiliations represented over 40 community organizations, including Friends of the Chicago River, CCP, CAIC, Go Middle River, and the Far South Community Development Corporation.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The open house session offered multiple engagement opportunities for participants to interact with proposed plan objectives, offer insights into their vision for the future, and map current successes and challenges. The tables below describe the stations as well as the activities.

Table 1: Stations and Content

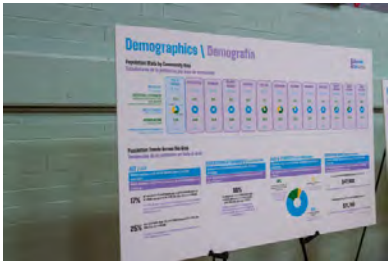

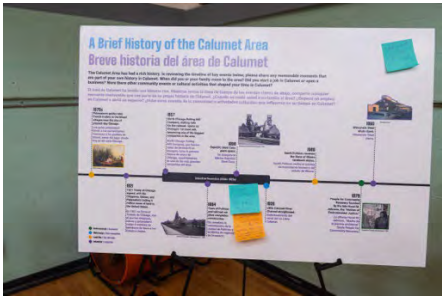

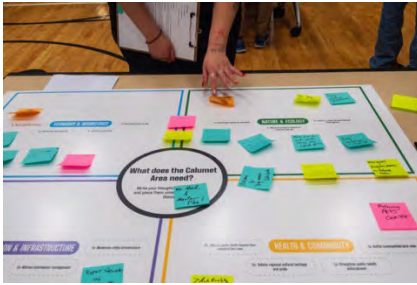

Station	Description of Content
<p>Introduction</p> 	<p>This station shared an introduction to the planning process, defined key terms, outlined the planning timeline, and highlighted information about industrial corridors in the City of Chicago.</p>
<p>Existing Conditions</p> 	<p>This station shared demographic data for the surrounding neighborhoods of the planning study, economic trends in the planning area, existing land use maps, existing zoning maps, industrial land use maps, open space maps, transportation maps, and an overview of prior plans.</p>

Table 1: Overview of Activities

Activity	Purpose
<p>Historical Timeline</p> 	<p>The Historical Timeline presented an abridged land use and environmental justice history of the Calumet Area from 1670-2025. Participants were encouraged to contribute their own personal histories, memorable moments, and community milestones to the timeline. The purpose is to develop an understanding of the communities perspective of what is important in the Calumet Area history.</p>
<p>Corridor Mapping</p> 	<p>This activity featured four large-scale maps of the study area divided into quadrants (Burnside, Pullman, Upper Calumet, Lower Calumet). Facilitators from the City of Chicago, MUSE Community and Design, and Rudd Resources guided participants through discussion to capture locations of concern, opportunities for improvement, and areas that work well and should be supported.</p>
<p>Goals</p> 	<p>Based on the citywide plan, this station prompted participants to respond to, "What does the Calumet area need?" Participants responded to this question for the four planning topics: economy and workforce, nature and ecology, transportation and infrastructure, and health and community.</p>
<p>Planning Libs</p> 	<p>This activity invited participants to reflect on the areas where they "work, recreate, and live" using Mad Lib-style cards tailored to the Calumet region. The responses helped capture current experiences in the area, which were then incorporated into a live drawing and mapped to visualize community connections and perspectives.</p>

FINDINGS

The following summary organizes findings from the various engagement activities and comments received into the four plan themes of economy and workforce, nature and ecology, transportation and infrastructure, and health and community.

ECONOMY AND WORKFORCE



Figure 2. An Industrial business owner and small business owner discussing opportunities.

In general, there were few comments on the economy and workforce topic within the activities. A few participants highlighted the need for industry that is greener and safer. One participant listed the need for a more self-sufficient Calumet economy. Most of the comments that were provided were related specifically to workforce development.

Workforce Development

Participants want to see community-specific job training for the industries in the area. There is a call for youth-specific “pipelines” for local businesses and industry in the area. With the new Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park being developed, community members want tech training and skilled labor training. Community members want to see job fairs and career fairs in the neighborhood for both youth and adults. There is interest in more stewardship of the natural areas in the community, including the potential for related paying jobs.

NATURE AND ECOLOGY

“Treat the area between Pullman and the Indiana border and Lake Michigan as a recreation destination... eliminate the barriers”

- Open House participant

River Access

Participants generally expressed interest in increased public access to Calumet’s waterways. Residents want to access the Calumet River and safely use the Calumet waterways network for recreation. One participant indicated they would like waterfront, canoe, and kayak access to the Calumet River. In addition to general improvements to riverfront access, below are specific locations or projects that were highlighted in the comments:

- Realization of the 100th Street river access effort developed by UIC Great Cities Institute
- Public recreation access to the Calumet River and connections between Wolf Lake and the Calumet River
- Public access to the river's edge near the Illinois International Port District's (IIPD) Lake Calumet facility for boat watching
- Access to the Calumet River at Hegewisch Marsh Park
- Scenic views and water/kayak/canoe access at the Sidestream Elevated Pool Aeration (SEPA) station at Torrence Ave. The SEPA station was mentioned at least 5 times specifically for scenic views and river access.
- Public access for a scenic view near Maryland Pig Iron of Illinois (north of 130th near Calumet River).



Figure 3. Participant reviewing existing conditions board.

Connectivity

Participants generally highlighted wanting to increase dedicated paths for pedestrians walking and biking near and within Big Marsh, along Lake Calumet, and between the communities. Trails were mentioned several times within the responses as an option for increased connectivity. It's important to note that residents and industrial business representatives alike indicated they are concerned about the safety of pedestrian use near truck routes.

Participants noted a desire for several specific connections between existing and future open spaces:

- Pedestrian and bike paths across Lake Calumet
- A dedicated bike path from Pullman to Big Marsh Park
- A bike path south on Cottage Grove to Beaubien Woods
- Connected Pullman, Eastside and Riverdale neighborhoods with green pathways, safe spaces, nearby work
- Pedestrian crossing and bikeway between Harborside Marsh and Lake Calumet
- Adaptive reuse of "Old Railroad bridge" (near SEPA station)
- Increased eastbound sidewalk access along Avenue O

Open Space

In general, participants want to maximize the natural areas in Calumet and add new opportunities, including new open space, jobs in nature and ecology, and improvements to current beaches and

parks. Participants also want to see new playgrounds and jungle gym equipment added and fixed in parks. Several participants indicated the Golf Course should not “count” as open space since it is not free and requires a reservation. Specific areas mentioned by the participants include:

- Fill in the natural areas around Lake Calumet that can be publicly accessed
- 100th Street Riverfront Site realized
- Expand Big Marsh Park east to Torrence
- ACME EPA Superfund Site should be converted to open space
- Schroud Superfund Site should be converted to a solar farm with public open space
- Cap the former Paxton Landfill for open space and scenic views to leverage the elevation

Outside of the study boundary, participants want to see the beaches improved with real sand, instead of small rocks, and added exercise equipment. Fill in incomplete portions of the Burnham Greenway. Open space as a significant contribution to the Illinois Quantum development site was also noted.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

“Smooth streets, it feels like we’re driving through rough terrain on too many streets”

- Participant in response to “What does Calumet need?”

General Challenges

Proximity between truck routes and multi-use nonmotorized vehicle routes was consistently raised as an issue of safety by both industrial businesses and residents. Residents indicated that trucks should have their own dedicated routes. While industrial businesses face issues with the existing truck routes, mainly potholes. The residents also indicated that access to the bridges for walking and biking tends to be “scary”. This could mean that proximity to truck traffic causes challenges of safety, or that safety in general is a concern when walking or biking across these bridges. The Burley Avenue expansion was also highlighted several times in written comments as having issues in its realization; specificity as to which issues was not indicated.

Flooding was a challenge participants raised several times, including:

- 106th & Stony Island Ave
- Avenue O south of 114th St.
- South Bishop Ford at 130th St.
- Flood control at riverbanks

Odors and air quality issues were highlighted at the following locations:

- 116th St.
- MWRD site (participants noted that 20 new residences are being developed near the MWRD site, and that there is a public health clinic nearby on 130th that has raised issues of the odors)
- Paxton Landfill
- PVS Chemicals
- Van Vlissingen Park
- North Star chemical plant



Figure 4. Participants looking at a neighborhood map of the study area.

Public Transit

Participants offered suggestions on where they'd like to see connecting public transit and new locations. Community members want increased connectivity within the community areas of Calumet and outside of the community. Recommendations for public transit connections included:

- Better public transit to Lake Michigan from the community area (participant did not state if this is an east-west connection or north-south).
- Express CTA bus and Metra line to downtown
- Public transit to Ford Chicago Assembly Plant and other major employers from the neighborhood areas
- Bus service within East Side
- Bus route along 130th (east-west)
- Public transit to the parks in the area

Generally, participants noted the need for increased safe sidewalks and bike lanes within the study area, highlighting the challenge of finding safe and continuous sidewalks to reach the parks and natural areas. In addition, access to Wendell Smith School at E 103rd St. and S Cottage Grove Ave was highlighted as a need for easier access. 94th Street was considered an option for a low-stress bike route.

HEALTH & COMMUNITY

Participants recommended several community services and public health needs in the area. Community services centered themes of mental health for young people while providing care to the aging population. The concerns with public health are related to the odors discussed in the transportation and infrastructure section of this summary.

Community Services

The community services highlighted by the participants include:

- Nursing homes
- Independent living facilities
- Services for children with disabilities and other vulnerable populations
- A 24 hour grocery store
- YMCA with an indoor swimming pool
- Hospital with a Level 1 Trauma Center
- Mental health facilities for youth and adults

Recreational services highlighted include:

- Performing arts center
- Sports recreation center
- Vet's park was highlighted specifically for youth sports, entertainment, music, a theater, a larger YMCA
- Movie theater and entertainment options

Public Health

Residents raised concerns about the public health implications of soil contamination from the dredging, industrial land usage close to the drinking water supply, and odors from nearby industrial facilities that affect air quality. A strong vision for Eastside and Hegewisch was shared, including clean air, detoxed soil, green schools, and economic growth that doesn't depend on hazardous industries. One resident commented wanting an increase in ecological protections.

Residents also commented on safety concerns of having hazardous materials exposed to the local workforce and concern for recreation on un-remediated land.

RESPONSES TO MAPPING ACTIVITY

Pullman

Comments on the Pullman area map indicated a desire for more connectivity around Lake Calumet and Big Marsh Park. The comments highlighted the unique preservation opportunities these assets pose. Community members want to see the preservation of existing neighborhood connectivity, community assets, and key businesses like Gotham Greens, while addressing new opportunities along the lake and in the park.

- Opportunities:
 - Bike locks, lighting, sidewalks, benches for small parks (Big Marsh)
 - Bike path across Lake Calumet; improve access to natural resources (golf course)
 - Need green infrastructure at the Sherwin Williams brownfield site

- Somewhere safe to fish near Harborside Golf course
- Connectivity Between Lake Calumet and Square Marsh
- Multi-use paths near S Stony Island next to Big Marsh
- Conflicts / issues:
 - Bike/walk access across Norfolk Southern Railroad
 - Greenstone church falling down (111th and S front Ave)
 - Bike Path to Beaubien Woods
 - Flood control on riverbanks (Park 600)
- Save / preserve:
 - Warehouse facility (industrial center in Pullman near 103rd)
 - Project office (S Corliss Ave)
 - Warehouse facility (Gotham Greens)
 - Big Marsh

Lower Calumet

The lower Calumet map saw the most comments for conflicts and issues. The comments revolved around smells in the area, flooding, and lack of connectivity. The opportunities mirror feedback from the other boards with connections, green space, and public access being prominent in the area. The areas noted for preservation include existing green space and community assets.

- Opportunities:
 - Pedestrian crossing (E 122nd St and S Yates Ave)
 - Potential river access (S Torrence Ave)
 - Old railroad bridge adaptive re-use (Watco/Kinder Morgan)
 - Cap landfill for open space and scenic views; leverage elevation (S Stony Ave)
 - Improve water quality (Lake Calumet)
 - More community activities (S Ewing Ave)
 - Schroud Site
 - Park 576
- Conflicts / issues:
 - Trash and litter at Park 600
 - Odors at S. Stony Ave
 - Odors at PVS Chemicals
 - Reduce odors at Paxton Landfill
 - Consider capping Schroud and installing a solar farm
 - Walkway needed on S Cottage Grove Ave.

- Walkway on 130th
- There is no bus along 130th
- Drainage on 106th and Stony Island and S. Bishop Ford
- Save / preserve:
 - Scenic views from Ford Chicago Assembly Plant
 - Bridges near Ford Chicago Assembly Plant
 - Views on S Torrence Ave over the river
 - Powderhorn Prairie
 - SEPA Station
 - Hegewisch Marsh
 - Park 565

Upper Calumet

On the Upper Calumet map, participants noted experiencing challenges with the movement of goods in and out of the community. The area has opportunities, including strong industrial partners and the possibility of green infrastructure.

- Opportunities:
 - ACME Steel EPA Superfund Site
 - Asphalt Operating Service/ BP
 - CBRE North Point Expansion (S Burley, below North Point Fresh)
 - Solar Farm at Calumet Cluster Site
- Conflicts / issues:
 - Low bridge overpass; trucks get stuck (95th and Stony)
 - Burley Ave expansion infrastructure issues (108th Street)
 - Rail spur and cargo master entrance to Walsh, Ozinga, Cargill is often blocked by car traffic
 - Bridge tunnels for residential connectivity
 - River usage becomes a safety issue if there are too many conflicts
- Save / preserve:
 - Preserve the PMD (Planned Manufacturing District)

Burnside

Burnside's comments were split between conflicts and potential opportunities/preservation. The conflicts focused on smells from the industrial areas and the heavy industry next to residential property. The opportunities are near the CTA's 103rd including fixing potholes and investing in the area.

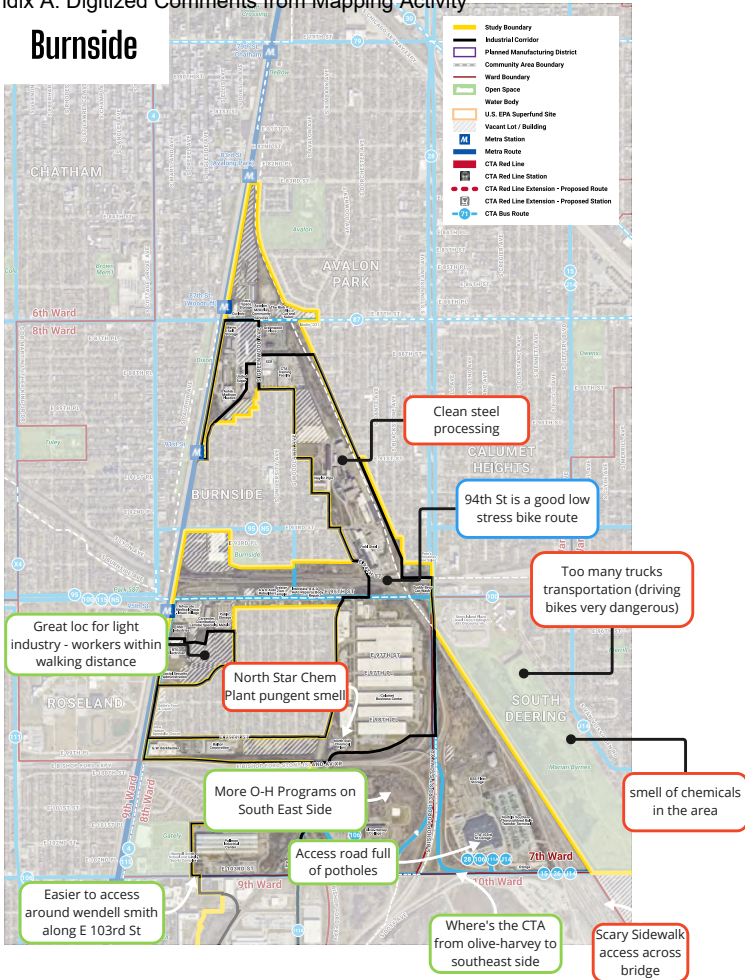
- Opportunities:
 - Access road full of potholes (CTA 103rd garage)
 - Burnside is a great location for light industry- workers within walking distance
 - 103rd and Pullman Industrial Center

- Conflicts / issues:
 - Smells of chemicals in the area (Marian Byrnes/Van Vlissingen)
 - North Star Chemical plant pungent smell
 - Clean steel processing; there is heavy industry next to residential (reference to Finkl Steel and Naylor Pipe)

- Save / preserve:
 - 94th St is a good low-stress bike route (94th and 95th)
 - More Olive-Harvey College programs in the neighborhood.

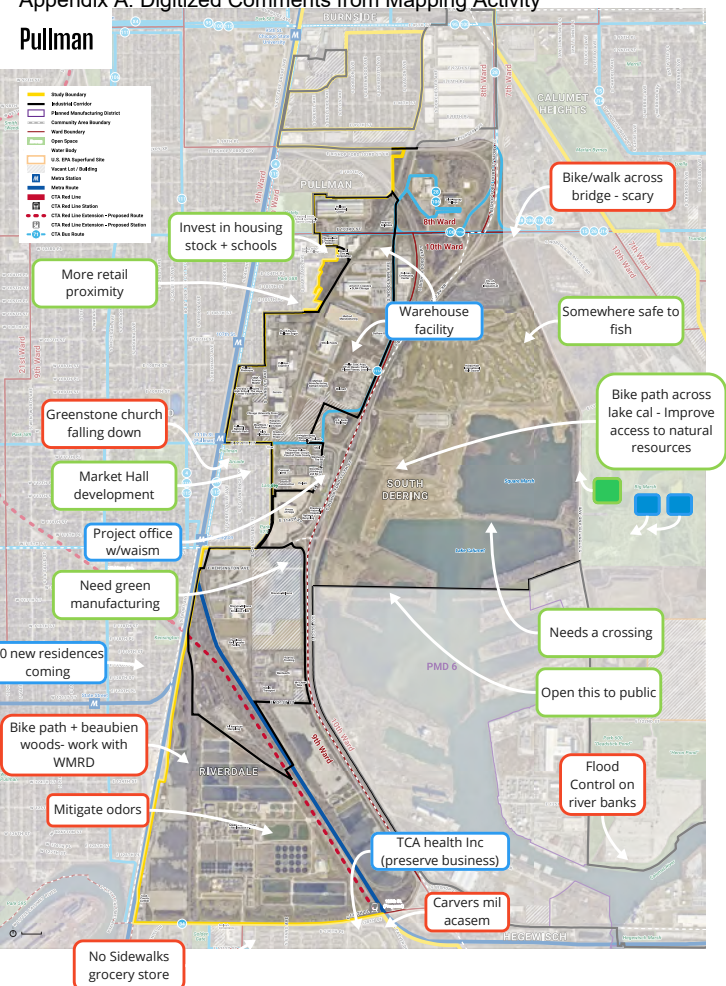
Appendix A: Digitized Comments from Mapping Activity

Burnside



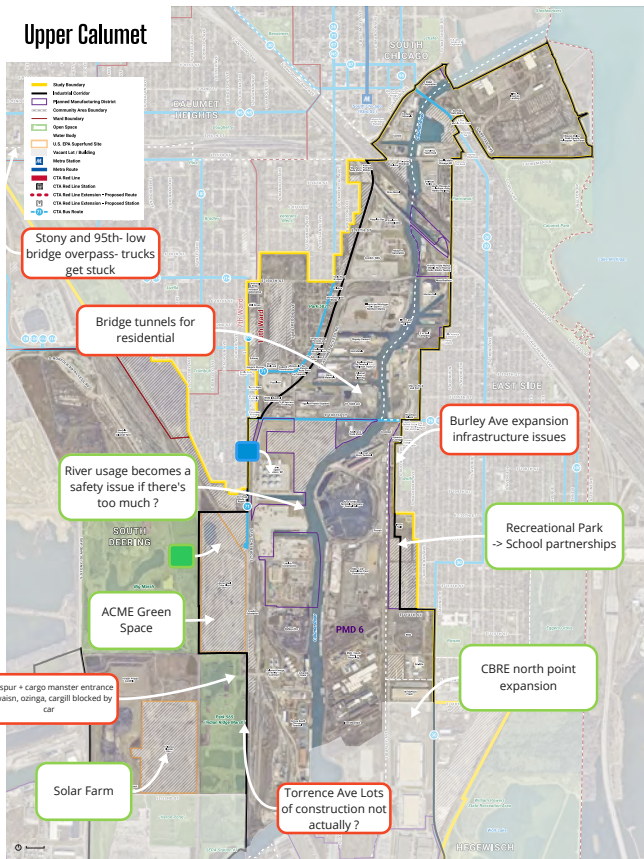
Appendix A: Digitized Comments from Mapping Activity

Pullman

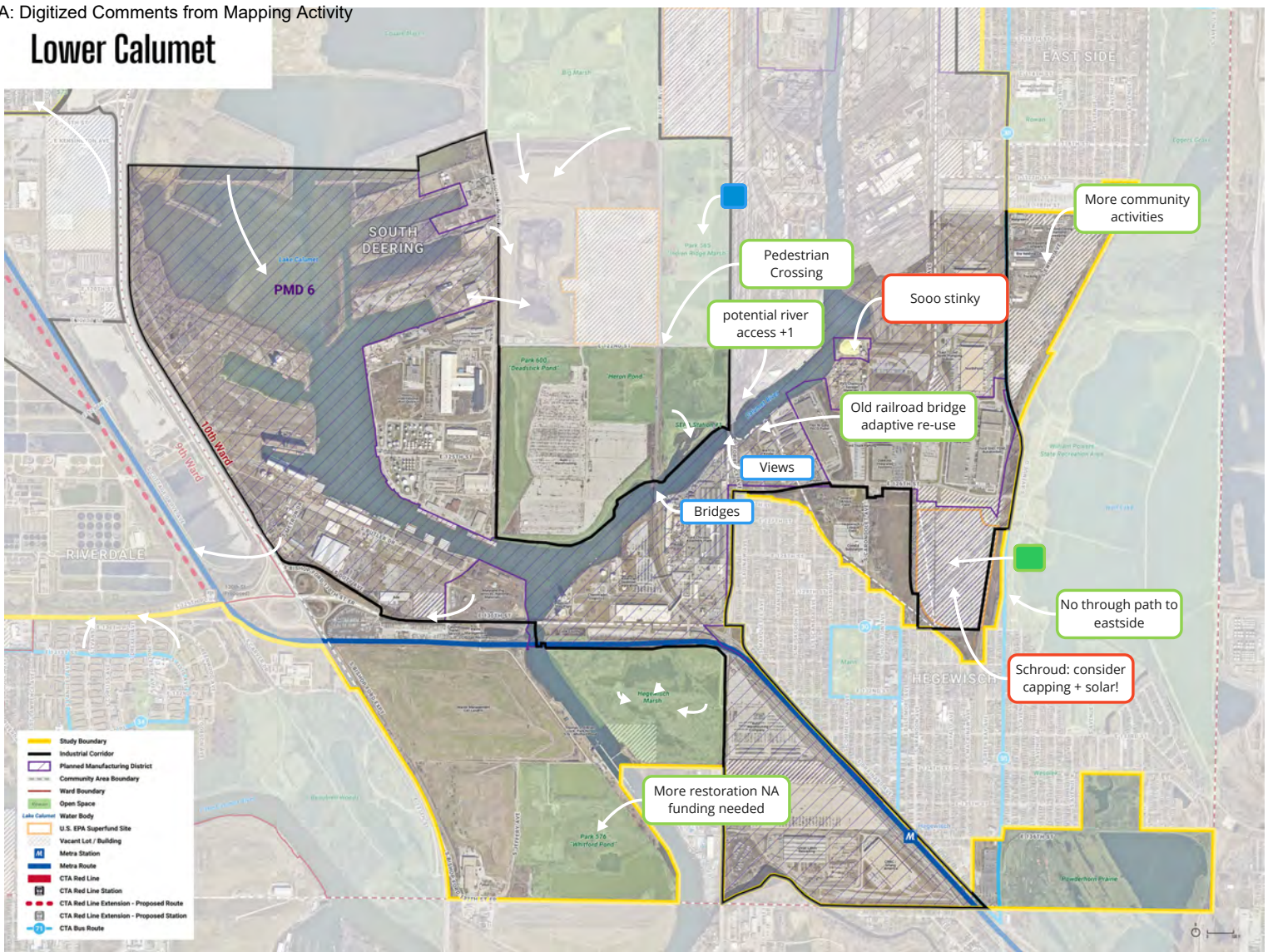


Appendix A: Digitized Comments from Mapping Activity

Upper Calumet



Lower Calumet



PMD 6

SOUTH DEERING

RIVERDALE

HEGEWISCH

EAST SIDE

More community activities

Pedestrian Crossing

potential river access +1

Sooo stinky

Old railroad bridge adaptive re-use

Views

Bridges

No through path to eastside

Schroud: consider capping + solar!

More restoration NA funding needed

