

## CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC OUTREACH

### PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS

- Steering Committees
- Public Meetings
- Results inform Development Plan

### PUBLICITY AND MEDIA RELATIONS

- Local newspapers and TribLocal editions
- Patch Updates
- Updates to municipal websites
- Radio program specials

### AGENCY & INSTITUTIONAL SUMMIT

- Regional focus
- Triple-bottom line orientation
- Implementation driven
- Millennium Reserve tie-in

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public Meetings were held in Alsip, Blue Island, Burnham, Calumet City, Dolton and the Dolton Park District, Palos Heights, Palos Park, and Riverdale. A general staff meeting was held at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. The purpose of these meetings was to provide an overall review of the goals of Cal-Sag Trail project and its current status and to present the Signage and Wayfinding and Development Plan project. Attendees participated in discussion regarding the opportunities associated with the Cal-Sag Trail being built within the jurisdictional limits of their community.



#### ALSIP

A Public Meeting was held at the Apollo Recreation Center on August 17, 2011. There were eighteen members of the community present, including residents, elected officials, and Park District Staff. After opening remarks by Alsip Park District Executive Director Jeannette Huber, followed by a brief presentation by the Project Team, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) exercise, sharing their observations with the rest of the group. The key and significant observations within each category are summarized as follows:

#### STRENGTHS

- Alsip Park District is a well-run endeavor with successful programs
- The presence of the Calumet-Sag Channel
- Strong regional accessibility

- Strong sense of community
- Strong industrial presence in Alsip
- Long length through Alsip
- Cemeteries with historic persons, especially musicians
- Freedom Park site
- A variety of existing conditions will make the Alsip leg visually interesting
- Centrally located on the Trail's overall Alignment

#### WEAKNESSES

- Crossing both Cicero and Pulaski can be a problem
- Traffic at Swap-O-Rama can be burdensome when the market is open
- Lack of a "Town Center"
- Lack of development along water's edge
- Perception of positive community image and safety of the corridor within Alsip
- MWRD alignment near Tri-State Tollway creates pinch point and lessens user experience
- Recent cemetery notoriety
- 10-foot trail width limits first responder accessibility
- Tinley Creek (near IL Rte. 83 and 127th Street) has periodic flooding issues

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- ADA accessibility to open space and water's edge
- Pedestrian crossing amenities at Pulaski and Cicero (i.e. countdown timers, grade separations)
- "Gateway" community potential, focus on redevelopment opportunities
- Freedom Park as a trailhead
- Ease of access to the Trail for entire community
- Recruitment tool for businesses
- Cemetery tours of musicians and civil rights personages
- Refreshment kiosks, which double as a security aid
- Corridor communities must work together

#### THREATS

- User safety and lighting needs

# CHAPTER 2

- Odors and perception of Calumet-Sag Channel water quality
- Economic recession impacts
- Adjacency of Crestwood and its perception



## BLUE ISLAND

A Public Meeting was held at the Blue Island City Hall Annex on August 18, 2011. Prior to that, a Steering Committee meeting was held on July 19, 2011 to prepare for the Public Meeting. There were thirty-two members of the community present, including residents, elected officials, and City Staff. The purpose of the Public Meeting was to provide an overall review of the goals of Cal-Sag Trail project and its current status, and to present the Signage and Wayfinding and Development Plan project. The Public meeting began at 7:00 p.m. and closed at 9:00 p.m.

After opening remarks by Mayor Peloquin and a brief presentation by the Project Team, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) exercise, sharing their observations with the rest of the group. These observations informed the strategies of the Development Plan, addressed in Chapter Four. The key and significant SWOT findings are summarized as follows:

## STRENGTHS

- Historic downtown, churches , restaurants and residences
- Diverse population
- Strong sense of community
- Main Street qualities
- Social, cultural and recreational activities
- Community history
- Transportation: ease of access via all modes – both within town and to other communities
- Bridges over the Channel and the Little Calumet River
- Mayor Peloquin
- Volunteerism and dedicated citizenry
- Friends of the Calumet-Sag Trail
- Blue Island Economic Development Plan (by CMAP & Center for Neighborhood Technology)
- Blue Island families living in town over several generations

- Trains: freight and commuter
- MetroSouth Medical Center
- Blue Island Public Library
- Moraine Valley Community College branch
- Park system
- Bicycle consciousness already present and fairly strong

## WEAKNESSES

- Volunteers are always the same individuals
- Not enough promotion of opportunities/events or of the Blue Island Community; limited media presence
- Lack of funding for programs; lack of investment for development
- Apathy and status quo; “us” vs. “them”; political infighting
- Hispanic lack of involvement; overall cultural separation
- Delays due to freight and commuter trains
- Graffiti and gang presence
- Unmet commercial/retail needs and loss of businesses
- No bicycle shops
- Not a “Home Rule” community
- Calumet-Sag Channel’s compromised water quality

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Inclusiveness across all demographics
- Nature center sited somewhere along trail (i.e. Ann Street, Fay’s Point, Canal Street)
- Gentrification
- Senior Housing
- Hospitality industry development
- Arts and performance space facilities development
- Transit-oriented development and cargo-oriented development
- Water-based sports
- Trail events (i.e. races, parades, charitable events)
- MWRD SEPA Station parkland becomes more programmed and used
- Older buildings are primed for redevelopment and reuse



- Trail proximity to downtown is an advantage
- Portland Park
- Availability of vacant land for development and buildings for redevelopment, including:
  - Mother of Sorrows property
  - Parco site near Francisco and Wireton
  - Nicor property behind First Lutheran Church
  - MWRD property - parking lot on Fulton Street
  - Open space south of Vermont between Winchester Avenue and Wood Street

## THREATS

- Economic recession
- Gentrification
- Image/perception of the community – especially lack of safety, presence of crime
- Lack of community policing
- Continued closure of Chatham Street and Division Street bridges
- Former Clark Oil site in Worth Township
- Competition from Indiana for business/employment recruitment and development
- High commercial real estate tax rates
- Absentee ownership of properties in downtown
- Influence of automobile culture (especially Western Avenue) and its deadening effect on downtown commercial area
- Lack of funding

## BURNHAM

The Public Meeting was held at the Burnham Village Hall on July 28, 2011. Prior to that, a Steering Committee meeting was held on June 28, 2011 to prepare for the Public Meeting. There were eighteen members of the community present, including residents, staff and elected officials.

After a brief presentation by the Project Team, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) exercise, sharing their observations with the rest of the group. These observations informed the strategies of the Development Plan, addressed in Chapter Four. The key and significant SWOT findings are summarized as follows:

## STRENGTHS

- Commitment of Mayor Polk
- Community enthusiasm for the project
- Long-term residents
- The presence of the railroads (as a draw to “rail fans”)
- Little Calumet River waterfront
- Burnham Prairie , being a significant attractor for visitors to the area – some from far away

## WEAKNESSES

- Freight train traffic: delays, noise
- Safety



- Lack of media coverage and news about the trail
- Employment – lack of jobs overall but especially for the young
- Ability to fund the project and its ongoing operations and maintenance

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Trains as a draw for rail fans
- K-8th grade school curriculum opportunities
- State Street and Central Business District connectivity
- Fitness stations along trail
- Public Private partnerships: Potential partners might include Calumet Refinery, MBI, Ford, SMS Scrap Metal,
- Tie-In to Ford Ecology Center
- Connectivity to Burnham Prairie
- Segway usage possibly attractive
- Botanic Garden: linear or centered at Blackburn Park

#### THREATS

- New development needs support from elected officials
- Employment, foreclosures and economy major hurdles that should have priority.

#### CALUMET CITY

The Public Meeting was held at the Calumet City Public Library Village Hall on September 28, 2011. Participants expressed a desire for the community bike loop trail, originally planned by Active Transportation Alliance several years earlier, to be advanced in their community. This bike loop trail would provide north-south connectivity between the Cal-Sag Trail and important destinations within Calumet City including the Central Business District, the Calumet Memorial Park District facility and other community parks as well as the Sand Ridge Nature Center. Additionally, attendees expressed support for environmental restoration efforts for the area of the Trail's alignment within Calumet City, where the area has been subjected to the establishment of invasive species, especially Phragmites. This objective was originally articulated by George Bellovic of IDNR during a stakeholder tour conducted in early 2011, and has remained a high priority since that time. Finally, the notion of silhouette sculptures celebrating the agrarian origins of the community held favor among attendees.

#### VILLAGE OF DOLTON AND DOLTON PARK DISTRICT

Two Public Meetings were held; the first at the Dolton Park District on August 9, 2011 and the second at the Dolton Village Hall on March 31, 2012. After a brief presentation by the Project Team, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) exercise. The key and significant observations within each category are summarized as follows:

#### STRENGTHS

- Needles Park is part of the many long-time residents' memories
- Lake Cottage Grove
- Local support for trail

#### WEAKNESSES

- EAV is at the lower end for communities of this size (>\$2M)
- Traffic congestion due to freight rail – grade separation would help
- Roadway lighting is not strong enough

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Redevelopment of the Indalex site at 142nd Street and Cottage Grove Avenue
- Sports-related land use pattern
- Soccer venue
- Develop plan arising from consultant's master plan efforts
- First-Tee program
- Tournament site with hospitality industry tie-in
- Redevelopment of older buildings near the interchange of Bishop Ford are highly desirable, to go along with the newer religious and banquet facilities and help renew this gateway site.
- Opportunities to showcase the more historic structures along Lincoln Avenue (and Leyden, north of the tracks as well)
- Streetscape and medianscape opportunities both on Lincoln and East 142nd (East Main, Dolton Avenue) would help enhance gateway aspects.
- If development must occur in (portions of) Needles Park, it must result in sustainable job creation. Hospitality industry jobs related to a sports-themed complex would be lower paying jobs compared to light manufacturing which would pay more.
- Cooperation between the Village and the owners of the fishing and social club at Lake Cottage Grove to allow fishing from the north shoreline alongside the Trail.
- A variety of business types could be developed (both new and adaptive reuse of existing buildings) along Lincoln Avenue, and along redevelopment further east near the Bishop Ford Freeway interchange
- Improvements need to be designed to become part of the community fabric
- Opportunity for overlook on north shoreline of Lake Cottage Grove – but safety is critical as no one must be able to get near the shoreline and its steep drop-off

#### THREATS

- Ownership of Needles Park
- Safety concerns will require lighting, cameras and call-boxes within Dolton

#### PALOS HEIGHTS

A Public Meeting was held at Lake Katherine Nature Center on July 26, 2011. There was a Steering Committee meeting held on July 13, 2011. The Public Meeting began at 7:00 p.m. and closed at 9:00 p.m. Thirty-one members of the community attended, including residents, City Staff and Lake Katherine Staff.

After opening remarks by Michael Leonard, Executive Director of the Palos Heights Parks and Recreation Department, followed by a brief presentation by the Project Team, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) exercise, sharing their observations with the rest of the group. The key and significant observations within each category are summarized as follows:

#### STRENGTHS

- Lake Katherine as central, iconic attraction along with its grounds and programs
- Access to City amenities including civic, commercial, institutional and recreational
- Trinity Christian College partnership: as a cultural draw (performances)
- Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail (FOCST) membership and presence in Palos Heights
- Need is evidenced by heavy use of other regional trails in NE Illinois
- Strong visual contact with waterway
- Off street nature of majority of Trail
- Metra connectivity
- Nearby businesses, including RB Bike Shop and Tastee-Freeze
- Increase in home values and resultant increased revenue stream to City and schools through increased valuations and
- Increase in sales taxes
- Established cycling community at Trinity Christian College
- Connection to Tinley Creek Preserve

#### WEAKNESSES

- Parking for Trail users needed
- Accessibility to various attractors within Palos Heights
- Safety – ability of Palos Heights First Responders to marshal the Trail
- Running community not engaged
- Edelweiss diversion (Palos Park portion)

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Nature Activities
- Fishing
- (Half) Marathons and run/walk races
- Convey the history of the Calumet-Sag Channel
- Harlem & Route 83 (College Avenue) intersection – key development

- and redevelopment opportunities and ability to channel demand to area shopkeepers
- Draw to bring people into town and increase use of local shops
  - Get people more active through walking and biking
  - Increased opportunities for family outings
  - Opportunity for environmental restoration
  - Public art exhibitry and acquisition
  - Educational curriculum opportunities
  - Increased visibility of and involvement by Palos Community Hospital
  - Increased economic development opportunities
  - Programmatic tie-in with Palos Finearts and Palos Heights Women's Club
  - Watercraft users (canoes and kayaks) and water-based tours

#### THREATS

- Funding availability
- Maintenance burden
- Less than full support by residents
- Safety (may be lessened through lighting, signage and emergency phones)
- NIMBY component
- Increase in accidents
- Increased traffic congestion and conflict
- Increased liability to City: injuries, crime, etc.
- Lack of communication
- Graffiti and vandalism
- Apathy

#### PALOS PARK

A Public Meeting was held at the Kaptur Administrative Center on August 15, 2011. There was a Steering Committee meeting held on August 11, 2011. The Public meeting began at 7:00 p.m. and closed at 9:00 p.m. There were seventeen members of the community present, including residents, elected officials, and Village Staff.

After opening remarks by Mayor Mahoney and a brief presentation by the Project Team, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) exercise, sharing their observations with the rest of the group. The key and significant observations within each category are summarized as follows:

#### STRENGTHS

- Forest preserves surrounding community
- Serenity and natural beauty
- Rich history
- Community support
- Shops at 80th Avenue and Southwest Highway
- Linear public art garden along trail
- Unique geology

#### WEAKNESSES

- Parking for Trail users needed

- Crossing Calumet-Sag Road is unsafe
- Difficulty of residents getting to the trail and getting their safely
- Rural section roadways throughout town limit room for pedestrians and bikes; sometimes viewsheds are limited

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Art committee can develop projects related to the trail for later auction/sale
- Swallow Cliffs can be devoted to more cyclist-related purposes
- Grade separation for Calumet-Sag Road
- Amphitheater
- Find ways to enhance the performance of the Courtyards
- Landmarks on the trail
- Festival: community history, music and fine arts
- Access to/development at the water's edge
- Farmers market
- Half-marathon
- Horse ride events
- Fishing events

#### THREATS

- Impact to wildlife
- Increase in noise, debris
- Potential increase in crime, lessening safety
- Perception that Channel water quality is poor
- "Not in my backyard" mentality

#### RIVERDALE

A Public Meeting was held at the Riverdale Village Hall on August 4, 2011. The purpose of the Public Meeting was to provide an overall review of the goals of Cal-Sag Trail project and its current status and to present the Signage and Wayfinding and Development Plan project. Attendees would have the opportunity to participate in discussion regarding the opportunities which Riverdale could pursue associated with the Cal-Sag Trail being built within the Village. The Public Meeting began at 7:00 p.m. and closed shortly after 9:00 p.m. On July 27, 2011, an informal meeting was held with Mayor Deyon Dean and Administrator Carol Moore to preview the topics and format of the Public Meeting.

After a brief presentation by the Project Team, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) exercise, both by filling out a SWOT worksheet and sharing their observations with the rest of the group. The key and significant observations within each category are summarized as follows:

#### STRENGTHS

- The Riverdale area has many trees atypical of the zone for this region; it may be a distinct microclimate. The Butternut Tree at 138th and Tracy Street is one of the largest in the state.
- The history of the Ivanhoe subdivision, planned communities and post-war boom in construction and settlement of Riverdale
- Tree-lined streets and strong neighborhood visual qualities

- The Little Calumet River waterfront
- Highly regarded bird sanctuary at Lake Riverdale
- Joe Louis The Champ Golf Course
- Metra Stations (2)
- Forest Preserves adjacent to Riverdale
- Monuments in Riverdale Park
- Halsted (Route 1) is an historic route
- Major Taylor Trail, already in place is a major linkage opportunity and has a good reputation
- Arcelor Mital Steelworks – former Acme Steel
- History: Native Americans, European immigrants, Freedom Seekers, Great Migration

#### WEAKNESSES

- High Crime areas existent (Former Pacesetter and apartments further east – Village aware of the issue and is addressing it)
- Halsted Street Viaduct is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists and the lighting is poor
- Train delays
- Street crossings not adequate/safe for cyclists and pedestrians
- Few places to eat

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Stories to tell about Riverdale (i.e. The history of the Freedom Seekers and the Underground Railroad, Betsy Robinson (Olympic Star), historic downtown, annexation/town beginnings, Ivanhoe subdivision, )
- Trail Connectivity
- Train-watching opportunities (esp. at the railroad yard)
- Development site: Lake Riverdale
- Development Site: Hospitality Destination and Multi-Use Redevelopment at Marina Site
- Development Site: Ongoing phases of Whistler's Crossing/Pacesetter
- Pop-Up Businesses along the Trail alignment
- Community Garden
- Opportunities related to the trail for youth – schools and organizations
- Businesses near the Metra Stations
- Enhanced habitat development at the Bird Sanctuary

#### THREATS

- Economy and lack of funding
- Unemployment
- Home Ownership and Foreclosures
- Homeless Populations
- Development Parameters and need for quality design and materials
- Need for greater political unity
- Informed populace
- Emerging/strengthening gang problems
- Historical Society collections to close to public – accessible only online

## SURVEY

### INTRODUCTION

The Cal-Sag Trail Development Plan Survey was a web based survey available from 07/22/2011 to 10/13/2011. A link to the survey was posted on the Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail (the "Friends") website; and a link to this website was placed on several websites of Coalition agencies as well as appearing in several media articles.

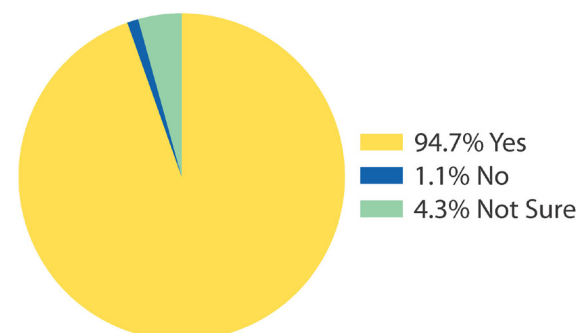
Overall the survey received an excellent response with 199 people completing it. The majority of respondents were residents of the communities that border the Cal-Sag Trail and a large majority indicated that they plan to use the Trail when it is completed.

In summary, respondents were very supportive of the regional trail and believed it would have a positive impact on their community's image, health of the residents, and the economies of their town and the Calumet region.

In what was a somewhat surprising reaction, respondents felt that the majority of Trail users would be local residents and that the Trail should primarily be developed to become part of the community fabric. This ran counter to the message dispensed by the Project Team and other stakeholders, such as Active Transportation Alliance, which was that regional trails typically bring in a high percentage of out-of-town users, depending on the types of attractions and the level of history and meaning in a corridor, and the money that they spend helps economic development and property value appreciation. In fact, this message is supported by most agencies and non-government organizations devoted to the development of regional trails. It is important to recognize this unique aspect of local perceptions regarding the Trail, continue to assess and challenge its veracity and move forward in developing programs and developments which satisfy these stated needs of citizens and stakeholders.

Respondents would like to see the Trail developed with a recreational focus, but they also support environmental improvements within the corridor. Connectivity with other local trails, transit, and existing businesses districts was very important to the respondents. And while most respon-

### WILL YOU USE THE CAL-SAG TRAIL WHEN IT IS COMPLETED?



dents believe the Trail could be a safe place, safety was a big concern.

### SURVEY FINDINGS

Respondents plan to use the Trail for nature and wildlife observation historic interpretation, festivals, and active recreation including walking, walking pets, and bicycling. 47.8% of respondents would like the Cal-Sag Corridor to have a recreational focus, 44.4 would like a balance between recreation and environment, and 7.9% would like the corridor to have an environmental focus.

Respondents (70.6%) believed that local residents would be the primary users of the Trail.

The majority of respondents felt the Trail's connectivity to Pace and Metra (74.6%) and Local Business (77.8%) is important.

The majority (69.8%) of respondent believed the Trail would be a safe place to recreate. Of those who felt would be unsafe 81.3% believed that additional security presence would make it safe. Many respondents (66.3%) believed that as more people use the Trail, the Trail will feel safer.

Respondents prioritized a list of Trail amenities. The results are conveyed as follows:

#### FIRST PRIORITY:

- Toilets
- Water fountains
- Benches

#### SECOND PRIORITY:

- Parking at trailheads
- Garbage cans
- Historical interpretive signs

#### THIRD PRIORITY:

- Mile markers
- Emergency phones
- Community information Kiosks

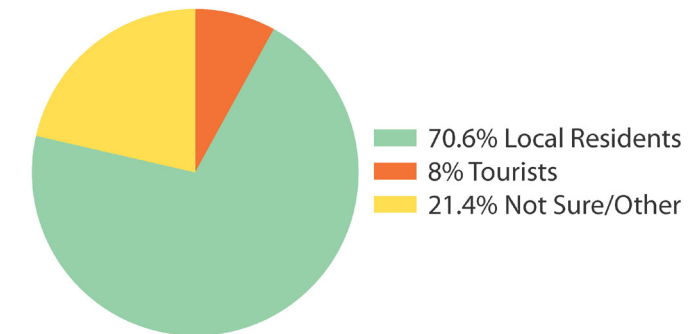
#### FOURTH PRIORITY:

- Viewing areas
- Native landscaping
- Covered shelters

The majority (74.9%) of respondent believed the Trail would increase value of adjacent and nearby properties. Most respondents believed that the Trail would help in recruiting businesses (63.4%), new business would locate near the Trail to cater to Trail users (83.5%) and existing business would also benefit for the development of the Trail (66.5%).

Types of new business that respondents believe could be successful near the Trail include: bicycle repair and equipment stores and restaurants and

### WHICH GROUP WILL USE THE CAL-SAG TRAIL THE MOST?



cafes (including ice-cream parlors). Supporting public uses respondents would like to see near the Trail include: active sports facilities, nature preserves, and community garden space.

The majority of respondents believe that marketing the Trail and the communities along it will support business development and job creation, especially if the marketing is coordinated across several, if not all of the communities.

Respondents support many environmental initiatives within the Cal-Sal Trail corridor, both in general and related to the development of the Trail's immediate corridor. These include: improving water quality in the Little Calumet River and the Calumet-Sag Chanel, preserving the corridor as a linear wildlife habitat, and restoring native plant communities. Ninety-four percent of respondents believe there is a linkage between a stable, healthy environment and a good local economy.

The majority of respondents believe the Trail will provide and outlet for active recreation for local residents (91.6%) and that linking the Cal-Sag Trail to local trails would provide benefits to their communities. Respondents also believed the Trail would prove an opportunity for family and friends to spend more time together and encourage youth as well as people of all ages to be more active.

### WILL THE CAL-SAG TRAIL BE A SAFE PLACE?

