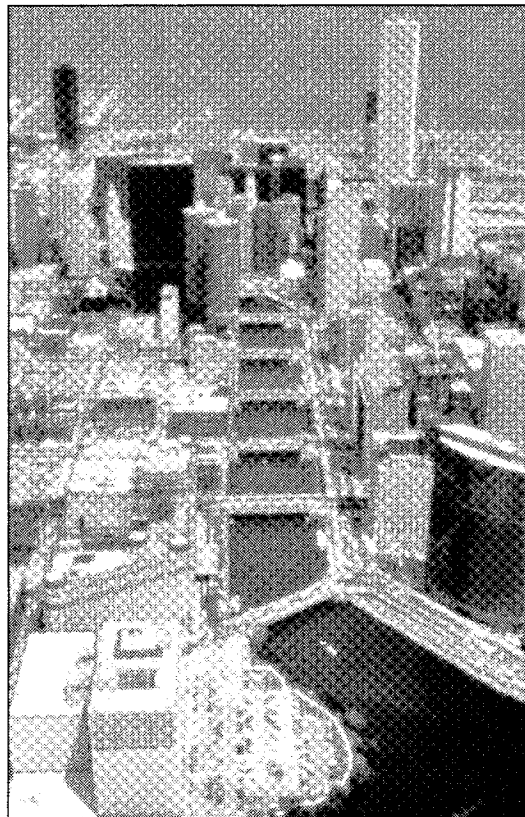


# WHAT CHICAGO NEEDS TODAY

**T**he city's open lakefront, large regional parks, outlying forest preserves, boulevards and other classic open spaces have served Chicago well for many decades. But splendid as they are, these assets are insufficient to meet the needs of all Chicagoans today. To remain competitive, Chicago must provide the quality of life factors that attract businesses and residents, including open space amenities comparable to or better than what other metropolitan areas offer.



Our parks are a refuge from concrete, from urban noise and congestion. They provide tranquil space to balance the more stressful elements of city life. Our parks touch every neighborhood in common, constructive activity.

*Forrest Claypool, General Superintendent, Chicago Park District, 1994*





Today, people expect and deserve to have parks within reasonable travel distance of their homes; bicycle and hiking trails; access to the forest preserves; neighborhood streets enhanced with trees and flowers; community gardens; green space and plazas downtown; and landscaped industrial districts conducive to retaining and expanding their manufacturing base.

One of the most pressing problems with Chicago's open space system is that over half of the people in Chicago live in neighborhoods where the parks are either too crowded or too far away. The existing system must be expanded to meet these residents' need for open space and outdoor recreation.

At the close of the 21st century, Chicago has the opportunity to create a new open space legacy for future generations. Economic growth and changes in land-use have made land along the lakefront and inland waterways available for open space and greenway redevelopment—opportunities that may not occur again for 100 years or more. Remarkably, high-quality wetlands and natural areas remain within the city but are undervalued and threatened with extinction. On the smaller scale, vacant lots and neglected school grounds provide ample space for greening and outdoor recreation.

## **THE VALUE OF OPEN SPACE**

Most people have long recognized, and many studies have demonstrated, the personal and social importance of open, green space and nature to human well-being.<sup>1-18</sup> The benefits people receive also make open space a cost-effective expenditure of public and private investments. Important functions and benefits of urban open space include:

**Recreational.** From active sports to quiet relaxation, open space can provide opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities for people of all ages. While the neighborhood park is most often considered to be the place for recreation, a space no bigger than a city lot can provide valuable space for neighborhood recreation.

**Social.** Neighborhood open space, such as community gardens and playlots, often serve a vital function in bringing people together and in building personal relationships and bonds that will promote community identity and stability.

**Aesthetic.** Trees, flowers and other green vegetation offer beauty and welcome contrast to the built environment. Benches, fountains, sculpture and other built features can further enhance the beauty of urban open spaces.



**Restorative.** Natural open spaces, even small ones, can help people “get away” from the din of urban life. Nature can help to restore people physically and psychologically by reducing stress, improving moods, and even lowering blood pressure.

**Economic.** Parks, greenways, and other open spaces can significantly enhance property values, which has been demonstrated in studies of prices people are willing to pay for visual and physical access to open space.

**Environmental.** Vegetated open space can improve air and water quality. Trees rid the air of harmful dust and gases and lower summertime temperatures. Streamside vegetation filters runoff, and wetlands absorb chemicals that would otherwise pollute surface waters.

**Ecological.** Patches and corridors of open space provide essential habitat for the native plants and wildlife of the Chicago region. Urban open space networks can sustain complex ecosystems and enhance city dwellers’ understanding of and relationship with nature.



## **DEFINING OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

While it is sometimes difficult to quantitatively measure all the benefits of open space, there are accepted methods of defining open space need. National and local community standards are commonly used to define the amount and kind of parks and other open spaces that would adequately serve the outdoor recreation needs of a community. These standards are generally stated in terms of the amount of open space available to serve a given population.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recommends 6 to 10 acres of local parkland for every 1,000 residents. However, the NRPA stresses that the unique geographic, demographic and historic development patterns of each city should be considered in establishing a local service level standard. Given Chicago's 150 year-settlement history, its relatively complete development and density patterns, and the fact that it is "land locked" by other fully developed cities and towns (and Lake Michigan on the east) it is reasonable to adopt standards lower than those of newer communities that are expanding on farmland or other undeveloped land.

## **HOW CHICAGO COMPARES TO OTHER CITIES**

The open space owned and operated by the Chicago Park District, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and City of Chicago encompasses 11,499 acres of land within the city limits. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Chicago has a population of 2,783,726. Therefore, the citywide ratio of public open space to Chicago residents is 4.13 acres for every 1,000 residents.

Table 2 compares open space acreage in major U.S. cities. Chicago ranks eighteenth out of the select group of twenty cities. When a closer comparison is made to eight cities with similar population and density characteristics, Chicago ranks sixth.

**Table 2**

**PUBLIC OPEN SPACE ACREAGE IN  
SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES**

Population Data			Local Agency Park Acres		Additional Acres	Municipal Open Space Acres	Open Space Acres Per 1,000	
Municipality (1)	1990 Population	Average Population Per Sq. Mile	Total Park Acres in Local Agency (1)	Acre Ratio: Developed to Total (2)	Additional Open Space Acres in Municipality (3)	Total Open Space Acres in Municipality	Open Space Acres for Municipality	Ranking for Municipality
Cleveland	505,616	6,400	2,500	0.9000	19,400	21,900	43.31	1
San Diego	1,110,549	3,358	31,688	0.2595	15,300	46,988	42.31	2
Phoenix	983,403	2,125	30,374	0.0709	1,629	32,003	32.54	3
Houston	1,631,766	2,899	20,388	0.3433	17,136	37,524	23.00	4
Dallas	1,006,877	2,664	19,442	0.2800	0	19,442	19.31	5
Milwaukee Cty.	965,067	3,983	14,750	0.5100	362	15,112	15.66	6
St. Louis	396,685	6,461	3,457	0.9132	0	3,457	8.71	7
Miami *	358,548	10,453	3,000	1.0000	0	3,000	8.37	8
Seattle	516,259	6,102	4,298	0.8034	0	4,298	8.32	9
Boston	574,283	12,167	2,200	1.0000	2,430	4,630	8.06	10
Denver *	467,610	3,024	3,715	0.8156	0	3,715	7.94	11
San Francisco *	723,959	15,704	3,357	0.8500	2,237	5,594	7.73	12
Pittsburgh	369,879	6,664	2,600	0.3535	35	2,635	7.12	13
Philadelphia *	1,585,577	11,659	8,700	0.3103	1,600	10,300	6.50	14
Detroit	1,027,974	7,189	5,889	0.9598	740	6,629	6.45	15
New York *	7,322,564	22,755	26,369	0.7007	13,673	40,042	5.47	16
Los Angeles	3,485,398	7,457	16,027	0.5357	0	16,027	4.60	17
Chicago	2,783,726	12.184	6,697	0.9972	4,802	11,499	4.13	18
Jersey City *	228,537	17,313	611	0.8363	289	900	3.94	19
Newark *	275,221	11,420	47	1.0000	742	789	2.87	20

\* Municipalities with population densities greater than or similar to Chicago.

(1) Local agency in Chicago is Chicago Park District.

(2) Ratio of maintained areas to total holdings of local agency.

(3) Property owned/maintained by another agency, including: Forest Preserve District of Cook County (3,683 acres), State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources (613 acres) and City of Chicago (481 acres), and open spaced owned by other local governments (25 acres).



## **REGIONAL OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

In the disposition of interior parks the main consideration should be, first, to distribute the areas about the city as evenly as possible, so as to make large parks readily accessible to all citizens; and secondly, to select for improvement those localities which have the greatest charm and value as park lands. Happily, nature has furnished the opportunity to combine both considerations.

*Daniel Burnham, Plan of Chicago, 1909.*



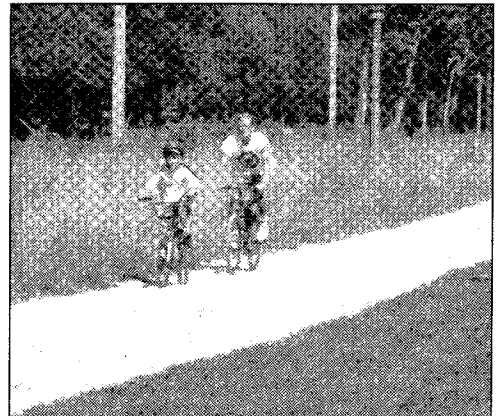
In addition to recommending open space standards for the community or neighborhood level, the NRPA recommends 15 to 20 acres of outlying regional open space for every 1,000 residents. The six-county metropolitan region has a ratio of 35 acres of open space per 1,000 people; Cook County, on the other hand, has twice the population of surrounding collar counties but only 13 acres of open space per 1,000 residents.

The *CitySpace Plan* recognizes that parks and open space cannot have only one set of standards based solely on acres of land per unit of population. Some land should be targeted for parks and open spaces because: 1) the land is located within or adjacent to an existing open space system and/or 2) the land contains wetlands or natural areas, historic sites or other unique characteristics worthy of preservation. Such open spaces are regional in nature because all citizens of the city, and often the region, benefit from their existence. The City of Chicago has unique geographic advantages that offer significant potential for expanding the supply of regional open spaces—the lakefront, inland waterways and the natural resources of the Lake Calumet area.

The recreational activities of today differ in type and intensity from those of a century ago. Chicago needs to respond by providing a wide variety of regional and community open spaces. For example,

regional open spaces such as greenways are used for biking, hiking, bird watching and other recreational pursuits. Greenways provide important connections between community open spaces in city neighborhoods and regional forest preserves. The lakefront parks system is an extraordinary greenway, but gaps in the system still remain. The Chicago River, a waterway that passes through many city neighborhoods and parks, has yet to achieve its potential as an urban greenway.

Changing land uses provide significant potential for expanding the supply of regional open space in Chicago. For example, 76 acres of lakefront land currently used for Meigs Field will become available for parkland development in 2002. Conversion of this site into parkland will provide a lakefront park site of regional significance. In terms of size and abundance of natural resources, the greatest potential for expanding the regional open space system lies in the lands surrounding Lake Calumet, where more than 2,000 acres of high-quality wetlands and natural areas remain unprotected.



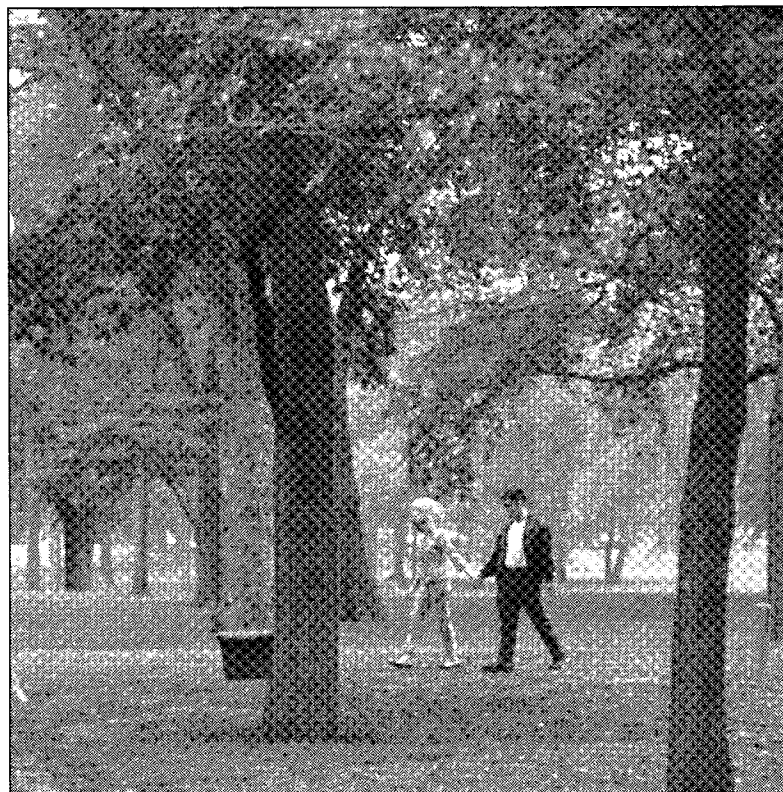
## **COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

In 1982 the public became aware of the severe inequity of Chicago's park resources when the U.S. Justice Department sued the Chicago Park District (CPD) for racial discrimination for failing to provide recreation resources — field houses, programs and personnel — equally to all residents. In 1983, the Consent Decree Task Force was formed to identify inequities in resources and methods for eliminating inequities. In 1987, the *Consent Decree Task Force Report* to the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners was released. Those communities found to be deficient were given a high priority for future development and staffing along with a monetary commitment of \$10 million per year for five years.

In struggling to rectify the deficiencies in park facilities, the CPD found a major problem was the lack of parkland in many neighborhoods, and that it simply was not possible to erect new playgrounds or field houses without acquiring more ground. Responding to this gap, in 1990 the Chicago Park District released the *Land Policies Plan*, followed in 1993 by the *Parkland Needs Analysis*, which set parkland goals and standards for open space to serve all Chicago communities.

The *Land Policies Plan* stated as an immediate goal that all community areas should have a minimum of 20 acres of parkland per 10,000 residents (or 2 acres per 1,000 residents). Although the

citywide average is 4.13 acres of open space per 1,000 people, very few communities meet this level of service. In fact, 38 of Chicago's 77 communities have less than 2 acres of open space per 1,000 population. Sixty-one percent of Chicago's population, or 1.6 million people, live in these 38 communities. Due to this shortage of open space, these communities are defined as "underserved" by the existing system.



The *Land Policies Plan* further specified that all neighborhoods should be within one-half mile from a park of at least three acres. The 1993 *Parkland Needs Analysis* reinforced this goal by stating that all residential areas within the city will have access to recreational parkland. This later study defined “service area” standards for five principal categories of parks (See Table 3). The service area defines the maximum acceptable distance a resident should be from each type of park. These are similar to the standards suggested by the National Recreation and Park Association. Figure 2 illustrates the service area standards and shows an area in Chicago with an open space deficiency.

Forty-one communities have areas within them that do not meet the Park District’s service area standards because residents are not within reasonable travel distance to various types of parks or are farther than one mile from any park. (See Map 2 and Table 4). Close to 135,000 people live in these “unserved areas.” In addition, 24 of these communities also do not meet the minimum standard of two acres per 1,000, while 17 others meet that standard but still contain unserved areas. The latter communities appear to be well-served, but in reality much of the open space may be in one large park that is too far away for many residents.

**Table 3**

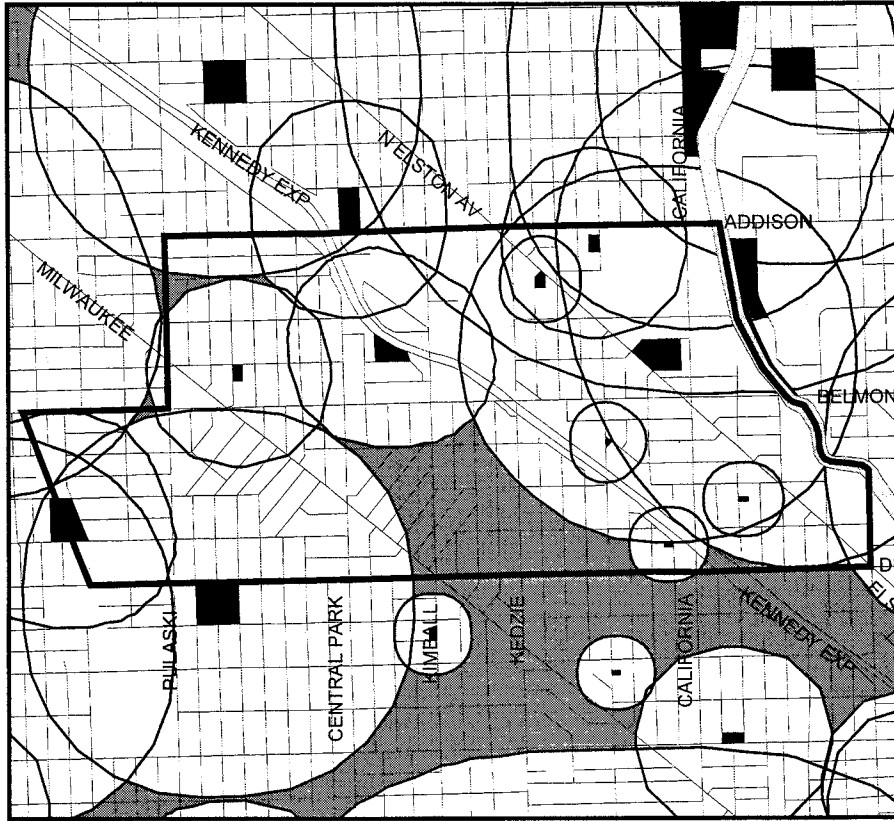
**CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT SERVICE AREA STANDARDS**

<b>Park Type</b>	<b>Size of Park</b>	<b>Service Area (Distance)</b>
Magnet and Citywide Parks	50.0 acres plus	1.00 mile
Regional Park	15.0 acres to 50.0 acres	0.75 mile
Community Park	5.0 acres to 15.0 acres	0.50 mile
Neighborhood Park	0.5 acres to 5.0 acres	0.25 mile
Mini-Park	0.1 acres to 0.5 acres	0.10 mile






Figure 2

**EXAMPLE OF CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT SERVICE  
AREA STANDARDS AND UNSERVED COMMUNITY  
AREA (AVONDALE)**



**Legend**

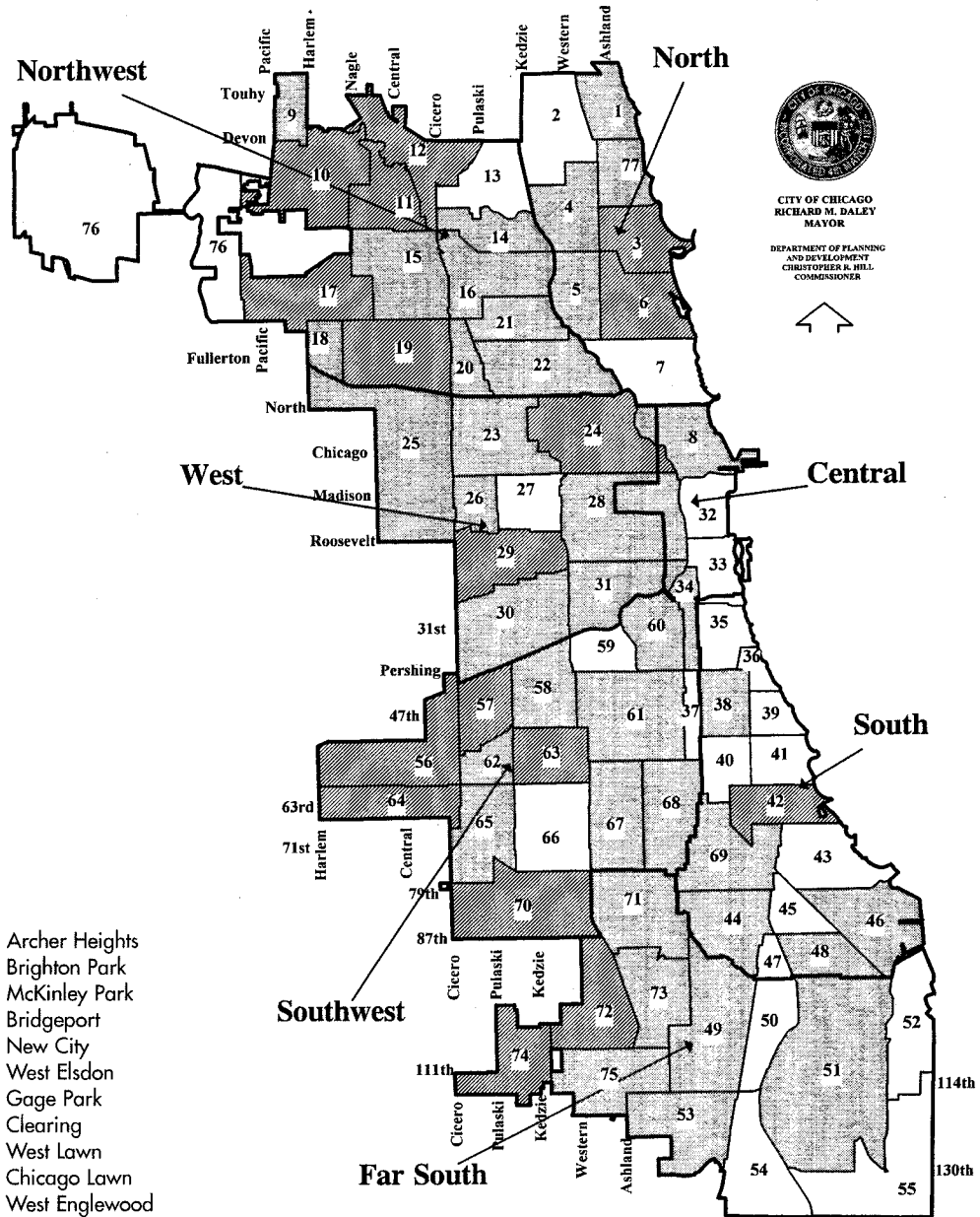
-  Chicago Park District
-  Park Service Areas
-  Unserved Area

# Map 2

## OPEN SPACE NEED IN CHICAGO COMMUNITY AREAS

### COMMUNITY AREAS

1. Rogers Park
2. West Ridge
3. Uptown
4. Lincoln Square
5. North Center
6. Lake View
7. Lincoln Park
8. Near North Side
9. Edison Park
10. Norwood Park
11. Jefferson Park
12. Forest Glen
13. North Park
14. Albany Park
15. Portage Park
16. Irving Park
17. Dunning
18. Montclare
19. Belmont Cragin
20. Hermosa
21. Avondale
22. Logan Square
23. Humboldt Park
24. West Town
25. Austin
26. West Garfield Park
27. East Garfield Park
28. Near West Side
29. North Lawndale
30. South Lawndale
31. Lower West Side
32. Loop
33. Near South Side
34. Armour Square
35. Douglas
36. Oakland
37. Fuller Park
38. Grand Boulevard
39. Kenwood
40. Washington Park
41. Hyde Park
42. Woodlawn
43. South Shore
44. Chatham
45. Avalon Park
46. South Chicago
47. Burnside
48. Calumet Heights
49. Roseland
50. Pullman
51. South Deering
52. East Side
53. West Pullman
54. Riverdale
55. Hegewisch
56. Garfield Ridge
57. Archer Heights
58. Brighton Park
59. McKinley Park
60. Bridgeport
61. New City
62. West Elsdon
63. Gage Park
64. Clearing
65. West Lawn
66. Chicago Lawn
67. West Englewood
68. Englewood
69. Greater Grand Crossing
70. Ashburn
71. Auburn Gresham
72. Beverly
73. Washington Heights
74. Mount Greenwood
75. Morgan Park
76. O'Hare
77. Edgewater



CITY OF CHICAGO  
RICHARD M. DALEY  
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
CHRISTOPHER S. HILL  
COMMISSIONER



### Legend

- Less than 2 acres per 1,000 residents
- Community has sub-areas with no parkland within one mile
- Community with at least 2 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents; no unserved areas

**Table 4**

**OPEN SPACE NEED BY COMMUNITY AREA (55 OF 77 TOTAL)**

	Community Area No. Name	1990 Population	Total Open Space Acres	Open Space Deficit (1)	Population within Unserviced Area	Acres Needed within Unserviced Area Only
<b>Northwest</b>	22 Logan Square	82,605	55.2	110.1	16,500	33.0
	14 Albany Park	49,501	25.2	73.8	1,100	2.2
	21 Avondale	35,579	8.7	62.5	5,900	11.8
	15 Portage park	56,513	70.2	42.8	2,000	4.0
	5 North Center	33,010	36.4	29.6	1,400	2.8
	20 Hermosa	23,131	20.5	25.8	4,900	9.8
	9 Edison Park	11,426	20.6	2.2	1,400	2.8
	16 Irving Park	50,159	99.9	.4	2,700	5.4
	10 Norwood Park	37,719	126.1	0	5,750	11.5
	17 Dunning	36,957	85.3	0	2,100	4.2
	19 Belmont Cragin	56,787	113.4	0	1,700	3.4
12 Forest Glen	17,655	504.9	0	1,000	2.0	
11 Jefferson Park	23,649	173.5	0	900	1.8	
<b>West</b>	30 South Lawndale	81,155	61.1	101.1	8,700	17.4
	23 Humbolt Park	67,573	54.9	80.2	1,000	2.0
	26 West Garfield Park	24,095	5.1	43.1	0	0
	25 Austin	114,079	208.3	20.1	12,500	25.0
	28 Near West Side	46,197	78.5	13.9	1,100	2.2
	18 Montclair	10,573	11.1	10.1	0	0
	29 North Lawndale	47,296	209.7	0	4,700	9.4
24 West Town	87,703	242.0	0	3,500	7.0	
<b>Southwest</b>	31 Lower West Side	45,654	27.3	64.0	0	0
	60 Bridgeport	29,877	18.0	41.8	1,800	3.6
	58 Brighton Park	32,207	24.4	40.0	10,600	21.2
	68 Englewood	48,434	57.6	39.3	700	1.4
	65 West Lawn	23,402	26.7	20.1	0	0
	67 West Englewood	52,772	93.8	11.8	0	0
	34 Armour Square	10,801	18.2	3.4	0	0
	62 West Elsdon	12,266	21.9	2.6	0	0
	61 New City	53,226	105.0	1.1	0	0
	70 Ashburn	37,092	236.8	0	400	.8
	64 Clearing	21,490	48.6	0	1,100	2.2
57 Archer Heights	9,227	27.0	0	600	1.2	
56 Garfield Ridge	33,948	73.9	0	3,600	7.2	
63 Gage Park	26,957	58.8	0	2,500	5.5	
<b>Far South</b>	71 Auburn Gresham	59,808	59.8	59.8	700	1.4
	53 West Pullman	39,486	45.1	34.6	2,800	5.6
	49 Roseland	56,493	85.6	27.4	2,700	5.4
	51 South Deering	17,755	31.3	4.2	0	0
	73 Washington Heights	32,114	60.6	3.6	400	.8
	75 Morgan Park	26,740	51.9	1.6	100	.2
	72 Beverly	22,385	121.0	0	1,000	2.0
74 Mt. Greenwood	19,179	50.0	0	4,100	8.2	
<b>South</b>	69 Greater Grand Crossing	38,644	57.6	39.2	4,700	9.4
	38 Grand Boulevard	35,897	37.5	34.3	0	0
	46 South Chicago	40,776	59.0	22.5	800	1.6
	44 Chatham	36,779	52.4	21.2	1,500	3.0
	48 Calumet Heights	17,453	31.6	3.3	300	.6
42 Woodlawn	27,473	342.7	0	900	1.8	
<b>North</b>	1 Rogers Park	60,378	52.9	67.9	0	0
	77 Edgewater	60,703	83.8	37.6	0	0
	4 Lincoln Square	44,894	79.5	10.3	0	0
	6 Lake View	91,031	241.0	0	14,100	28.2
3 Uptown	63,839	347.0	0	300	.6	
<b>Central</b>	8 Near North Side	62,842	83.8	41.9	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,285,384</b>	<b>5,022.8</b>	<b>1,249.2</b>	<b>134,550</b>	<b>269.1</b>

(1) Open space acres needed to meet minimum standard of 2 acres per 1,000 community residents.

Sources: For park acres: Chicago Park District, Office of Research and Planning, 1997; for 1995 population: City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 1997.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE NEED FACTORS**

**Local vs. Regional Parkland.** A complete assessment of community open space needs requires an analysis of park size, location and use, along with residential development patterns at the neighborhood level. Many communities, such as Lincoln Park, Lake View and the Near South Side, appear to be well served when considering total open space acreage. However, much of this open space is contained within lakefront parks that attract visitors from the entire Chicago metropolitan region. These parks are separated from adjacent residential neighborhoods by railroad lines and Lake Shore Drive. Also, many of the large regional parks do not contain adequate park facilities, such as ballfields or playgrounds, to serve the needs of nearby neighborhoods.

**Private Development Impact Assessment.** Residential development trends of the past decade have exacerbated the open space needs of Chicago neighborhoods. Since 1987, more than 25,000 new residential dwelling units were built in Chicago.<sup>19</sup> Much of this new development has occurred in neighborhoods with significant open space deficiencies, such as the Near North, Near West, Logan Square, West Town and Lake View neighborhoods.

In addition, residential development is spreading into former commercial and industrial districts which had no previous need for neighborhood parks. In the Central Area, close to 1,300 units were added in 1996 and another 2,200 units are expected in 1997.<sup>20</sup> Much of this new

growth is concentrated in the West Loop and River North districts, where little open space exists today.

The density and design of many new residential developments raises additional issues related to local open space needs. In some neighborhoods, such as Logan Square, West Town and Lake View, new townhouse and condominium developments are replacing single-family homes and multi-family buildings. In many cases, large portions of the sites are covered by the new structures, leaving little or no usable open space. Exceptions to the minimum requirements for setbacks and yards are often granted, further reducing open space provided on site and creating additional demands for public open space.

The impact of private development on Chicago's significant open space deficiencies can be addressed through zoning policies and regulations that require land and/or fees for public open space and strict adherence to minimum standards for private open space. Also, incentives such as density bonuses can be offered for the creation of additional public open space. These zoning techniques are used in cities and suburbs throughout the county and should be considered in Chicago as a means of providing additional support to Chicago's public open space development strategy.

## **GOALS FOR MEETING OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

Chicago's competition for business and residents comes not only from large, established cities but also from suburban and "exurban" communities throughout the country. In order to strengthen Chicago's competitive position, the open space system should be expanded to remedy immediate needs and to capitalize on assets that no other city has to offer.

Given Chicago's geographic opportunities and constraints, the *CitySpace Plan* recommends the following goals as ambitious but realistic benchmarks for Chicago's public agencies and citizens to work toward:

1. By 2010, each community area in Chicago will have a minimum of two acres of public open space per 1,000 residents and all unserved areas will be eliminated.
2. By 2020, the entire city will have five acres of public open space per 1,000 residents.
3. By 2020, the city as a whole and its individual communities will achieve a balance of regional and local open space opportunities for all residents.

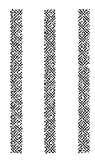
While the short-term goal may appear to be modest, it will require the targeted development of approximately 1,250 acres of local open space. This would translate into 90 to 100 acres of open space per year.

The long-range goal will require the development or preservation of approximately 2,400 acres of both local and regional open space. In addition to meeting the community area goal, such an increase will require completion of the lakefront park system, creation of greenways along Chicago's rivers and railways, preservation of significant natural areas in the Lake Calumet region, and other large-scale open space developments.

In establishing a complete park and parkway system, the life of the wage earner and of his family is made healthier and pleasanter; while the greater attractiveness thus produced keeps at home the people of means and taste, and acts as a magnet to draw those who seek to live amid pleasing surroundings. The prosperity aimed at is for all Chicago.

*Daniel Burnham, Plan of Chicago, 1909*





# PLACES TO



# GROW

## **WHERE CHICAGO WILL FIND THE LAND RESOURCES TO MEET ITS OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

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**T**he city's land resources for open space are vast and varied. Through the creation and analysis of a citywide land inventory, the **CitySpace Plan** identifies potential sites for a variety of open spaces. Publicly owned land and school grounds were found to offer the most strategically located and cost-effective means for meeting demands for open space in Chicago.

### **VACANT LAND**

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Every community in Chicago has vacant land. In built-up neighborhoods, the empty places may be nothing more than a few small lots strung together. In other sections of the city, there are areas where whole blocks of buildings have been abandoned and razed, leaving large expanses of vacant space. Though often viewed as a sign of neighborhood decline, vacant land is a valuable resource that offers opportunities for creating new open spaces, along with other residential, commercial and industrial development.

The CitySpace Project created a citywide land inventory and mapping system to assist in identifying potential sites for open space development. The inventory includes descriptions of existing open space and vacant land, including the size, ownership and tax status. Information describing ownership and tax status is particularly valuable for open space planning purposes. Vacant sites with potential for open space development that are owned by public agencies could be acquired at little or no cost. In addition,

tax delinquent property could be made available at low cost through special land acquisition programs offered by Cook County and the City of Chicago.

There are more than 55,000 vacant lots in Chicago, totaling close to 14,000 acres of vacant land or about 14% of the city's total land area (see Table 5).<sup>1</sup>

The distribution of vacant land varies greatly among the city's 77 community areas (see Map 3). Communities west and south sides have many more vacant acres than those on the southwest and northwest sides of the city. Some of the

communities with the greatest amount of vacant land are near industrial areas on the far south side.

Land ownership and tax status are important indicators of the redevelopment potential of vacant land. In 1994, CitySpace planners conducted a detailed analysis of vacant land and found that close to 30% of the city's vacant land was owned by local public agencies or other not-for-profit organizations. Another 17% was tax delinquent.<sup>2</sup> Such publicly-held and tax delinquent properties offer significant opportunities for developing new public open space in Chicago.

**Table 5**

**VACANT LAND IN CHICAGO**

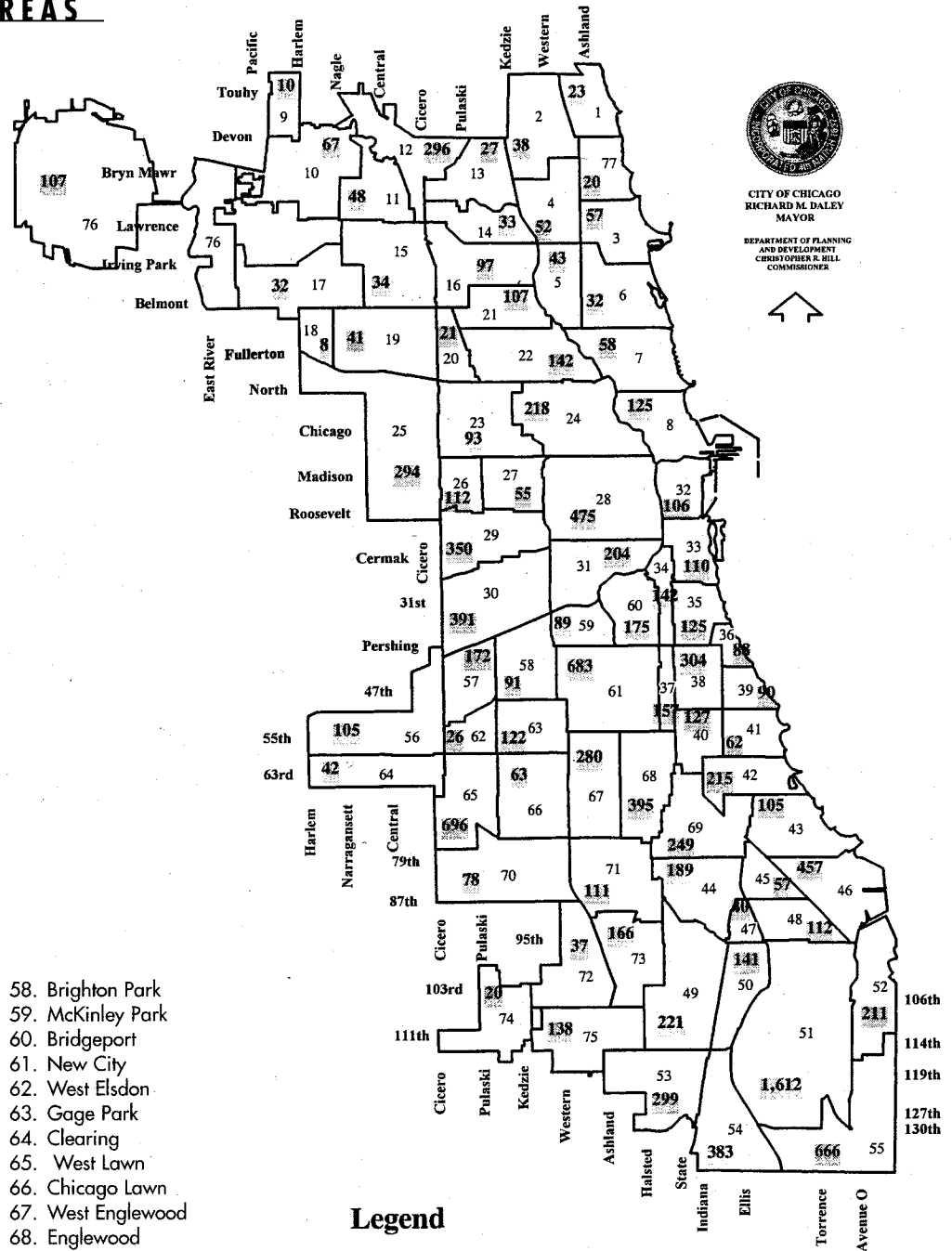
All Lots	576,990
Vacant Lots	55,485
Percent Vacant	9.6%
All Acres	94,917
Vacant Lot Acres	13,769
Percent Vacant	14.5%

# Map 3

## VACANT LAND IN CHICAGO COMMUNITY AREAS (NO. OF ACRES)

### COMMUNITY AREAS

1. Rogers Park
2. West Ridge
3. Uptown
4. Lincoln Square
5. North Center
6. Lake View
7. Lincoln Park
8. Near North Side
9. Edison Park
10. Norwood Park
11. Jefferson Park
12. Forest Glen
13. North Park
14. Albany Park
15. Portage Park
16. Irving Park
17. Dunning
18. Montclare
19. Belmont Cragin
20. Hermosa
21. Avondale
22. Logan Square
23. Humbolt Park
24. West Town
25. Austin
26. West Garfield Park
27. East Garfield Park
28. Near West Side
29. North Lawndale
30. South Lawndale
31. Lower West Side
32. Loop
33. Near South Side
34. Armour Square
35. Douglas
36. Oakland
37. Fuller Park
38. Grand Boulevard
39. Kenwood
40. Washington Park
41. Hyde Park
42. Woodlawn
43. South Shore
44. Chatham
45. Avalon Park
46. South Chicago
47. Burnside
48. Calumet Heights
49. Roseland
50. Pullman
51. South Deering
52. East Side
53. West Pullman
54. Riverdale
55. Hegewisch
56. Garfield Ridge
57. Archer Heights
58. Brighton Park
59. McKinley Park
60. Bridgeport
61. New City
62. West Elsdon
63. Gage Park
64. Clearing
65. West Lawn
66. Chicago Lawn
67. West Englewood
68. Englewood
69. Greater Grand Crossing
70. Ashburn
71. Auburn Gresham
72. Beverly
73. Washington Heights
74. Mount Greenwood
75. Morgan Park
76. O'Hare
77. Edgewater



CITY OF CHICAGO  
RICHARD M. DALEY  
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
CHRISTOPHER S. HILL  
COMMISSIONER



### Legend

1-77 Community Areas

123 Vacant Acres

Source: City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, 1997.



## INLAND WATERWAYS

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) is responsible for protecting the water quality in Chicago. It also has been a leading supporter of the preservation and enhancement of open space through the improvement and management of land under its stewardship. MWRD owns 647 acres of land that provide significant opportunities for future public open space that will benefit the entire region. The ability to achieve these benefits, however, is dependent upon continued public control and protection of these acres.

The MWRD owns 384 acres of land along 12 miles of Chicago's 40-mile inland waterway system. These land holdings offer significant potential for greenway conservation and trail and park development. Table 6a provides a breakdown of how the MWRD land is distributed geographically and its lease status.

The MWRD owns an additional 215 acres of land in the Lake Calumet area, a diverse ecological system that provides habitat for numerous wetland and migratory birds. Table 6b shows that the MWRD's land in the Lake Calumet area is divided among several large parcels. This land represents a significant opportunity

**Table 6a**

## METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT LAND ALONG INLAND WATERWAYS (IN ACRES)

Tenure	North Shore Channel	Main Channel	Calumet River	Total Acres
Vacant	1	64	-	65
Leased:				
Park District	141	-	-	141
Private/Low Rents <sup>1</sup>	28	68	-	96
Private/High Rents <sup>2</sup>	9	51	-	60
MWRD Facilities				
SEPA 1 <sup>3</sup>	-	-	20	20
SEPA 2	-	-	2	2
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>384</b>

<sup>1</sup> Low Annual Rents (property leased for less than \$10,000 per year)

<sup>2</sup> High Annual Rents (property leased for \$10,000 or more per year)

<sup>3</sup> Side Elevation Pool Aeration Facility

for wetland and natural area conservation at a relatively low cost through the leasing of this property to other public agencies with the resources and expertise to manage natural areas.

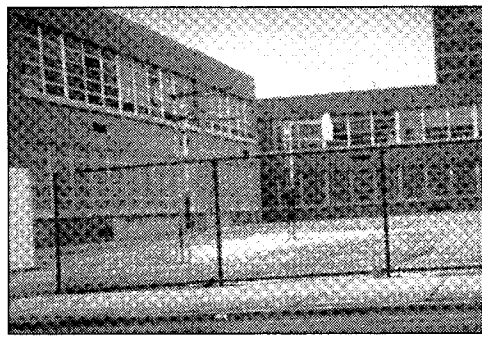
The Forest Preserve District of Cook County has targeted the Lake Calumet area in its *Land Acquisition Plan* as having potential for a new preserve. The Plan seeks to expand and improve the existing open space system in Cook County by preserving significant native ecosystems, major expanses of open space and greenways. Such opportunities span municipal, county and state boundaries, which underscores the importance of all agencies in the region working as partners toward a common goal of an improved open space network.

**Table 6b**

**METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT LAND IN LAKE CALUMET AREA (IN ACRES)**

Site	Acres
Deadstick Slough	80
Kensington Marsh	15
O'Brien Lock & Dam	120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>215</b>

Source: Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, 1995.

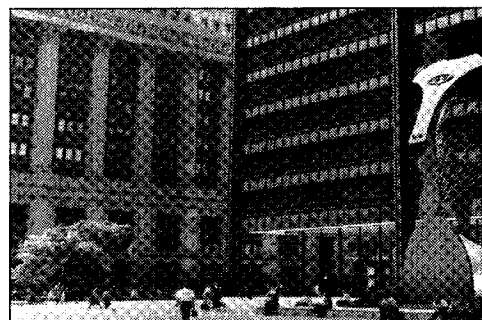


**LAND ADJACENT TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND INSTITUTIONS**

The land that surrounds public buildings represents another potential resource. In some cases, the amount of land in these locations is substantial. Even the densest neighborhoods have some land surrounding buildings that serve municipal or other public purposes.

**Public and Private Schools.** In dense neighborhoods, the land around schools is one of the few logical places to turn to for additional open space. The Board of Education owns 557 public school sites in Chicago, and currently a majority of these sites are surrounded by concrete and asphalt.

**Public Sites and Buildings.** The City Department of General Services owns or maintains 426 structures or pieces of property. While many of these public sites are either very small or used for outdoor storage or other purposes, they do represent important potential opportunities for landscaping, streetscape, gathering places and other types of places that could help serve and enhance the neighborhoods in which they are located.



## **OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY AND SITE EVALUATION**

The CitySpace Project team analyzed the open space needs and opportunities within the 55 community areas with deficiencies. Resources used to identify potential open space sites included: 1) maps of open spaces, schools and other community facilities; 2) community area land use maps prepared by the North-eastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC); and 3) information on vacant lots, including the address, size and ownership of each parcel. In addition, questionnaires were sent to community leaders asking about their perceptions of vacant land and the types of open spaces they desired.

Field surveys were undertaken to identify suitable sites for new open space. The field surveys were guided by an evaluation process that examined vacant land according to its potential for a variety of open space types, each with different physical characteristics and service requirements. The evaluation criteria that determined whether a vacant site has open space potential included: 1) its location within or proximity to an unserved or underserved community area; 2) its potential linkage to other existing or planned open spaces; and 3) the presence of significant natural features on the site.

Vacant land will vary greatly in its potential for open space. It may be

separated from potential users by man-made or natural barriers, such as railroads or rivers. Also, a site may have a combination of features that make it more suitable for one type of open space and less suitable for other types. A vacant lot may be too small for a neighborhood park but perfectly adequate for a community garden. A larger site may provide sufficient space for recreation activities or, depending on the presence and condition of its natural assets, may be more appropriate for restoration and use as a nature preserve.

Urban open spaces can range in size from a fraction of an acre to hundreds of acres, can have significant natural attributes as well as features that are entirely man-made, and can be found in the most dense city neighborhoods as well as in forest preserves on the edges of the city. (See Table 7.)



**Table 7****OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY AND POTENTIAL LOCATIONS**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Potential Locations</b>
Forest Preserve	Typically 100-plus acres, containing natural features and attracting visitors from entire metropolitan area.	Lake Calumet area and sites along inland waterways.
Wetlands and Natural Areas	Size varies, ranging from large-scale (nature preserve) to small-scale sites with natural features (forest, wetlands, prairies, streams, lakes); some with outdoor-and nature-oriented facilities.	Lake Calumet area, sites along inland waterways and rail corridors, and sites within existing parks and cemeteries.
Magnet Park	50+ acres, attracting large numbers of visitors from the entire metropolitan area	Northerly Island (Meigs Field)
Citywide Park	50+ acres, attracting visitors from the entire city	USX (South Works) site
Regional Park	15-50 acres, with indoor and outdoor recreation facilities serving a section of the city	Bridgeport (Stearns Quarry), Gage Park, South Lawndale, West Englewood, West Pullman
Community Park	5-15 acres, with indoor and outdoor recreation facilities serving a neighborhood	Auburn-Gresham, Bridgeport, Brighton Park, Clearing, Englewood Forest Glen, West Elsdon, West Lawn
Neighborhood Park	.5-5 acres, with outdoor and sometimes indoor recreation facilities serving a neighborhood	Community areas throughout Chicago
Neighborhood School Park	1-3 acres, active and passive recreation, playground	Community areas throughout Chicago
Mini-Park	Less than 1 acre, playground	Community areas throughout Chicago
Community Garden	0.1-.5 acre garden plots	Community areas throughout Chicago
Greenway	Length varies, minimum width 50 feet; walking, bicycling, nature observation, wildlife corridor, natural habitat	North Branch Riverwalk, Downtown Riverwalk, South Branch (I&M Canal Corridor) Greenway, Conrail Bikeway, Burnham Prairie Trail, Calumet and Little Calumet River Greenway, Lakefront (north of Hollywood and south of 71st Street)
Plaza/Square	Hard or soft surface areas, more urban	Downtown developments, neighborhood commercial districts