

CANAL ORIGINS PARK

The waters off Canal Origins Park are considered to be the second best fish habitat in the city (exceeded only by River Park along the North Branch). It is located at the confluence of Bubbly Creek, the South Branch of the Chicago River, and the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal.

This site is historically important. On July 4, 1836, the first shovelful of dirt for the Illinois & Michigan (I&M) Canal was dug at what is now Canal Origins Park. The I&M was constructed to provide a way for larger boats to travel from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River by connecting Lake Michigan to the Illinois River. Before the I&M was built, the main stem of the Chicago River was only navigable to this point.

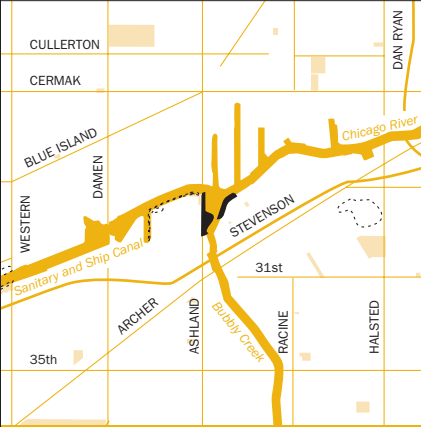
The Canal Corridor Association worked for twenty years to see Canal Origins Park preserved. The State of Illinois transferred the west property 2 3 4 to the Chicago Park District, and in 2004, the park's native habitat was restored. Earth artist Michael Singer helped create the design. A walkway is dug down into the earth, giving the feel of a canal. Chicago artist Phil Schuster

worked with groups of students to create ceramic friezes that tell the story of the canal.

The design highlights the historic significance of the site while improving the park's natural features. This is a stopping ground for migrating birds, and kingfishers can be found throughout the warm months. Black-crowned night herons are frequently seen feeding here.

The site on the east shore, called Bridgeport Expansion 1, is dominated by cottonwood and mulberry trees, with weedy understory vegetation. A well-worn trail runs parallel to the river. There are good views of the river and of the western portion of Canal Origins Park across the water.

The City purchased Bridgeport Expansion in 2004. The land requires extensive environmental clean-up. The Chicago Park District will be the eventual owner. No formal plans have been drawn, but the east property will enhance natural habitat and improve the public's access to the river. Upland portions of the site may be used for active recreation such as ball fields.



Canal Origins Park



ADDRESS 2800 S Ashland Ave
 OWNER Chicago Park District, City of Chicago
 ACREAGE 4.33

HABITATS
 1 Potential Habitat
 2 4 Riparian / Water Edge
 3 Prairie / Grassland

DIRECTIONS For the west side, turn north on Ashland off of Archer; the park is on the right hand side of the street, just before the access road for the Chicago Sun-Times printing plant and the river bridge. For the east side, turn north on Lock Street off of Archer Avenue. Stop at the dead end.

