

Village of Robbins Environmental Vision

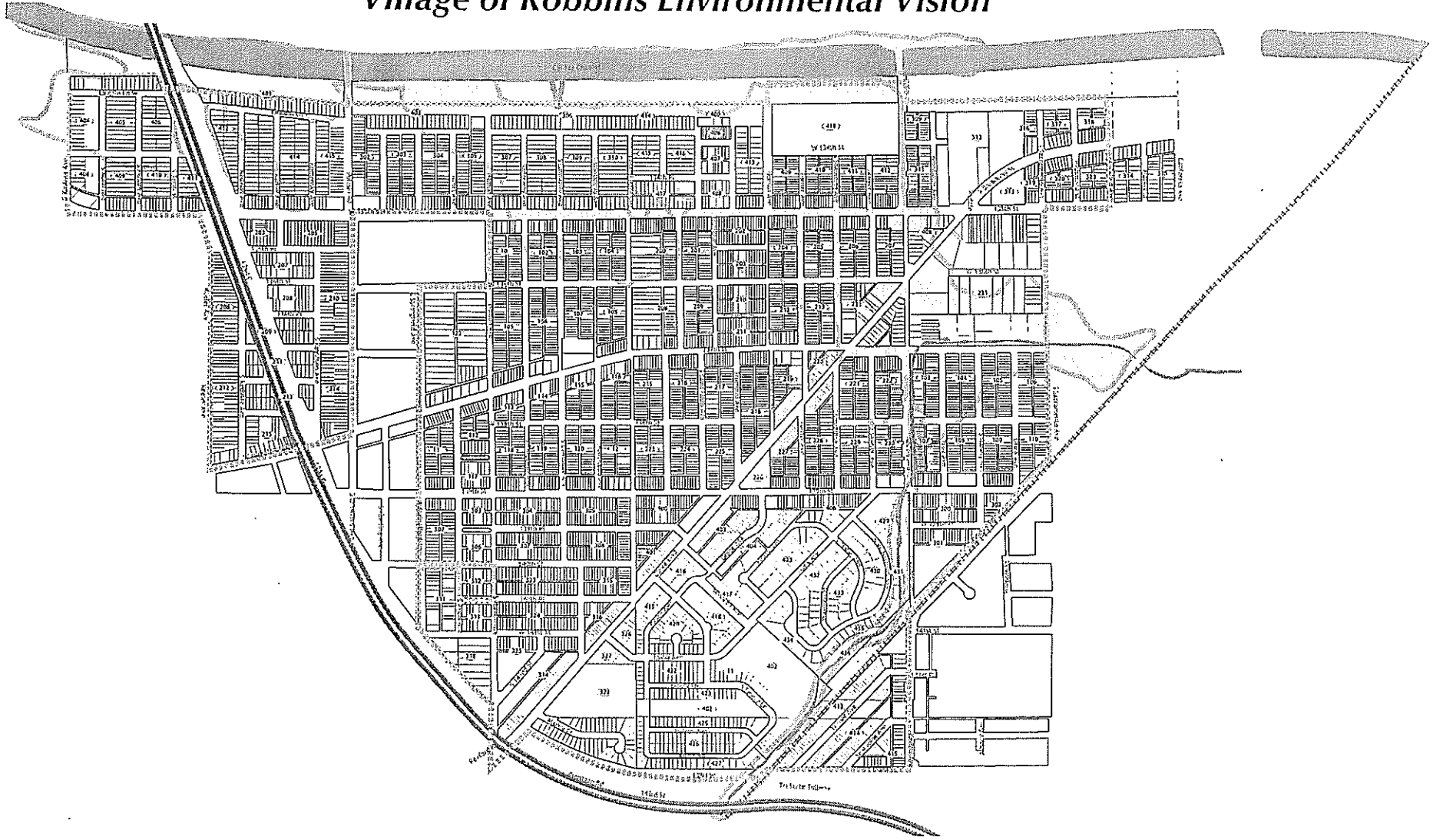


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Village of Robbins received a grant through the Illinois Environmental Agency Green Communities Demonstration Program in 2003. The IEPA's goal is to help communities find more effective ways for dealing with environmental challenges and planning for a sustainable future.

As the outcome of several community meetings, four environmental issues were selected as the most pressing issues for the Village of Robbins:

- Clean Land, Air and Water
- Land Use and Development Management
- Open Space Development
- Environmental Education

CLEAN LAND, AIR AND WATER

The primary goal identified by the community was to have clean land, air, and water within the Village of Robbins. The main is-

ssues identified under the broad category were flooding and floodplain issues.

Currently, over 20% of the Village of Robbins is located within the 100-year floodplain. The 100-year floodplain refers to the land area susceptible to being inundated by water with a 1 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Residents currently located within the floodplain must purchase flood insurance, above and beyond their homeowners insurance. Construction of new structures is generally prohibited in the floodplain. Therefore, the floodplain represents difficulties for current residents, as well as for any future development.

According to Village Staff and residents, there are areas located within the floodplain limits that have never flooded. Consequently, before plans are made for the future of the floodplain and its impact on the community, it is important to identify its true location. Identifying accurate floodplain boundaries may also free land for redevelopment.

Eliminating existing structures from within the floodplain is an additional step in working towards improved stormwater manage-

ment. Removing structures from within the floodplain increases open space available for water infiltration, which in turn helps alleviate flooding.

Prior to 1938, Midlothian Creek was channelized to run north through Robbins and make a 90-degree bend to the east before exiting into Blue Island. One of the main causes of streambank erosion is the straightening of the streams. In the past, streams were channelized to move water quickly through flood-prone or erosive areas. But instead of solving a problem, it only moved the problem downstream with even greater force.

The banks of Midlothian Creek are eroded and filled with invasive species and debris. Streambank erosion is naturally occurring process. But too much erosion can pollute water supplies, cover fish habitat, and intensify flooding issues. Stabilization of the creek banks will further improve the condition of Midlothian Creek.

OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT

According to National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standard of 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 people, the Village of Robbins needs approximately 65 total

acres of open space. Currently, Robbins is severely deficient in open space.

The Village of Robbins has identified and secured approximately 11 from the Village of Crestwood with the goal of creating a park. A preliminary park plan, as designed by the Village residents, is included in the Appendix.

Even with the addition of 11 acres of parkland, Robbins is still behind NRPA's stated goal. The Village needs to identify additional locations and work with the residents in growing their park and open space offerings.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The ultimate goal of environmental education is to increase the level of environmental awareness of the community in order to make well-informed decisions about enhancing and protecting the local natural resources of Robbins.

The task force will develop bottom-up strategies and programs to assist Robbins in implementing environmental policies that best meet the resident's needs.

The Environmental Vision for Robbins sets forth a long-range sustainable development

program for the community. Involving and educating children about their role in the Vision will help the plan move forward.

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Poor development practices and land use and zoning decisions are partly responsible for the poor environmental conditions that have led to frequent flooding, vacated properties, and undesirable living conditions which plague certain areas within the community.

Correcting mistakes done in the past by previous development land use decisions is not always possible. However, the Village of Robbins can learn from previous mistakes and policies of neighboring communities to ensure new development and land use decisions are sensitive the desired environmental vision of the community.

INTRODUCTION

The Village of Robbins' Environmental Vision is the Village's official guide and policy improving the environment of the community. This Plan is the product of considerable effort on the part of the elected officials, Village staff, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), and residents of the community. The recommendations and goals presented in this plan are the result of voiced community concerns and public input.

This Plan establishes the foundation for the public and private initiatives to improve the Village of Robbins from an environmental standpoint, and to create a more desirable community in which to live, work, and play.

This plan presents the environmental vision of the community and delivers to developers, business, owners, Community leaders, and the Village residents, the new environmental framework in which future decisions will be made.

This Plan provides a basis for implementing several initiatives aimed at meeting the 4 general environmental goals for Robbins, and

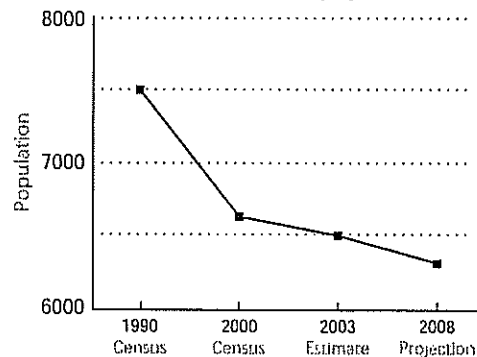
ultimately assisting the community in achieving its Environmental Vision.

THE VILLAGE OF ROBBINS

The Village of Robbins, Illinois is located in southern Cook County, approximately 20 miles southwest of downtown Chicago. The Village of Robbins occupies approximately 1.5 square miles of land within Bremen Township. Neighboring communities include Crestwood, Midlothian, Blue Island, Alsip and Posen. Notable geographic landmarks include the Calumet Sag Channel, located immediately north of the Village (Figure 1).

DEMOGRAPHICS

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Robbins was 6,635. The majority of the Village's population is concentrated in the southern areas of the Village, south of 137th Street. The Village experienced an 11.5% decline in population from



1990 to 2000. Projections estimate an additional 2.9% loss from the 2003 population by 2008.

The median household income for the Village of Robbins was \$34,965, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The Village's median household income increased over the previous decade, however, Robbins has not seen the same rate of growth as the neighboring communities. The median household income of Robbins remains approximately 20% lower than the area within a 3-mile radius around Robbins.

Unemployment levels as high as 20% were reported for the Village of Robbins during the 1990's, however unemployment has decreased in recent years due to an increase in retail and service jobs within the region. The majority of Robbins residents are employed in the retail/service, administrative support, and professional managerial employment sectors.

A limited amount of commercial development exists within Robbins and most of the existing companies are small businesses. The Village's largest employer is the Lydia Health Care nursing home, which employs just over 100 people. There are no other

employers in the community with more than 25 employees. The Foster-Wheeler Incinerator Facility was shut down in 1997, after only 3 years of operation, depriving the Village of a major source of tax revenue. There are currently no industrial or manufacturing developments within Robbins and the Village is largely dependent on residential property taxes for revenue.

A recent market study conducted by URS Corporation and Community Economic Redevelopment Corporation (CERC) suggests that a limited availability of quality, single-family homes within the Village has contributed to this population decrease. In addition to a limited amount of quality residences, the Village has experienced an increase in tax delinquent properties. The Village estimates half of the properties within Robbins are tax delinquent. Through the Cook County Tax Treasurer's Tax Sale, the Village has been acquiring the delinquent land and currently owns more than 1,300 properties. (Figure 2) When a tax delinquent parcel is acquired by the Village, any structure present on the property is demolished if it is within the floodplain or substandard. This policy has further decreased the amount of available housing. The floodplain

issue is covered in more detail in the next section of this Plan.

FLOODPLAIN

Over 20% of the Village of Robbins is located within a regulatory floodplain. Figure 3 illustrates the boundaries of the floodplain as reported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Flood zone data from the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map for Cook County shows that the floodplain is concentrated in the northern portion of Robbins, along the Cal-Sag Channel and Midlothian Creek.

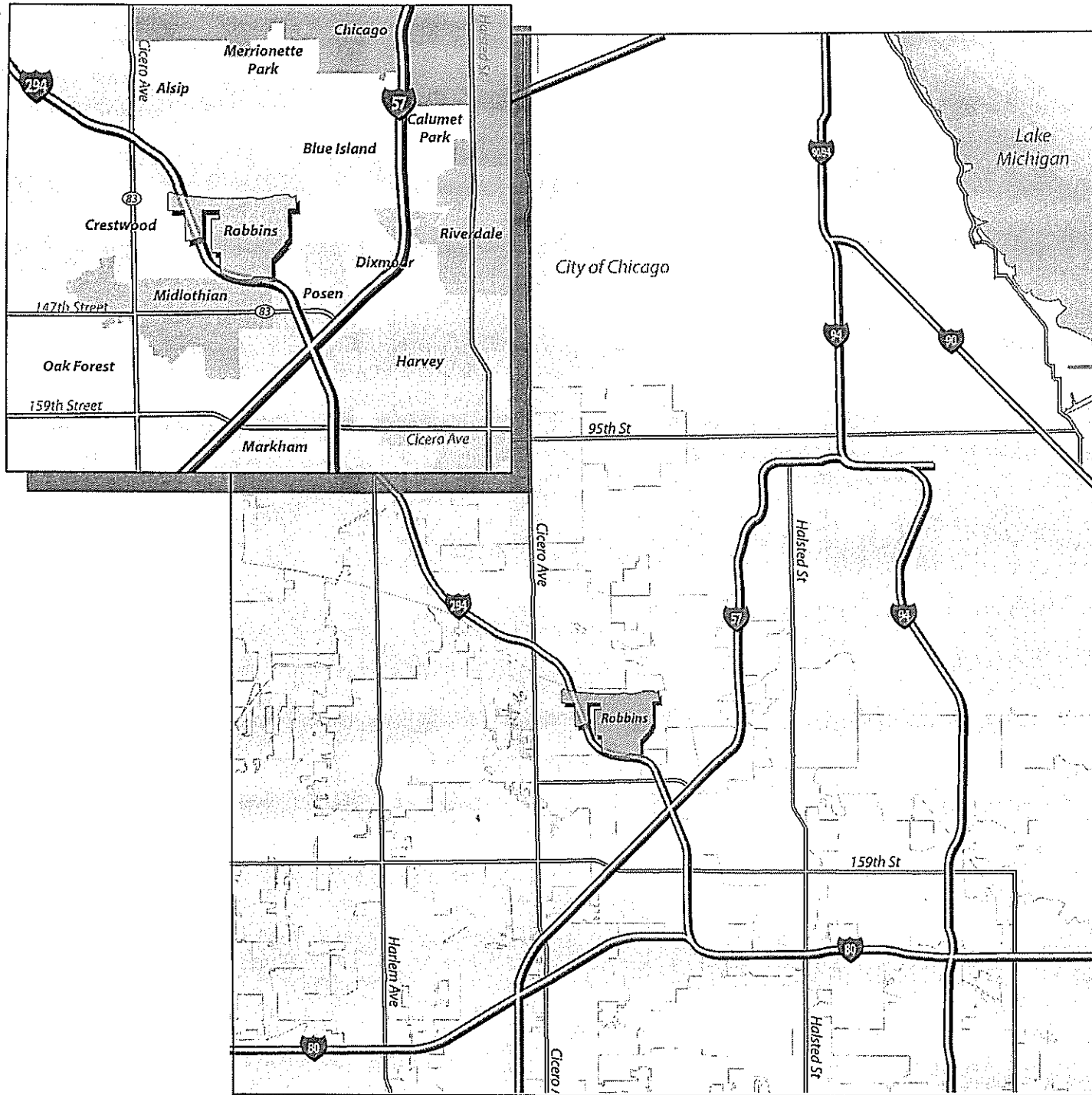
The majority of the floodplain in Robbins is classified as Zone AE. Zone AE corresponds to the 100-year floodplain, which consists of the area adjoining a river, stream, or watercourse that will be covered by water in the event of a 100-year flood. The 100-year flood is the flood elevation having a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in magnitude in any given year.

The floodplain presents a barrier to new development, as any construction must obtain a permit from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) after demonstrating it will not have future flood damage potential and will not increase present or

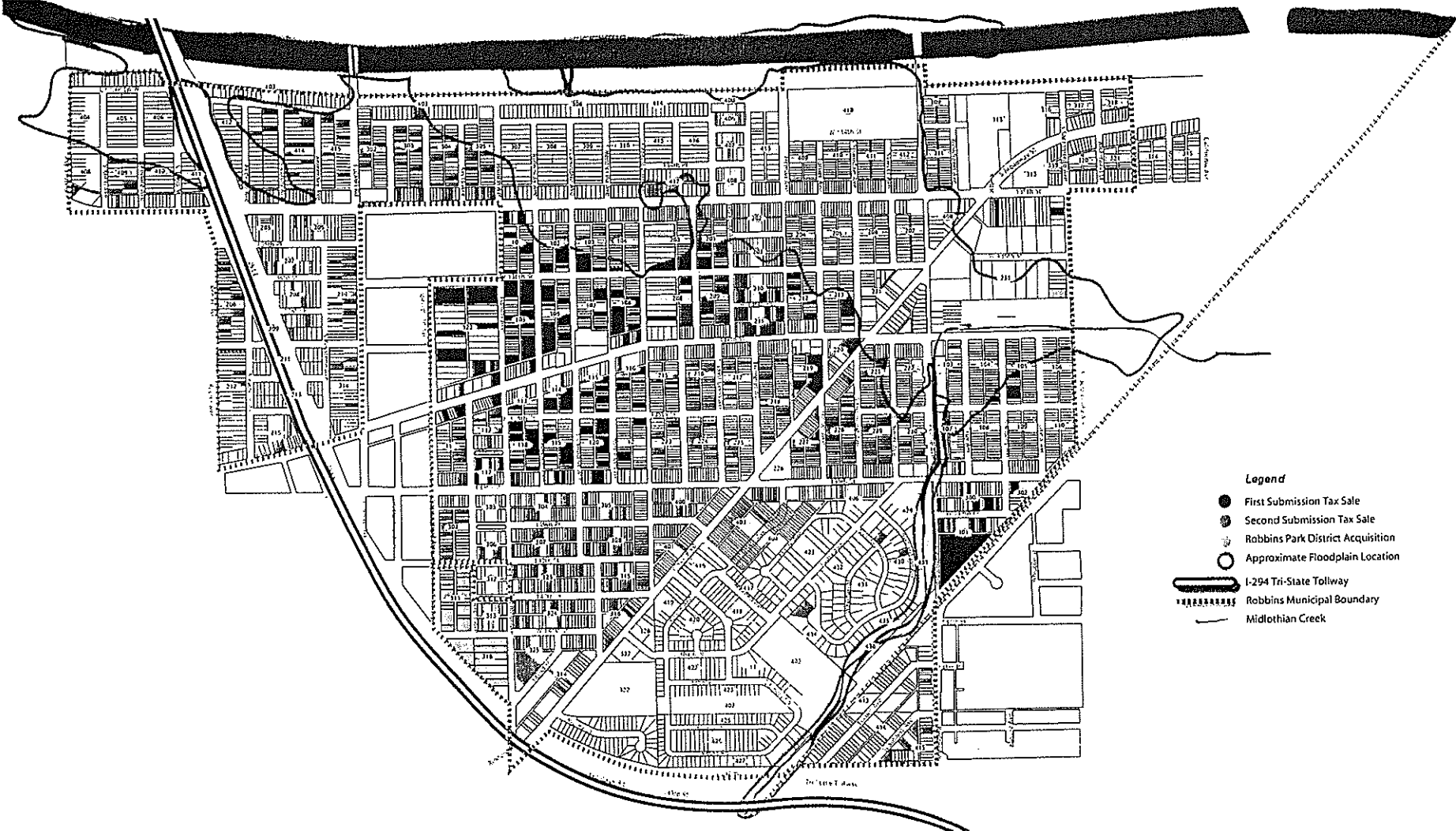
future flood damages on upstream, downstream, or adjacent lands. No construction will be permitted which will cause significant increases in flood stage or velocity.

Not only does the floodplain present challenges to future development within the community, but the floodplain is problematic to current residents. Residents residing within the floodplain live on parcels prone to flooding and with instances of flooded basements and streets. In addition, homes within the floodplain must purchase costly flood insurance.

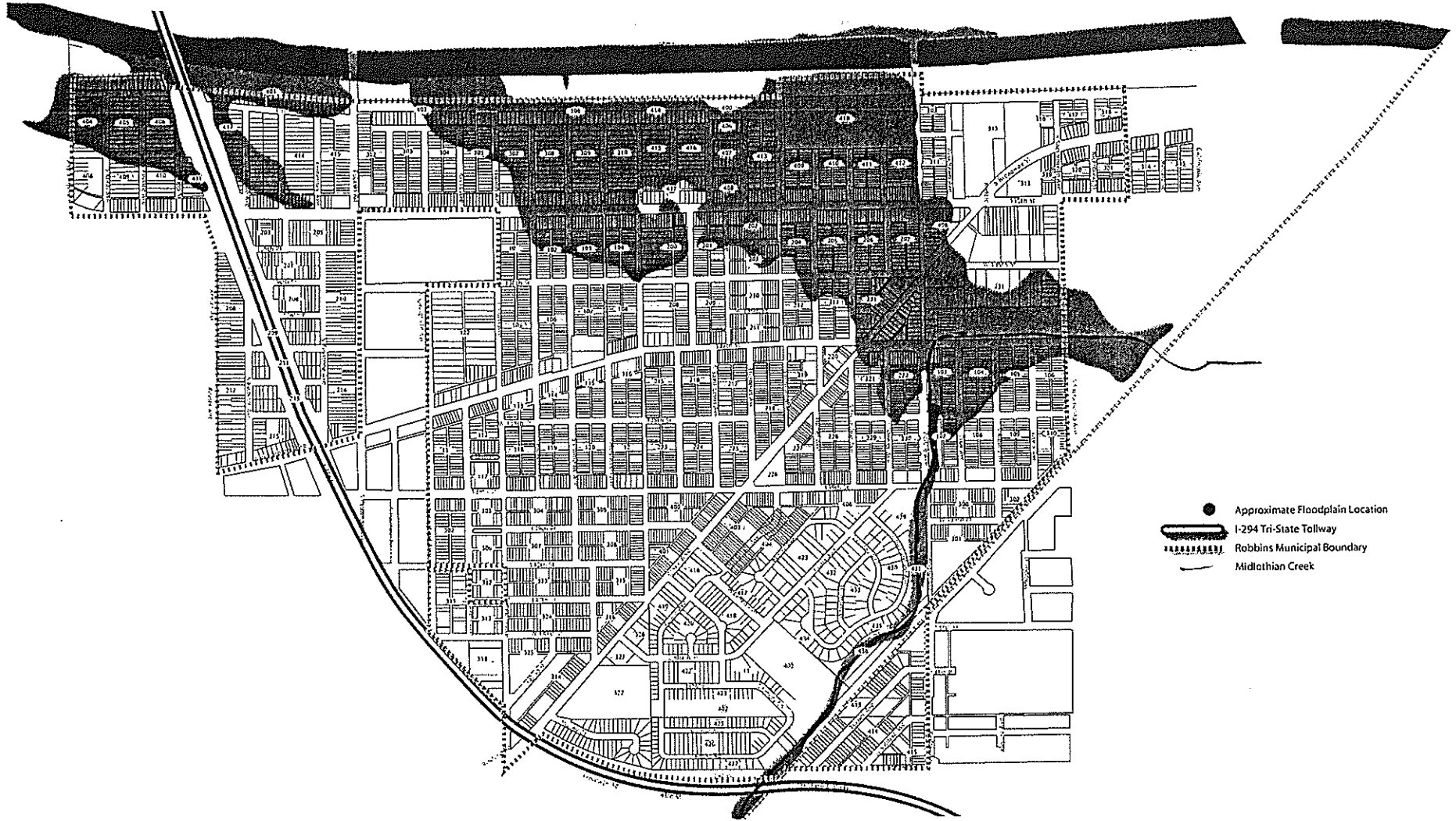
According to information provided by the Village of Robbins, there are 415 residential structures located within the floodplain.



Village owned properties



Floodplain Location



PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Village of Robbins was awarded a grant in 2003 through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's (IEPA) Green Communities Demonstration Program to create an Environmental Vision that will help guide Robbins as they worked to stimulate investment and revitalization within the Village. More specifically, the IEPA's goal is to help communities find more effective ways for dealing with environmental challenges and planning for a sustainable future.

This grant program supports community-visioning processes that build the capacity of communities to address local environmental issues through collaborative problem solving and consensus based decision-making. Robbins applied for this grant with the goal of energizing the community, developing a community-wide vision, addressing related problems simultaneously, enhancing the quality of life for residents, and making Robbins a more attractive place to do business. The Village of Robbins selected URS Corporation and the Chicagoland Redevelopment Institute (REDI) (URS Team) to help the Village in developing their Environmental Vision.

VISIONING PROCESS

In April 2003, the URS Team collaborated with the Village of Robbins to produce a newsletter that informed residents about the Green Communities Grant and invited community members to become involved. The project kickoff meeting was held on April 23, 2003 and was well attended by Village Officials, Block Club leaders, and residents. The goals and the process of the visioning process were outlined and issues to be focused on were discussed. A Project Advisory Board (PAB), made up of community members, was developed and tasked with the objective of advising the Village on approaches to public outreach, the focus of the program, and the goals for measurement of success.

A Town Hall meeting was held on Sunday, May 18th at the Robbins Community Center



Residents at a workshop select their most important environmental issues

and was attended by 22 citizens, some representing neighboring municipalities. Based on the issues discussed at the project kickoff meeting, the URS Team grouped concerns together into nine broad environmental categories. Attendees at the Town Hall meeting were asked to identify their top four issues from the nine issues listed.

Listed in priority, the top four environmental issues selected at the Town Hall meeting are as follows:

Land Use and Development Management

Clean Land, Air and Water

Open Space Development

Environmental Education

Although not selected in the top four, other issues discussed at the Town Hall meeting included waste management and recycling; floodplain and stormwater management; energy efficiency and renewable energy; natural areas protection and restoration; and, neighboring communities.

A second PAB meeting was held on Tuesday, May 27, 2003. Originally scheduled for a different date and time, the last minute

change of date and venue resulted in low participation.

The URS team facilitated another meeting in at a July Block Club meeting to help further develop the goals of the environmental vision. In addition to developing the environmental goals and objectives, the URS Team worked with community residents to understand what the end results would be. This meeting and additional meetings with the Village Administrator helped solidify what the Environmental Vision for the Village of Robbins would become.

BACKGROUND TO THE VISION

The Vision Statement describes the environment of Robbins, as it will be in the year 2014. It is a “retrospective” which chronicles the accomplishments of the previous decade. It records the projects, improvements, and developments that have been undertaken since the completion of Robbins’s *Environmental Vision Plan* in 2004.

The Vision Statement establishes focus and direction for the Community and provides an overview of the policies, actions and recommendations presented in the following sections of the report. The Vision Statement is not intended to provide specific improvement projects and recommendations, but rather, a more general outline of what Robbins should be in the future.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL VISION OF ROBBINS

Since Robbins' Environmental vision was completed 10 years ago, considerable change has occurred. The town has achieved a healthy balance of residential growth and commercial redevelopment and has greatly improved the Village's overall identity and appearance. Park and recreation amenities have been added and Robbins has come to be regarded as an ecological treasure in the Chicagoland area.

In the year 2014...

Robbins is in the middle of what has already proven to be a successful renaissance. Village improvements have installed a sense of community pride long absent from the Village of Robbins. Community members and the business community alike have responded with great enthusiasm. Population has seen a steady increase and new retail, office, restaurants, and service uses have been opening their doors in record numbers along Claire Boulevard and Kedzie Avenue. The improvements have resulted in a quaint and attractive retail district, which provides

an ideal pedestrian environment that draws on the rich history and character of the community. Neighboring communities have taken notice of the improvements in Robbins and have begun to emulate Robbins' green initiatives.

Flooding and related issues have been greatly relieved through the updated mapping of the floodplain and the relocation of at-risk property owners. Homeowners are enjoying the freedom from paying for flood insurance and from worrying about their basements during heavy rainfall. The conversion of floodplain land from residential property into open space has also added much needed park space for Village residents.

Midlothian Creek has become a treasured, ecological asset to the Village. A walking path extends along the entire length of the creek and has become a popular destination for residents. The banks of Midlothian Creek have been stabilized and revegetated to prevent further erosion and also to help improve the water quality of the creek. The enhanced banks combined with the addition of pools and riffles within the creek have worked to promote a healthy aquatic environment. Science classes from Childs Ele-

mentary School and Keller School spend time studying migrating birds, fish, and other wildlife along the banks of Midlothian Creek.

Once a town with few parks, Robbins has become the envy of its neighbors. Building off of their success with the first community park at the southwest corner of the Village, the Park District continues to provide additional recreational facilities for its residents. Property in the floodplain that once frustrated residents has been turned into a benefit for the Village. The floodplain area has provided enough open space for baseball and soccer fields, playgrounds, and community gardens. The Eagles football team has continued their success, bolstered by the ability to practice on their very own field. The wetland area and nature preserve have become a destination for bird watchers, nature enthusiasts, and residents from Robbins and neighboring communities. Pocket parks have been developed throughout town as the Village works to improve each resident's access to open space. Partnering with neighboring communities and the Cook County Forest Preserve has proven to be a rewarding experience resulting in the construction of a bike path along the Cal-Sag Channel connecting Robbins with Calumet

Woods and the Cook County Forest Preserve.

The Claire Boulevard and Kedzie Avenue corridors have seen significant redevelopment and improvement. Fueled by both private and public investment, the corridors are lined with both large and small successful retail businesses, including restaurants, national retailers, local retailers, and commercial service uses. Condominium and townhome projects have been developed at select locations throughout the corridors, adding to the Village's overall character and sustainable mix of uses. Reinvestment, rehabilitation, and additions to existing structures have increased the property values in the Village and further stabilized the residential areas. Established design and development guidelines have been used over the years to ensure that new development is attractive, constructed of quality materials, and reflective of the Village's desired character and image.

The annual spring neighborhood cleanup day is a huge success in bringing residents together to work towards maintaining all of the enhancements completed by the Village. Vacant lots have been cleared of debris and instances of fly dumping have all but disap-

peared, due in part to a successful neighborhood watch program. School gardens and natural green spaces allow students to gain hands on environmental education. Robbins has successfully built upon and enhanced the community's heritage and historical character to create a pleasant environment for all of its residents.

Helping fuel the redevelopment and revitalization efforts of the community are the continual improvements to the Village's existing infrastructure. The Village's Capital Improvement Plan outlines the street and sidewalk rehabilitation program, curb and gutter repair, and sewer replacement schedule, which will be completed every year. Having consistently stuck to this Capital Improvement Plan, the Village has incrementally and systematically upgraded and maintained the community's infrastructure. These community-wide improvements have helped attract new businesses and retain existing ones. Residents are better served by the improved infrastructure and private property reinvestment reflects the Village's trend of public reinvestment into community systems.

GOAL #1: CLEAN LAND, AIR, AND WATER

The primary goal identified by the community was to have clean land, air, and water within the Village of Robbins. The main issues identified under the broad category were flooding and floodplain issues.

Currently, over 20% of the Village of Robbins is located within a regulatory floodplain, which presents problems from a develop-

CLEAN LAND, AIR & WATER



ACTIONS

- Improve stormwater management
- Identify true floodplain
- Improve condition of Midlothian Creek

END RESULTS

- Quality recreation facilities
- Enhanced Midlothian Creek
- Increased development potential

Poster presented at July Block Club Meeting

ment, as well as residential, standpoint. (Figure 3)

IDENTIFY TRUE FLOODPLAIN

Objective: Identify the precise location of the floodplain.

Rationale: According to Village Staff and residents, there are areas, while located in the floodplain according to FEMA, which have never flooded. Consequently, before plans are made for the future of the floodplain and its impact on the community, it is important to identify its true location.

The fact that there are areas within the identified floodplain that have never flooded serves as an indication that the Flood Insurance Rate Maps may be inaccurate and that property owners are unnecessarily paying flood insurance.

Identifying the true floodplain boundaries may also open up potential land for redevelopment.

Recommendations:

- 1) Survey the lowest point on each property believed to be outside the floodplain. If properties currently shown to lie within the floodplain are proven to

be outside boundary, FEMA will issue a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) freeing the property from the floodplain designation. The LOMA is attached to the property deed so future owners of the property are not constrained by floodplain regulations.

ELIMINATE STRUCTURES WITHIN THE FLOODPLAIN

Objective: Once the floodplain has been identified, all structures within the floodplain should be removed.

Rationale: Eliminating structures from within the floodplain is a major step in working towards improved stormwater management. Removing houses and the accompanying appurtenances (garages, driveways, patios, etc.) increases open space available for water infiltration. Allowing stormwater to filter through the ground, rather than sending it directly into a stormwater system, will alleviate some of the pressure on Robbins' older sewer system that may not be able to handle today's demands. Filtering water through the ground also works to naturally remove some pollutants and also helps with groundwater recharge.

Recommendations:

- 1) Continue to acquire tax delinquent parcels within the floodplain through the Cook County Treasurer's Tax Sale. If housing exists on the property, or any other appurtenances, they should be razed by the Village.
- 2) Develop a land acquisition and resident relocation plan to acquire those properties that are not tax delinquent. The relocation plan should offer incentives for residents to move within Robbins.
- 3) Prioritize parcels for acquisition based on the frequency of past flooding.
- 4) Purchase at risk properties and relocate owners to more suitable areas within the Village of Robbins.
- 5) Identify potential funding sources to assist the Village in relocating residences from the floodplain.

USE THE FLOODPLAIN AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOL

Objective: Identify a use for the floodplain that, while protecting it, can be used as an economic development tool by the Village.

Rationale: Upon acquiring the floodplain land within the community, the Village will be in the unique position of having the ability to plan for the best possible use of a large amount of open space. While this land is not well suited for residential, commercial or industrial development, a park or preserve may be appropriate.

Determine the benefits of open land. Since this land is not well suited for development, a desirable reuse of land within a floodplain could be a recreational facility. A needs analysis should be performed to determine what park facilities are most desirable to the residents.

Several options are available for the floodplain area. The large floodplain area on the north side of town, adjacent to the Cal-Sag Channel, is an ideal location for a wetland nature preserve. The floodplain conditions map from 1938 show a number of wetlands in the area. Returning the developed property to its native state could help manage

stormwater and provide important habitat for wildlife.

With proper design and implementation a wetland nature preserve could turn a community impediment into a benefit and a local attraction. Historical information and interpretive signage, walking and bicycling paths, community gathering space and outdoor classrooms would add to the overall attraction of the preserve.

A further use for this area is that of a wetland mitigation bank. Wetland mitigation banks provide compensation for wetland loss in other locations. Wetland mitigation banks are wetlands whose values and functions are summed and assigned a value that is translated into "credits". The wetland bank must exist in perpetuity and may never be developed for another purpose. As approved wetland losses occur, these credits are used to compensate for the losses. Mitigation banks typically provide compensation within the same watershed. Private individuals, public agencies, or a combination of these entities can develop mitigation banks. Community enhancements, such as trails, paths, and other passive recreational facilities, are permitted within a wetland bank.

In addition to the wetlands, a portion of the area may also be used to create a quarry, which can be reclaimed to provide both stormwater storage and recreational opportunities. Initial searches of the geology of Robbins suggest the presence of shallow bedrock, which may provide an opportunity for limestone extraction. Limestone is an important component in the construction of roadways and other public improvement projects. Managed correctly, a quarry can be reclaimed and offer public space for swimming, boating, and fishing while providing a habitat for fish and wildlife.

Recommendations:

- 1) Identify possible reuses of the floodplain and develop a cost-benefit analysis for each use to maximize the Village's return in protecting the floodplain. Possible uses include a wetland mitigation bank, wetland nature preserve, or a quarry.
- 2) Determine the best reuse strategy for the floodplain area.
- 3) Develop floodplain area.

**IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF
MIDLOTHIAN CREEK**

Objective: Improve the flow, water quality, banks and overall condition of Midlothian Creek.

Rationale: Midlothian Creek is one of eight major tributaries to the Little Calumet River in southern Cook County. The creek generally brings stormwater runoff and rainfall from the western side of the watershed northward to the Little Calumet River. The Village of Robbins is one of the more downstream communities for the creek, before it discharges to the Little Calumet River.

Development pressures in the watershed are stressing the ability of Midlothian Creek to naturally manage flows. Prior to 1938, Midlothian Creek was channelized through Robbins to run north along Kedzie Avenue and turn 90-degrees to the east after crossing 137th Street.

One of the main causes of streambank erosion is the straightening of the streams. In the past, streams were channeled to move water quickly through flood-prone or erosive areas. But instead of solving a problem, it only moved the problem downstream with even greater force.

The banks of Midlothian Creek are eroded and filled with invasive species and debris. Cleaning up the banks would be an initial step in reclaiming the creek and managing overall drainage. Removing trash from stormwater inlets and outlets would also permit water to drain freely into the creek and alleviate upstream flooding.

Stabilization of the creek banks will further improve the condition of Midlothian Creek. Streambank erosion is naturally occurring process. But too much erosion can pollute water supplies, cover fish habitat, and threaten property.

Recommendations:

- 1) Remove trash and brush from the banks of Midlothian Creek.
- 2) Establish a schedule to routinely clean debris from existing storm sewer grates.
- 3) Determine the feasibility of restoring Midlothian Creek to its true alignment before bank stabilization treatments are performed. A work plan completed by URS Corporation for the Village of Robbins in August 2001 estimated approximately 1200 hours were needed

to study the feasibility of realigning the creek.

- 4) Identify potential funding source to assist the Village in stabilizing the stream-bank.
- 5) Stabilize the banks with bioengineering techniques, adding riffles and pools to the creek itself, and revegetating the area with native plant species will provide habitat for wildlife and work towards improving water quality.

CONTINUE MIDLOTHIAN CREEK WALKING PATH

Objective: Extend the walking path along Midlothian Creek throughout the entire Village.

Rationale: Besides adding to the overall enjoyment of the creek, the walking path will provide safe passage for children from Childs Elementary School and Keller School to travel to and from the park improvements on the north side of the creek.

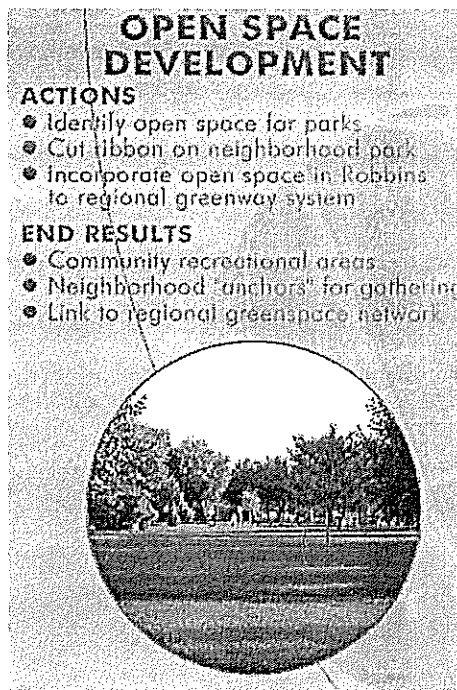
Recommendations:

- 1) Regardless of the Midlothian Creek's alignment, a walking path should be constructed along its entire length, connecting residents and school children to this natural resource.

GOAL #2: OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Open space in communities is important on many levels. Green space in urban areas provides substantial environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Trees and plants work to reduce air and water pollution, they help keep cities cooler, and they are a more effective and less ex-



Poster presented at July Block Club Meeting

pensive way to manage stormwater runoff than building systems of sewers and drainage ditches.

Parks also produce important social and community development benefits. They make communities more desirable; they offer recreational opportunities for children and families; at-risk youth, and they provide places in neighborhoods where people can feel a sense of community.

Strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more. Regular physical activity has been shown to increase health and reduce the risk of a wide range of diseases.

Numerous studies have also shown that parks and open space also increase the value of neighboring residential property. Growing evidence points to a similar benefit on commercial property value.

According to National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) standard of 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 people, the Village of Robbins needs approximately 65 total acres of open space. Currently, Robbins is severely deficient in open space.

As a result of the lack of park space, the Robbins Eagles youth football team must hold their practice sessions in neighboring communities. The Village of Robbins and the Robbins Park District share the goal of acquiring additional open space and recreational facilities.

COMMUNITY PARK

Objective: Develop a park to provide the residents of Robbins with a community recreational area.

Rationale: The Village of Robbins has identified and secured approximately 12 acres bounded by I-294, South Springfield Street, South Hamlin Avenue, and 140th Street for a new park for the residents of Robbins. The Village acquired the property from the Village of Crestwood with the goal of creating a park. Now that the property has been purchased, developing the park is the next step.

A park meeting was held on February 18, 2004 to establish a preliminary design for the park. Eight residents, including the Park District Board, participated in a design charrette. A rendering of the park complex is illustrated in Figure X.

Recommendations:

- 1) Establish preliminary park design. (Completed February 2000. See Appendix X for rendering.)
- 2) Identify both public and private funding sources to help finance the park development. Due to funding limits, this may need to be completed in phases.
- 3) Complete wetland delineation of the park site.
- 4) If needed, acquire land to the west for wetland mitigation.
- 5) Using the rendered plan as a guide, develop the park complex.
- 6) Conduct a ribbon cutting ceremony to publicize the opening of the new park.

IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE

Objective: Following the development of the first park, the Village should investigate the addition of further green space and pocket parks within the residential communities.

Rationale: Even with the addition of 12 acres of parkland, Robbins is still behind NRPA's stated goal.

One area well suited for a park complex is the property immediately north of Midlothian Creek along Kedzie Avenue. Any Permanent fixtures and structures will need to be permitted due to their location within the floodplain. Landscaping should be used to shield the neighboring industrial uses from the park site.

Recommendations:

- 1) Identify the park and recreational needs of the community.
- 2) Identify future park and open space sites for potential acquisitions to meet the Community's needs.
- 3) Identify both public and private funding sources to help finance the park development.
- 4) Acquire park site.

REGIONAL GREENWAY SYSTEM

Objective: Incorporate open space in Robbins into the regional greenway system.

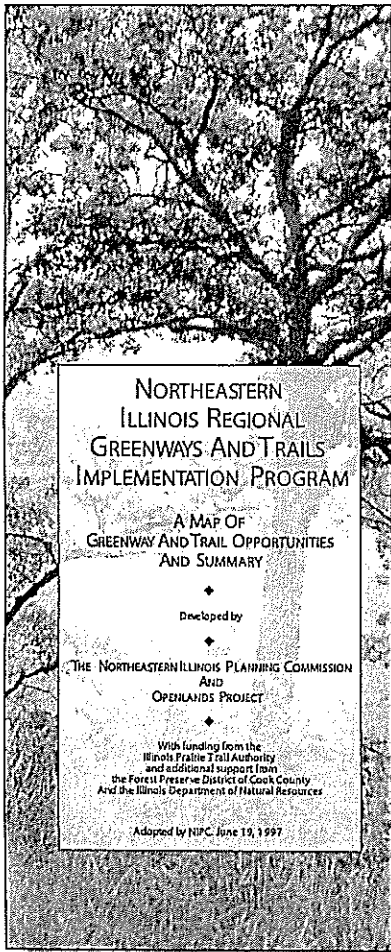
Rationale: The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) adopted the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan (Greenways Plan) in 1997. The Greenways Plan identifies greenways con-

necting Robbins to the Cook County Forest Preserve and to Calumet Woods. (Figure 4) Robbins' transformation of developed floodplain land into open space is the beginning step in the regional plan. Coordination with the neighboring communities will work to expand the greenway into a regional asset.

Recommendations:

- 1) Pass a resolution in support of NIPC's Greenways Plan.
- 2) Work with neighboring communities and NIPC to develop a regional greenway committee.
- 3) Assist NIPC in implementing the Greenways Plan.

Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan



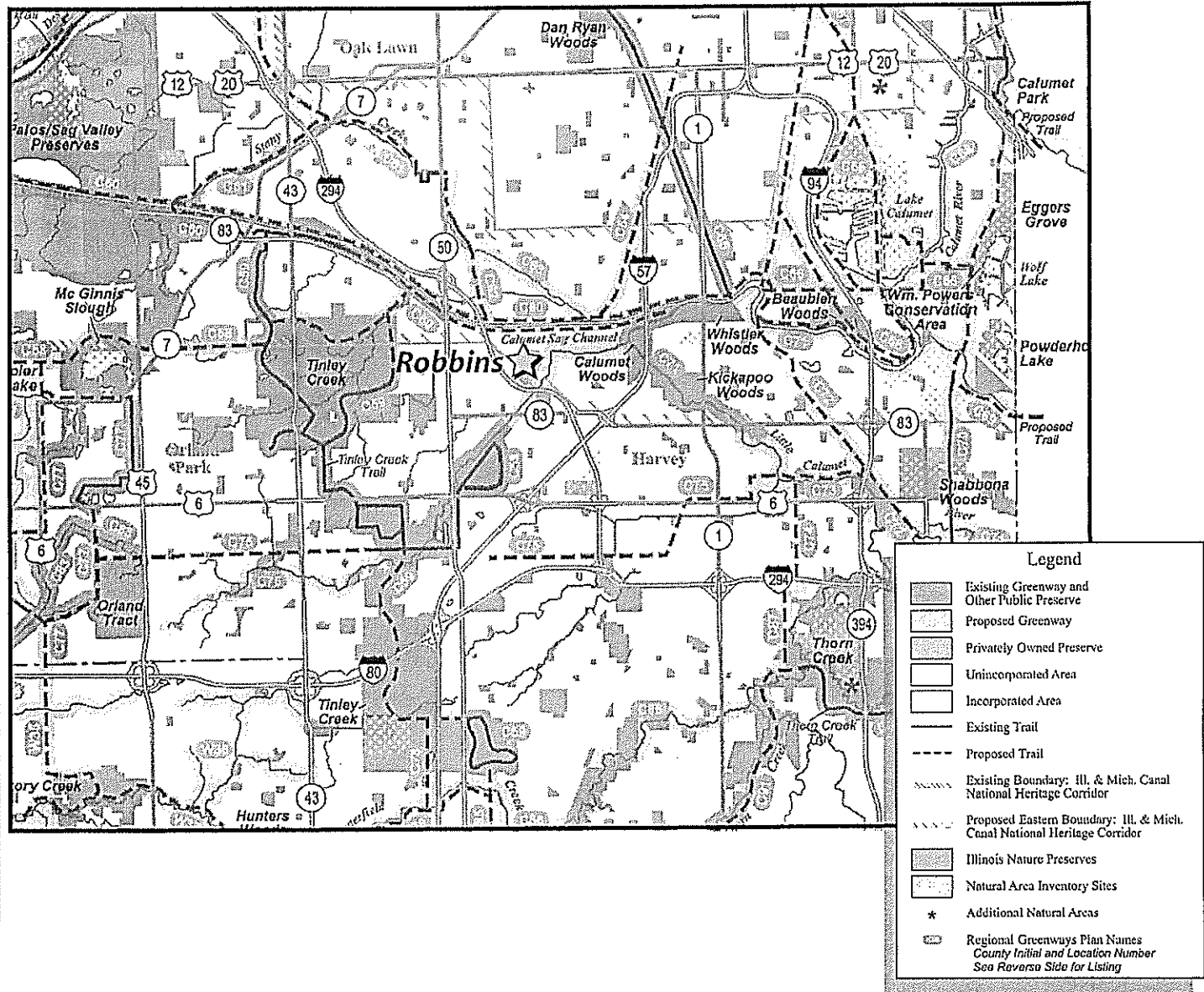
**NORTHEASTERN
ILLINOIS REGIONAL
GREENWAYS AND TRAILS
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

A MAP OF
GREENWAY AND TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES
AND SUMMARY

◆
Developed by
◆
THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION
AND
OPENLANDS PROJECT

◆
With funding from the
Illinois Prairie Trail Authority
and additional support from
the Forest Preserve District of Cook County
And the Illinois Department of Natural Resources

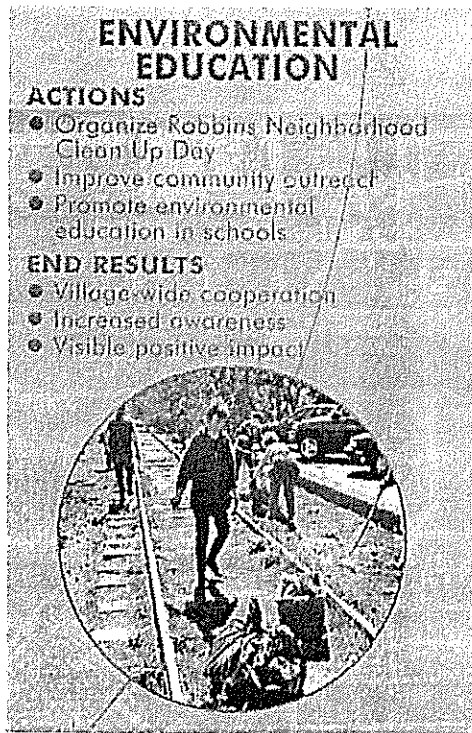
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Adopted by NPC, June 19, 1997



GOAL #3: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The ultimate goal of environmental education is to increase the level of environmental awareness of the community in order to make well-informed decisions about enhancing and protecting the local natural resources of Robbins.

Some of the benefits of environmental edu-



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cation can include: Increased public support for measures to protect natural areas; improved public understanding of how nature and wildlife contribute to viable, sustainable, and livable communities; improved understanding of the public's capability to conserve nature and to motivate residents to take action; improved skills for identifying and solving local environmental problems.

DEVELOP A TASK FORCE

Objective: Create a task force to implement and carry out goals related to Environmental Education.

Rationale: The task force will develop bottom-up strategies and programs to assist Robbins in implementing environmental policies that best meet the resident's needs.

Recommendations:

- 1) Identify and support community leaders who can lead the education effort for the schools and community.
- 2) Identify the issues and brainstorm on possible solutions.
- 3) Oversee and guide the implementation of the solutions.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

Objective: Develop environmental educational materials and programs for Robbins' schools.

Rationale: The Environmental Vision for Robbins sets forth a long-range sustainable development program for the community. Involving and educating children about their role in the Vision will help the plan move forward.

The Chicagoland area is rich with environmental and civic groups who may be able to provide assistance with the development of educational materials and speakers to help educate the children about environmental issues. A sampling of organizations and their websites include:

- Campaign for Sensible Growth
www.growingsensibly.org
- Center for Neighborhood Technology
www.cnt.org
- Chicagoland Environmental Network
www.chicagoenvironment.org
- Chicago Metropolis 2020
www.chicagometropolis2020.org
- Chicago Wilderness
www.chiwild.org
- Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management Homepage

- www.lincolnnet.net/users/lrflood/index.html
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
www.dnr.state.il.us
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
www.dnr.state.il.us
- Illinois Natural History Survey
www.inhs.uiuc.edu
- Metropolitan Planning Council
www.metroplanning.org
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
www.il.nrcs.usda.gov
- Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission
www.nipc.cog.il.us
- Openlands Project
www.openlands.org
- Sierra Club: Illinois Chapters
www.sierraclub.org/chapters/il/
- The Nature Conservancy
www.tnc.org
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District
www.usace.army.mil

Recommendations:

- 1) Develop Environmental Education Program.

- 2) Contact environmental agencies/groups to help develop and implement program.
- 3) Work with school board and principals to execute the program.

PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Objective: Create activities that will reinforce the education received at school.

Rational: Young children learn most about the environment by interacting with it. Such experiences play a critical role in shaping lifelong attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior toward natural environments.

Recommendations:

- 1) Develop links between school-based programs and community projects. Involving the children in revegetating the banks of Midlothian Creek with native plantings is an example of one project that will benefit the children and the community.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Objective: Improve community outreach to engage the residents of Robbins in the "greening" of their community.

Rational: Conservation organizations, the media, and community leaders contribute in important ways to the knowledge and values held by the public. They also help interpret conservation issues. Outreach and education is crucial to developing public support for environmental and ecological based activities. It is important to clarify potential misconceptions about nature and the management needed to preserve it. Several techniques can be used to enhance the education of the residents of Robbins.

Recommendations:

- 1) Inform the public about restoration efforts. Some common restoration techniques may not seem initially beneficial to the residents. Including information in the community's newsletter will help reach the most people.
- 2) Involve residents in monitoring, restoration, and land management efforts. Target local groups, such as church groups, garden clubs, block clubs and other civic organizations to help increase the amount of public involvement.

NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN – UP

Objective: Organize a community wide clean-up day.

Rationale: Organizing the public to clean up their community helps to instill pride and a sense of community in local residents.

Neighborhood Clean-Up Days work to combat the downward spiral of neighborhoods resulting from the appearance of abandonment.

The goal for Robbins's Clean-Up Day should be for the day to become an annual event. Enlisting schools, youth programs, civic groups, and community organizations to recruit their members for the event will help ensure a consistently large turnout.

Recommendations:

- 1) Appoint a Neighborhood Clean-Up Coordinator
- 2) Work with the city and companies to provide trash bags, rakes, and other necessary items.
- 3) Recruit interested groups and organizations
- 4) Designate specific areas to be targeted for clean up

- 5) Designate day for clean-up

ANTI-LITTER/ FLY DUMPING

Objective: Develop an Anti-Litter and Fly Dumping campaign.

Rationale: Fly dumping is disposing any type of waste on public or private property without a permit. Waste that is commonly dumped illegally includes tires, construction debris, household garbage, old furniture, appliances, hazardous waste and other materials. It creates dangerous and potentially unhealthy conditions, decreases property values, and inhibits economic activities.

Due to the large number of vacant lots in Robbins, instances of fly dumping are extremely common.

Recommendations:

- 1) Review the persistent littering and illegal dumping activities along with the types of waste that are dumped to assess the profile of the dumpers. Robbins should also be cognizant of possible driving forces behind littering and illegal dumping such as excessive user fees, restrictive curbside trash pickup, or ineffective recycling programs.

- 2) Review the locations of persistent littering and illegal dumping to assess the site characteristics of areas susceptible to receiving trash.

- 3) Educate the residents about littering and illegal dumping and how it impacts the community. Simple messages should be provided to the community relating the cost of illegal dumping on local taxes, location of proper disposal sites, and how dumping can impact the water quality in the area.

- 4) Develop a neighborhood watch system to report instances of fly dumping and impose fines upon the guilty parties.

- 5) Once an area has been cleaned of debris, signs, lighting, or other barriers should be used to discourage future dumping. The signs should indicate the fines and penalties for dumping and a phone number for reporting incidents. Landscaping efforts may also discourage future dumping and provide an attractive open space potentially increasing property values.

ADOPT A SPOT

Objective: Develop an "Adopt a Spot" program.

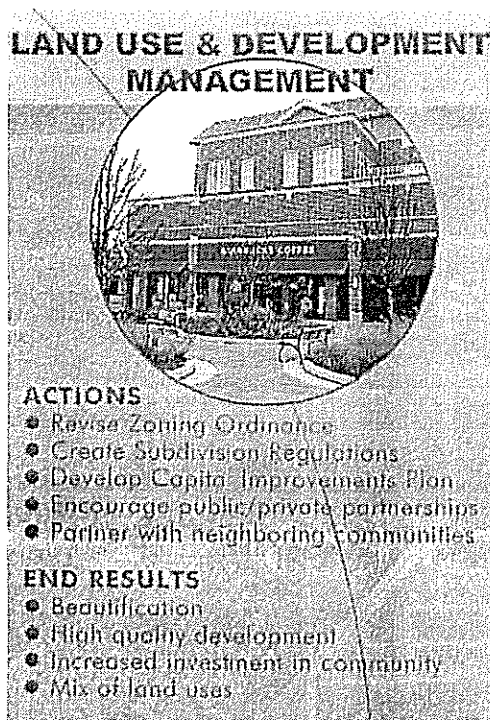
Rationale: "Adopt a Spot" and other similar programs help improve the aesthetics of specific areas through the volunteer work of organizations. Adoptive groups are tasked with the cleaning and maintaining of specific areas. Included in this may be the planting and maintaining of flowerbeds in the public right of way, litter removal along main thoroughfares, or other clean up activities. Groups are usually recognized for their work through a plaque or a sign near their adopted spot.

Recommendations:

- 6) Develop guidelines for adopting a spot.
- 7) Identify groups willing to "Adopt a Spot"
- 8) Identify areas in need of cleaning or beautification

GOAL #4: LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Poor development practices and land use and zoning decisions are partly responsible for the poor environmental conditions that have led to frequent flooding, vacated properties, and undesirable living conditions which plague certain areas within the community.



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Correcting mistakes done in the past by previous development land use decisions is not always possible. However, the Village of Robbins can learn from previous mistakes and policies of neighboring communities to ensure new development and land use decisions are sensitive to the desired environmental vision of the community. Five objectives related to achieving the goal of environmentally conscious and sensitive planning and development are listed below

LANDSCAPING ORDINANCE

Objective: Review and revise the Village's landscaping ordinance to provide for more landscaping within the Village.

Rationale: The landscaping ordinance places requirements on development to provide buffering, screening, parking lot islands, and right-of-way trees. Commercial and industrial developments with large parking lots exacerbate stormwater runoff and can be unsightly, monotonous and visually unappealing. Trees in residential areas can add to the character and overall appeal of a neighborhood, reduce energy consumption by providing shade, provide cleaner air, and assist in the absorption of stormwater.

A landscaping ordinance should require landscaped islands in parking lots, trees along all right-of-ways, and landscaped buffers separating commercial and industrial areas from residential neighborhoods.

Recommendations:

- 1) Conduct a comprehensive review of the Village's landscaping requirements contained in the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations or municipal code.
- 2) Revise ordinance to require more comprehensive landscaping for all commercial and industrial development.
- 3) Revise ordinance to require right-of-way trees evenly spaced (i.e. every 20 feet) along all streets within the Village.

ZONING ORDINANCE

Objective: Conduct a comprehensive review of the Village's zoning ordinance and revise it to accommodate appropriate new development and redevelopment in the Village.

Rationale: A zoning ordinance is the legal tool used by municipalities to implement land use and development plans. Zoning

regulates allowable uses on properties, building heights, density, and setbacks.

Since the adoption of the Village's Zoning Ordinance, several planning studies have been completed, including the 1999 Robbins's Redevelopment Plan and the 2003 Robbins Transit Oriented Development Plan, which have proposed more appropriate development within the community. However, the Zoning Ordinance has not been updated to provide for the implementation of these plans.

Recommendations

- 1) Conduct a comprehensive review of the Village's zoning ordinance and identify barriers to implementation of recent planning studies where more appropriate and desirable development has been proposed.
- 2) Revise the zoning ordinance to allow for the recommendations of the previous plans to be implemented.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Objective: Encourage best management practices in relation to stormwater and landscaping.

Rationale: Best Management Practices (BMPs) are effective, practical, structural or nonstructural methods which prevent or reduce the movement of sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants from the land to surface or ground water, or which otherwise protect water quality from potential adverse effects of conventional development and other activities.

Since a large floodplain encumbers much of the land area of Robbins, it is likely that redevelopment in the community will be challenged with this environmental feature. The Village of Robbins is in a unique position to require BMPs in this area and set the benchmark for this type of development in the area.

Recommendations:

- 1) Develop and adopt best management practices for stormwater, including green roofs, bioswales, naturalized detention areas, porous pavement, rain barrels and cisterns, rainwater garters,

filter strips and level spreaders, and vegetated swales.

- 2) Develop and adopt best management practices for landscaping, requiring installation of native plant species to serve a variety of purposes including habitation, infiltration, filtering and evapotranspiration.

CONSERVATION PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Objective: Revise development regulations to encourage conservation design and development.

Rationale: Conventional design and development often results in the degradation of hydrologic ecosystems, such as streams and wetlands. Even with strict regulations restricting detention release rates, streambanks continue to be eroded, habitats continue to be degraded, groundwater recharge continues to decrease, and the costs associated with flooding continue to increase.

Conservation design differs from conventional design in that it utilizes site planning and design to preserve existing and natural areas and utilizes naturalized drainage and detention measures to minimize negative

impacts to hydrology and water quality. Sustainable technologies, building design, and proper development can minimize imperious services and encourage open space and natural greenways.

When redevelopment occurs within the floodplain that encumbers much of Robbins, the Village should require conservation design and development to counteract the negative impacts of the floodplain that are adversely affecting the community.

Recommendations:

- 1) Develop and adopt conservation design guidelines for new residential, commercial and industrial development.
- 2) Require new development within the floodplain to adhere to the conservation design guidelines.
- 3) Encourage new development outside of the floodplain to adhere to the conservation design guidelines.

PARKLAND DEDICATION ORDINANCE

Objective: Require developers to contribute parkland, or cash-in-lieu of, for all new development.

Rationale: Parks and recreation play important roles in creating desirable communities and establishing a healthy environment in which to live work and play.

As residential development and redevelopment occurs in Robbins, new population will be generated. New residents of Robbins create a demand for all types of public services, including parkland. The U.S. Supreme Court and the Illinois Supreme Court have both ruled that it is constitutional to require developers to provide parks to serve the populations they are generating.

The Village of Robbins should require developers in the community to construct neighborhood parks to serve the new residents of the community.

Recommendations:

- 1) Identify communities similar to Robbins in respect to its economic condition, housing stock, redevelopment potential, and market conditions.
- 2) Survey like municipalities to determine park donation requirements for other communities.

- 3) Determine a park donation requirement appropriate for Robbins. It is important that the donation requirement meets the parkland objectives of the community but does not deter development from occurring.