Creating Robbins Park
(Can flooding reinvigorate a community?)

“Spark Creative Engineering that will”

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP
Donohue & Associates
Neighborhood Capital Institute
Living Habitats
2iM Group
Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates, Inc.
“MWRD’s goal is to redefine the meaning of infrastructure investment by implementing solutions that not only promote resiliency, but also promote the economic growth, health, and “well being” of a community.”
Vision:
A green-blue stormwater solution for Robbins with wetlands, lakes, parks and playfields
History
The first settlers came to the present-day Village of Robbins as part of the Great Migration of freed slaves and their descendants from the South.

- **1882**: Henry E. Robbins established his first subdivision. Early residents were attracted to its semi-rural setting, reminiscent of their Southern country roots.

- **1910**: Robbins became Chicagoland’s first African-American incorporated community, when it was officially founded by Mayor Thomas Kellar on December 14.

- **1917**: Robbins Airstrip was the nation’s first African-American owned and operated airfield.

- **1931**: Willa Brown was the first African-American woman to earn a pilot’s license and a commercial license in the U.S.

- **1938**: Robbins Airstrip was the nation’s first African-American owned and operated airfield.

**Notable residents**

- **1882**: Henry E. Robbins
- **1910**: Robbins became Chicagoland’s first African-American incorporated community
- **1917**: Robbins Airstrip was the nation’s first African-American owned and operated airfield
- **1931**: Willa Brown was the first African-American woman to earn a pilot’s license and a commercial license in the U.S.
- **1938**: Robbins Airstrip was the nation’s first African-American owned and operated airfield

**Present**

- **S.B. Fuller**: Entrepreneur and Head of the South Side NAACP
- **Nichelle Nichols**: Actress (Star Trek), Singer, voice artist
- **Dwyane Wade**: Chicago Bulls’ Shooting guard
Previous Work and Challenges

- MWRD commissioned Donohue to study the flooding
- Identified cause and extent of the problem
- Developed traditional solutions
- Engineered solutions focused only on stormwater management
  - Effective, but high cost
  - Solution impacted at least some homes
  - Plans for future development incomplete and not integrated with stormwater alternatives
  - No added benefits beyond flood control
Stormwater flooding

Village of Robbins

500-year flood

100-year flood

Floodway areas

Stormwater flooding

Cal-Sag Canal

Midlothian Creek
Flooding

Need for investment & services

Vacant land

Lack of sports fields

Lack of major open spaces

Poor relationship to transit
Opportunities

“Let’s design a flood control solution that will maximize local assets and spur economic development.”
Job creation
Potential for transit-oriented development
Creation of public gathering spaces
Connections to the Cal Sag Channel
Community engagement and discussions
Public meeting
October 1
Community Guidance
For designing the concept plan

1. No Relocation of Residents
2. Solve the Flooding
3. Respect and engage the historic legacy of Robbins
4. Attract new residents
5. Facilitate development of affordable housing and retail
6. Inspire job creation
7. Create space for youth sports and seniors
8. Engage nature through learning, fishing, walking, rowing
9. Establish a strategy for maintenance and maximizing the value of land around the park
Robbins Park can be a catalyst for growth along the Kedzie Corridor

Community Guidance Principles #1, 2, 4, 5, & 6
Community Guidance Principles #4, 5, & 6

Associated lands adjacent to Metra Station are envisioned for transit-oriented development.
Community Guidance Principle #7

Add sports amenities to the community
Create walking trails, rowing, and fishing opportunities

Community Guidance Principles #7 & 8
Connect schools with trails along waterways

Community Guidance Principle #3, 4, & 9

Horace Mann School

Keller Middle School

Robbins Metra Station

Cal-Sag Canal

Midlothian Creek
The planning strategy
3 Development Areas

Area 1 – Robbins Park
Area 2 – Transit – Oriented Development District
Area 3 – Clean Energy District
Development potential adjacent to the future Robbins Park

Support power plant as job center

Transit oriented development around Metra

Robbins Metra Station

5 min walk

W 135th St

Midlothian Creek

Village of Robbins

S Pulaski Rd

Kedzie Ave

Robbins Metra Station

5 min walk
Area 2 - Transit-Oriented Development District

26 Acres Total vacant land within 5 min walk of Metra
Transit-Oriented Development Option 1

±550 Houses/ Apartments
Mix of Single family, Townhouses, Stacked Flats & Multifamily

±20 Dwelling Units (Du)/Acre
20,000 sq ft retail

Infill Residential

Neighborhood Mixed-Use

Village of Robbins

Robbins Metra Station

Midlothian Creek

W 135th St

W 137th St

S-Ctire Blvd

W 139th St
Transit-Oriented Development Option 2

±850 Houses/ Apartments
Mix of Single family, Townhouses, Stacked Flats & Multifamily
±30 Du/Acre
60,000 sq ft retail

Infill Residential

Neighborhood Mixed-Use

Robbins Metra Station
Option 2 example
Area 3- Clean Energy District

33 Acres of Industrial Land
16 Acres vacant

48 Megawatt Substation within site

Located on a major industrial water corridor

Adjacent to Robbins Park
Connecting major regional resources

- Argonne National Lab
- Robbins Clean energy district
- MWRD Calumet WRP
- Lake Michigan
Utilizing the Cal-Sag Channel as a major asset
Close proximity to national rail network
Area 3 – Clean Energy District

Site 1a + 1b: 17 ac
Site 2: 7 ac
Site 3: 5 ac
Site 4: 4 ac
Total: 33 ac

Vacant Land: 16 ac
Build industrial center focused on resource recovery and green technology
Making it happen…We need YOU!

Village of Robbins  Land Holders  Developers

Stewards  Experts  Funders

Workers  Influencers  Partners
Making it happen... We need YOU!

- Village of Robbins
- Land Holders
- Developers
- Funders
- Partners
- Experts
- Influencers
- Workers
- Stewards

CORE GROUP
Can we make this happen together?
Lake Katherine
Palos Heights, IL
“The Possibilities are Endless”
Robbins Park from Broadway
Robbins Park