



2019 GLISA Small Grant White Paper

# Calumet Connect - Modernizing the Calumet River Industrial Corridor

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# Acknowledgments



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# Background and Approach

## BACKGROUND

Our broad long-term vision and goals focus on: 1) building community capacity to participate in Chicago Department of Planning and Development's (DPD) official processes for development decisions that impact communities adjacent to the Calumet River, 2) supporting DPD's capacity to run effective and equitable community engagement processes, and 3) developing community-aligned recommendations on how environmental, public health, climate adaptation, and sustainable development principles can be integrated into DPD's official Guidelines and other development decisions along the Calumet River.

We believe it is critically important that community leaders have the capacity and are prepared to participate in official processes led by DPD. This requires community leaders working together to build consensus on the types of site development they realistically want to see based on principles of river ecology and a blue-green corridor vision; climate resilience and adaptation using nature-based solutions; environmental justice and understanding the cumulative impacts that contribute to public health; and site design that balances public access and environmental needs with economic development strategies. Because of the long history of environmental injustice and inequity in planning and land use decisions on the southeast side of Chicago, the development of policies and programs should be approached as an opportunity to rebuild trust and mitigate future harm.

We designed and facilitated a community engagement process that provided the DPD with a stakeholder-supported framework that they can use to guide future land use and development decisions. Once adopted, implemented, and enforced, DPD's stakeholder-informed development guidelines will result in industrial development along the Calumet River that mitigates the harmful effects of industrial activities and improves the quality of air, land and water, increases public access and supports more sustainable economic development within the Calumet River Industrial corridor.

Our project's goals are closely aligned with those of the We Will Chicago Plan (WWC), in particular Pillar 4, "Environment, Climate & Energy." Our project will help DPD shape modern and community-supported land use policies and development guidelines that ensure environmental justice and an environmental and human health perspective are front and center in all industrial development. The following WWC goals are directly addressed through this initiative:

- Goal 1.0: Prioritize climate resiliency efforts in overburdened communities and for low- income individuals through both public- and private- sector efforts.
  - Objective 1.2 Establish and enforce climate, health and environmental criteria and policies for development reviews.
- Goal 2.0: Use environmental justice principles to establish criteria and policies for geographies harmed by environmental degradation.
  - Objective 2.1 Incorporate opportunities for residents to be part of land-use and transportation planning for their neighborhoods.
  - Objective 2.4 Conduct a cumulative impact assessment and establish targets for positive outcomes in communities that are environmentally overburdened.
- Goal 4.0: Maintain and expand green space natural resources and conservation efforts for the benefit of all Chicagoans
  - Objective 4.5 Create open space or corridor easements around industrial zones.
  - Objective 4.7 Protect Chicago's freshwater resources as the climate changes.

The Alliance for the Great Lakes (Alliance, lead Angela Larsen) and the Southeast Environmental Task Force (lead Olga Bautista) co-created the Calumet Connect Partnership (Partnership) and have been co-facilitating and providing backbone support for the Partnership since 2018, actively working to ensure that community expertise and leadership guide the City's land use, zoning and development decisions for industrial land along the Calumet River. The Partnership is a unique multi-disciplinary and multi-sector group that continues to evolve its membership and purpose. The Partnership played a pivotal role in bringing community leaders

and allies together to address knowledge gaps. The Alliance and the Task Force worked closely with Dr. Ken Frank (GLISA, Michigan State University) to develop facilitation intervention strategies, and Omar Gates (GLISA, University of Michigan) to develop climate change information including a glossary of terms, a story/narrative, and future areas of research to ensure this data and information is incorporated into advocacy and training materials.

## SUMMARY

Over the last several years, the Alliance and the Task Force worked with Partnership members to develop a series of events, utilizing the existing Elevating Justice curriculum to educate and activate Partnership members and their networks. These events helped share and build skills, support community decision and policy making, center southeast side community voices and ensure southeast side community benefits, build coalitions, and make space to relax and have fun. The Elevating Justice curriculum was initially co-created in 2020-2021 by environmental justice leaders throughout Chicago. Building off the existing Calumet Connect Databook and policy recommendations developed by Partnership members, community education and advocacy efforts will focus on needed changes to the community engagement process and legal frameworks that dictate land use, development, and permitting decisions along the Calumet River.

The Alliance and the Task Force worked closely with Dr. Frank to develop facilitation intervention strategies. We interviewed 30 members of the southeast-side community leaders' network, analyzed the interview responses, and used our analysis to develop facilitation intervention strategies. We identified who from the network we wanted to focus our facilitation strategies on, with a focus on strengthening the connection between seasoned members of the core coordinating group and new members of periphery groups made up of youth leaders who played a critical role in some recent organizing wins.

Ensure local, technical climate information was included in the Calumet Databook, as well as providing a glossary of terms and telling the story/narrative of climate impacts to reach less technical audiences. We also needed to identify future areas of research as locally relevant climate data is relatively hard to secure and not readily available.

# Relationships

## ALLIANCE-GLISA

The Alliance has received prior support from GLISA for adaptation planning for coastal ravine habitats through previous small grants in 2013 and 2015.

## STAKEHOLDER NETWORKS ENGAGED

The Alliance and Task Force involve the community and/or beneficiaries through the Partnership. The Partnership serves the communities surrounding the Calumet River on the Southeast side of Chicago, and neighborhoods adjacent to the Calumet River Industrial Corridor. Last year the Partnership expanded to include community leaders working in the Altgeld Gardens and Little Village neighborhoods. The Partnership was formed and continues to evolve to allow residents to help define what equitable land use policies and development regulations look like and to learn from each other about how to organize relevant campaigns in their communities.

Funded members of the Calumet Connect Partnership for 2020-2022 include:

**Amalia Nieto Gomez:** Alliance for the Southeast

**Vanessa Bly:** Bridges//Puentes Social Justice Collective

**Olga Bautista:** Southeast Environmental Task Force

**Martha Allen-Torres:** SS Coalition to Ban Pet Coke

**Louis Cabrales:** Southeast Youth Alliance

**Angela Hurlock:** Claretian Associates

**Margaret Cortez:** Parents of Extraordinary Children

**Eduardo Luna:** 93 Studios

**Francesca Pederson:** Chi Nations Youth Council

**Cheryl Johnson:** People for Community Recovery

**Vanessa Schwartz:** Metropolitan Family Services

**Bob Dean:** Center for Neighborhood Technology

**Christina Harris:** Metropolitan Planning Council

**Ben Helphand:** NeighborSpace

**Oliver Ciciora:** SOUL

## Use of Climate Information and Services

The Alliance's and Task Force's prior experience using climate data for this project included work with Dr. Ken Frank with Michigan State University (GLISA) to conduct social network analysis. The analysis was to evaluate the effectiveness of facilitation strategies designed to strengthen communication between members of the network, with the goal of increasing climate relevant advocacy actions taken by these members. We also worked with Omar Gates from GLISA to develop baseline climate data and information that we would use to inform advocacy actions. The anticipated use of climate information and services was to include technical locally relevant climate information in the Calumet Databook, and to then expand on this work by developing a glossary of terms, a story/narrative, and future areas of research. We identified future areas of research, as locally relevant climate data is relatively hard to secure and not readily available, and worked with researchers from the Center for Neighborhood Technology to gather and analyze some of this data. However, due to significant gaps in needed quantitative data, the strategy moving forward will be to gather qualitative data from residents to help fill those gaps.

We used social network analysis to inform our facilitation strategies. However, because the city had not until recently initiated any official planning for the Calumet River industrial corridor, there weren't many advocacy actions that we asked members of the network to take. Now that the city is initiating some official planning processes, we will be asking members of the network to take advocacy actions, and we will be resurrecting the network. We used the climate data that we were able to secure to inform some of our advocacy strategies.

We identified the need to translate more complex climate data into simple language that could be easily shared with Calumet Connect members. Based on this need a 2 pager and glossary of terms was developed and used to help ground conversations about local climate impacts.

# Outcomes and Outputs

- The Alliance tripled the funding available to support Partnership members and activities. The Partnership made great progress with the creation and release of the Calumet Databook in February 2021. This foundational resource includes more than 300 pages of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as policy recommendations. This information is being used by advocates and will be used by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to inform new industrial plans and guidelines for the Calumet River.
- We interviewed 30 members of the Southeast side community leaders' network, analyzed the interview responses, and used our analysis to develop facilitation intervention strategies. We identified who from the network we wanted to focus our facilitation strategies on, with a focus on strengthening the connection between seasoned members of the core coordinating group and new members of periphery groups made up of youth leaders who played a critical role in some recent organizing wins. We used social network analysis to guide our facilitation strategies and help track our success. We resurveyed the network and are getting ready to analyze the data.
- We developed and operationalized the Elevating Justice curriculum, educating and elevating the expertise of community leaders and preparing them to participate when the time is ripe in city led public policy discussions.
- The Alliance and the Task Force has led innovative engagement strategies such as Calumet River boat tours for community stakeholders, water summits in conjunction with popular community art events, walking tours along the Little Calumet river, bicycle tours along the Calumet River and Spanish language panel discussions on industrial land use and zoning and study sessions co-led by members of the Calumet Connect Partnership.
- The Alliance and the Task Force have continued to fundraise to support the Calumet Connect Partnership, re-granting to partners up to 64% of the funding we've raised.

The Calumet Connect Databook (Databook) was an important milestone. If not for the Databook community leaders would not have been able to successfully bring their landmark civil rights HUD complaint, secure commitments from the Chicago Department of Public Health to develop the City's first cumulative impact ordinance, or secure a commitment from the Department of Planning and Development to initiate their first steps towards mitigating future harm through the use of industrial site guidelines. This has led to an Executive Order and a Voluntary Compliance Agreement between HUD and the City of Chicago. They require that the City address land use and zoning and update industrial site guidelines for the Calumet River, as well as establish an equitable engagement process. The Alliance is now working with the city to help take these next steps.

**1. HUD Complaint.** Community leaders, members of the Calumet Connect Partnership, brought a *landmark* civil rights HUD complaint that could be a model for how environmental justice litigation could advance equitable land use and zoning reforms. The City is now entering into negotiations with HUD and agreeing to changes in zoning and community engagement, and actively working to pass a cumulative impact ordinance. There is little doubt that the HUD complaint had a significant cooling effect on the city's appetite to lead and engage stakeholders in a planning process to update their land use plans and zoning for the Calumet Industrial Corridor, so in that respect the HUD complaint could be seen as a delay. However, the success of the HUD complaint is a potential game changer when it comes to land use reforms. The Databook was foundational to the success of the HUD complaint. HUD cited the Databook. If we did not have this critical data analysis as our foundation, HUD would not have ruled in our favor. The federal government ruled in our favor and now the federal government is watchdogging the City to ensure they advance legal reforms, such as changes in zoning, community engagement and passing a cumulative impact ordinance - all actions that are listed as policy recommendations in the Databook. And if the City decides to pull out of negotiations with HUD, the Department of Justice will get involved, and the DOJ will also lean heavily on the Databook. The fact that the community groups and the federal agencies have this amount of data to rely on is remarkable. And the Databook is a living document, this is just the beginning. The Southeast Environmental Task Force is working with other partners to build off the Databook to investigate climate change impact to the industrial corridor.

- 2. Cumulative Impact Ordinance.** The City announced they were doing the cumulative impact assessment and in this assessment, their body of research included and referenced the Databook. Because of her work on the Databook, Olga Bautista was positioned as a key bridge between CDPH and community leaders in the cumulative impact assessment, and also in the current development of CDPH's cumulative impact ordinance.

In addition to the Calumet Databook and the important public policy decisions that we've influenced, we have invested significant time in strengthening the Calumet Connect Partnership. It can not be overstated the importance of relationship building and strengthening the social infrastructure. We have taken our time to build trust and build support for advancing the policy recommendations in the Databook. True collaborations take time to fully organize and get operational. We used social network analysis to guide our facilitation strategies and help track our success. We developed and operationalized the Elevating Justice curriculum, educating and elevating the expertise of community leaders and preparing them to participate when the time is ripe in city led public policy discussions. The DPD wants us to help inform their approach to equitable community and stakeholder engagement as they develop their industrial site guidelines, and CDPH and EPA want to work with us to develop and execute an equitable community engagement process for the Schroud Superfund site. This would not be possible without the significant investment we've made in articulating and operationalizing an equitable model for community engagement.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

COVID-19 created significant delays in hosting in-person events and trainings, which impacted when we were able to survey the network.

## Next Steps

*Calumet Databook.* The Task Force is currently working with the Center for Neighborhood Technology to refine and expand the climate information, with a focus on collecting parcel level data based on what residents who live in industrial corridors are experiencing and noticing related to neighborhood flooding.

*Social Network Analysis.* We are just wrapping up our second survey and will be looking to work with Dr. Ken Frank and his team to analyze the data. We will be interested to see whether and how the network has changed over time, and whether behaviors have changed based on our facilitation interventions.

*Industrial Site Guidelines.* DPD's development of industrial site guidelines grew out of the Databook. DPD asked us to develop the Databook because it was needed (if we wanted DPD to include health equity considerations in their industrial modernization or land use planning efforts then DPD needed relevant health data) and it was likely beyond the scope of what DPD would contract for a consultant to provide. We listened and we responded, continually keeping DPD in the loop as the Databook was developed and persistently reiterating in meeting after meeting the policy recommendations from the Databook. While the City's first step is not land use planning, they are advancing site guidelines this year which will address several recommendations from Databook, including buffers and other strategies to mitigate harmful industrial practices at the site scale.

*Equitable Stakeholder Engagement.* DPD wants us to help inform their approach to equitable community and stakeholder engagement as they develop their industrial site guidelines, and the Chicago Department of Public Health and the US Environmental Protection Program (EPA) want to work with us to develop and execute an equitable community engagement process for the Schroud Superfund site.

It's unclear at this time what the next steps with GLISA are on the Calumet Connect Project. The Alliance is transferring management of all projects and funders to the Task Force, to ensure Calumet Connect is a resource that is community owned and managed for the benefit of southeast side communities. So any future relationship between GLISA and Calumet Connect would be managed by the Task Force.