



Chicago Metropolitan  
Agency for Planning



# Illinois International Port District

**MASTER PLAN**  
Executive Summary

September 2022

# What is the IIPD?

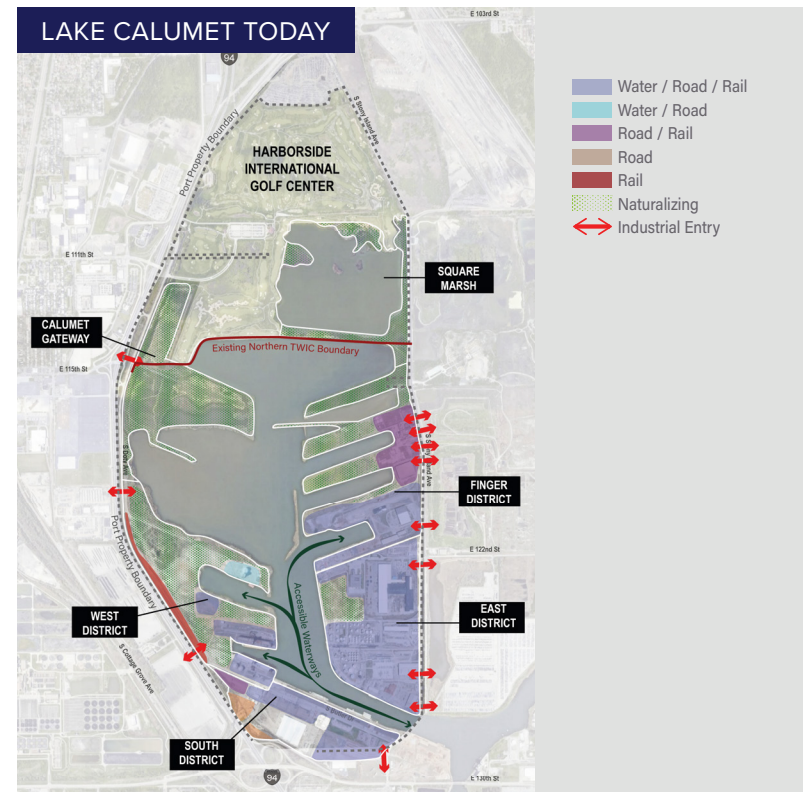
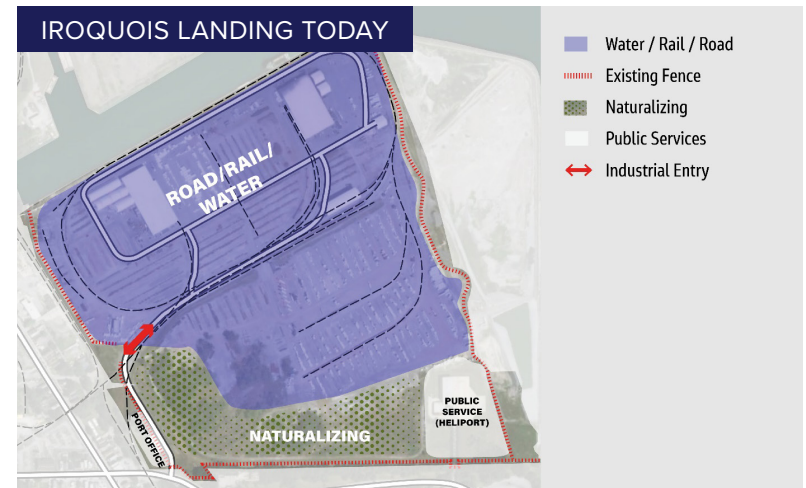
The Illinois International Port District (IIPD) is a port facility at Lake Calumet and Iroquois Landing (at the mouth of the Calumet River) on the southeast side of Chicago. Created in 1951, the IIPD is a complex, multi-purpose facility; its approximately 1,800 acres include active industry and multimodal shipping operations, a public golf course, and numerous undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels that offer a wealth of opportunities, from recreation to conservation to new businesses.

The IIPD has eight unofficial districts. The first seven are located at Lake Calumet:

- **HARBORSIDE INTERNATIONAL GOLF CENTER** 36-hole golf course
- **SQUARE MARSH** naturalized area with restoration potential
- **CALUMET GATEWAY** unused transitional area between the golf course and industrial areas
- **FINGER DISTRICT** historical port location, currently underutilized
- **WEST DISTRICT** moderately active industrial area used for agricultural transfer and storage
- **EAST DISTRICT** heavy industrial activity area
- **SOUTH DISTRICT** active warehousing and manufacturing area

The eighth district is **IROQUOIS LANDING**, an active multimodal port facility at the mouth of the Calumet River and Lake Michigan.

The IIPD plays a significant role in the ongoing revitalization of the Calumet Area of Chicago. The IIPD is unique within Calumet in its size and multi-use districts. This Master Plan provides a future vision for the IIPD as not only a vibrant multimodal freight and manufacturing hub, but also a community recreational and conservation resource encompassing both land and water.



## Why do a Master Plan?

The IIPD has lots of potential opportunities for growth and development. This Master Plan sets a vision for what the future will look like and an action plan for how to get there.

## What was the planning process?

The planning process was undertaken in alignment with the goals of the IIPD, CMAP's ON TO 2050 regional comprehensive plan, and the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Long Range Transportation Plan. The two-phase planning process began in 2019:

- **Phase I (2019-2020)** included research, data analysis, and stakeholder input.
- **Phase II (2021-2022)** resulted in development scenarios, a vision, and an action plan to move forward the IIPD of the future.

## Who was involved?

Key stakeholders and community members were involved throughout the plan, with most outreach activities taking place after the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Steering Committee members were engaged through four meetings and were encouraged to review materials and provide input throughout the process. A public information portal including a survey and request for comment was available and updated throughout the study.

### Steering Committee

- Included 30+ public and private sector IIPD stakeholders
- Focused review of key milestones and findings
- 15+ briefings to update members on scenario assessment findings
- 4 meetings: Jan 2020, Sept 2020, Jan 2022, and Apr 2022

### Public Engagement

- 2 surveys with more than 600 responses
- Mapping tool to collect feedback
- English and Spanish language webpages
- Public open house in May 2022

### Environmental Task Force

- Included open space, environmental justice, and community advocates
- Engaged in a dedicated group to help shape plan recommendations
- 2 meetings: Oct 2020 and Dec 2021



Public feedback from the Open House at Harborside International Golf Course in May 2022



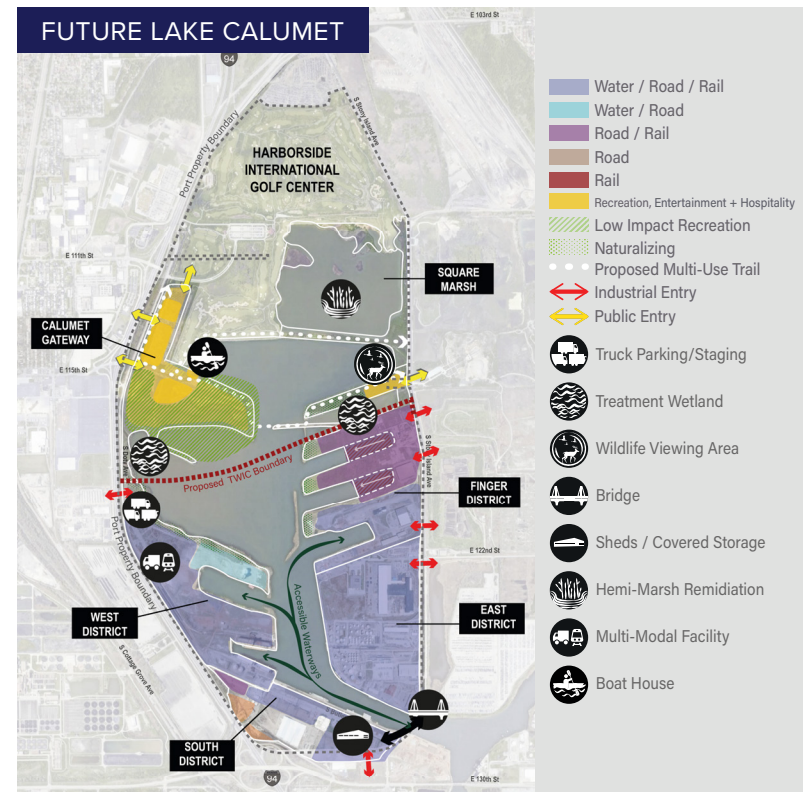
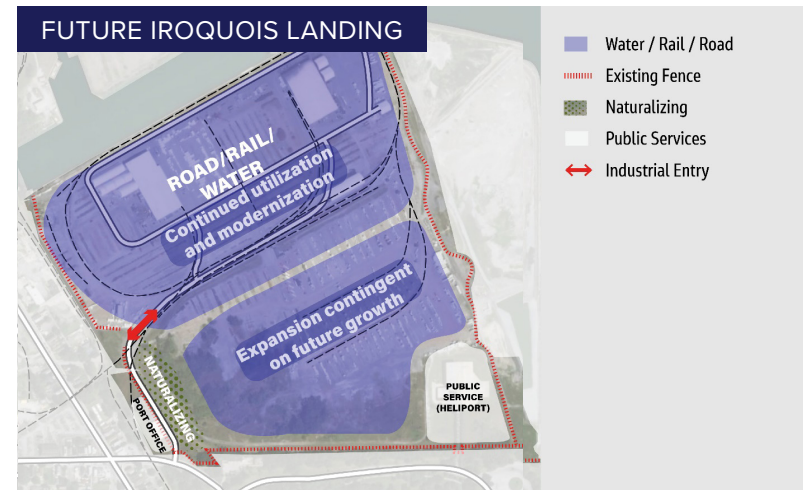
Crowd gathering at the Public Open House in May 2022

# What is the Future of the IIPD?

In the future, the IIPD will be a vibrant, multi-use port that prioritizes sustainable economic development, trade, recreation, and conservation.

Key future goals include:

- **Concentrating and increasing ship and barge activities** in the navigable waterways south of Gull Island, which is located alongside the southernmost finger pier and northern portion of the East District. Building upon its strengths as a multimodal shipping hub will help the IIPD more effectively serve critical industrial markets and support the Calumet Area economy.
- **Developing publicly accessible recreational and conservation facilities** on the north side of IIPD, including a bike/ multi-use path, hemi-marsh, and entertainment facilities. This requires moving the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) boundary and fences south of Calumet Gateway and the North Finger Pier.
- **Advance environmental stewardship** through habitat restoration, enhanced public access, alternative energy, and other upgrades to promote greater energy efficiency.
- **Achieve modernized and sustainable operations** by investing in expanded data collection, record-keeping, staffing, and utilities.
- **Becoming an industry leader and community voice** in the Calumet region. IIPD will continue to engage with its dedicated community partners to work towards achieving shared goals.



 **Want to review the full-length Plan and supporting deliverables?**  
[cmap.is/engage-iipd](https://cmap.is/engage-iipd)

## Vision for the Future IIPD

Serve as a National Multimodal Freight & Logistics Hub



Maintain the IIPD's status as a national multimodal freight & logistics hub by pursuing investments that will further position the IIPD to handle additional freight volumes by barge/vessel, rail, pipeline, and highway modes

Facilitate Economic Development



Facilitate economic development in Southeast Side of Chicago by increasing industrial, commercial, and recreational land utilization at underutilized Port properties

Enhance Quality of Life and Community Benefits



Enhance quality of life of surrounding community by mitigating the negative impacts of freight and industry, and improving the community's ability to connect with each other and with nature in Calumet Gateway and Square Marsh

## Development Recommendations

### Calumet Gateway

- Construct a hotel.
- Establish a public boathouse to facilitate the use of humanpowered watercraft.
- Provide recreational, entertainment, and hospitality opportunities.
- Develop a pavilion venue for small-scale concerts and other community events.
- Support construction of bicycle/pedestrian multi-use path across Lake Calumet.

### Square Marsh/Lake Calumet

- Restore water quality throughout Lake Calumet.
- Remediate Square Marsh to encourage development of a hemi-marsh.

### Finger District

- Partially fill between two middle Finger Piers to yield additional acreage for industrial use.
- Establish Wildlife Viewing Area on North Finger Pier.

### West District

- Build out multimodal freight facility by expanding road, rail, and water access.
- Develop truck parking/staging facility.
- Develop art wall on grain elevators
- Rehabilitate and modernize the dock wall, port facilities, and utility infrastructure.

### South District

- Support construction lift bridge to connect S. Stony Island Avenue to 130th Street.
- Rehabilitate and modernize the dock wall and utility infrastructure.
- Build additional sheds and covered storage for industrial use as the market demands.
- Repair/replace existing sheds.
- Upgrade and expand port entrance.

### East District

- Maximize industrial land utilization through lease evaluation and/or renewals.

# Implementing the IIPD's Bright Future

The Master Plan includes an Implementation Plan to help the IIPD achieve its development goals. It builds on the engagement conducted with the IIPD's stakeholders throughout the planning process to define the short- and long-term actions, and identify and prioritize required partnerships, barriers, obstacles, and contingencies, cost ranges, and other details.

Targeted investments in each IIPD District, including capital improvement projects, infrastructure modernization, further studies, and operational improvements will be critical for the IIPD to achieve its goals for the future. Additionally, and simultaneously, avenues for the IIPD to be a community and environmental steward will be pursued.

## Implementation Strategies

This Master Plan defines seven implementation strategies comprised of various actions that are designed to help the IIPD move forward developments through improved financial stability, infrastructure quality and access, operational practices, and environmental and community stewardship.

- **Financial Stability and Opportunity for Increased Revenue**
- **Port Modernization: Operations**
- **Port Modernization: Infrastructure**
- **Improved Quality of Environmental Assets**
- **Community Access and Destination Amenities**
- **Improved Access to Industrial Facilities**
- **Port as a Good Neighbor and Leader**

Aerial view of a ship unloading at Iroquois Landing.



*“ The IIPD strives to be good neighbor and community partner. We have committed to undertaking projects in an environmentally responsible way, while working towards improving awareness, understanding, and engagement with the surrounding communities and other government agencies. ”*

*- Erik Varela, Executive Director*

# Next Steps

Across the seven implementation strategies, more than 50 actions were identified for the IIPD and its partners to take toward the future of the port. The following high priority action items are designed to lay the groundwork to achieve the IIPD's financial, development, community, and environmental goals. Thanks to existing support from the IIPD's state and local partners, some of these items are already underway:

-  **Rehabilitate and modernize critical port infrastructure at Iroquois Landing, West District, and South District.**
-  **Conduct boundary survey to confirm land ownership and IIPD boundaries.**
-  **Expand data collection practices.**
-  **Invest in technology to increase safety and security of IIPD systems and property.**
-  **Conduct tenant lease assessment to establish appropriate market rates for leased and non-leased parcels.**
-  **Bring on full-time IIPD staff and/or professional services to support essential functions.**
-  **Move TWIC boundary and fences south of Calumet Gateway to enable public access and non-industrial development.**

There is a bright future ahead for the IIPD as it works towards maintaining its long-term utility as a national multimodal freight hub, strengthening economic development opportunities for the region, and delivering long-promised recreational amenities to the Southeast Side. In recent years, the IIPD has benefited from financial and technical support from the state of Illinois, IDOT, Cook County, and CMAP. This Master Plan provides an opportunity to continue moving forward, building on the IIPD's relationships with dedicated community partners. Getting early buy-in from these important stakeholders will build momentum and identify champions to back all the large-scale projects, investments, and initiatives to come.



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**Erik A. Varela**  
*Executive Director, Illinois  
International Port District*

*“This Master Plan builds upon the momentum of the past few years and lays out a future for the IIPD that not only enhances economic development and freight movement, but also sets the stage for increased public use of the port’s open space and waterways, as well as conservation of the critical habitats at Lake Calumet.”*

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