



# Village of Dixmoor Planning Priorities Report

March 2015



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# Section 1: Introduction

The Village of Dixmoor applied to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) under its Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program seeking support for a variety of projects, including a comprehensive plan and a zoning ordinance update. Dixmoor currently does not have a comprehensive plan. The Village would benefit from having a comprehensive plan to guide the community toward prosperity over the next 10 to 20 years. However, the Village does not have a plan commission, which under Illinois Municipal Code is the body responsible for comprehensive planning activities. Additionally, recent changes in municipal leadership have created an opportunity to reevaluate community goals and work toward shorter-term solutions to the more pressing challenges facing Dixmoor.

The Village and CMAP agreed that before a comprehensive plan should be pursued, it would be prudent to organize more immediate investments and activities to prepare for future planning. Therefore, a Planning Priorities Report was scoped for the Village of Dixmoor. This report prioritizes the main issues that the Village should address in the near future to improve its economic health and quality of life for its residents.

## Planning Priorities Report

This planning priorities report sets immediate and short-term goals that will prepare Dixmoor for long-range planning. It will help the Village to make interim progress toward desired future improvements in livability, economic sustainability, and efficient governance. CMAP staff gathered and analyzed information to capture the existing conditions in Dixmoor, and then used that baseline to formulate recommendations for next steps that the Village can take to achieve its goals.

Each of the following sections provides a summary of the information gathered from both stakeholder interviews and research and analysis. Sections cover regional context, community engagement, land use and zoning, population and housing, economic conditions, transportation, and the natural environment. Sections begin with a series of key findings that help to inform the recommended strategies found in chapter nine.

Finally, the recommended strategies are organized under four main goals:

- Address gaps in capacity.
- Preserve the Village's residential character.
- Invest in infrastructure.
- Revitalize commercial and industrial areas.

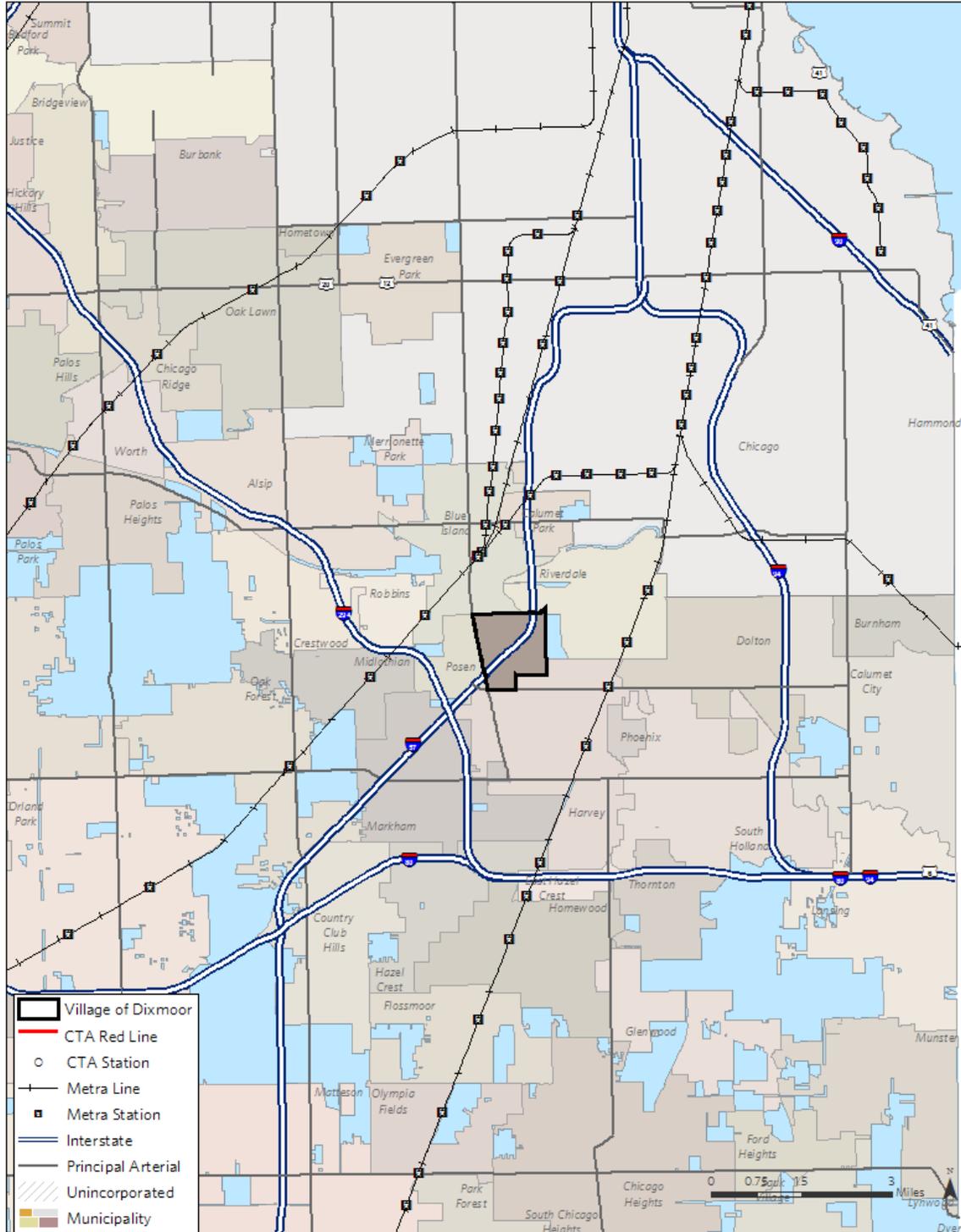
Each goal area has a series of strategies that are necessary to move forward on each goal. Strategies are accompanied by a suggested time frame for implementation, which depend on the complexity of funding and partnerships needed to put the strategy into action. The time frames are: immediate (within the first year); short-term (0-2 years); or mid-term (2-5 years).



# Section 2: Regional Context

This section provides an overview of Dixmoor’s community identity and how the Village fits into the larger region of northeastern Illinois. Understanding the community’s past and its regional position will provide a context for Dixmoor’s current challenges and opportunities.

**Figure 2. Location in the Subregion**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

## Regional Setting

Dixmoor is located in southern Cook County, Illinois, in Thornton Township about two miles south of the Cal-Sag Channel. The Village is less than 20 miles south of Chicago's Loop, and its neighboring municipalities include Blue Island to the north, Posen to the west, Harvey to the south and east, and Riverdale to the north and east. Dixmoor enjoys proximity to the new interchange between Interstates 294 and 57, with I-57 running elevated through the community and traversing the Village from southwest to northeast.

## Community History and Character

The Village of Dixmoor is a tightly knit community that has been shaped by the industrial heritage, transportation assets, and diversity of cultures in southern Cook County. It developed primarily as a residential community serving people who worked industrial jobs in nearby Blue Island and Harvey. Being just over one square mile in size, neighboring communities made attempts to annex what is now Dixmoor in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In reaction, the community voted to incorporate in 1922 and was originally called Specialville, named after the first Village president Charles Special. In 1929, residents sought to change their municipality's name to Dixmoor.

Eventually, Dixmoor developed its own industrial uses, and to this day, the manufacturing sector is a primary employer there. The Wyman Gordon Company had a manufacturing plant located in Harvey that spanned the municipal border into Dixmoor, and it was the primary employer for Village residents for many years. After the post-war era, racial integration increased, with many African American families buying homes and settling in Dixmoor. Relocating to the suburban village enabled many families to gain more space and a higher quality of life than what they experienced in more urbanized communities to the north. By the 1960s, over 60 percent of the Village's residents were African American, and nearly 40 percent were white. This racial distribution held until the 1990s, when the Latino population began to grow in the Village. When the Wyman Gordon plant closed in 1980 and other manufacturers shut their doors over the next two decades, employment opportunities dwindled and residents shifted to more service-oriented jobs.

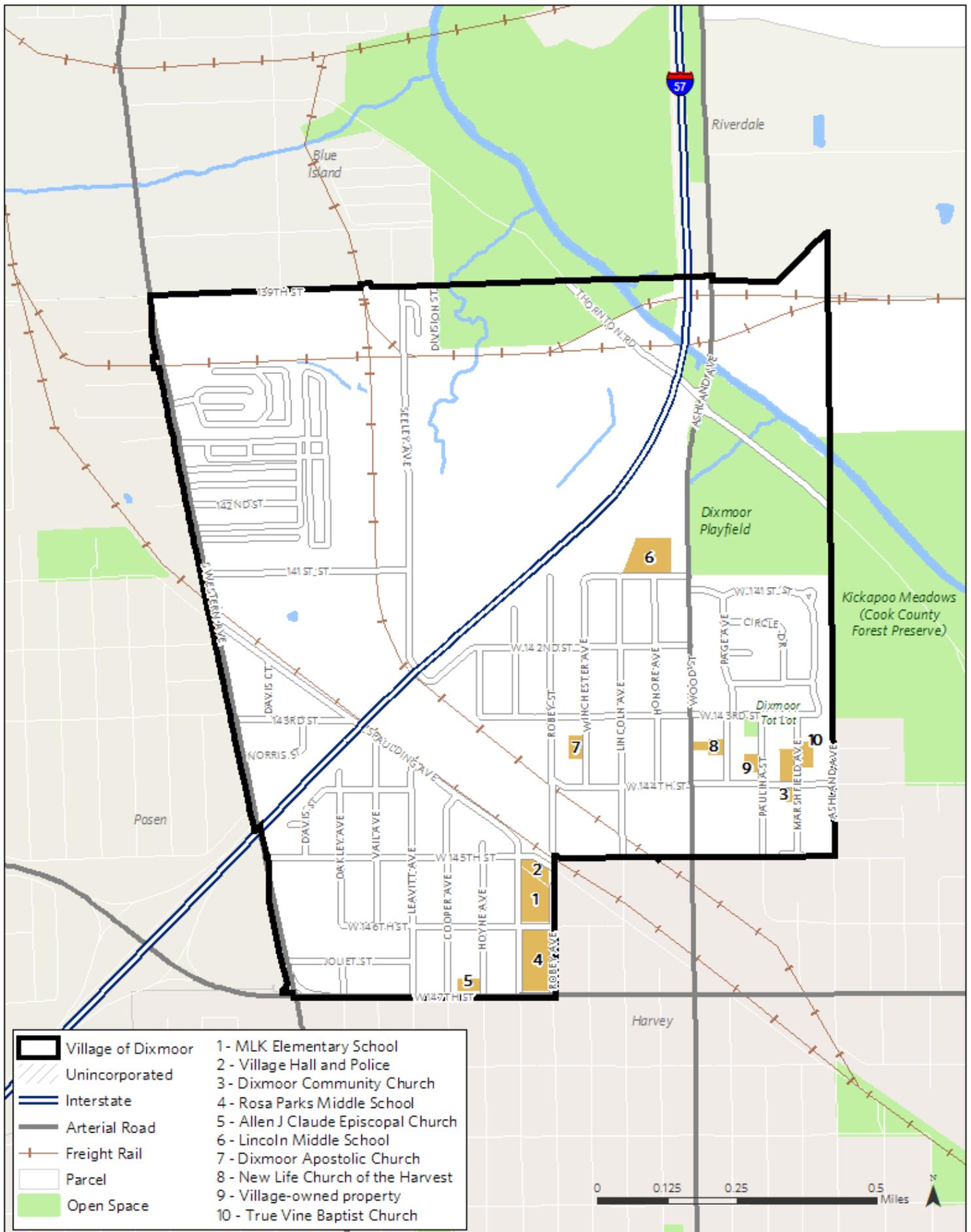
The transportation assets that travel through, adjacent to, and even over Dixmoor play a large role in the Village. With I-57 traveling overhead, the historic Dixie Highway (or, Western Avenue) forming its western border, and three Class I railroads traveling at grade through the Village, Dixmoor is inundated by transportation infrastructure. Despite the heavy presence of transportation as well as utility and industrial uses, Dixmoor has managed to maintain small but thriving residential neighborhoods that are primarily made up of single-family houses or mobile homes. There are many multi-generational families proudly residing in Dixmoor. According to stakeholder interviews, it is a community of many dedicated residents who are hopeful about its future.<sup>1</sup>

## **Governance and Community Facilities**

Dixmoor is a non-home rule Village, meaning that rather than the Village having complete autonomy, the Illinois State legislature retains some authority over decision-making. Dixmoor's elected officials include a Village president and six other members of the Board of Trustees. Municipal staff includes a Village clerk to lead administrative functions, and several departments with at least one staff member: human resources; planning and economic development; police; and public works. Some municipal positions – like the building inspector and the treasurer – are currently part-time, while other posts are contracted (like a village attorney and a municipal engineer). The 20-member Dixmoor Fire Department was dissolved at the end of 2013 due to a municipal budget deficit of over \$1 million. Dixmoor instead entered into a three-year intergovernmental agreement for the Village's residents to receive fire protection from the neighboring City of Harvey. This has allowed the Village to save on the costs of maintaining its own department while still providing the necessary service to its residents.

Village Hall and the Police Station are located next to each other, two blocks north of the 147<sup>th</sup> Street and in between two residential neighborhoods. Residents benefit from other community facilities, like five churches – primarily located in the eastern part of the village – as well as three of the four schools in the West Harvey-Dixmoor School District 147. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School and Rosa Parks Middle School are adjacent to each other, to the south of Village Hall. Lincoln Elementary School is located on the north side of the Village. It is adjacent to one of the mobile home areas and across Wood Street from a single-family home neighborhood, so that children and their parents can easily walk to school. Lincoln Elementary serves many Latino students and offers Spanish-language services for families. Since the Village does not have its own park district, residents often go outside of the community for youth and senior activities. School District 147 shares its facilities for public and community-wide events whenever possible, and has proven to be a strong partner for the Village.

**Figure 3. Community Facilities**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

## **Previous Community Plans**

It is critical to consider previous planning efforts to inform the goals and priorities captured in this report. There has been limited long-range planning in the Village. Dixmoor does not have a comprehensive or a strategic plan, though the Village is included in many subregional and multijurisdictional plans. Most of those broader planning efforts have been driven by the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) – the council of governments for communities in southern Cook County and parts of Will County. The following summarizes the key components of these reports:

### ***Chicago's South Suburbs: Smart Growth in Older Communities***

The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) conducted a study of older south suburban communities to explore methods for basing redevelopment around a community's freight assets despite years of disinvestment. One pilot project, launched in 2006, examined the site of the Wyman Gordon Company's former manufacturing plant, located in Harvey and Dixmoor. The site is well located with proximity to two intermodal terminals and multiple expressway entrances, and it is directly served by two Class I railroads. However, the site was extremely contaminated when the plant shut down. Through this project and with involvement from SSMMA, the two municipalities collaborated to enroll the site in remediation programs in order to clean and prepare it for future redevelopment. These actions were the precursor to further progress on the Wyman Gordon site, discussed further in this report.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Chicago Southland's Green TIME Zone Report***

In 2010, SSMMA produced a report that set a specific framework for redevelopment in the south suburbs: rebuilding economies around transit, intermodal facilities and manufacturing, and a commitment to improving the natural environment (these core principles form the acronym TIME). While the plan does not focus on Dixmoor, it offers strategies that are applicable to the Village, like housing stabilization and land assembly for predevelopment.<sup>3</sup>

### ***I-294/I-57 Interchange Land Use and Economic Development Plan***

In 2011, SSMMA initiated a project on behalf of five municipalities in the direct vicinity of the I-294/I-57 interchange being constructed by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Illinois Tollway. This multijurisdictional project – including Dixmoor, Harvey, Markham, Midlothian, and Posen – resulted in a land use and economic development plan, designed to help the five communities and the supportive regional and state agencies to plan appropriately for the changes occurring due to the new interchange (e.g., changes in traffic patterns and resulting infrastructure needs). While the project study area only included the southwest area of Dixmoor, the final plan identified four sites that are ideal for commercial redevelopment in the Village.<sup>4</sup>

## **Dixmoor and GO TO 2040**

The cumulative choices of 284 municipalities and seven counties determine quality of life and economic prosperity across our region. Local autonomy over land use decisions also requires communities to take responsibility for how those decisions shape a community's livability, as

well as impacts on neighboring communities and the region as a whole. As part of the larger Chicago metropolitan region, Dixmoor influences and is influenced by the region.

CMAP developed and now guides the implementation of GO TO 2040, metropolitan Chicago's first truly comprehensive regional plan in more than 100 years. To address anticipated population growth of more than 2 million new residents, GO TO 2040 establishes coordinated strategies that will help the region's 284 communities address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality of life issues. The GO TO 2040 plan strives to balance the need for local autonomy and regional cooperation. It provides principles that municipalities and counties can apply when they decide how and where development should happen or which infrastructure investments to make in their communities. The plan recommends supporting local planning through grant programs, infrastructure investments to implement plans, technical assistance, and collaboration between municipalities on shared priorities.

### **Livable communities**

1. Achieve greater livability through land use and housing
2. Manage and conserve water and energy resources
3. Expand and improve parks and open space
4. Promote sustainable local food

### **Human capital**

1. Improve education and workforce development
2. Support economic innovation

### **Efficient governance**

1. Reform state and local tax policy
2. Improve access to information
3. Pursue coordinated investments

### **Regional mobility**

1. Invest strategically in transportation
2. Increase commitment to public transit
3. Create a more efficient freight network

The Livable Communities, Regional Mobility, and Efficient Governance chapters are most relevant to Dixmoor's Planning Priorities Report, particularly that relate to:

- Providing safe and livable housing.
- Generating economic revitalization.
- Strategically funding needed capital improvements.
- Strengthening municipal operations.

GO TO 2040 states, “municipalities are critical to the success of GO TO 2040 because of their responsibility for land use decisions, which create the built environment of the region and determine the livability of its communities. The most important thing that a municipality can do to implement GO TO 2040 is to take this responsibility very seriously.” By undertaking this planning prioritization project, the Village is taking necessary steps to make informed land use and development decisions, while demonstrating their commitment to helping shape the future of the region as well.

## Section 3: Community Engagement

The concerns, priorities, and values expressed by the community are integral to understanding Dixmoor's existing conditions. This input helped to shape this report's recommended strategies. It was important to learn from a variety of stakeholders through this process because the Village has not previously conducted plans that would have captured earlier community goals.

Stakeholder engagement allowed CMAP staff to better understand issues and opportunities currently faced by the community. A series of stakeholder interviews was the primary method of community engagement. This involved discussions with individuals representing a wide variety of interests. In addition, staff participated in business community meetings run by the Village, which enabled CMAP to learn from a broader range of leaders in the business community.

The interviews and meetings were conducted confidentially, and therefore the consensus of these discussions is presented in this report, rather than individuals' perspectives. Over two-dozen key stakeholders were interviewed, either one-on-one or in small groups. These stakeholders included:

- Municipal representatives (both elected officials and staff).
- Community leaders (e.g., library district board members, religious leaders, and school district representatives).
- Residents (both lifelong in and new to Dixmoor).
- Business community leaders across retail and industrial sectors.

Key stakeholder findings are divided into Strengths, Challenges, and Goals & Opportunities.

### Strengths

#### Location

A commonly expressed strength of Dixmoor is its prime location in south Cook County, with key transportation assets either in or adjacent to the Village. Businesses and residents alike expressed that it is easy to get around by car and that its location near highways and railways should make it attractive to industrial and freight-related businesses.

#### Livability

Aware of the media's focus on crime in the south suburbs, many stakeholders emphasized that Dixmoor is a safe place to live, especially compared to some neighboring communities. Residents also noted that it is more affordable than some nearby municipalities, with lower tax rates and lower housing costs.

## **Sense of Community**

Since it is a geographically small community, and because many people are lifelong residents whose parents and grandparents settled in Dixmoor, some stakeholders shared that there is a closeness and sense of neighborliness in the Village. This reinforces the sense of safety in Dixmoor, with friends and family checking in on each other. The Village of Dixmoor Improvement Association – a citizen’s group that organizes events and offers information for residents – exemplifies this community dedication.

## **Challenges**

### **Aging and Inadequate Infrastructure**

Most stakeholders shared concern with the Village’s aging infrastructure. While this is a common issue in communities across the region, Dixmoor’s challenge is acute because it has a great need for upgrades but only enough funding to address the most urgent problems. Stakeholders identified potholes, flooded streets, and missing sidewalks in every corner of the Village, demonstrating that the challenge is not isolated to one part of the municipality. In some cases, stakeholders discussed how inadequate infrastructure leads to safety concerns for pedestrians.

### **Upkeep in Residential Neighborhoods**

From residents to community leaders, a commonly expressed challenge facing Dixmoor was inconsistent property maintenance and the need for better code enforcement in residential areas. Stakeholders also were concerned with the growing vacancy that is scattered throughout neighborhoods.

### **Lack of Services for Specific Populations**

Stakeholders understood that Dixmoor is a small community and cannot provide facilities and services for every type of person within the Village limits. Many residents said that they rely on the parks and recreational facilities offered in nearby communities, and shared arrangements should be encouraged for small municipalities. However, many stakeholders stated a need for after-school and other youth programs, senior services, and Spanish-language services for the growing Latino population.

## **Goals & Opportunities**

### **Revive the Community Center**

Stakeholders felt it was important to refresh efforts surrounding an unfinished community center, which would provide a facility to house the young and senior citizen programs they felt were missing from the Village’s services.

## **Capitalize on Momentum for Economic Development**

A sense of opportunity permeated many stakeholder conversations, with residents and business owners citing the new I-294/I-57 interchange as a chance to stimulate growth and redevelopment.

## **Retain the Strong Sense of Community**

Stakeholders were proud of the community's character and would like to maintain it. As the population shifts, they recognize the opportunity for extending that close-knit network to connect with newer residents, providing them with the support they need to thrive in Dixmoor.

## Section 4: Land Use and Zoning

This section describes the existing land use and development conditions within Dixmoor with a focus on types of uses, existing zoning, and the built environment. The information in this section was primarily gathered from CMAP's Geographic Information System (GIS) database, and was supplemented by stakeholder interviews and a visual assessment of the Village.

### Key Findings

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing land use conditions in Dixmoor. These key findings help to shape and inform the objectives and recommended strategies for addressing land use and zoning issues in Dixmoor.

- **The transportation and utilities land uses create fragmentation in the Village.** These land uses both limit developable land and produce physical barriers for residents.
- **Dixmoor's land use does not look like a typical bedroom community or suburb.** Over 50 percent of the Village is composed of transportation and utilities, industrial, or vacant land, and much of these land use types are located in the middle of Village, thereby splitting up the residential areas from each other.
- **The substantial percentage of vacant and underutilized land creates gaps in the built environment that are prime areas for redevelopment.** This vacant land spans across single-family residential, industrial, and commercially zoned areas.

**Figure 4. Railroad storage and other transportation land uses located in the middle of the Village.**

*Photo: CMAP, April 2014.*



# Land Use Composition

Table 1 displays the distribution of land uses in Dixmoor by category. Acreage was calculated using GIS data. Although Dixmoor – which is just over one square mile in size – is a geographically small community, it contains a diverse array of land uses.

**Table 1. Land Use by Acreage**

Land Use	Area (in Acres)	Percentage of Total
Transportation and Utilities	166.0	25.9%
Single Family Residential	115.1	18.0%
Industrial	108.6	17.0%
Vacant	76.1	11.9%
Open Space	74.2	11.6%
Mobile Home Residential	68.7	10.7%
Commercial	15.5	2.4%
Institutional	14.3	2.2%
Mixed Use	1.6	0.2%
Multi-Family Residential	0.7	0.1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>640.7</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: CMAP 2005 Land Use Inventory and 2014 verification by CMAP staff.		

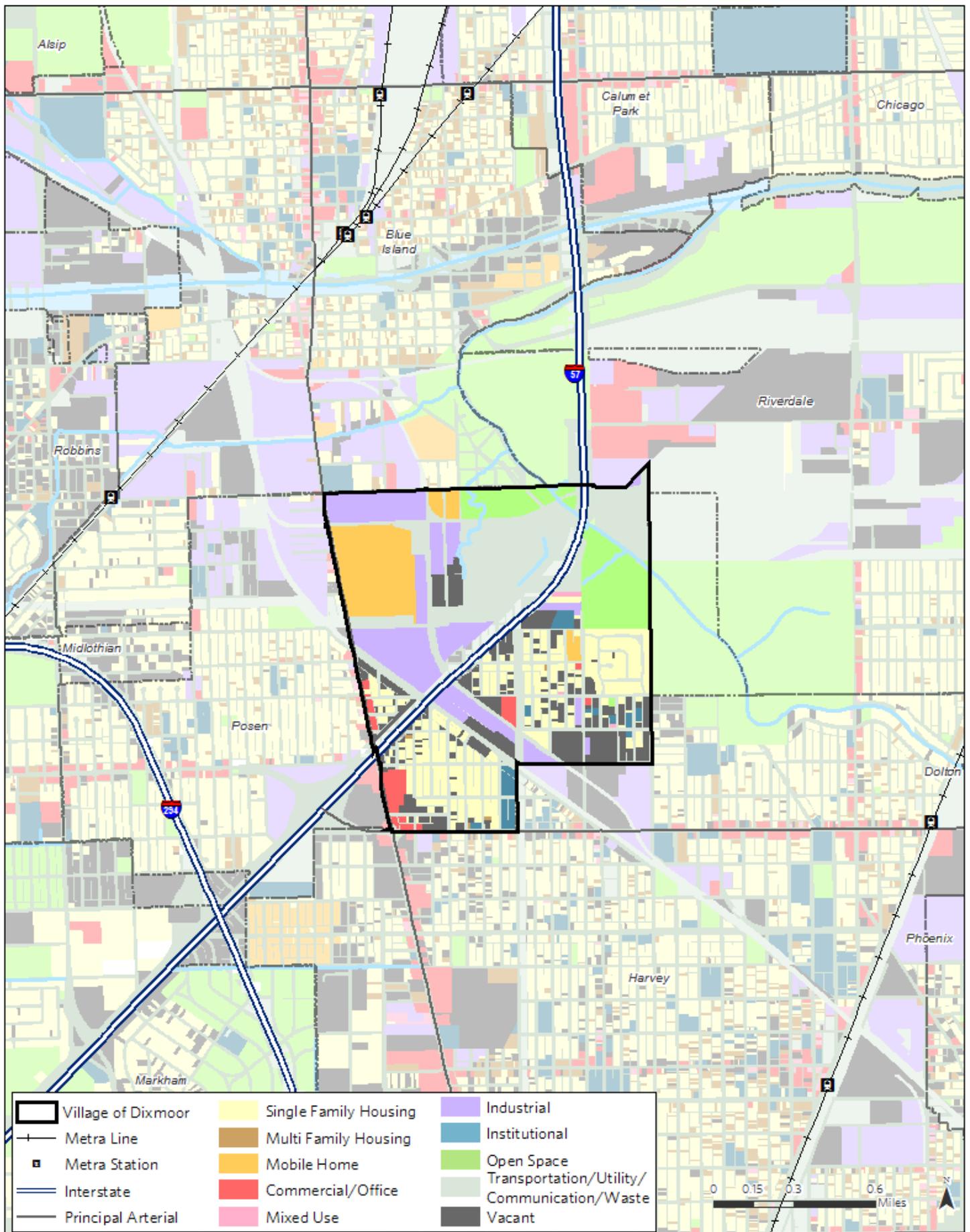
These land uses are summarized briefly below, and further described in subsequent sections of this report.

## Transportation/Utilities

The transportation and utilities land uses are located near the center of the Village and comprise over 25 percent of Dixmoor’s land, with pockets of residential, industrial, and open space land uses toward the municipal boundaries (see Figure 5). The transportation and utilities land uses include highway, rail, and utility facilities, which limit the developable land available for potential economic development in Dixmoor. There is a large Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) utility substation structure that separates residential areas on the north side of the Village and constrains the land available for industrial or commercial redevelopment. These land uses also produce physical barriers for residents, impeding connectivity and in some cases creating safety hazards. For instance, Robey Street is a heavily trafficked two-lane local road running north-south. It intersects with two sets of train tracks at a point in the Village where many pedestrians and cars travel, near schools and Village Hall.



**Figure 6. Existing Land Use in the Subregion**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

## **Residential**

Over a quarter of the Village is made up of residential land uses, including single family, multi-family, and mobile homes. The main residential areas are all separated from each other across the Village. The two main single-family residential sections and the largest mobile home residential section are each in different corners of Dixmoor, divided up by transportation, utility, and industrial uses.

Eighteen percent of Dixmoor is made up of single-family homes, which is the second-largest land use in the Village. Nearly 11 percent of Dixmoor comprises thriving mobile home communities, each of which is privately owned. The mobile park owners provide their own utilities to their residents (such as water service), and they also maintain the sidewalks and street lighting independently from the Village. Lastly, there is a very small portion of multi-family housing available, with just a few small apartment buildings within the Village's limits.

## **Industrial**

The third-largest type of land use in the Village is industrial land (17 percent). Though there are scattered industrial sites throughout Dixmoor, the most dominant industrial land is located along and between the railways that traverse the Village from southeast to northwest. This channel of industrial land connects with land uses in the larger subregion, tied by those railroad lines to Phoenix and Harvey to the south, and to Blue Island, Robbins, and Alsip to the north. Industrial uses are by far the biggest economic driver for Dixmoor, with a number of automotive and transportation-oriented businesses as well as light manufacturing.

## **Vacant**

Nearly 12 percent of land in Dixmoor is categorized as vacant. Part of the Village's vacant and underutilized land is scattered throughout residential areas and along commercial corridors. In some cases, the vacancy spans several consecutive parcels on a block, creating gaps in the built environment that are prime areas for redevelopment. Many of the larger vacant areas were formerly in industrial uses and would be suitable for industrial redevelopment in the future.

## **Open Space**

Over 11 percent of the Village is composed of open space, due in large part to the presence of facilities that are part of the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC). The FPCC serves the Village in the northeast corner of town, running the Dixmoor Playfield off of Wood Street that provides recreational fields, pavilion facilities, and basketball courts. Extending to the east of the municipal boundary and into Harvey and Riverdale is the 245-acre forest preserve called Kickapoo Woods, through which the Little Calumet River runs. There is also a tot lot at 143<sup>rd</sup> and Paulina in Dixmoor that is small but well-maintained.

## Commercial

Less than three percent of the land in the Village is commercial, with very limited retail and office uses. There is one major commercial node, located at S. Western Avenue (Dixie Highway) and 147<sup>th</sup> Street (Sibley Boulevard), with scattered commercial uses extending north on Western and east on 147<sup>th</sup>.

## Institutional

Institutional land uses comprise just over two percent of the Village. These land uses mostly include schools and churches within Dixmoor, as well as one small Village-owned property – the underutilized lot where the community center structure currently stands. Institutional land is generally mixed into the residential areas, as those types of entities exist to serve the residents of Dixmoor and are therefore located conveniently.

## Zoning

Dixmoor’s zoning code, which dates from 1978, has nine types of districts (described in Table 2). The zoning largely reflects the current land uses, aside from the presence of vacant land. However the zoning code does not include districts for Transportation and Utilities, for Institutional, or for Multi-Family land uses, and therefore could benefit from an eventual update to more accurately represent the Village’s existing conditions and land use goals.

**Table 2. Major Zoning Districts**

District Type	Description
C/R	Conservation / Recreation
R1	Single-Family Residence
R2	Single-Family Residence (smaller lots)
R3	Limited General Residence
R5	Mobile Home Residence
B1	Neighborhood Shopping
B2	General Commercial
I1	Restricted Industrial
I2	General Industrial

Source: Village of Dixmoor, 1978.



## Section 5: Population and Housing

The population and housing section describes the important characteristics of Dixmoor's resident population and its housing stock. Information for this section was obtained through 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data, as well as 2008-12 American Community Survey (ACS) data, and Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data.

### Key Findings

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Dixmoor's population and housing. These key findings help to shape and inform the objectives and recommended strategies related to population trends and housing conditions in Dixmoor.

- **Dixmoor's population is shifting in its racial composition.** Historically, Dixmoor has been a majority African American community. Today African American residents remain in the majority (52.3 percent of the population), but there has been a decline in both African American and white residents in recent years, with an overall population loss in the last decade. A dramatic increase in the Latino population (80.9 percent from 2000 to 2010) ensured that the Village's net population loss was not more severe, as it was the only racial or ethnic group that grew in number.
- **As is the case for many communities in south Cook County, unemployment is high in Dixmoor.** At 16.7 percent, Dixmoor's unemployment rate is higher than county and regional figures. However, Dixmoor does fall within the range of municipal unemployment rates across south Cook County. Unemployment has been a challenge facing many south suburban communities since stable, well-paying industrial jobs became increasingly scarce toward the end of the last century. Employed residents in Dixmoor commonly work in service and industrial-related fields. Additionally, about 10 percent work in education services, though relatively few work in other administrative and professional industries.
- **Historically, Dixmoor's single-family housing stock has been a prominent part of its identity.** Today, the vast majority of Dixmoor's residential stock is either single-family detached homes – which was how the Village originally was developed – or mobile homes. The Village's housing stock, though there is a range of sizes and price points, provides extremely limited multi-family housing options (less than five percent of housing units).
- **Trends in home rentals and residential vacancy are leading homeowners to be vigilant about property maintenance in their neighborhoods.** In decades past, most homes in Dixmoor were owner-occupied, but owner occupancy has declined significantly over the last 20 years. It's possible that Dixmoor's younger-than-average population contributes to lower owner-occupancy. With the shift toward increased rentals of single-family homes (which suggests less permanency and lower community

investment), some of the adjacent homeowners have become more aware of how neighboring property is being treated. This, in combination with residential vacancy over 20 percent, has led to greater attention and care from community stakeholders to prevent neighborhoods from experiencing blight.

## Demographic Profile

Dixmoor has a small population compared to its immediate neighbors, with 3,644 residents as of 2010. The Village’s average household size, at 3.13 people per household, is larger than both the Cook County and the regional averages, showing that more people live in each home in Dixmoor than the average home in the region.

**Table 3. Population, Households, and Household Size, 2010**

	Dixmoor	Cook County	Region
Population	3,644	5,194,675	8,431,386
Households	1,164	1,966,356	3,088,156
Average Household Size	3.13	2.60	2.73
Source: 2010 U.S. Census.			

While the region saw an overall increase in population between 2000 and 2010, both Cook County and Village of Dixmoor experienced population losses over that time period. The percentage of population decrease was twice as much in Dixmoor (7.4 percent) as it was for Cook County as a whole (3.4 percent). The net loss was 290 residents in Dixmoor.

**Table 4. Change in Population, 2000-10**

	Dixmoor	Cook County	Region
Population, 2000	3,934	5,376,741	8,146,264
Population, 2010	3,644	5,194,675	8,431,386
Change, 2000-10	-290	-182,066	285,122
Change as %, 2000-10	-7.4%	-3.4%	3.5%
Source: 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census.			

As of the most recent U.S. Census, the majority of residents in Dixmoor were African American, comprising 52.3 percent of the population, which aligns with the Village’s history as a primarily African American bedroom community. This is over double the African American population of Cook County (24.4 percent), and it is triple that of the region (17.4 percent). Over one third of Dixmoor’s residents in 2010 were Hispanic or Latino (35.5 percent, which is also higher than the county and regional figures (24 percent and 21.6 percent, respectively). 11 percent of Dixmoor residents were white, which was significantly lower than that population in Cook County (43.9 percent) or the region (over half of the population). There is an extremely small Asian population in Dixmoor, at less than one percent.

**Table 5. Race and Ethnicity, 2010**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
White	405	11.1%	2,278,358	43.9%	4,486,557	53.2%
Hispanic or Latino*	1,295	35.5%	1,244,762	24.0%	1,823,609	21.6%
Black or African American	1,907	52.3%	1,265,778	24.4%	1,465,417	17.4%
Asian	2	0.1%	318,869	6.1%	513,694	6.1%
Other**	35	1.0%	86,908	1.7%	142,109	1.7%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>3,644</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>5,194,675</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,431,386</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race.  
\*\* Includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races.  
Source: 2010 U.S. Census.

Broad trends in Dixmoor’s population shift between 2000 and 2010 echo similar changes at the county and regional levels. Overall, the region experienced a decrease in African American and white populations, with a concurrent increase in its Latino population. The same trends occurred in Dixmoor, however the changes were sharper. For instance, not only did the white population decrease and the Latino population increase, but the latter actually overtook the former as the second-largest population by race in the Village. The increase in the Latino population (80.9 percent from 2000 to 2010) is the reason that the net population loss in Dixmoor was not more severe, as it was the only racial or ethnic group that grew in number. One other place that Dixmoor diverges from regional trends is in its Asian population, which is small and did not increase as seen in Cook County and the region.

**Table 6. Change in Race and Ethnicity, 2000-10**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Change in Population	Percent Change	Change in Population	Percent Change	Change in Population	Percent Change
White	-528	-56.6%	-280,351	-11.0%	-200,702	-4.3%
Hispanic or Latino*	579	80.9%	173,022	16.1%	414,407	29.4%
Black or African American	-317	-14.3%	-124,670	-9.0%	-72,117	-4.7%
Asian	-3	-60.0%	61,026	23.7%	137,701	36.6%
Other**	-21	-37.5%	-11,093	-11.3%	5,833	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>-290</b>	<b>-7.4%</b>	<b>-182,066</b>	<b>-3.4%</b>	<b>285,122</b>	<b>3.5%</b>

\* Includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race.  
\*\* Includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races.  
Source: 2010 U.S. Census.

Dixmoor’s population is over four years younger than the average age for Cook County or for the region. The Village’s average age of 31 can be attributed to a relatively higher amount of residents under 19 years of age (34.2 percent), and lower populations of middle aged residents (ages 35 to 64 years old) as compared to county and regional figures. Many stakeholders in Dixmoor expressed that they were part of multi-generational families all living in the Village,

while others were part of young families with children who had been relocating to Dixmoor in recent years.

**Table 7. Age Cohorts and Median Age, 2010**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Under 19 years	1,247	34.2%	1,374,096	26.5%	2,346,937	27.8%
20 to 34 years	791	21.7%	1,204,066	23.2%	1,790,049	21.2%
35 to 49 years	682	18.7%	1,067,351	20.5%	1,807,886	21.4%
50 to 64 years	552	15.1%	928,833	17.9%	1,534,488	18.2%
65 to 79 years	274	7.5%	436,799	8.4%	679,470	8.1%
80 years and over	98	2.7%	183,530	3.5%	272,556	3.2%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>3,644</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>5,194,675</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,431,386</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Median Age	31		35.3		35.5	

Source: 2010 U.S. Census.

While the median household income in Dixmoor (\$40,594) is lower than in the county and the region overall, it is in line with many of its neighboring communities in south Cook County (which range from \$28,123 in Harvey to \$49,400 in Posen). Over two-thirds of households in Dixmoor have a median income of less than \$50,000, as compared to in the county where less than half of households are at that income level. Conversely, in Dixmoor less than two percent of households earn over \$100,000, whereas nearly one-quarter of Cook County households earn at those higher income levels.

**Table 8. Household Income**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Less than \$25,000	365	30.5%	456,264	23.6%	599,075	19.6%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	443	37.0%	436,472	22.6%	640,942	21.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	303	25.3%	339,402	17.6%	537,114	17.6%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	63	5.3%	235,745	12.2%	402,300	13.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	22	1.8%	253,222	13.1%	468,043	15.4%
\$150,000 and over	0	0.0%	212,565	11.0%	401,400	13.2%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>1,196</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,933,670</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,048,874</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Median HH Income	\$40,594		\$54,648		\$71,198	

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Nearly three-quarters of all Dixmoor residents who are 25 years and older hold at least a high school diploma. While this is lower than county and regional levels, there is an even greater difference in the proportion of residents with college degrees. Over one-third of residents both in Cook County and in the region hold a bachelor's degree or higher, but in Dixmoor that population is less than one out of every ten people.

**Table 9. Education Levels**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Population, 25 years and over	2,091	100.0%	3,456,817	100.0%	5,538,499	100.0%
High school diploma or higher	1,514	72.4%	2,906,668	84.1%	4,771,543	86.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher	175	8.4%	1,184,199	34.3%	1,982,346	35.8%

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

According to the 2008-12 ACS, over 16 percent of residents in Dixmoor were unemployed. This figure – while it is considerably higher than unemployment rates in Cook County (11.5 percent) and in the Chicago region (10.5 percent) – actually falls in the middle of the range of unemployment rates of surrounding municipalities (which spans from 14 to nearly 30 percent). Unemployment is a challenge facing many communities in the subregion of south Cook County, where industrial companies that had provided ample job opportunities in the past have either shut down or relocated out of the County or even the state.

**Table 10. Employment Status**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Population, 16 years and over	2,566	100.0%	4,112,868	100.0%	6,573,191	100.0%
In labor force	1,759	68.6%	2,742,562	66.7%	4,498,245	68.4%
Employed*	1,465	83.3%	2,424,917	88.4%	4,013,150	89.2%
Unemployed	294	16.7%	316,141	11.5%	471,447	10.5%
Not in labor force	807	31.4%	1,370,306	33.3%	2,074,946	31.6%

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.  
\*Does not include employed population in Armed Forces

The main industry types that employ residents in Dixmoor include health and education services, retail, and industrial-related fields. Over one in four employed residents in Dixmoor hold a job in healthcare, social assistance, or educational services, and nearly one in five work in retail trades or accommodation and food services. Over 20 percent of employed Dixmoor residents work in a field related to manufacturing, warehousing, or wholesale trade, which is in keeping with the Village's industrial character.

**Table 11. Employment of Dixmoor Residents by Industry Sector, 2011**

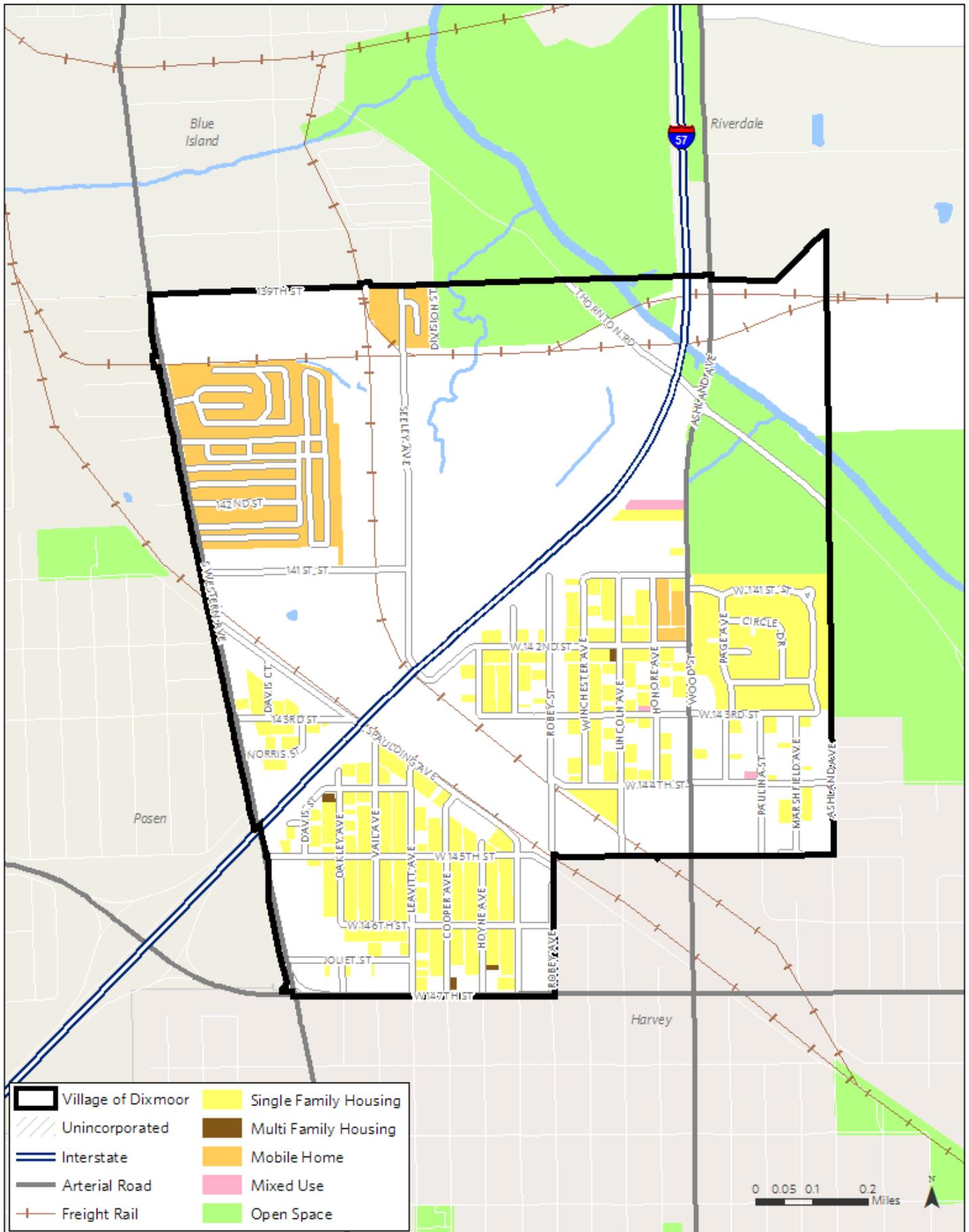
	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Health Care and Social Assistance	232	16.3%	279,009	13.8%	436,605	12.7%
Retail Trade	172	12.1%	200,900	9.9%	360,760	10.5%
Manufacturing	140	9.8%	176,874	8.7%	338,715	9.9%
Educational Services	140	9.8%	204,733	10.1%	338,389	9.9%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	116	8.1%	147,012	7.3%	239,634	7.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	107	7.5%	154,783	7.6%	244,775	7.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	99	7.0%	92,688	4.6%	148,474	4.3%
Public Administration	80	5.6%	87,601	4.3%	134,679	3.9%
Wholesale Trade	61	4.3%	101,724	5.0%	201,327	5.9%
Finance and Insurance	60	4.2%	126,620	6.3%	204,871	6.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	53	3.7%	161,265	8.0%	270,668	7.9%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	45	3.2%	78,114	3.9%	124,729	3.6%
Construction	36	2.5%	49,633	2.5%	101,639	3.0%
Information	28	2.0%	49,085	2.4%	80,261	2.3%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	22	1.5%	38,369	1.9%	72,789	2.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	13	0.9%	34,939	1.7%	61,695	1.8%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12	0.8%	33,084	1.6%	50,602	1.5%
Utilities	7	0.5%	7,354	0.4%	14,208	0.4%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	0.1%	543	0.0%	1,283	0.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0.0%	1,139	0.1%	3,204	0.1%
<b>Total Employed Population</b>	<b>1,424</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,025,469</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>3,429,307</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau.

## Housing Characteristics

As was discussed in the Land Use section of this report, over a quarter of the Village’s land cover is made up of residential uses. Single-family residential land is the dominant type, and over 10 percent of Dixmoor’s land is occupied by privately-run mobile home communities.

Figure 8. Residential Areas



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

The distribution of housing types displayed in Table 12 illuminates those residential land use findings further. Results from the 2008-12 ACS found that of the non-mobile home households in Dixmoor, the vast majority are single-family detached homes. When mobile homes are considered, they make up the majority of the overall housing types in Dixmoor (at 54.7%), with single-family detached homes comprising just 42.1 percent. This demonstrates that while there is more land covered by single-family residential designation, the mobile home neighborhoods are more compact, with a higher number of units located in each mobile home area.

**Table 12. Housing Type**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Single, detached	633	42.1%	869,539	39.9%	1,679,254	50.2%
Single, attached	0	0.0%	118,595	5.4%	257,910	7.7%
2 Units	21	1.4%	218,404	10.0%	242,900	7.3%
3 to 4 Units	14	0.9%	252,173	11.6%	286,137	8.6%
5+ Units	14	0.9%	703,831	32.3%	876,492	26.2%
Mobile home	822	54.7%	15,404	0.7%	X	X
<b>Housing Units*</b>	<b>1,504</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,178,739</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,342,693</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Total for Region excludes mobile, boat, RV, van, etc.  
Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

There are less than 50 total households that are units in a multi-family building in Dixmoor, comprising less than five percent of housing types. This is extremely low as compared to Cook County, where about half of households are in multi-family buildings. Even accounting for the mobile home areas, this creates a lower-density residential environment in Dixmoor than exists across the county and even at the regional level. This distribution does not provide a diversity of housing stock for a range of household types in the Village.

**Figure 9. Single-family homes on east side of Village.** Photo: CMAP, April 2014.



Residential vacancy increased across the region and the nation when the financial markets fell and the housing markets followed around 2008 and 2009. This trend was seen in Dixmoor, where residential vacancy had been at 6.7 percent in the year 2000,<sup>5</sup> and increased to 10.6 percent by 2010, as seen in Table 13. That vacancy rate was slightly higher than that of Cook County (9.8 percent) and the region (8.4 percent), and was comparable to many of Dixmoor’s neighboring communities. More recent data from the 2008-12 ACS shows an even sharper increase in residential vacancy, with Dixmoor’s rate rising to 20.5 percent. This change could be more extreme due to the relatively small size of the Village.

Of the occupied households in Dixmoor, over 71 percent were owner-occupied in 2010, which dropped from 81 percent owner-occupied in 2000.<sup>6</sup> That number has further shifted since 2010, with more recent data showing that the ratio of owners to renters living in occupied households is nearly one to one (with 53 percent owner-occupied and 47 percent renter-occupied).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 13. Housing Occupancy and Tenure, 2010**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Occupied	1,164	89.4%	1,966,356	90.2%	3,088,156	91.6%
Owner-Occupied	835	71.7%	1,143,857	58.2%	2,022,176	65.5%
Renter-Occupied	329	28.3%	822,499	41.8%	1,065,980	34.5%
Vacant	138	10.6%	214,003	9.8%	284,601	8.4%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>1,302</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,180,359</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,372,757</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: 2010 U.S. Census.						

Figure 10 provides a visual assessment of the vacancy in two main residential neighborhoods in Dixmoor. Where a building footprint appeared in an aerial view, a gray block was included on the map. Parcels that are blank represent areas that appeared to be empty or void of any substantive structure. The highest concentration of residential vacancy appears to be located directly to the north and also to the east of Village Hall. This map is meant to offer a visual snapshot of residential vacancy at one point in time, but is certain to be inaccurate as time passes. For instance, the abandoned townhomes at the corner of Wood and 143<sup>rd</sup> Streets were being demolished through a Cook County Sheriff’s Office program at the time of writing this report. The County Sheriff’s program, called Restoring Neighborhoods Workforce, recently took an inventory of vacancy in residential areas, identifying 58 properties that are in need of landscaping or even boarding up to prevent trespassers.<sup>8</sup>



The number of smaller households (either studio or one-bedroom units) makes up a very small percentage of all households in the Village. Nearly half of all homes in Dixmoor are two-bedroom units, with no households that are five-bedrooms in size.

**Table 14. Housing Size (Number of Bedrooms)**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
0-1 Bedroom	53	3.5%	444,707	20.4%	547,556	16.0%
2 Bedrooms	730	48.5%	688,082	31.6%	962,848	29.0%
3 Bedrooms	431	28.7%	700,183	32.1%	1,136,361	34.0%
4 Bedrooms	290	19.3%	259,049	11.9%	570,895	16.9%
5 Bedrooms	0	0.0%	86,718	4.0%	152,248	4.5%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>1,504</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,178,739</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,369,908</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

The housing stock in Dixmoor is newer than that of Cook County and the region. The median year when a home in Dixmoor was built is 1970, as compared to 1965 for the Chicago region and 1957 for the county. Only seven percent of Dixmoor’s current housing stock stands from before 1940, whereas nearly one third of the overall county’s housing is from that pre-war era. This is due in part to Dixmoor becoming incorporated later than other parts of Cook County, and becoming increasingly settled only after World War II when the growth of south suburban industrial operations called for nearby residential communities to house workers. Over 40 percent of the Village’s housing stock was built in the 1960s and 70s.

**Table 15. Housing Age**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Built 2000 and after	149	9.9%	167,141	7.7%	388,157	11.5%
Built 1980 to 1999	419	27.9%	270,579	12.4%	653,018	19.4%
Built 1960 to 1979	653	43.4%	538,837	24.7%	867,250	25.7%
Built 1940 to 1959	171	11.4%	516,539	23.7%	671,560	19.9%
Built 1939 or earlier	112	7.4%	685,643	31.5%	789,923	23.4%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>1,504</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,178,739</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,369,908</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Median age	1970		1957		1965	

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Overall, the condition and nature of Dixmoor’s housing stock contributes to the community’s character. As vacancy has increased and a shift toward more renters has occurred, stakeholders

and community leaders have expressed concern about upkeep of homes in the Village. Census data shows that home values in Dixmoor are about one fifth the median value of a home in Cook County, and that values in the Village are substantially lower than even many of its neighboring municipalities. Housing values are self-reported for Census collection, and in many cases the reported figures are out of line with recent home sale pricing, so any comparison of home values should be applied with caution. However this should still indicate that Dixmoor's housing stock could benefit from further attention and systematic improvement in order to raise values to more closely approximate those in the subregion of south Cook County.

**Figure 11. Empty lot next to debris, with maintained single-family homes on the other side.** *Photo: CMAP, April 2014.*



**Figure 12. Empty lot still has mailbox and appears to be mowed by neighbors.** *Photo: CMAP, September 2014.*



## Section 6: Economic Conditions

This section examines key economic and market indicators in Dixmoor, including employment trends, equalized property values, and economic development tools. This analysis was conducted using data from Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) from the U.S. Census, Dun and Bradstreet, Illinois Department of Revenue, and CoStar.

### Key Findings

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Dixmoor's economy. These key findings help to shape and inform the objectives and recommended strategies for enhancing economic conditions in Dixmoor.

- **Manufacturing and related industries remain at the core of Dixmoor's economy.** Besides the Village's schools that provide jobs in educational services, the most common type of employment in Dixmoor involves manufacturing or a related industry. Over 45 percent of Dixmoor's private sector jobs are either in manufacturing or wholesale trade industries, and half of the Village's largest employers run industrial operations.
- **The Village's total taxable value by property type does not align with that of a typical suburb.** While it is common for a suburban community to generate the vast majority of its taxable value from its residential property, Dixmoor's residential property value pulls in less than 50 percent of the total. In contrast, over one-third of the Village's total property value comes from its industrial property, which is a significantly higher portion of the total value than that of Cook County or the region. This reveals that industrial operations play a large role in the Village's revenues and economic activity.
- **Dixmoor has incentive programs in place to help stimulate economic development.** With programs like Tax Increment Financing and an Enterprise Zone in place, the Village is poised to capitalize upon the tools they provide for business attraction and retention, especially in areas where there is high vacancy and underutilized land.

### Employment

In spite of flagging industrial employment opportunities in recent decades, Dixmoor gained 158 workers since 2002, representing a nearly 32 percent increase in its employment base. This is likely due to a few new businesses opening in the Village. It is almost irrelevant to compare the Village's employment trends with those of Cook County or the Chicago region since the total quantity of jobs is so much smaller in a community the geographic size of Dixmoor.

**Table 16. Private Sector Employment, 2002-11**

	Dixmoor	Cook County	Region
Employment, 2002	496	2,223,156	3,409,568
Employment, 2011	654	2,189,184	3,461,583
Change, 2002-11	158	-33,972	52,015
Change as %, 2002-11	31.85%	-1.53%	1.53%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau.

The jobs available in Dixmoor span across industries, though nearly half of all jobs are in fields related to manufacturing or the warehousing and distribution of wholesale goods. Over one third of jobs in Dixmoor relate to educational services, which is in keeping with the fact that there are three schools that operate in the Village. Notably, jobs in construction increased between 2002 and 2011. In addition to manufacturing and construction, the industries of accommodation and food services as well as real estate experienced increases in the number of private sector jobs over the last decade.<sup>9</sup> Commercial development around Western Avenue and 147<sup>th</sup> Street has likely contributed to the increase in food service jobs available.

**Table 17. Employment of Private Sector Workers in Dixmoor by Industry Sector, 2011**

	Count	Percent
Educational Services	224	34.3%
Manufacturing	194	29.7%
Wholesale Trade	104	15.9%
Retail Trade	53	8.1%
Construction	33	5.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	25	3.8%
Real Estate -- Rental and Leasing	15	2.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	3	0.5%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	3	0.5%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Table excludes those industries that did not have any jobs available in Dixmoor, such as Finance and Insurance, Information, or Management of Companies.  
Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau

There are no longer any large private sector employers located in Dixmoor (like the manufacturer Wyman-Gordon, which employed about 350 people at its plant in Dixmoor and Harvey before it closed in the 1980s). However, Public School District 147 employed nearly 150 people in 2013, and the intent is for those schools to remain reliable job generators in the community. A couple of private companies that excel in manufacturing and related services each employ several dozen skilled workers:

- Orient Machining and Welding offers tools and services to repair, replace, fabricate, and assemble specialized parts and machinery for particular manufacturing operations.

They employed 67 workers in 2013 and all of their machinists and welders operated on two 12-hour shifts.<sup>10</sup>

- National Railway Equipment Company is another major employer in the Village, with a total of 90 people working at its Dixmoor facility (one of nine locations).<sup>11</sup> The company supplies new and remanufactured low emissions locomotives and related products, and is located in the industrial area between the CN and CSX railroad tracks.

**Table 18. Top Employers in Dixmoor, 2013**

Employer	Type	Count
West Harvey/Dixmoor Public School District 147	Elementary and Secondary Schools	148
Orient Machining & Welding, Inc.	Machine Shops	67
National Railway Equipment Co.	Transportation Equip & Supplies (except Motor Vehicles/ Merch Wholesalers)	60
Kinder Morgan Kansas, Inc.	Energy Infrastructure / Engineering Services	42
National Railway Equipment Co.	Commuter Rail Systems	30
Village of Dixmoor	Police Protection	25
Cem, LLC	Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing	19

Source: Dun and Bradstreet Market Insight.

## Existing and Potential Economic Development

Nearly 20 percent of Dixmoor’s land is covered by either industrial or commercial uses. With much of the Village’s vacant land sitting adjacent to these industrial and commercial uses, there may be potential for redevelopment that would capitalize upon existing operations to generate more economic activity within Dixmoor. Some of the vacant areas were formerly in industrial uses, and therefore were sizable properties. Other vacancy and underutilized land occurs in commercial corridors (e.g. – a paved or grassy lot in between active businesses), which can contribute to a perception of blight. These vacant properties range in size and could accommodate any number of new uses, from a new or expanding industrial company to a retailer, and even to a neighborhood park or other open space that helps to improve surrounding property values.

The Equalized Assessed Value (EAV), or the taxable value of property, is estimated for a community using data from the Illinois Department of Revenue. The total property value in the Village of Dixmoor includes residential, commercial, industrial, and railroad properties. While the largest portion of the Village’s total estimated EAV was generated by residential property (43%), that percentage is much smaller than the residential estimates for Cook County (66.5%)

and for the region (71.1 percent). Typically in suburban communities, residential property is the dominant value generator, so it is slightly unusual for Dixmoor's residential EAV to be less than 50 percent. The Village's industrial property value makes up for that difference in its residential EAV. Over one-third of Dixmoor's total property value is attributable to its industrial property, which is a significantly higher portion of the total EAV than that of Cook County or the region. On a smaller scale, the estimated EAV from railroad property in Dixmoor is also much larger proportionally than its regional counterparts. At 17 percent of the total value, the Village's commercial EAV is only moderately lower than it is for the county and the region.

**Table 19. Equalized Assessed Value by Property Type, 2011**

Property Type	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Estimated EAV	Percent	Estimated EAV	Percent	Estimated EAV	Percent
Residential EAV	\$12,027,316	43.0%	\$101,103,264,883	66.5%	\$186,199,669,907	71.1%
Commercial EAV	\$4,751,480	17.0%	\$34,168,804,907	22.5%	\$49,787,535,331	19.0%
Industrial EAV	\$10,334,138	36.9%	\$16,506,122,399	10.9%	\$24,382,115,238	9.3%
Railroad EAV	\$872,833	3.1%	\$286,641,500	0.2%	\$412,122,009	0.2%
Farm EAV	n/a	n/a	\$4,218,027	0.0%	\$1,059,935,193	0.4%
Mineral EAV	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$12,328,655	0.0%
<b>Total EAV</b>	<b>\$27,985,767</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$152,069,051,716</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$261,853,706,333</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue.

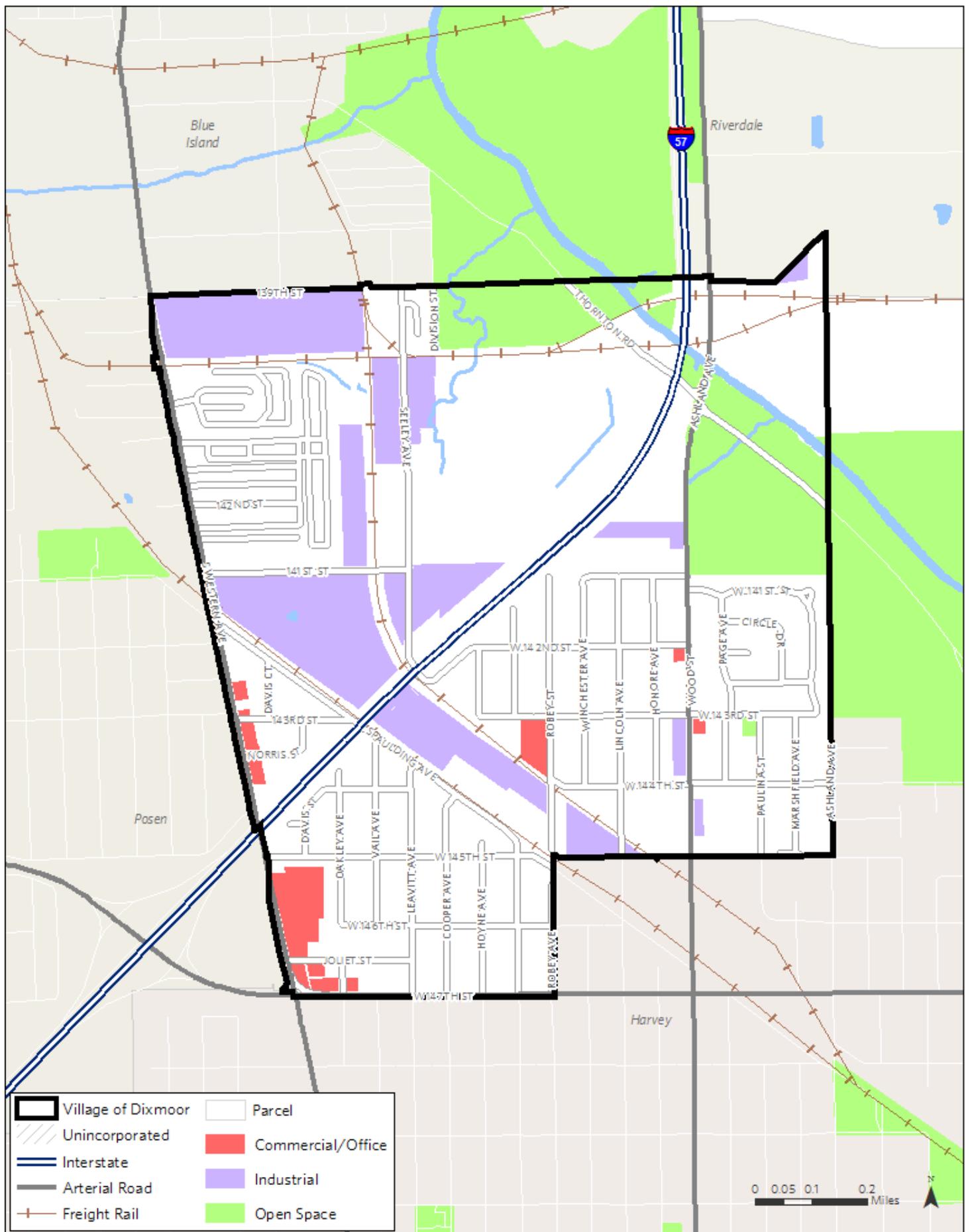
Retail activity is relatively low in Dixmoor as compared to the county and the region. The Village generates \$3,286 on a per capita basis, which is about one-third of what Cook County produces in revenue from retail sales. This aligns with the relatively small amount of active retail that currently exists in Dixmoor.

**Table 20. General Retail Sales, 2012**

	Dixmoor	Cook County	Region
Retail sales	\$11,974,226	\$49,351,405,982	\$88,734,178,389
Retail sales per capita	\$3,286	\$9,500	\$10,524

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue.

Figure 13. Industrial and Commercial Areas



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Recent investment has helped to bolster the Village’s retail areas, such as the Dixmoor Town Centre – a shopping center located along S. Western Avenue that houses an Aldi grocery and a Family Dollar – which was built in 2008. Additionally, Dixmoor recently attracted new food retailers to be tenants at Dixmoor Town Centre, and Village officials have been working with the Dixmoor Meat Market – a prominent community grocery store at the corner of Western Avenue and 147<sup>th</sup> Street – to explore plans for expansion and improved ingress and egress for their parking lot. Since 2006, the Village has experienced a net gain of over 55,000 square feet of commercial space.<sup>12</sup> There is potential for this retail and general commercial development to spur further activity, which could help to generate greater retail sales revenue for the Village in the future.

**Figure 14. Aldi and Family Dollar in the Dixmoor Town Centre shopping mall.** *Photo: CMAP, September 2014.*



One notable former industrial use with strong potential for redevelopment is the Wyman-Gordon Company’s site in the southeast corner of Dixmoor. Wyman-Gordon was a manufacturer of automotive and aircraft components from 1942 until 1980. It was closed for over twenty years before most of the buildings on the 25-acre site were demolished in 2002 and 2003. The site – spanning the municipal boundary between Dixmoor and its neighbor Harvey – is now largely considered vacant and still faces underground contamination. Over the course of many years, cleanup efforts have been pursued to remediate the site and prepare it for redevelopment. Dixmoor and Harvey received financial assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) as well as from the South Suburban Mayors and

Managers Association (SSMMA) s revolving loan fund, which enabled a phased approach to cleanup that first cleared the debris from the site and then allowed for additional underground investigation.

**Figure 15. Clean-up and remediation activity on the Wyman Gordon site.** *Photo: CMAP, September 2014.*



## Existing Incentive and Resource Programs

Dixmoor has employed incentive programs and – if implemented properly – they could assist in the Village’s redevelopment goals.

### Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) can help a municipality stimulate economic development by establishing a special district during a development period, where the tax base is frozen at the predevelopment level, and property taxes continue to be paid. Taxes derived from the increase in assessed values due to new development (or, the tax increment) can then be used to pay for infrastructure and other improvements within the district. The Village of Dixmoor currently has two active TIF districts. Until recently there had been three TIFs, but one expired at the end of the 2013 calendar year. Table 20 contains complete descriptions of the location and terms of each district. Dixmoor has hired a TIF administrator to explore the capacity of these TIFs once the Village has brought its municipal finances up to date. Currently, financial records are not available to accurately show what has been collected in each district and how it has been used.

The Village has expressed interest in potentially extending the lives of TIFs 2 and 3, as well as in expanding TIF 3 (Figure 16). The proposed expansion would include several parcels at Wood and 143<sup>rd</sup> Streets that are currently zoned as B1-Neighborhood Shopping. The parcels to the

south of 143<sup>rd</sup> Street are currently in retail use as a liquor store and parking lot, and the other parcels contain a development of blighted townhomes that the Village is in the process of demolishing. In early 2015, the Village began to explore establishing two additional TIF districts: TIF 4 (which would be adjacent to TIF 3), and TIF 5 (which would replace the expired TIF 1).

**Table 20. Tax Increment Finance Districts in Dixmoor**

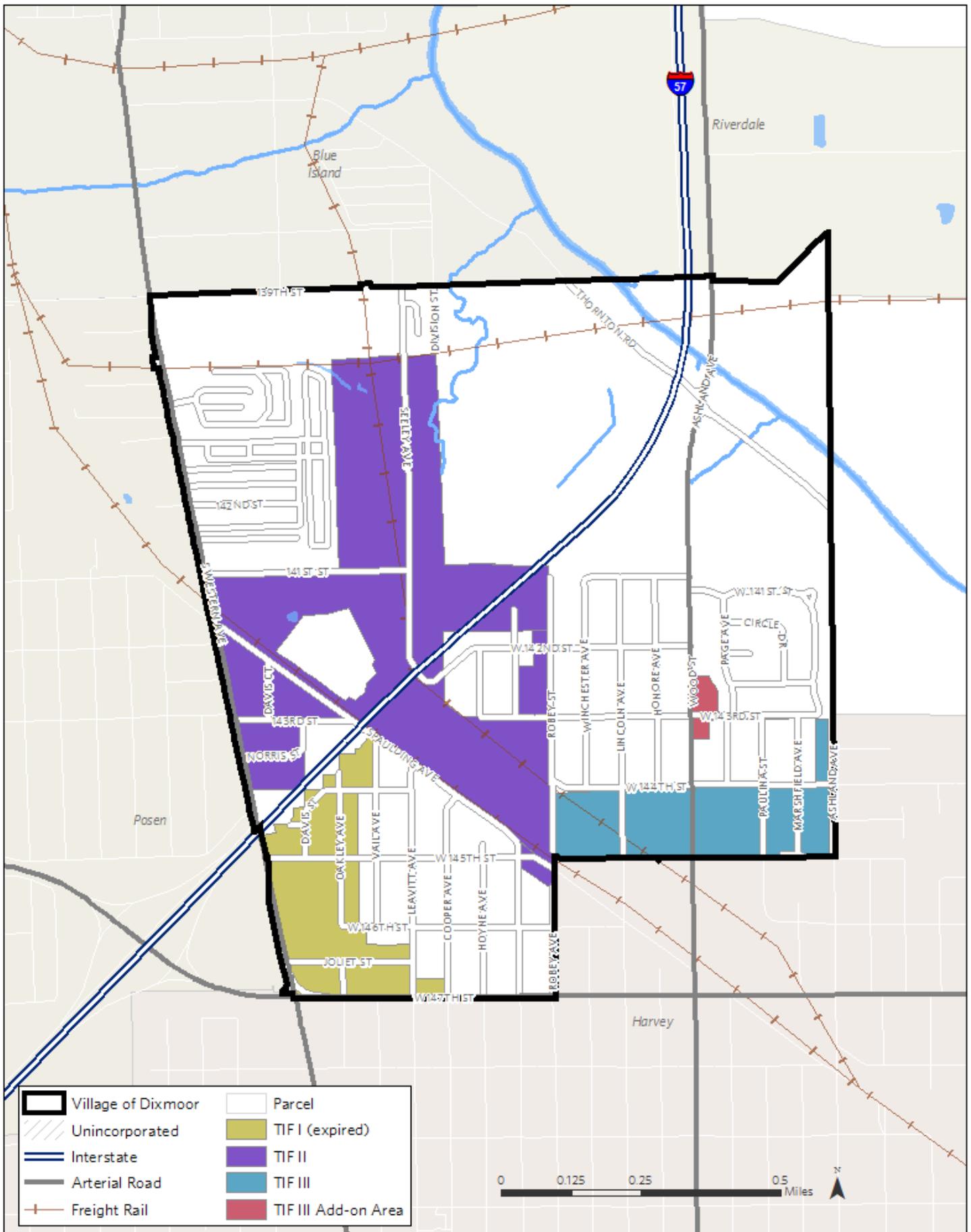
TIF District	Location Description	Year Created	Expiration
1	Commercial area at Dixie Highway and 147 <sup>th</sup> Street	1990	2013
2	Industrial area bordered by train tracks to north, Dixie Highway to west, Spaulding Avenue to south, and Robey Street to east	1996	2019
3	Industrial area bordered by 144 <sup>th</sup> Street to north, Robey Street to west, 145 <sup>th</sup> Street to south, and Ashland Avenue to east.	2001	2024

Source: Village of Dixmoor, 2014.

### The Illinois Enterprise Zone Program

This state enterprise zone (EZ) program, signed into law in 1982, was created to spur economic development through tax incentives and exemptions for businesses. Dixmoor and many of its neighboring communities – including Alsip, Blue Island, Robbins, and others – are currently a part of the Cal-Sag Enterprise Zone, which is set to expire in 2015 (EZs are created for a period of 15 years). SSMMA is currently helping these south Cook County communities to reapply to the EZ program in order to renew the Cal-Sag EZ. Businesses located within an EZ are eligible to receive tax incentives and state exemptions to bolster their economic condition. As it currently exists, Dixmoor is eligible to offer businesses within the Cal-Sag EZ an abatement on property taxes for a period of five years, as well as a reduction in building permitting fees to facilitate development.

Figure 16. Current and Recently Expired Tax Increment Finance Districts



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

## Section 7: Transportation and Mobility

This section provides an overview of the existing transportation infrastructure in Dixmoor, focusing on roadway conditions, transit access, and freight movement. The data in this section was obtained from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Regional Transportation Authority Mapping and Statistics (RTAMS), the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), the U.S. Census Bureau, and a visual assessment of existing conditions in the Village.

### Key Findings

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Dixmoor's transportation system. These key findings help to shape and inform the objectives and recommended strategies for improving transportation and mobility in and through Dixmoor.

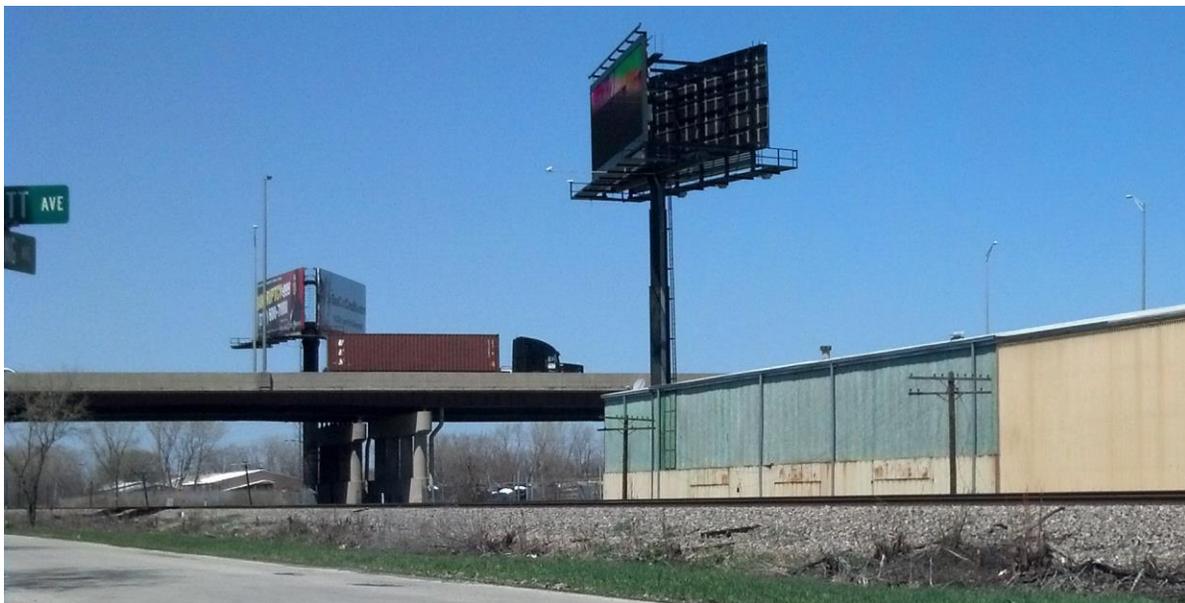
- **Interstate 57 visually bifurcates the Village of Dixmoor.** The interstate's only connection to any other point of the Village's road network is an entrance/exit from 147<sup>th</sup> Street just west of Dixmoor in neighboring Posen. Where it travels through Dixmoor, I-57 has an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) of 113,800, with truck volumes at 6,050 vehicles.
- **Capital improvement projects like the new interchange between I-57 and I-294 are expected to change travel patterns near and through Dixmoor.** The improved entrance and exit onto I-57 just west of the Village and the connection to I-294 should increase the traffic and enable more travelers to stop at destinations in Dixmoor. Additionally, IDOT's future improvements to Wood Street should greatly enhance mobility for all modes along that north-south corridor.
- **Dixmoor's multi-modal infrastructure is insufficient.** Beyond traveling by private vehicle, the systems and infrastructure for other travel modes are lacking in the Village. Much of the sidewalk network for pedestrians is disconnected throughout Dixmoor, and currently there is limited bike-supportive infrastructure within the Village's boundaries. While Pace Bus does serve Dixmoor with two routes, they are not heavily utilized and do not connect residents to a key Metra station in nearby Harvey.
- **Freight movement by rail causes traffic congestion when there are train delays at the at-grade crossings.** Stakeholders listed rail freight traffic as a challenge for people traveling by car or by foot in the Village, especially at peak travel times (like the morning and afternoon rush hours).

# Roadway Conditions

## Road Network and Traffic

Dixmoor’s road network is comprised mostly of local roads, with a few key arterials primarily at the Village boundaries. The local roads generally have low travel speeds, trips lengths, and traffic volumes, and access to adjoining property is generally unrestricted. There are two principal arterial roadways – Western Avenue and 147<sup>th</sup> Street – both of which run along Dixmoor’s boundary with neighboring communities of Posen and Harvey. These arterials are designed for higher speed travel and traffic flows, and accommodate longer distance trips. One minor arterial called Wood Street traverses the Village north-south, which serves a moderate traffic flow (15,600 AADT) and is currently being studied for improvements by IDOT.

**Figure 17. Interstate 57 travels over Dixmoor's local streets.** *Photo: CMAP, April 2014.*



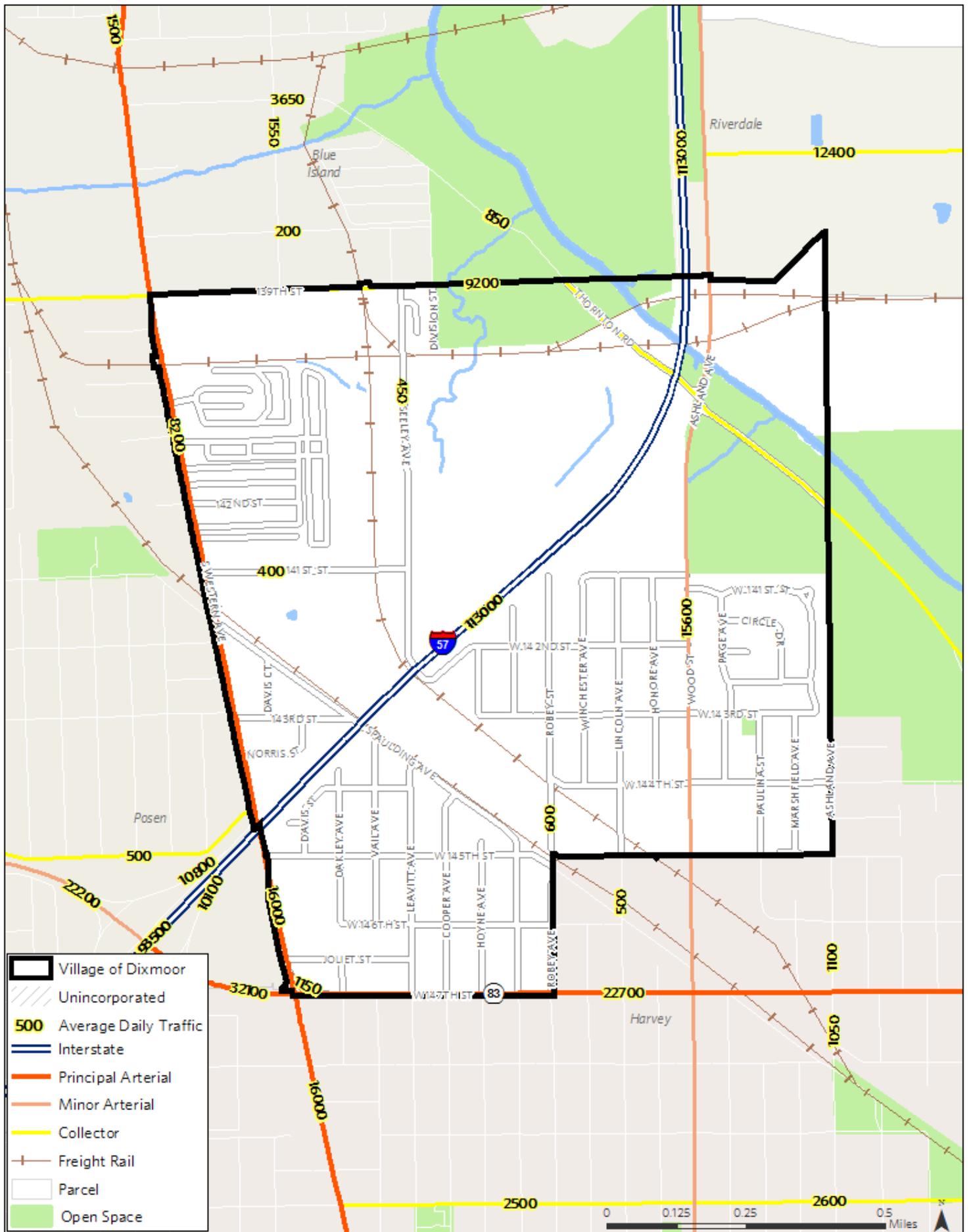
Interstate 57 connects Chicago to destinations south in Missouri and Kentucky. It is elevated where it passes through Dixmoor, from southwest to northeast. Since it runs overhead, I-57 does not intersect with any other roadways in the Village, though it does have an entrance onto 147<sup>th</sup> Street just west of Dixmoor in neighboring Posen. Where it travels through Dixmoor, I-57 has an AADT of 113,800, with truck volumes at 6,050 vehicles.

**Table 22. Functional Classification of Non-Local Roads**

Road Name	Jurisdiction	Classification	Traffic Count
I-57	IDOT	Interstate	113,800 (Truck Volume: 6,050)
S. Western Avenue	IDOT	Principal Arterial	16,800
W. 147 <sup>th</sup> Street	IDOT	Principal Arterial	28,200 (Truck Volume: 1,900)
Wood Street	IDOT	Minor Arterial	15,600

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue.

Figure 18. Road Classification and Average Annual Daily Traffic



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Annual vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per household is a measure of average distance traveled by automobile per household in a given geographic area. In this case, households in the Village of Dixmoor are estimated to have travelled 16,790 vehicle miles in 2011, which exceeded the Cook County average by over 2,000 miles annually. Dixmoor’s VMT – which measures travel for any type of trip, whether a commute to work or a household errand – is likely higher than the county total because of the Village’s close proximity to major thoroughfares like Western Avenue and I-57, which facilitates driving to destinations for Dixmoor residents. Additionally, a lack of frequent and accessible transit options in the Village likely contributes to Dixmoor’s VMT being higher than in other parts of Cook County.

**Table 23. Total Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per Household, 2011**

	Dixmoor	Cook County	Region
Annual VMT per household	16,790	14,774	17,571
Source: CMAP calculations of U.S. Census Bureau and Illinois Secretary of State.			

## Capital Improvement Projects

A few capital improvements are underway in and adjacent to Dixmoor that will greatly enhance road conditions and access both to and from the Village. IDOT – District 1, Division of Highways Office is a lead agency on each of these projects, since they involve State facilities.

### ***I-294/I-57 Interchange***

IDOT partnered with the Illinois Tollway to build a new interchange connecting Tri-State Tollway I-294 to I-57. This interchange project was designed to link two major interstates, thereby relieving congestion on local roads, improving the region’s freight access to the south suburbs, and spurring economic development in the project area. The project’s estimated cost is \$719 million. In October 2014, the Tollway opened the primary interchange connections between I-294 and I-57, as well as I-57 at 147<sup>th</sup> Street. The interchange is anticipated to serve more than 76,000 vehicles per day, and the improved ramps right at 147<sup>th</sup> will greatly increase exposure and access to Dixmoor from the northwest part of the region via the Tri-State Tollway.

### ***147<sup>th</sup> Street Resurfacing***

Related to the improvements surrounding the new interchange, IDOT is planning road resurfacing along IL Route 83/Sibley Boulevard (which is 147<sup>th</sup> Street in Dixmoor) starting at the intersection with Western Avenue/Dixie Highway and extending east nearly 6 miles to Torrence Avenue in Calumet City. The total cost of the resurfacing project is estimated to be over \$4.3 million, with an estimated completion year of 2016.

### ***Wood Street/Ashland Avenue Improvements***

Since 2012, IDOT has been undergoing a Phase 1 Study of improvements along a three-mile segment of Wood Street/Ashland Avenue from 138<sup>th</sup> to 159<sup>th</sup> Streets, which travels through the municipalities of Harvey, Dixmoor, and Riverdale. The study was designed to address current safety concerns and roadway deficiencies, as well as to meet future needs. Public input from hearings held in August 2014 allowed for the selection of a road design that widens the roadway, adding a middle turn lane, a shared-use path, and sidewalk on the east side. The

design proposes that pavement will be replaced, and drainage and stormwater improvements will be added. The project is moving into Phase II, which involves land acquisition in the affected communities. Overall the project is estimated to cost over \$55 million.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation

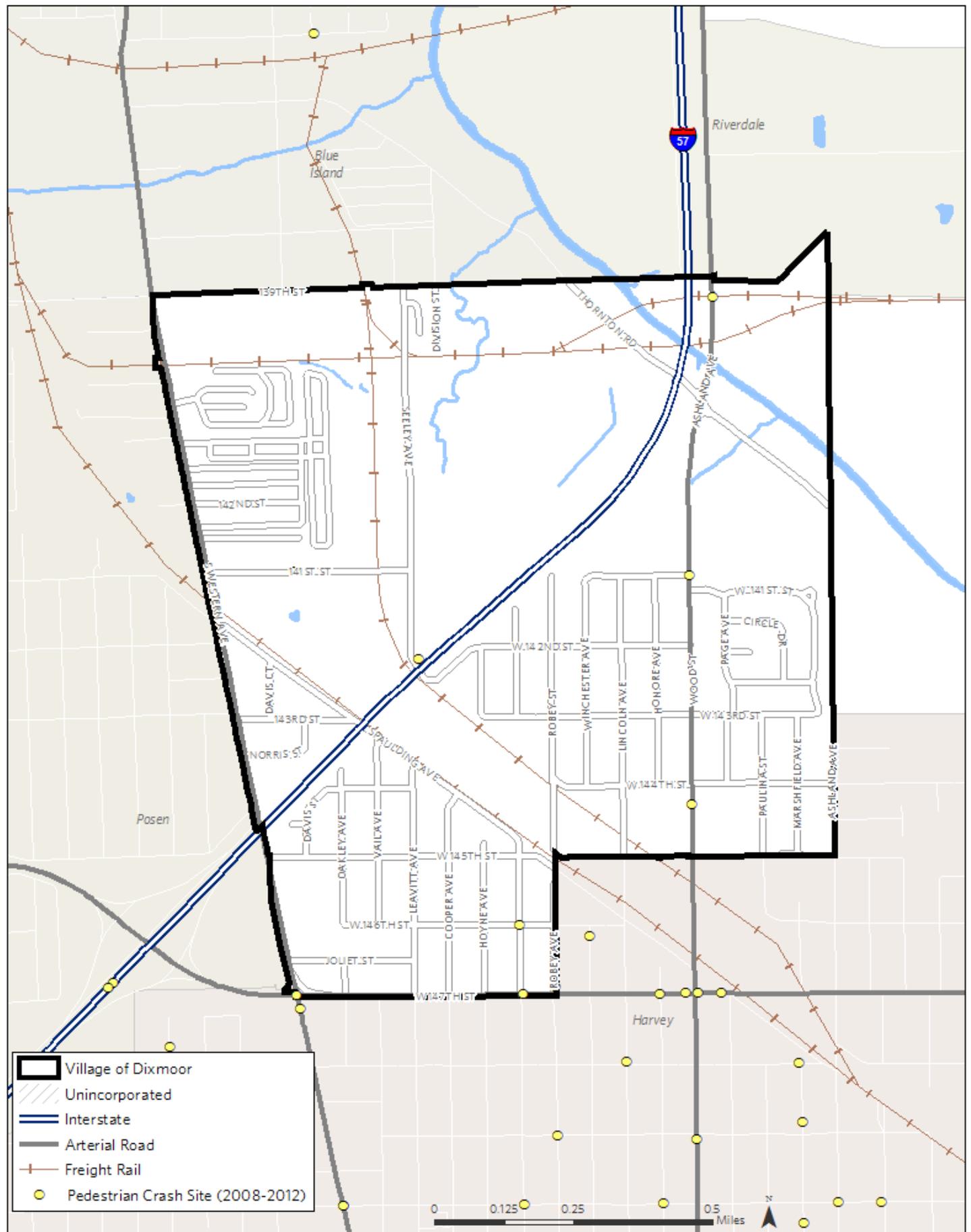
The sidewalk infrastructure in the center of the Village is either non-existent or segments are disconnected, leaving pedestrians without a clearly marked path to travel. This causes safety concerns at railroad crossings, for instance where Robey Street intersects the CSX railroad tracks near Village Hall. Crash incidents that involve pedestrians tend to occur on arterials that have heavier traffic volumes and higher speed limits, such as 147<sup>th</sup> or Wood Streets (see Figure 20). Many of the sidewalks on 145<sup>th</sup> and Joliet Streets approaching Western Avenue are aged or split up so there is not a consistent pedestrian path. These pathways are in need of repair to reinforce their function, enhance safety, and serve as connectors between the residential neighborhood and retail stores on the western side of the Village.

**Figure 19. Incomplete or nonexistent sidewalks on either side of the street.** *Photo: CMAP, September 2014*



Currently, there is no bike-supportive infrastructure – which could include anything from dedicated paths to shared lane markings – within Dixmoor’s boundaries. Cyclists either ride in the street on quieter, local roads, or on the sidewalks along busier thoroughfares. There is a planned regional trail that would run along the Little Calumet River in the northeast corner of the Village, connecting north to the Cal-Sag Trail. Stakeholders spoke of the need for further nonmotorized (that is, related to biking and walking) infrastructure to be developed, suggesting a multi-use path for cycling, jogging, and walking that would run along the CSX railroad tracks and connect to the Kickapoo Forest Preserves.

Figure 20. Pedestrian-related Crash Incidents



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

# Transit Access

There are several Pace Bus routes that run through or nearby the Village of Dixmoor. Two routes serve Dixmoor directly, and are detailed in Table 24. Illinois Route 349 runs along Western Avenue / Dixie Highway, connecting riders to the Harvey Transportation Center to the south, and to Metra stations in Blue Island to the north, ultimately terminating in Evergreen Park just outside of Chicago’s city limits. This route – presumably used by commuters connecting to other transit services – has higher ridership than Route 354, which runs a loop connecting south suburban communities and their major amenities (including Metra stations, Oak Forest Health Center, and South Suburban College).

**Figure 21. A neighborhood Pace Bus stop.** Photo: CMAP, April 2014.



**Table 24. Pace Bus Route Ridership in Dixmoor, 2013**

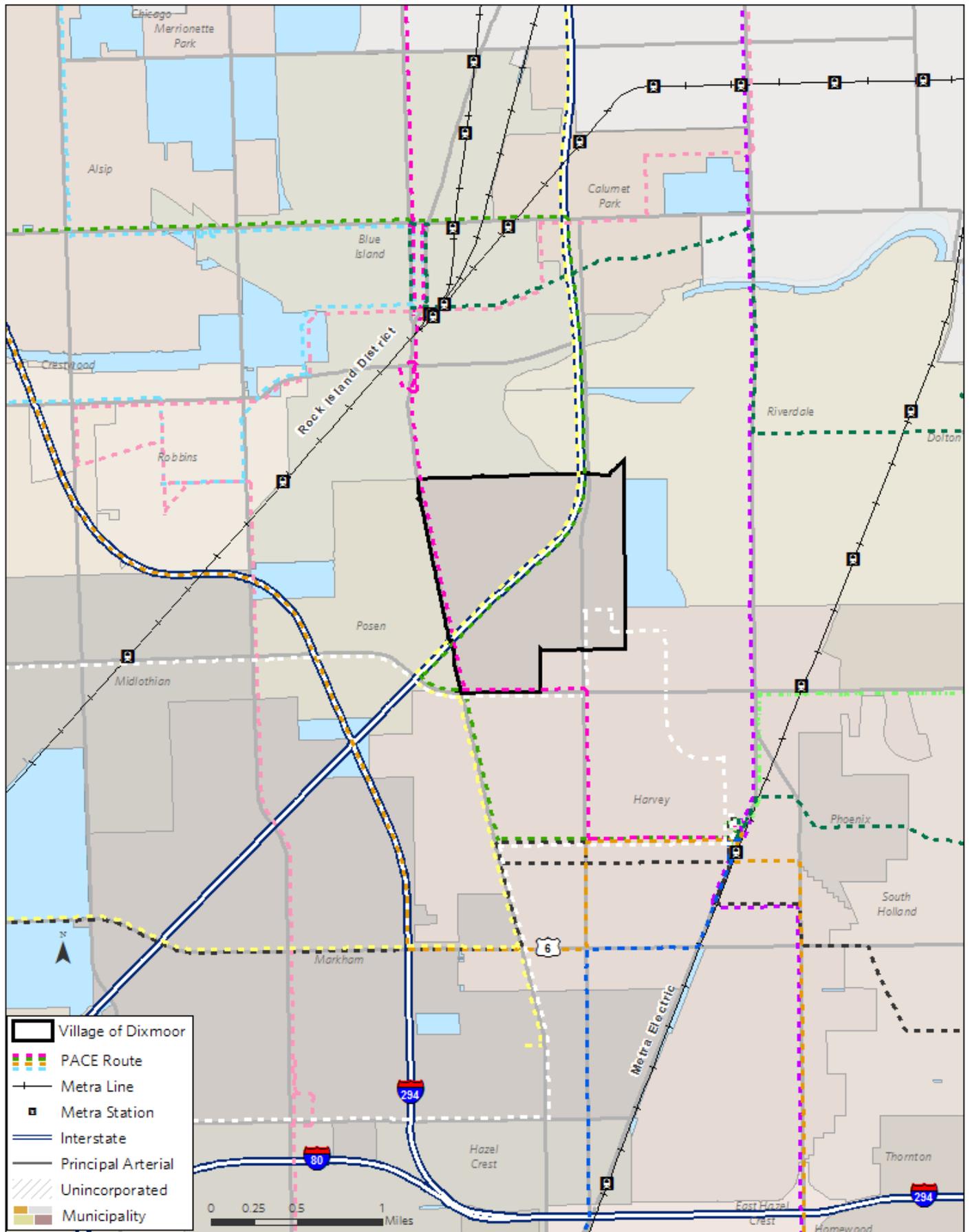
Route number and name	Weekday Ridership	Saturday Ridership	Sunday Ridership	Links
Pace 349: South Western	2,871	2,043	1,277	<a href="#">Route Details</a>
Pace 354: Harvey - Oak Forest Loop	501	361	n/a	<a href="#">Route Details</a>

Source: RTAMS and City of Chicago.  
 Note: Ridership numbers are given for the entire route, not just portions within the municipality.

Dixmoor has access to both the Rock Island and Metra Electric train lines with stations in nearby Blue Island, which are accessible by Pace route 349. Dixmoor is also nearby the 147<sup>th</sup> Street Metra Electric Line Station, which is located approximately two miles to the east in neighboring Harvey, Illinois. In 2006, the 147<sup>th</sup> Street Station had a weekday boarding average of 1,255 passengers, and weekday alightings at the station averaged 1,216. Boarding counts have been trending downward since 1999, as the population around the station area declined 15 percent from 2000 to 2010.<sup>13</sup>

There are 1,122 parking spaces with a utilization rate of 56 percent (2013 count, RTAMS), meaning that a Dixmoor resident with access to a car can use the 147<sup>th</sup> Street Station and its commuter lot with relative ease. However, there is a gap in Pace Bus service between Dixmoor and this Metra station (as seen in Figure 13), making the 147<sup>th</sup> Street Station much less accessible to anyone in Dixmoor without a car.

Figure 22. Subregional Transit Service



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

## Freight Movement

With its heavy industrial and utilities land uses, freight activity is a part of daily life in the Village of Dixmoor. Truck travel comprises about two thirds of freight movement in the Chicago region. In Dixmoor, truck travel occurs not only on I-57 but also on arterials like 139<sup>th</sup> and 147<sup>th</sup> Streets going east-west, and on Western Avenue going north-south. Trucks must also access industrial companies in the center of the Village, travelling over local roads like Spaulding Avenue to get to their business destinations. It is important for Dixmoor to focus on the roadway improvements – such as repaving and upgraded turning options – that will facilitate truck freight movement and allow those vehicles to access their destinations as efficiently and safely as possible. Local road improvements are traditionally funded through federal and state user fees, like the local allotments of IDOT revenues from the motor fuel tax (MFT). However often times, municipalities will choose to fund road projects out of their general fund if the state revenue sources do not cover their needs.

In terms of rail freight, three main rail lines traverse the Village and have a significant presence in the community. Owned and operated by Canadian National (CN), Canadian Pacific (CP), and CSX Railways (all Class I railroad companies), these rail tracks pass through the Village as part of a broader regional rail network, connecting the southern Cook County suburbs to other freight hubs in central Chicago and near O’Hare International Airport. Stakeholders have cited rail freight traffic as a problem for people traveling by car or by foot in the Village. On the CN and CP rail lines that pass through Dixmoor, as many as two dozen trains may travel through the Village per day (see Figure 24). While railroad companies make an effort to have this freight travel at off-peak hours, the train crossings do cause frequent delays for cars and pedestrians during the day and in peak travel times. Community members have reported that delayed trains frequently block auto traffic on Western Avenue or at Robey Street, causing a driver to turn around and drive to the nearest entrance for I-57 in order to get across the Village to their destination and bypass the train.

**Figure 23. Train on Canadian Pacific Railway passes under trucks on I-57. Photo: CMAP, April 2014.**



In an effort to make critical improvements to passenger and freight rail infrastructure, the CREATE program (which stands for Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program) was initiated over ten years ago. While more funding is needed to implement all 70 planned projects in the program, today there are over 20 projects that have been completed, two of which are in the direct vicinity of Dixmoor. These CREATE projects are not only increasing the efficiency of the rail movement, but also are helping Dixmoor residents and employees by decreasing automobile delays and congestion at points where roadways and railways intersect (such as at Western Avenue and the CP rail crossing in the northwest corner of Dixmoor).

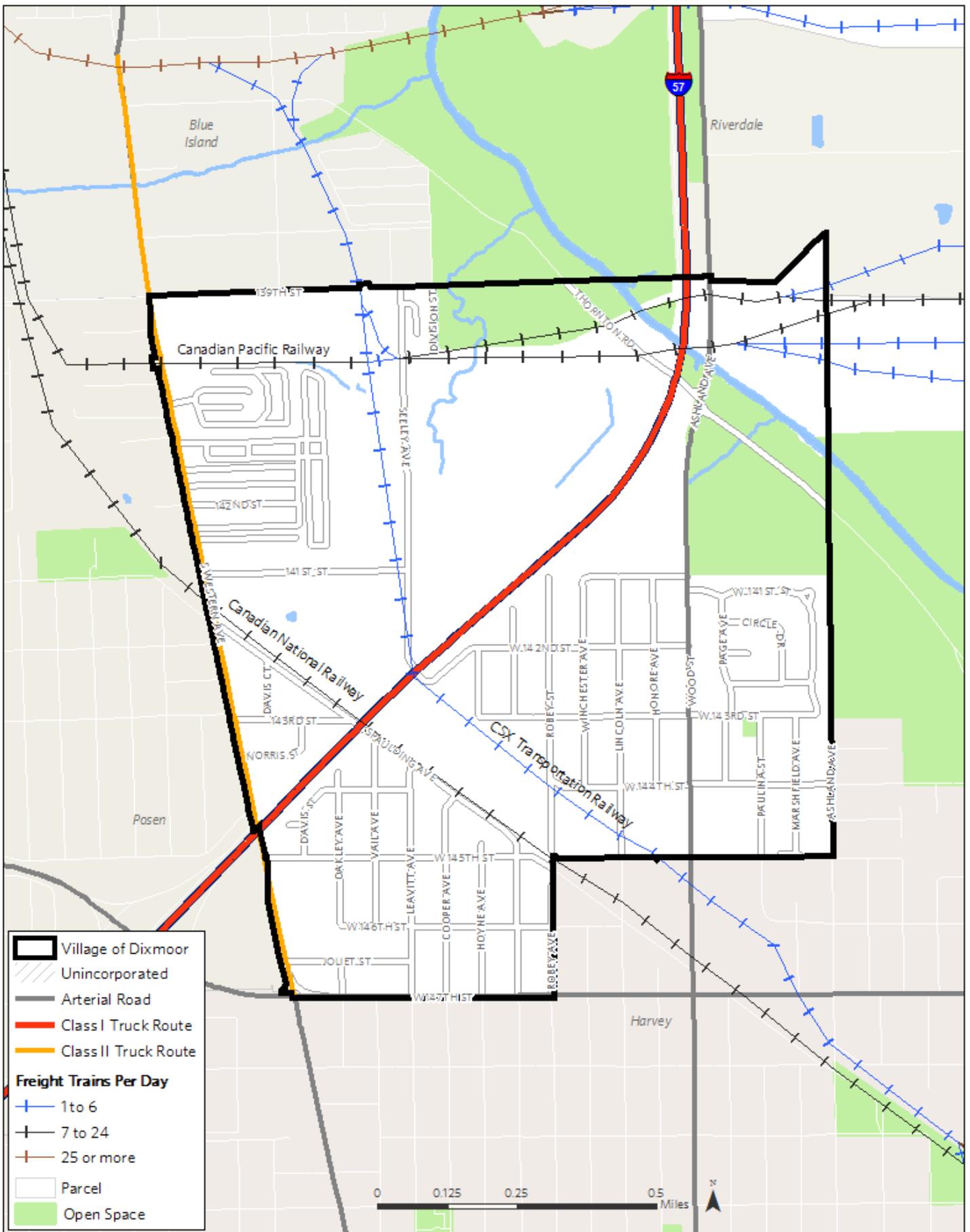
### ***CREATE Beltway Corridor Improvements***

One project has been pursuing improvements along the Beltway Corridor from Thornton Junction (in South Holland) to Kedzie Interlocking (in Chicago). One such improvement – project number B-15 – was completed in September 2012 and directly benefited Dixmoor and its neighbors. B-15 installed a new bi-directional computerized Traffic Control System (TCS) along three miles of track between Blue Island and Dolton, passing through Dixmoor. Additionally, the project installed a series of crossovers and electric lock switches to replace manually operated switches. These improvements enabled train speeds to increase, allowing trains to pass through this part of the corridor in six minutes as opposed to the hour of time it used to take a train to pass through this area.

### ***CREATE Western Avenue Corridor Improvements***

Another CREATE project in the Western Avenue Corridor (WA-10) is making improvements to Blue Island junction, just to the north of Dixmoor along the CSX railway that passes through the Village. The WA-10 improvements will allow for crossovers and connections that currently do not exist, enabling more trains to reach intermodal facilities more quickly, and removing related traffic congestion due to current transferring delays.

Figure 24. Freight Activity



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

## Transportation, Employment, and Affordability

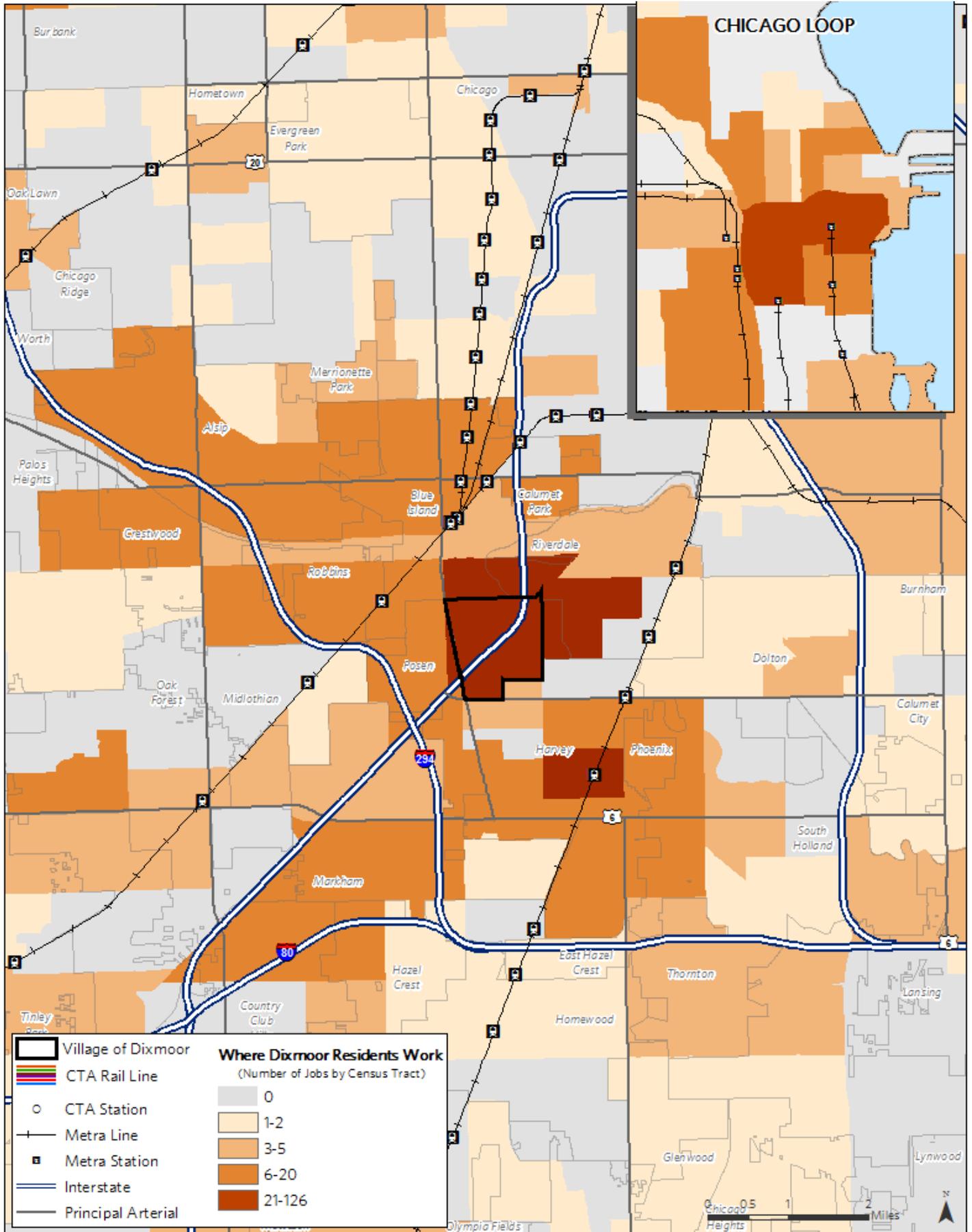
A community’s transportation network – including its roadways, railways, sidewalks and bicycle paths – interacts with land use and employment opportunities in a way that affects affordability and livability for residents. This physical transportation network plays a key role in a community’s accessibility to destinations (such as places of employment, or household shopping locations), and it influences travel mode choice. The interplay of all these elements in Dixmoor is explored in this section.

Although residents of Dixmoor are employed all across the Chicago region, the majority of the Village’s residents (over 70 percent) work in Cook County. Approximately 30 percent of residents work in the City of Chicago, with modest amounts of residents working in the Village of Dixmoor (less than two percent) and other surrounding municipalities like Alsip, Blue Island, and Harvey. Nearly 10 percent of residents work in either DuPage or Will Counties, which are neighboring counties with significant employment centers.

**Table 25. Employment Location of Dixmoor Residents**

	Count	Percent
City of Chicago	453	31.81%
City of Harvey	42	2.95%
City of Blue Island	36	2.53%
Village of Alsip	29	2.04%
Village of Dixmoor	24	1.69%
<b>Other Locations</b>		
Other Municipalities in Cook County	419	29.42%
DuPage County	77	5.41%
Lake County, IL	52	3.65%
Will County	51	3.58%
Sangamon County ( <i>Springfield, IL area</i> )	34	2.39%
Kane County	28	1.97%
Lake County, IN	28	1.97%
McHenry County	9	0.63%
Other Counties	118	9.97%
<b>Total Employed Population</b>	<b>1,424</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Source - Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2011.		

Figure 25. Where Dixmoor Residents Work



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

While Dixmoor is not a large employment destination, it draws workers from around the subregion, especially from southern Cook County. Nearly three-quarters of all people who work in the Village reside in Cook County, with over 15 percent of workers in Dixmoor traveling from the City of Chicago. Less than four percent of Dixmoor’s workforce also resides in the Village, but approximately a quarter of Dixmoor’s workers travel from neighboring communities in the southern suburbs of Cook County.

**Table 21. Residence Location of Workers in Dixmoor**

	Count	Percent
City of Chicago	104	15.90%
City of Blue Island	39	5.96%
City of Harvey	26	3.98%
Village of Dixmoor	24	3.67%
Other Locations		
Other Municipalities in Cook County	293	44.80%
Will County	69	10.55%
Lake County, IN	49	7.49%
Other Counties	50	7.65%
<b>Total Employed Population</b>	<b>1,424</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2011.

With many Dixmoor residents making short work trips to nearby communities in Cook County, and given the limited Pace Bus service in the Village, trends in mode share show that most of Dixmoor’s commuters rely upon private vehicle travel. The percentage of Dixmoor commuters driving themselves in a private vehicle aligns with Cook County figures, with about two thirds of commuters driving alone to work. However, the percentage of Dixmoor commuters who carpool (over 24 percent) is over double the number in Cook County or in the region. Those two travel modes – both of which depend on a private vehicle – comprise over 90 percent of all the work trips out of Dixmoor. To further highlight this trend, there are half as many public transit commuters in Dixmoor (6.33%) as there are in the region as a whole, and a third as many as there are in Cook County.

**Table 22. Mode Share, as Percentage of Work Trips**

	Dixmoor		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<i>Work at Home*</i>	20	N/A	93,836	N/A	171,635	N/A
Drive Alone	925	66.50%	1,485,736	65.21%	2,731,969	72.50%
Carpool	341	24.51%	221,832	9.74%	348,682	9.25%
Public Transit	88	6.33%	420,010	18.43%	489,131	12.98%
Walk or Bike	37	2.66%	124,078	5.45%	154,848	4.11%
Other	0	0.00%	26,844	1.18%	43,476	1.15%
<b>Total Commuters</b>	<b>1,391</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>2,278,500</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>3,768,106</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2008-12 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.  
 \*Not included in "total commuters."



One accepted measure of affordability examines a community’s housing and transportation costs together, working from a threshold of 45 percent of the region’s Average Median Income (AMI), below which the community is considered more affordable for residents. As costs associated with traveling by private automobile (e.g., maintenance, gasoline) are typically higher overall than the cost of traveling by public transit, it is logical that the annual household transportation costs in Dixmoor (\$13,934 / year) would be a higher than in Cook County or the broader Chicago region. However, Dixmoor’s housing costs are significantly lower (\$752 / month) than those in the county and the region, which keep the Village’s combined housing and transportation costs (“H+T”) below the county and regional averages. A household in Dixmoor with the region’s median income would spend 38 percent on their combined housing and transportation costs, which classifies the Village as affordable according to this index.

**Table 23. Housing & Transportation Costs as Percent of Income per Household**

	Dixmoor	Cook County	Chicago Region (MSA)
<b>Housing Costs</b> as percent of income	14.97%	26.75%	28.15%
<b>Average Monthly Housing Cost</b> \$ / month	\$752.00	\$1,343.80	\$1,414.40
<b>Transportation Costs</b> as percent of income	23.11%	19.57%	21.82%
<b>Annual Transportation Cost</b> \$ / year	\$13,934.02	\$11,799.13	\$13,152.74
<b>“H+T” Costs</b> as percent of income	38.08%	46.32%	49.97%
Source: CNT, “H+T Affordability Index”: <a href="http://htaindex.cnt.org/map/">http://htaindex.cnt.org/map/</a> . Note: Red text if the percentage exceeds the standard threshold of affordability: 30% for housing costs and 45% for housing and transportation costs combined.			

Dixmoor’s proximity to I-57 is an asset to the community, since it serves as a convenient connector via I-94 to jobs in downtown Chicago just 20 miles north. Despite that nearby interstate, the Village still remains some 25 to over 40 miles away from some of the region’s largest job centers (like the O’Hare area, or Naperville and Aurora). The result is relatively low access from the Village to the region’s jobs via automobile commute. Less than half of jobs in the region that are accessible with a 45-minute car trip from the average household in Cook County (37.1 percent of the region’s jobs) are accessible from the average household in Dixmoor (17.8 percent). This lower auto-oriented access aligns with the figures showing Dixmoor residents working in communities closer to the Village, rather than the majority of residents commuting to farther job centers.

When transit access to jobs is examined though, the percentage of the region’s jobs that are accessible by a 75-minute transit (train or bus) trip from Dixmoor is much more in line with

regional and county figures, primarily due to the ability to reach the Loop using nearby Metra service. This relatively higher access to the region’s jobs by transit (as compared to by car) does not reflect the previously discussed commuter trends, which showed work trips out of Dixmoor to be primarily completed via private automobile. Dixmoor is near Metra stations in neighboring communities (Metra Electric stations in Harvey, as well as a Rock Island station in Blue Island) that have commuter parking lots and are served by Pace Bus routes. Taken together, this data suggests that more of Dixmoor’s residents could be taking advantage of the Village’s proximity to transit than is current practice. While Dixmoor does not have many transit assets, nearby communities do, and better connections would improve job access for Dixmoor residents.

**Table 24. Access to Jobs in the Region, by Travel Mode**

	Dixmoor	Cook County	Chicago Region
Regional Jobs Accessible by Automobile <sup>1</sup> <i>(in absolute number of jobs and percentage of the region’s total jobs)</i>	675,071 jobs (17.8 percent)	1,410,840 jobs (37.1 percent)	1,105,197 jobs (29.1 percent)
Regional Jobs Accessible by Transit <sup>2</sup> <i>(in absolute number of jobs and percentage of the region’s total jobs)</i>	1,241,195 jobs (32.6 percent)	1,450,768 jobs (38.1 percent)	1,129,679 jobs (29.7 percent)
<p>Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014, using 2010 U.S. Census data. Weighted travel model for roadway and public transportation, with the base number of Total Jobs in the region estimated to be 4,514,732.</p> <p><sup>1</sup> Accessible by Automobile = Regional jobs accessible within a 45-minute drive of an average household.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> Accessible by Transit = Regional jobs accessible within a 75-minute transit trip (bus or train) of an average household.</p>			

## Section 8: Natural Environment

This section provides information on Dixmoor's green infrastructure, which includes water resources, open areas, and parks. Information was obtained from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

### Key Findings

The following are key conclusions regarding the existing conditions of Dixmoor's natural environment. These key findings help to shape and inform the objectives for addressing environmental issues in Dixmoor.

- **Dixmoor is in need of better stormwater management practices.** Flooding was frequently observed and reported by community stakeholders, especially in the southwest corner of the Village, which sits in a 100-year floodplain. Local infrastructure requires upgrading to keep up with surface drainage during heavy storms and snow melts. Dixmoor falls in the Little Calumet River subwatershed, which ultimately flows into the Cal-Sag Channel and into Lake Michigan.
- **The Village contains minimal locally operated open space where residents can recreate.** There is a "tot lot" designed for small children at 143<sup>rd</sup> and Paulina Streets that is currently well-maintained, but small. The Village is fortunate to be served by the Forest Preserves of Cook County on the east side of town, with the Dixmoor Playfield off of Wood Street providing open space, pavilions, and basketball courts. There is no formal park serving residents living on the west side of the Village. Including the forest preserve land, Dixmoor exceeds the National Park and Recreation Association's standard for adequate access to open space, which is 10 acres per 1,000 people.

### Water Resources

Watersheds are geographic areas determined by where the water underground or collected on the surface drains (typically into a larger body of water), which is important to water resource management. Dixmoor is located in the greater Chicago/Calumet watershed, in which water ultimately flows into the Chicago and Calumet Rivers. It is a very densely populated watershed and therefore much of the land is developed rather than open space, which leads to higher runoff during rain events. There are several subwatersheds in the Chicago/Calumet, which further divide land according to where water and runoff flow. Dixmoor falls into the Little Calumet River subwatershed, which is the basin from which water drains into a southern tributary (called the Little Calumet River, cutting across the northeast corner of the Village) into the Cal-Sag Channel. This subwatershed includes about 33 acres of land (a small portion of which is located in northwest Indiana). It has just one detention facility in Cook County called the Thornton Transitional Reservoir, which diverts water from Thorn Creek to affect flows in the Little Calumet River.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is responsible for regional stormwater management and creating plans for the Little Calumet River and other watersheds in the region. While one of the core characteristics of watersheds is that they are not constrained by governmental boundaries and they require multijurisdictional coordination, it is worth noting that MWRD’s plans for the Little Calumet River subwatershed do not include actions that would occur in Dixmoor, but rather in nearby communities like Harvey and South Holland.<sup>14</sup> These recommended improvements would have the greatest impact for the subwatershed as a whole. Despite there not being any specific MWRD recommendations located within the Village’s municipal boundaries, Dixmoor does experience challenges related to stormwater management, as reported by community stakeholders.

**Figure 27. A local street flooded from snow melting after a heavy winter storm. Photo: February 2014.**



Flooding throughout the Village was a common issue for community stakeholders. Particularly after the snowmelts of late winter and during heavy storms in spring and summer, the Village’s local roadways are not equipped to drain fast enough and pavement flooding is prevalent. Some stakeholders reported personal property flooding and basement backups as well. The southwest corner of Dixmoor – including its main commercial area and a single-family neighborhood – is located within a 100-year floodplain. A 100-year flood plain has been defined as a one percent annual chance of major flooding in the approximate area; however with the effects of climate change, it is likely that the percentage is even higher today. Additionally, pavement flooding at Wood Street and Thornton Road was reported by the Village to MWRD.

## Land Resources

Dixmoor’s main source of open space is operated by the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC). The FPCC’s Dixmoor Playfield, located in the northeast corner of the Village along Wood Street, provides open space, recreation pavilions, and basketball courts. This FPCC facility is several acres in size, and is connected to a much larger forest preserve called Kickapoo

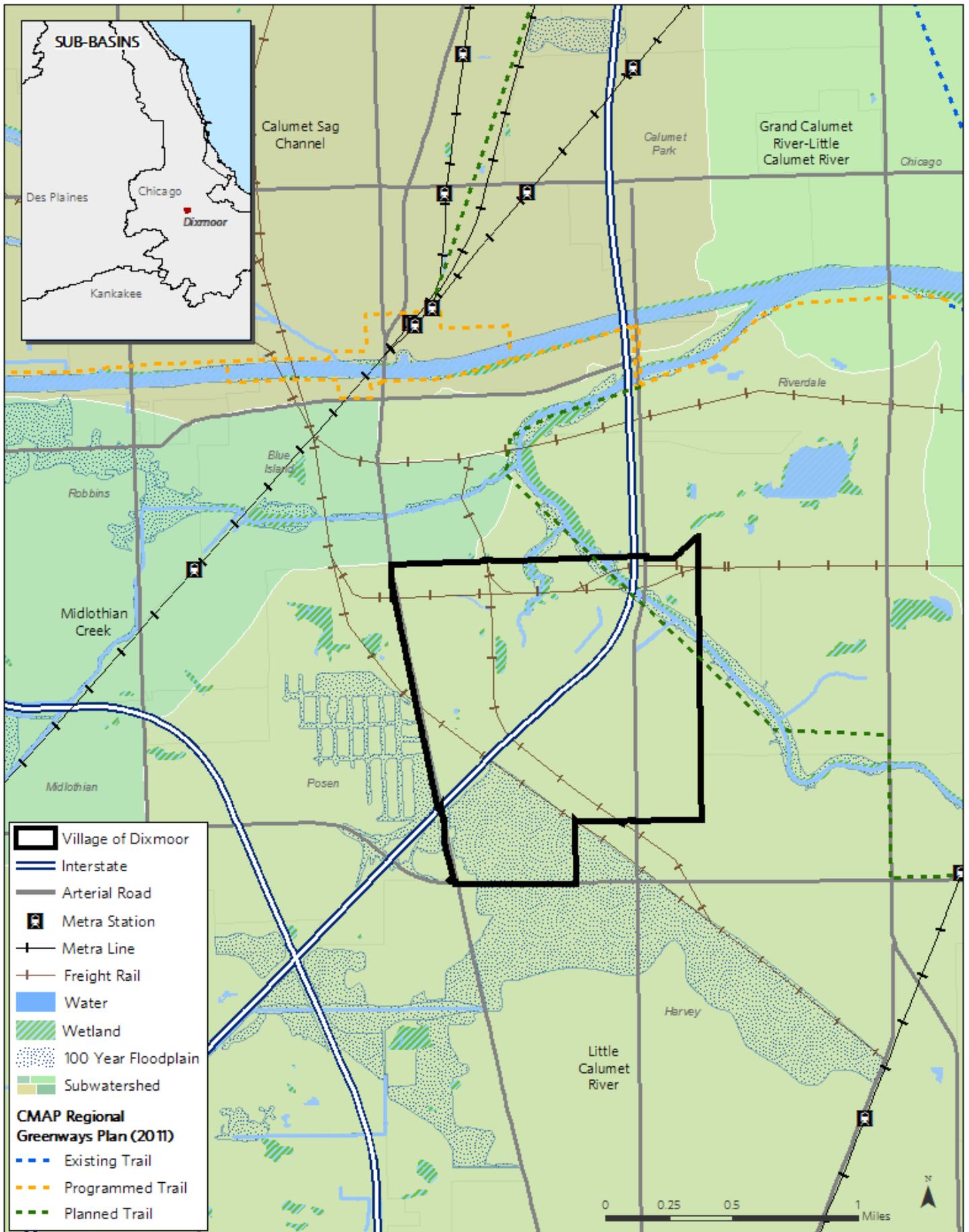
Woods, which is located across the municipal boundary in Riverdale. Kickapoo Woods is a 245-acre preserve that has preserved natural habitats and trailways, as well as a well-known model airplane flying area.

Otherwise there is a lack of locally run open space in the Village. One small “tot lot” located at 143<sup>rd</sup> and Paulina Streets is designed for young children. The tot lot was originally built by a Village park district, but that district was dissolved in the late 1990s by Cook County due to embezzlement charges against district board members. The Village has been maintaining this lot since then, and today the children’s play area is clean and safe. There are vacant parcels scattered throughout residential neighborhoods that – if the Village was able to acquire them and obtain proper funding – could be converted to additional “pocket parks” or other small open space areas in other parts of the Village to benefit a greater number of residents, or could be used for stormwater management purposes.

The tot lot is adjacent to a two-acre site, upon which a recreational structure was built over a decade ago. The building – which was funded in 1998 by a \$200,000 federal grant that intended to help Dixmoor achieve its goal of having its own community and senior center – was never fully completed and now sits unused by residents. In August 2014, the Illinois Governor’s Office announced that Dixmoor would receive a Park and Recreational Facility Construction (PARC) grant from the Department of Natural Resources to complete the community center. The grant for over \$1.1 million will fund rehabilitation at the site, including electrical, plumbing, and climate control improvements for the building’s interior, as well as landscaping and parking outside of the building.<sup>15</sup>

Dixmoor residents also rely on other entities to supplement the Village’s open space and recreational options. The Village presently coordinates with School District 147 so that the broader community can benefit from the use of school facilities for special events and sports leagues. Additionally, stakeholders reported that many residents travel to other nearby communities for their park districts, sporting facilities, and senior centers.

Figure 28. Natural Resources and Trailways



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

## Section 9: Recommendations

The previous sections identified key issues and opportunities that exist today in the Village of Dixmoor. This section proposes a number of strategies for the Village to pursue in order to achieve current goals and position itself for future reinvestment. The strategies are organized under four main goals, and each has a suggested time frame for implementation:

- *Immediate* strategies should be considered within the first year of report adoption, and these include actions that are “easy wins” for the Village to achieve, as well as actions that are more involved but that are necessary for further strategies to be pursued.
- *Short-term* strategies should be addressed within the first two years. These are strategies that address urgent challenges, but either take time to prepare for action or require other activities to occur first.
- *Mid-term* strategies can be addressed after immediate and short-term strategies are initiated, within two to five years of Dixmoor’s implementation of this report. Many of these strategies require more complex partnerships or funding sources that will take significant time to arrange.

There are other strategies that could be recommended for the long-term, over the course of the next ten years. These include the possibility of creating a formal comprehensive plan, or updating the Village’s entire zoning code. For the immediate and near-term future, there are very pressing needs that Dixmoor must address first before spending scarce time and resources on longer-range planning activities. This report captures the community’s current conditions and priorities, and fills the role of a forward-facing priorities report that guides the Village toward necessary actions to achieve future goals.

### Address Gaps in Capacity

An important initial goal for Dixmoor is to build upon its current work to improve its governance and administrative structure. Multiple changes in leadership throughout the past several years have led to gaps in information. Current economic conditions force the Village to run lean operations. Dixmoor’s current leadership demonstrates the drive to set goals and make up for the shortfall in staff capacity and resources. The following recommendations will enhance current efforts to create a more efficient and accountable government in Dixmoor.

#### ***Continue efforts to organize the Village’s finances.***

*Immediate strategy – 0 to 1 year*

The State of Illinois’ comptroller’s office oversees municipal financial audits and requires an annual audit from all municipalities. Despite that, Dixmoor has not completed the state-mandated exercise in two years, although they made strides to do so throughout 2014.

It should be an urgent priority to continue these efforts and bring the Village's finances up to date through the fiscal year. The Village should be in communication with the Illinois comptroller's office to set mutual expectations and ask for guidance where needed. Until good bookkeeping is reestablished, it is difficult to know what revenue the Village has available to fund programs and invest in the community. Additionally, if Dixmoor were interested in pursuing the cost savings of joint procurements and intergovernmental service sharing arrangements, then a current financial audit is needed. It is incumbent upon Village leadership to restore financial transparency, both to fulfill state law and as an obligation to its citizens.

***Formalize the Village's relationship with SSMMA to accomplish community goals for housing, economic development, and infrastructure improvements.***

*Immediate strategy – 0 to 1 year*

SSMMA provides resources, training, and even funding sources that support communities in the region's south suburbs. While Dixmoor has worked with SSMMA on specific projects, it would benefit the Village to establish a more robust relationship with the subregional council to capitalize upon all they have to offer. More detailed recommendations for how to engage with SSMMA are offered in the subsequent sections of goals and related strategies.

A first step to more broadly formalize the relationship would be to have a meeting (or series of meetings) between the Mayor and the economic development department staff and the topical experts at SSMMA about areas of concern in Dixmoor. This relationship can further connect Dixmoor to its neighbors, helping to forge productive multijurisdictional partnerships.

***Establish a joint Planning and Zoning Commission.***

*Short-term strategy – 0 to 2 years*

This entity, encompassing the roles of a traditional Plan Commission and a Zoning Board of Appeals, would analyze, review, and recommend activities related to existing and future development in the Village. Typically, a plan commission is an advisory body that makes recommendations to elected officials on matters of rezoning and long-range planning, while a zoning board of appeals hears and decides on requests for variances from the zoning ordinance. A joint body would combine the functions of these two groups by reviewing and recommending decisions on all zoning and planning issues. A joint Planning and Zoning Commission would reduce the administrative costs for planning staff and would streamline the Village's development review process.

The first step in forming a Planning and Zoning Commission is for the Village's Board of Trustees to adopt an ordinance that establishes the group. This ordinance would need to clearly describe the processes to be followed for the various duties of the commission. The members would need to be citizens in the community who are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the Board of Trustees for three- or five-year terms. It is recommended that the members' terms are eventually staggered to avoid full commission turnover at one time, and that alternate members are selected. A typical size for such a commission is seven members (using an odd

number to avoid tie votes). After appointments are made, each member would need to take an oath of office administered by the Village clerk. The commission would have monthly meetings on different days than the Village Board meetings.

Immediately upon being established, this commission could recommend developments and any overlay zoning or variances that could be necessary for economic development. Eventually, the Planning and Zoning Commission would oversee a comprehensive planning process and a full zoning code update for the Village.

## **Preserve the Village's Residential Character**

A common priority many expressed throughout the stakeholder interview process is to sustain and bolster the Village's community identity, which many feel rests largely in the kinship and character of its residential neighborhoods. Historically, Dixmoor's housing stock primarily comprised single-family homes that were occupied by their owners. Today, there has been a shift toward more renters living in the Village, which – when coupled with the high level of vacancy in residential areas – has led to some concerns about all residents and homeowners being both dedicated to property upkeep and invested in the community. At the same time, the Village must be responsive to the needs of its changing population. With the increase in Latino residents and a younger-than-average population overall, Dixmoor is experiencing a rise in new, young families that would benefit from resources about responsible renting and homeownership.

### ***Strengthen code enforcement, particularly in single-family residential neighborhoods.***

*Immediate strategy – 0 to 1 year*

There is inconsistent property maintenance across Dixmoor's residential neighborhoods, with a wide range of care and upkeep to homes even on the same block. At one far end of the spectrum, some homes are vacated, in disrepair, or even boarded up. In other cases, the structure is in fine condition, but landscaping maintenance is neglected (i.e., overgrown lawns and side yards), or there is visible junk and debris on the property. Instances of egregious residential property code violations create a nuisance for residents and homeowners who keep their property in impeccable condition, as many in Dixmoor do. Code violations also tend to bring down overall property values for a community and create a perception of blight and municipal disinvestment.

Dixmoor currently has only one part-time code enforcement officer, and so the Village should prioritize investing resources in increasing its building staff (at least temporarily until enforcement activity diminishes). A few possible solutions include:

- **Share code enforcement responsibilities with a neighboring community.** Two or more communities can formally arrange to share staff time to help supplement each municipality's existing capacity for code enforcement.
- **Employ best practices from other communities.** Information and resources exist that are designed to empower municipalities like Dixmoor to take control of the housing trends they are experiencing. For instance, SSMMA's housing arm – called the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative (or “the Collaborative”) – partnered with the Metropolitan Planning Council to study best practices in how communities manage single-family home rentals.<sup>16</sup> This study offers strategies for municipalities to track and regulate the rental of single-family homes, which can help a community ensure that it is offering well-maintained and safe rental properties.
- **Pursue state mechanisms to address violations.** There are resources – even for small, non-home rule communities like Dixmoor – to guide municipalities to more efficient code enforcement, which can ultimately help save time and collect money owed to the community. Illinois state law provides municipalities with a number of tools to collect fines by placing liens (or, a public notice of the charges owed) on the property in violation.<sup>17</sup> Such actions should be pursued by the Village to take a tougher stance against violators and help reinforce the culture of good home maintenance in Dixmoor.

### ***Connect residents to homeowner services.***

*Short-term strategy – 0 to 2 years*

Increasing vacancy and issues with inconsistent property maintenance indicate a growing need for easily accessible resources to guide residents toward responsible homeownership. Whether Dixmoor residents want to buy a new home, need assistance with financing, or want to rehabilitate their existing home, there are nonprofits that provide this type of information and education to communities in south Cook County, including:

- **The South Suburban Housing Center (SSHC,** located in Homewood) offers one-on-one counseling sessions for pre- and post-home buying as well as for renters, helping interested residents to better understand their personal finances and lending options. Dixmoor residents are also eligible for SSHC's down payment assistance grant program (up to \$15,000).<sup>18</sup>
- **Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago (NHS)** offers a suite of home owner services from home buyer education to foreclosure prevention to lending.<sup>19</sup> In 2013, the Illinois Attorney General's Office distributed National Foreclosure Settlement Awards in the area of Community Revitalization & Housing Counseling, and NHS was the recipient of a \$1.75 million award to expand their services to south suburban Cook County. This has enabled NHS to work with SSMMA to offer home buyer education

classes, and provides funds for affordable financing to help households buy, fix, or refinance their homes.

Ultimately, the Village should connect with these service providers and promote their programs publicly for residents, perhaps by arranging materials in Village Hall or by sending information home with students in School District 147 for their parents. This public information should also include resources about mobile home maintenance and property management, since mobile homes now comprise the majority of housing types in Dixmoor (nearly 55 percent of homes, according to the 2008-12 American Community Survey).

### ***Pursue becoming a member of a subregional land bank.***

*Mid-term strategy – 2 to 5 years*

Residential vacancy rates have been growing across the south Cook County, and the most recent census data estimates that over 20 percent of residential properties were vacant in Dixmoor (including abandoned homes, as well as residential land where the buildings have been razed and the lot now sits empty). This increase calls for attention and care from community stakeholders to prevent neighborhoods from experiencing blight.

Due to the large quantity of empty parcels and underutilized property in residential neighborhoods, the Village ought to consider land banking options. The **South Suburban Land Bank and Development Authority (SSLBDA)** and **Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA)** both help to stimulate development by getting foreclosed properties back into productive use in communities with limited capacity to manage redevelopment themselves. Land banking in Dixmoor could work in locations where there are a couple of properties that are vacant and adjacent (thereby creating a larger site), and would be especially useful on residential blocks that are on the verge of blight if not for this rehabilitation.

In order to participate in a land bank, Dixmoor would first need to reach out to the authority's staff, which SSMMA could facilitate through their relationship with SSLBDA. The Village would need to be invited in order to become an eligible community in the land bank's operations. Dixmoor would also need to legally acquire vacant properties, and then a land bank would assist with managing their aggregation and redevelopment.

## **Invest in Infrastructure**

Many residents and stakeholders spoke of needed improvements to Dixmoor's aging infrastructure. Pavement flooding is a common occurrence across the Village after a big snow melt or a heavy storm, when sewers cannot accommodate the drainage fast enough. Sidewalks are grown over or discontinuous in some parts of the Village, and street signage and lighting is badly needed on many residential blocks. Multiple stakeholders noted that there have been potholes on the street in front of their home (most of which are locally controlled roadways) for years or even decades without repair. Investing in small- and medium-sized infrastructure

improvements will not only benefit residents, but also increase efficiencies for businesses in the Village that utilize Dixmoor's infrastructure on a daily basis. Before the Village can reasonably expect to attract redevelopment and spur economic growth of any magnitude, it must first find ways to fix its system of physical assets.

### **Create a Capital Improvement Program to prioritize infrastructure investments in the Village.**

*Short-term strategy – 0 to 2 years*

Determining a way to fund infrastructure improvements with limited resources is the first step toward investing in the community's physical assets. One tool that local governments use to guide investment when they lack the funding to address every need is a Capital Improvement Program (CIP). A CIP is a short- to mid-range plan for physical improvements to public infrastructure. This plan, and the process that it takes to develop a CIP, allows a municipality to prioritize its needed roadway, sewer, facility, and other infrastructure projects, as well as equipment purchases. Given the volume of capital improvements needed in Dixmoor – ranging from curb and sidewalk installations to local road reconstruction – the most rational way to select projects is to examine each of them against the others and order them according to greatest community benefit. The following are primary considerations for creating a CIP:

- **Ranking projects.** A CIP includes a timeline and financial proposals for each project, enabling the Village to evaluate and rank projects according to community need, goals, and feasibility. The planning horizon for a CIP is normally five years. Typically the public works and finance departments are heavily involved in the development of a CIP, from identifying needed projects to determining project costs and lifespans. After project ideas have been collected from department heads as well as from the Planning and Zoning Committee (whenever one is formed in Dixmoor), the next step is to set up criteria for scoring the projects to meet community goals. For instance, if two main goals in Dixmoor are to alleviate flooding and improve pedestrian travel (particularly for children), then perhaps sewer improvements and new crosswalks would receive higher priority in the CIP.
- **Approving and updating a CIP.** Ultimately the community's elected officials authorize the CIP and approve of the projects in concept, though the program is not legally binding but rather more of a "living" document. It is therefore responsive to shifting goals or unanticipated funding needs beyond the first fiscal year of the program. Though a CIP is a multi-year document, it is updated annually to move unfunded projects up in the ranking as other projects are completed, and to add projects according to new or changed community goals.<sup>20</sup>
- **Funding a CIP.** The primary reason that creating a CIP is not listed as an immediate strategy in this report is because it is contingent upon having a fully updated Village budget that details the revenue available for capital improvements. Until Dixmoor's finances are fully accounted for and all outstanding expenditures have been paid, it is

difficult to know what kind of funding the Village currently has to allocate to capital improvements. After the Village's finances are determined, officials can decide on a reasonable budget allocation for anticipated capital needs, and can begin to reserve additional funds needed either with special assessments or by saving and setting aside money in the long term. In the end, a CIP will require the Village to plan ahead for funding both predictable and unpredictable capital needs, thus encouraging more fiscal stability in the long term.

***Improve stormwater management in the Village through multijurisdictional coordination.***

*Short-term strategy – 0 to 2 years*

Water drainage does not observe political boundaries, and therefore multijurisdictional collaboration with neighboring communities, SSMMA, and Cook County is needed in order to address flooding problems. There are a number of organizations that are looking at improved stormwater management for greater south suburban Cook County. Participating in these forums can help to highlight Dixmoor's needs and provide opportunities to partner with others who are already addressing subregional stormwater planning efforts.

- **Attend Little Calumet River Watershed meetings.** Dixmoor should connect the stormwater management programs run by the MWRD. An initial step toward this collaboration would be for Dixmoor to attend the quarterly Little Calumet River Watershed meetings held at SSMMA, which would help the Village become familiar with the subregional stormwater management planning.
- **Join and participate in the Millennium Reserve via the Calumet Stormwater Collaborative.** The Millennium Reserve is a partnership of nearly 100 public agencies, nonprofits, and private businesses that are working to stimulate economic growth and improve quality of life in the Calumet Region. Dixmoor falls into the Millennium Reserve region, and would benefit from actively participating in this coordinated effort to develop an action agenda for environmental restoration and community development. One of the Millennium Reserve's early priority projects has been the Calumet Stormwater Collaborative, which is working to establish common goals and identify opportunities to align existing projects. The Calumet Stormwater Collaborative counts many of Dixmoor's partners and neighbors amongst its members, including Blue Island, Midlothian, SSMMA, the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and CMAP.<sup>21</sup>

Within the Village's local purview, the creation of a CIP will likely include upgrades to stormwater infrastructure to reduce flooding in residential areas. As the Village's public works staff implements all local infrastructure improvements, the department could be overloaded with pressing work. One way to alleviate their workload would be to try to coordinate or even share staff with Cook County, MWRD, or neighboring municipalities on stormwater management projects, since those are frequently multijurisdictional in nature.

## **Enhance safety and strengthen access to community amenities for nonmotorized travel modes.**

*Mid-term strategy – 2 to 5 years*

Though Dixmoor is a geographically small community, it is able to offer its residents many amenities, from grocery stores to schools to churches. However, the condition of some of Dixmoor's transportation infrastructure can make mobility across the Village difficult or even unsafe, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. The Village should focus on making sidewalk improvements and filling in gaps along commonly used pedestrian routes, and should consider small enhancements to facilitate bicycling.

- **Prioritize minor local improvements at key intersections and along common routes.** One example of an area that needs improvement is near Village Hall, where Robey Street is traversed by CN and CSX railroad tracks. Safety at this intersection of travel modes – which is locally perceived as a hazard, especially for children walking to and from school – could be greatly enhanced by adding signage and crosswalks for both automobiles and pedestrians. Investments in other nonmotorized infrastructure would help to strengthen connections to community amenities. For instance, improvements could be made to sidewalks in the western residential area of the Village to better link residents to the commercial corridor along Western Avenue. In this way, residents could more easily and safely walk to and from Aldi and Dixmoor Meat Market.
- **Pursue a Safe Routes to School plan to secure funding for needed improvements.** In order to affect more systemic improvements to pedestrian safety, Dixmoor could seek out a Safe Routes to School plan. Safe Routes to School is a national movement aimed at improving pedestrian and bicycle accessibility to schools. Through a collaboration of various local stakeholders, a safe bicycle and/or pedestrian route for students is developed and promoted. Resources for such a planning activity include the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program.<sup>22</sup>
- **Explore opportunities to connect with regional amenities like the Forest Preserves of Cook County.** Building a multi-use path along the CSX railroad tracks could connect joggers, pedestrians, and cyclists to trails in the Kickapoo Forest Preserves. CMAP administers federal transportation funds that are potential resources for building this nonmotorized linkage to a regional amenity like the forest preserve. These resources include: the **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)**, and the **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)**. CMAQ funds bicycle facility projects (among other transportation projects) that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, and TAP supports nonmotorized transportation with a focus on bicycle facilities. For both of these competitive funding sources, the applicant must have substantially completed Phase I engineering prior to the programming of funds, and the project must be featured in at least one formally approved community plan.

## Revitalize Commercial and Industrial Areas

The community has expressed a desire to enhance its economic health, which can be achieved in part by continued efforts to redevelop commercial and industrial uses that can generate more revenue in Dixmoor. While currently the commercial land area is a relatively small portion of the Village's land cover, there has been growing investment in commercial and retail activity in recent years. Additionally, Dixmoor's industrial base remains a dominant employer and economic engine. Coupled with the Village's proximity to regional truck and rail assets, Dixmoor should pursue redevelopment in freight-related and manufacturing industries.

Frequently, economic development can become a longer-term goal, especially in a community like Dixmoor with financial and capacity issues that require immediate attention. In some cases, a community may have sites that hold market potential but would need additional effort to prepare the property before moving forward (like land assembly, remediation, infrastructure upgrades). It is important for a community to set economic development into motion but to maintain realistic expectations about the amount of time and investment that it can take to see redevelopment efforts come to fruition.

### ***Continue to explore the terms and use of the Village's TIF districts.***

#### *Immediate strategy – 0 to 1 year*

Dixmoor has had TIF available as a tool for economic development for years, with little development attributable to that financing mechanism. Today, the Village is working with a TIF administrator to gain a complete understanding of the community's TIF districts. In the meantime, the Village should continue to better understand the funding received and expended from the active TIFs. Only then will Dixmoor be able to focus on utilizing the active TIFs to improve their respective districts.

- **TIF 1** expired at the end of 2013, so it is no longer eligible to collect the incremental tax and invest those funds in that district. However, the Village should make sure it has documented how the collected funds from TIF 1 were expended.
- **TIF 2** should focus on supporting the existing businesses in that district so that they thrive. The increment collected in TIF 2 should be used for road maintenance (like pothole patching and lane striping) and infrastructure improvements (such as stormwater mitigation and street signage) to enhance conditions for those businesses in the area. It is important for Dixmoor to focus on the roadway improvements that will expedite truck freight movement, allowing those vehicles to access their business destinations as efficiently and safely as possible.
- **TIF 3** holds promise in terms of redevelopment because the large site of underutilized industrial land in that district could attract new industrial users. That area has the potential to benefit greatly from the TIF, since it started with low property values (little to no economic activity occurs in the district today), and redevelopment would likely create a large increase in property values that could be collected through the increment.

### **Support successful commercial areas.**

*Short-term strategy – 0 to 2 years*

The Village should continue its good relationships with existing commercial businesses – like the tenants in Dixmoor Town Centre – as well as foster connections with any new businesses that locate in Dixmoor. Creating open lines of communication between the Village and private companies can encourage business owners to feel invested in the community and maintain their property. The Village should continue to work with Dixmoor Meat Market ownership to help them, whenever possible, in their plans for expansion. Likewise, the Village should improve its relationships with industrial business owners. The Mayor’s current initiative to hold quarterly Business Community meetings allows private sector leaders to interact directly with municipal leadership, giving the Village an opportunity to listen to the needs of its economic generators.

### **Encourage redevelopment and Cargo-Oriented Development on vacant and underutilized industrial land.**

*Mid-term strategy – 2 to 5 years*

The Village should sustain its long-term focus on catalytic projects, like redeveloping the former Wyman Gordon site. There has been interest in the 20 acres of vacant land that comprise part of this site, which have been cleared and remediated over the years. With the assistance of SSMMA, the site is in the final processes of obtaining a No Further Remediation (NFR) Letter from the U.S. EPA, which will help attract serious developers. SSMMA is interested in one day having the site serve as a demonstration case for green infrastructure installation, with the intent of redeveloping the site using energy efficient technology and building materials.

Additionally, because of the Village’s proximity to a variety of freight assets – from nearby intermodal yards to the new I-57 / I-294 interchange – Dixmoor is in a prime location for Cargo-Oriented Development (COD). COD looks at the intersection between cargo and transportation assets to bring community development and job growth to disinvested areas. If goods movement is already active through Dixmoor and its surrounding communities, it is likely that related uses – like warehousing and distribution centers – could be needed to support that freight activity. The vacant and underutilized industrial land in Dixmoor is well located to provide those types of supportive uses.

### **Stay involved with County-level discussions about changing the tax code.**

*Mid-term strategy – 2 to 5 years*

Cook County’s tax classification system can discourage economic development. Communities in south Cook County have some of the highest property tax rates in the region. Proposals to eliminate the classification system would reduce rates for the non-residential (i.e. commercial and industrial) businesses that are hit hardest and often find it difficult to stay located in Cook County. Lowering non-residential property tax rates in communities with existing infrastructure and underutilized or vacant infill land may make these communities more attractive for development. Dixmoor would stand to benefit from such changes, as they could help existing businesses in the Village and also facilitate the attraction of industrial developers.

# Endnotes & Resources

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- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Census, 2000
- <sup>7</sup> ACS, 2008-2012
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- <sup>15</sup> Illinois Governor's Office Press Release, August 30, 2014.  
<<http://www3.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=3&RecNum=12578>>
- <sup>16</sup> *Managing Single-Family Rental Homes* (second edition), Metropolitan Planning Council, June 2013.  
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- <sup>17</sup> *Lien on Me: Using Liens to Collect Municipal Debt and Expenditures*, 2007.  
<<http://www.ancelglink.com/Resource/Download/18>>
- <sup>18</sup> South Suburban Housing Center webpage. <<http://southsuburbanhousingcenter.org/>>
- <sup>19</sup> Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago, Inc. webpage.  
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- <sup>21</sup> Millennium Reserve webpage. <<http://www.millenniumreserve.org/>>
- <sup>22</sup> Safe Routes to School program webpage, Illinois Department of Transportation.  
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