

**Appendix E-1: Land Use and Economic Development
Technical Memorandum**



Ashland Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project Environmental Assessment

Memorandum

Date: August 8, 2013

Subject: Land Use and Economic Development

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Introduction

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), in cooperation with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Department of Housing and Economic Development (DHED), and the Federal Transit Authority (FTA), is proposing to implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) features and service along Ashland Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. The limits for the Ashland Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project are:

- Irving Park Road on the north to 95th Street on the south (approximately 16.1 miles)

CTA currently operates local bus service within the Ashland Avenue BRT Project limits. The proposed improvements are limited in scope and would be implemented within existing roadway rights-of-way:

- Construction of 35 median BRT stations with shelters and pedestrian boarding areas
- Upgrade of traffic signal systems to include transit signal priority
- Implementation of queue jump lanes and turn restrictions at intersections
- Removal of travel lanes to accommodate a designated bus lane in each direction
- Pavement milling and resurfacing
- Streetscape improvements including medians, landscaping, and ADA-accessibility upgrades

Purpose

This memorandum analyzes the potential impacts of the Ashland Avenue BRT Project on land use and economic development. The types of impacts considered in this analysis include conflicts with or disruptions to existing land uses; inconsistencies with local and regional plans, policies, and regulations; and future land use and economic development benefits and opportunities presented by the alternatives.

Land Use and Zoning

Regional and local planning bodies govern land use and zoning regulations. Within Chicago, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) as the regional planning body defines the regional planning principles for the study area, while the City of Chicago regulates land use policies and zoning within their local jurisdictional boundaries. As such, existing land use, zoning, overlay districts and relevant land use plans were evaluated within a half mile buffer of Ashland Avenue to determine compatibility with the proposed project. Full land use and zoning analysis details may be found in **Table 1** and **Table 2**.

Table 1: Existing Land Use by Category within half mile of Ashland Avenue Corridor

Existing Land Use Category	Sum of Acres	Percent of Total
Residential	5,552.9	51.6%
Retail/Service	39.7	0.4%
Office/Professional	71.9	0.7%
Urban Mix	1,370.6	12.7%
Other Commercial	70.3	0.7%
Institutional (Government, medical, education, etc)	686.1	6.4%
Industrial, Warehousing and Wholesale Trade	1,557.0	14.5%
Transportation, Communication, and Utilities	528.6	4.9%
Open Space	410.4	3.8%
Vacant or Under Construction	344.2	3.2%
Water	125.1	1.2%
Total	10,757	100.0%

Source: Cook County Assessor, 2012

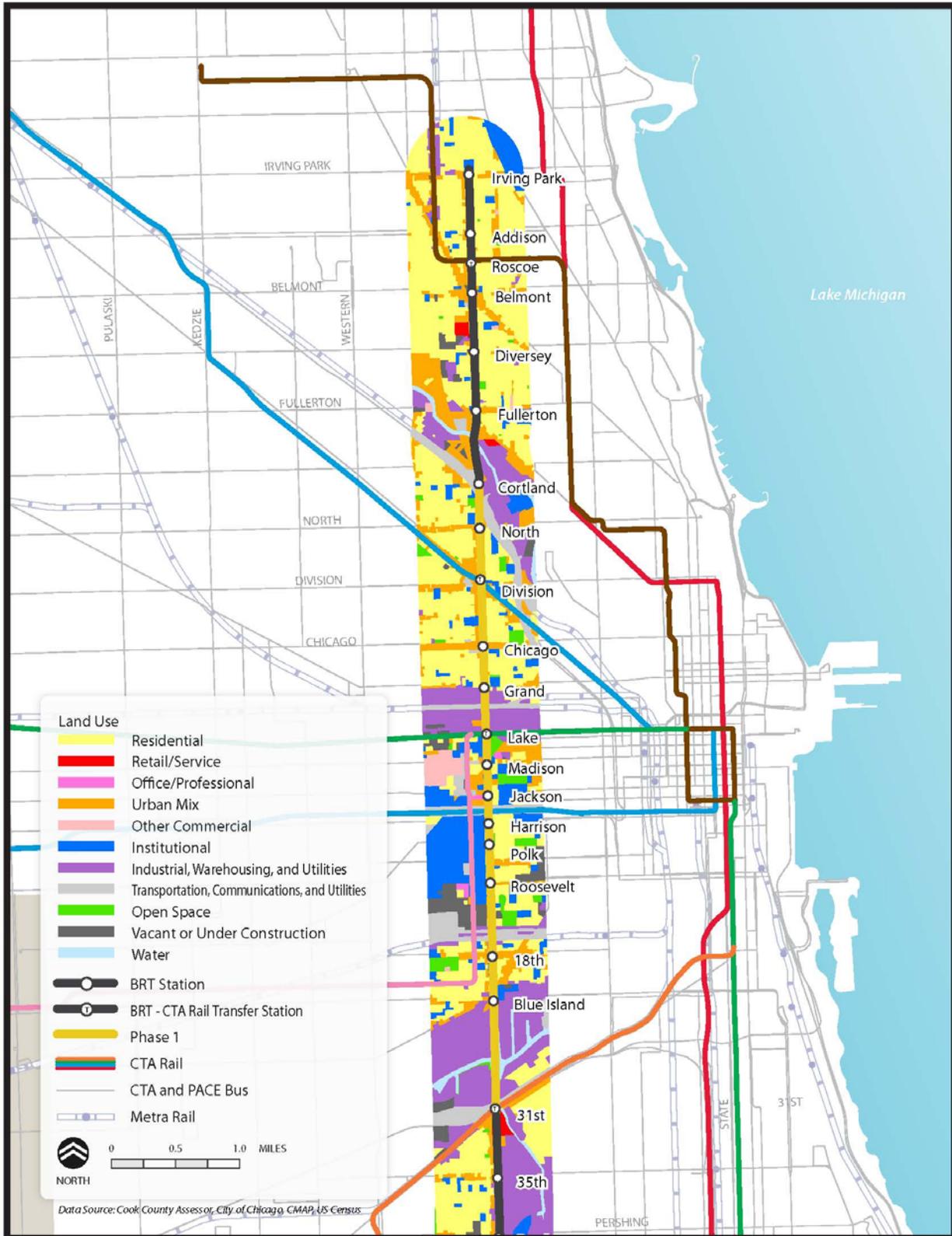
Table 2: Zoning Districts within Half Mile of Ashland Avenue Corridor

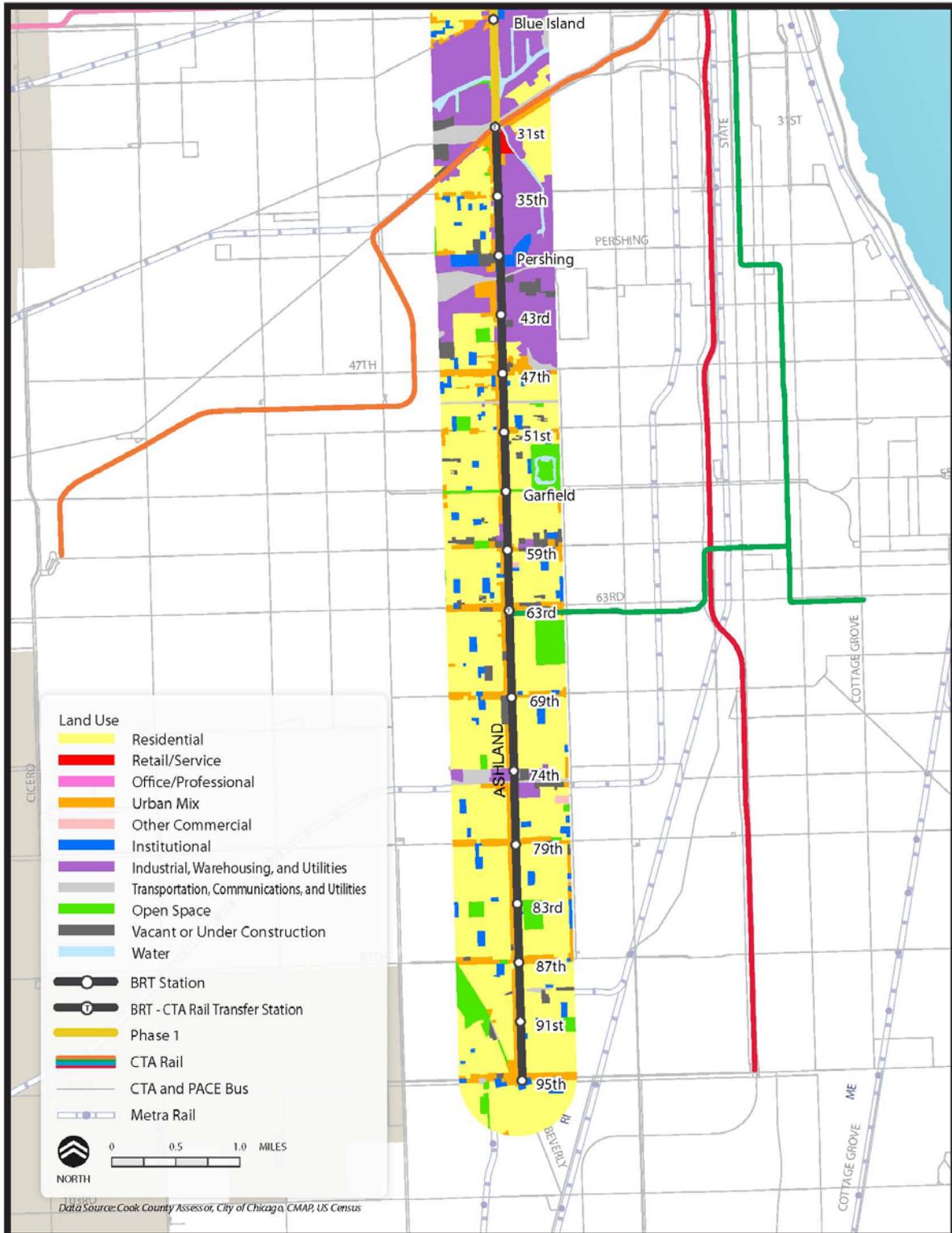
Zoning Districts	Sum of Acres	Percent of Total
RS - Residential Single-Unit	4062.63	37.6%
RT - Residential Two-Flat, Townhouse and Multi-Unit	1347.64	12.5%
RM - Residential Multi-Unit	149.72	1.4%
B1 - Neighborhood Shopping	285.72	2.6%

Zoning Districts	Sum of Acres	Percent of Total
B2 - Neighborhood Mixed-Use	16.58	0.2%
B3 - Community Shopping District	636.59	5.9%
C1 - Neighborhood Commercial District	420.5	3.9%
C2 - Motor Vehicle-Related Commercial	125.79	1.2%
C3 - Commercial, Manufacturing and Employment	11.98	0.1%
DR - Downtown Residential	0.05	0.0%
DS - Downtown Service	0.15	0.0%
DX - Downtown Mixed-Use	0.12	0.0%
M1 - Limited Manufacturing/Business Park	284.55	2.6%
M2 - Light Industry	264.69	2.4%
M3 - Heavy Industry	109.18	1.0%
PMD - Planned Manufacturing District	1446.61	13.4%
POS - Parks and Open Space	363.98	3.4%
PD - Planned Development	1277.79	11.8%
Total	10,804	100.0%

Existing land uses and zoning in the corridor were determined to be consistent with the proposed project. Land use within the study area is shown in **Figure 1** and is linked with the City's geography and historical pattern of urban development. Ashland Avenue is a predominantly commercial corridor with retail, business industrial and institutional land uses lining the street. Residential uses are located throughout the area and include a mix of medium density single-family, multi-family and mixed use development. Commercial and retail uses are located along arterial east-west streets as well as Ashland Avenue.

Figure 1: Existing Land Use (Half Mile Buffer)





Institutional uses, such as schools, are located throughout the study area and are typically located within residential neighborhoods. In addition, the Illinois Medical District is located along Ashland Avenue, between Jackson Avenue and Roosevelt Road. The medical district has the highest concentration of hospitals within the City of Chicago, and includes medical research facilities, a biotechnology business incubator and universities. It is a major employment and educational center along the corridor.

Two waterways flow through the study area, including the south branch of the Chicago River and the Sanitary and Ship Canal, which connects the Des Plaines River and the Chicago River. Industrial uses flank these waterways, which historically provided water transport that supported industrial activities. Similarly, industrial uses are located along the Metra commuter rail corridors that pass through the study area, including the Union Pacific, BNSF and Heritage Corridor lines. Some industrial uses in these areas have converted to retail and commercial uses over time.

Overlay Districts

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts

The Ashland Avenue Corridor intersects with 20 of the city's 160 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts in the city, shown in **Figure 2**. These TIFs are a special funding tool used by the City of Chicago to promote public and private investments in infrastructure improvements in given areas as growth and development occur.¹ The majority of these TIFs are focused on mixed use residential and commercial development and encompass most retail oriented streets along Ashland Avenue. In addition to these mixed-use focused TIFs, there are also five industrial corridor TIFs that are concentrated near the three major rail lines and three interstate highways that pass through the corridor; existing access to and from interstate highways would be retained in these areas as part of the proposed project. The Ashland Avenue corridor also intersects three previously designated Empowerment Zones and two of the City's three Enterprise Communities, shown in **Figure 3**. The Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities program is a federal, state, local government partnership for stimulating comprehensive renewal--particularly economic growth and social development--in distressed urban neighborhoods across the nation.² Combined, these areas provide a number of tax and business incentives in the corridor that contribute to the current and planned land use and transportation environments.

Historic Districts

Within a half mile of the Ashland Avenue corridor there are eight historic districts, including:

- Armitage-Halsted
- Longwood Drive

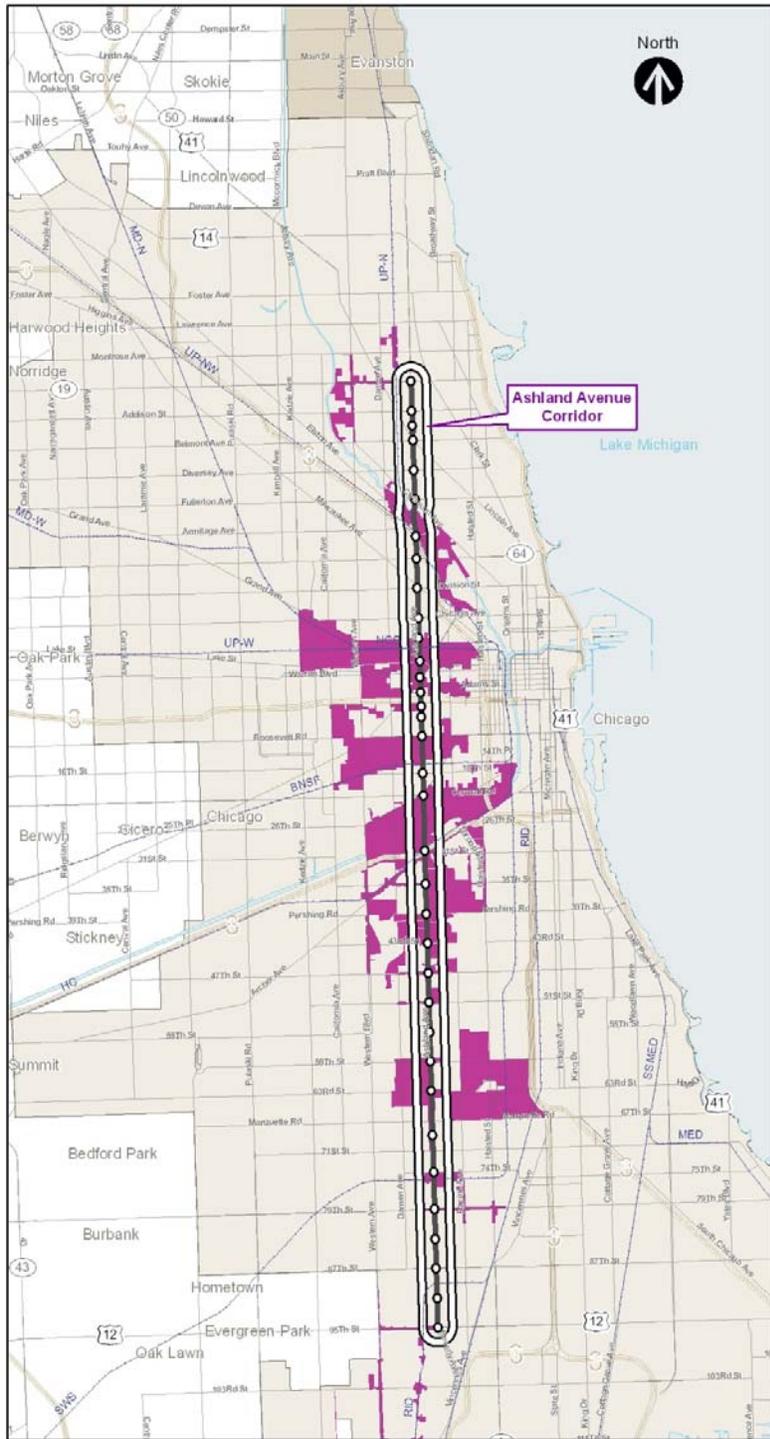
¹ City of Chicago, Tax Increment Financing Program, http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/tax_increment_financingprogram.html.

² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Renewal Initiative, http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program/offices/comm_planning/economicdevelopment/programs/rc

- Beverly/Morgan Park Railroad Station
- East Village District
- Jackson Boulevard
- Milwaukee Avenue District
- Ukrainian Village
- Wicker Park

Figure 2: Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts

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Legend

- Tax Increment Financing Districts
- Tax Increment Financing Districts

Data source:
 Cook County Assessor, City of Chicago,
 CMAP, US Census

Scale

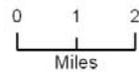
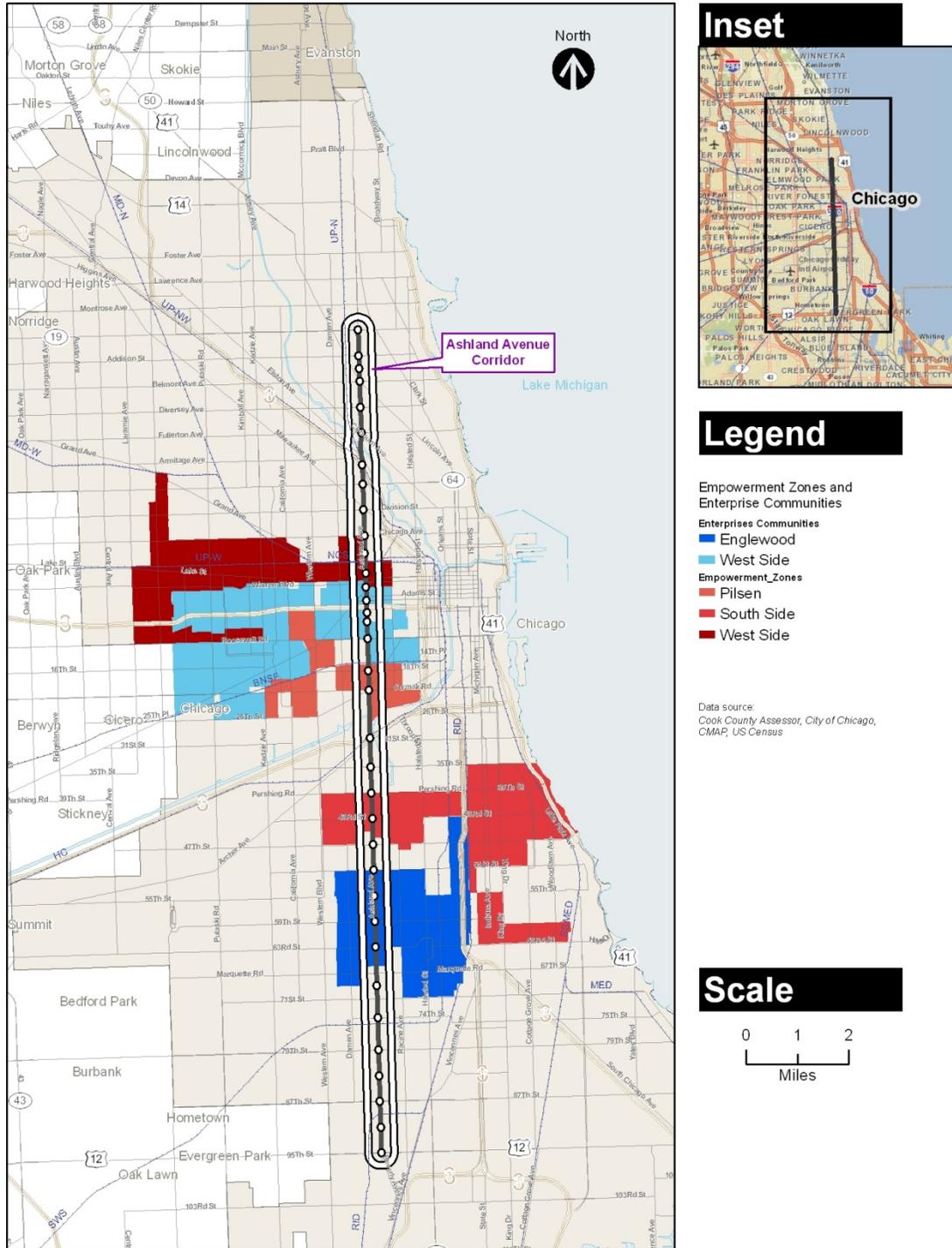


Figure 3: Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities



Industrial Corridors

Within a ½ mile of the Ashland Avenue corridor there are five industrial corridors, shown in **Figure 4**, including:

- North Branch
- Kinzie
- Western / Ogden
- Pilsen
- Stockyards

Relevant Land Use Plans

The City of Chicago also has a number of Community Plans and Open Space Plans which were reviewed for relevance to the study area. Relevant, recently completed land use plans to the study area include the Chicago River Corridor Development Plan, Reconnecting Neighborhoods Plan, and the Near Northwest Side Plan. These plans provide a future vision for specific portions of the corridor. A review of these plans indicates no conflicts between these land use plans and the proposed action and details on these plans are provided below. In addition to existing plans, in May 2013, the Chicago City Council approved a BRT Land Use Development Plan that is proposed specifically to analyze and identify improvements to local land use policies to support the eventual development of BRT along Ashland Avenue.

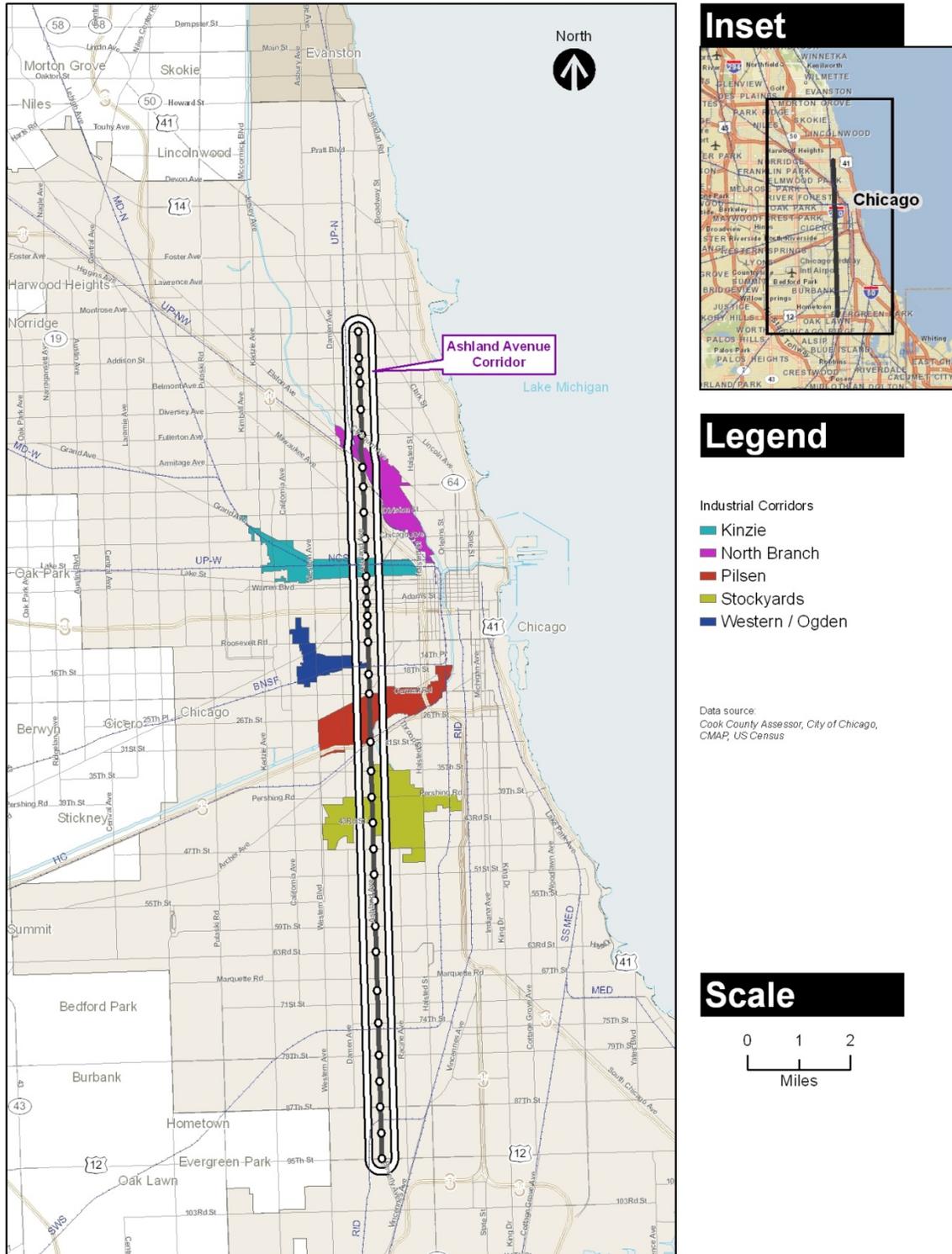
Chicago River Corridor Development Plan

The Chicago River Corridor Plan (2005) guides development and planning along the River, with specific goals related to paths and greenways, public access, habitat conservation, recreation and economic development. The Chicago River crosses Ashland Avenue in two locations and intersects with three planning areas defined in the plan: Reach Four, Reach Five, and Reach Eight. Reaches four and five encompass the northern crossing and Reach eight covers the southern crossing.

Reconnecting Neighborhoods

Reconnecting Neighborhoods (2009) is part of the City's efforts to integrate affordable housing into its neighborhoods. The plan includes three focus areas, one of which—Near West—is intersected by the Ashland Avenue. The plan provides suggested improvements to transit, pedestrian accessibility, urban design, and commercial development. An attachment at the end of this document provides a synopsis of suggested improvement strategies.

Figure 4: Industrial Corridors



Near Northwest Side Plan

The Near Northwest Side Plan (2002) intersects with the Ashland Avenue corridor between east-west Kinzie Street and Chicago Avenue. The plan aims to complete the open space network, enhance the transit system, and guide new development. Key transit recommendations include:

- Potential new CTA Green Line stations
- Enhanced CTA Blue Line Station entrances
- Strengthened pedestrian connections between CTA and Metra Stations
- Improvements to bus stops such as new shelters, benches, signage and lighting
- Implementation of the Central Area Plan transportation recommendations

Environmental Impacts

No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the project would not be constructed and no impacts to current land use or zoning would occur. The No-Build Alternative would not further incentivize economic development in the corridor.

Ashland Avenue BRT Project

The proposed project would have no direct impacts on land uses in the corridor and is consistent with existing land use, zoning and relevant community land use plans. The City of Chicago is committed to the proposed effort and additional land use studies are proposed to identify further improvements to land use policies in the corridor to support development of the proposed project. In addition, the implementation of BRT would further support economic development plans by proving greater cohesion between land use and transportation. The BRT service and street enhancements could incentivize new transit oriented development (TOD) in the corridor, which would be consistent with zoning.