

### The Model Industrial Corridors Initiative

One of the Daley administration's early efforts to expand its industrial policy beyond simple land-use controls was a program established in 1994 called the Model Industrial Corridors Initiative. By the summer of 1993, the administration was nearing completion of its industrial land-use plans for the North, South, and West Sides of the city and was now ready to take a more proactive stance toward retaining manufacturing jobs in the twenty-two industrial corridors identified in the plans. In a strong demonstration of his newfound sympathies for Chicago manufacturers, Daley authorized the hiring of LEED Council executive director Donna Ducharme as the city's top industrial development officer in July 1993, placing her in charge of program development within the newly designated industrial corridors.

Soon after her appointment in the Department of Planning and Development, Ducharme convened a task force to help define the ideal features of a viable, inner-city industrial corridor and to develop a program to help individual corridors better achieve these characteristics. The task force—a diverse group including manufacturers, real estate brokers, developers, representatives from industrial development organizations, and city planning staff—agreed on a set of five basic objectives: industrial corridors should be safe, accessible and functional, competitive and marketable, well-managed, and attractive. The Model Industrial Corridors Initiative was established to meet these objectives by funding industrial development organizations participating in the city's Local Industrial Retention Initiative (LIRI) program to write strategic plans for their service areas addressing these five goals. Each group was also promised anywhere from \$1 million to \$1.5 million to seed the implementation of their plans. By 1997, funding proposals submitted by twelve LIRI organizations from the North, South, and West Sides of Chicago had been approved by the city.

One of the first organizations funded under the new program was Greater Southwest Development Corporation, a Southwest Side industrial development organization whose service area consists of a nine-hundred-acre industrial corridor anchored by a number of large food-products manufacturers, including Tootsie Roll, Nabisco, and Kool-Aid. Greater Southwest's strategic plan, issued in March 1995, is representative of the types of plans that organizations participating in the Model Industrial Corridors Initiative have produced. Its primary focus is land use and infrastructure. Among other things, the plan identifies locations where the need for street repairs, viaduct upgrades, and other physical improvements is most urgent. It also contains a

survey of vacant land parcels in the corridor with the best prospects for industrial redevelopment, along with proposals for marketing the property (Greater Southwest Development Corporation 1995).

In addition to the above recommendations, the plan contains proposals for increasing intracorridor networking relationships among area firms and for improving the skills of the local workforce. In a survey of corridor firms carried out as part of the Model Corridors planning process, nearly 50 percent of companies expressed an interest in common warehousing and cooperative purchasing of raw materials or finished goods. Opportunities for the area's larger manufacturers to use the services of local rather than outside suppliers are identified as well. In addition, firm owners singled out the need for job training as a top priority. Under the plan, employers would work with nearby educational institutions to develop new programs designed to meet the specific training needs of local employers. Both these efforts, job training and the fostering of intracorridor networking relationships, would be overseen by a steering committee made up of local business and community representatives.

Under Ducharme's leadership, the Model Industrial Corridors Initiative was developed as a decentralized planning process. By providing LIRI organizations with the resources to write and implement their own strategic plans, the administration has helped create a strong organizational presence in the neighborhoods that is committed to seeing the process through to completion. LIRI organizations participating in the program work closely with area manufacturers to prepare their strategic plans; as a result, the manufacturers are themselves generally strong supporters of the process, willing to devote time and resources to ensure that the plans are fully implemented. Aside from improving the program's chances of success, the decentralized planning process has helped the administration broaden its base of support in the neighborhoods by offering policy benefits to LIRI organizations and their members and allies.

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