



Nearby Neighborhood Residents' Images and Perceptions of the River

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study brought together groups of residents to discuss what they felt about the Chicago River in their neighborhood and how they would like to see it improved for recreation and other values. Residents were recruited at random for 11 focus groups, including 9 groups who lived close to the river in neighborhoods throughout the corridor and 2 groups from the metropolitan region at large who lived away from the river. Groups averaged 9 participants each, and 98 people in all participated in the study. Through a combination of structured survey questions and facilitated, open-ended discussion, the groups discussed such questions as: What are people's current levels of awareness and knowledge of the river? How do people use the river? What is the perceived quality of the river landscape? Have perceptions of the river changed? What types of development are preferred along the corridor? How can the river be improved for recreation and other values? Can recreation development activities proceed if the water is not clean? What specific recommendations can be made to improve particular river segments?

Responses to the structured survey questions and transcripts of the open-ended discussions were analyzed to examine commonalities and differences within and between focus groups on general issues (e.g., the current condition and maintenance of the river landscape) and to identify specific topics of importance (e.g., perceptions of fish consumption, knowledge about river aeration facilities). A computerized coding scheme developed for the transcripts allowed respondents' comments to be summarized and organized so that salient themes and issues could be identified.

CURRENT PERCEPTIONS AND USES OF THE RIVER

Participants' current perceptions and uses of the river can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Nearby residents were generally aware of the river in their neighborhood, but knew little about the Chicago River as a system.** The different names, often colloquial ones, given to different reaches may obscure how individual reaches connect as a system. Knowledge of current and historic activities along the river was spotty and sometimes inaccurate, although one or two people in some groups were often extremely familiar with some aspect of the river due to their jobs, leisure interests, or because their homes were close to river improvement or development projects. Those from the two metropolitan groups who lived away from the river tended to have the lowest levels of knowledge and awareness. What they knew about the river was often limited to the Main Branch and was based on infrequent trips downtown or recall of major news events such as the "Great Chicago Flood" of 1992 or the annual dyeing of the river green on St. Patrick's Day.
- 2. People's overall impressions of the river in their neighborhood varied greatly by where they lived.** Those living near the Main Branch, the Middle Fork, and the Skokie Lagoons generally had a high regard for the river in their neighborhood, while those along the North and South Branches and the Cal-Sag Channel generally had a low regard. Drawings and written statements revealed many reasons for participants' quantitative ratings of their overall feelings. Those who felt positively about the river mentioned things about history, wildlife, and aesthetics, while those who felt negatively focused on pollution, misuse, and neglect of the resource. Whether people's overall impressions were positive or negative, the vividness and emotional charge of their descriptions conveyed a high concern about the present and future states of the resource.
- 3. Nearby residents used the river corridor in diverse ways.** Most residents who lived near the river used and appreciated it at some level, even for just an open view and change of scenery as they drove over it. Direct use of the corridor often hinged on the availability of open space and facilities. Where such opportunities exist, many neighbors used the corridor for linear recreation such as walking and bicycling or for location-specific activities such as picnicking or relaxation. Visual appreciation of the corridor was an important type of indirect use for those who lived right by the river, even if they rarely went out to use it directly. Water-based recreation was a popular but infrequent activity of nearby residents. Although only a small proportion of nearby residents owned and used boats on the river near their home, several had taken river tour boats on the downtown reaches and said that being on the river is a unique experience open to all.
- 4. The river's natural, aesthetic, and functional characteristics were important to nearby residents.** When nearby residents talked about the characteristics of the river landscape that were important to them, they often focused on the vegetation and wildlife present. These features were the major attraction in the less developed

reaches of the corridor, but nature was also important to residents in highly urbanized settings, where green trees, grass, and wild brush moderated the expanses of buildings and concrete paving. Natural features provided important aesthetic benefits to nearby residents, including beauty, solitude, and a needed contrast with the urban development surrounding the corridor. People looked to the river for more than natural beauty, however, and recognized the significance of its architectural and engineering achievements and the utilitarian roles it plays for industry, commerce, flood control, and sanitation.

- 5. Water quality condition and maintenance was the chief concern.** A high proportion of focus group participants felt there were serious water pollution problems on the reach near where they lived, although their explanations of how the river was polluted varied considerably from one end of the corridor to the other. Along the northernmost reaches of the corridor, people were concerned mainly about turbidity and natural debris in the water, while those further south were concerned about offensive odors, dumping, industry and barge discharges, and toxic waste. Some residents saw the presence of fish in their reaches as an indicator that water quality was improving, though not to the point where the fish could be eaten. Although most residents cited problems with the current condition of the water, a smaller percentage in each reach were aware of the various efforts to maintain and improve water quality, including dredging, aeration, garbage pickup, and the “Deep Tunnel” stormwater storage project.
- 6. Safety and access were among the other important concerns of nearby residents.** Two other issues cited by nearby residents, safety and access, have important implications for river corridor planning and management. Each of these issues has many dimensions as voiced by nearby residents. For safety, residents were concerned both with physical safety, particularly with children falling in the water and the consequences of body contact, and with personal safety and the threat of violence from gangs and others who congregate at spots along the river. For access, residents were concerned about such issues as the convenience, amount, and type of access to the river, and public versus private rights to use the waterway.
- 7. Nearby residents perceived positive changes occurring along the river.** Despite some serious problems with the condition and maintenance of the corridor, many nearby residents had seen positive changes in recent years and were hopeful about further improvements. Water quality changes most often mentioned are those improvements that can be directly perceived: increased water clarity, and reductions in debris and odors. Residents saw open space and facility developments for recreation as additional signs of positive change that will enhance their recreational use and the desirability of living near the river.

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE RIVER

Participants’ ideas about the future potential of the river for recreation and other purposes are summarized below, along with the implications these findings have for planning and management:

- 1. Clean water is the key factor that will decide the future of the river for recreation and other purposes.** Although participants in many of the focus groups recognized that substantial improvements in water quality had already been made, further efforts are still needed if the rivers in their neighborhoods are to be used more fully for recreation and other purposes. Good water quality is important for direct, water-based activities such as boating and fishing. It is also important for indirect, land-based activities, but people are willing to accept less-than-pristine conditions as long the odors and debris are not offensive. To address water quality concerns, agencies and municipalities could increase active cleanup efforts and step up regulation and monitoring programs. Based on the willingness of some participants to work on grassroots efforts to help improve water quality, volunteer groups could be mobilized for litter and debris removal, water quality monitoring, and other activities.
- 2. The natural environment should be enhanced throughout the river corridor.** Vegetation and wildlife were important to participants’ enjoyment and use of the river in both urban and suburban settings. Along more remote stretches of the corridor, enhancing the natural environment might mean keeping vegetation more natural or restoring it to its natural integrity. Restoration in some cases might include reducing current wildlife population levels, such as the deer herd at the Skokie Lagoons. Along more highly used stretches of park and forest preserve, vegetation might be managed to balance needs for wildlife, aesthetics, recreational use, and personal safety. This balance might be achieved by creating more “manicured” areas with trees, grass, and flowers and by planting or thinning vegetation to increase sight lines and openness. Along the most urbanized sections of the river, more trees and grass could be planted to soften the edge between the river and the built environment that surrounds it, to make the shore more aesthetically pleasing and conducive to use by recreationists and wildlife.
- 3. Maintenance of the landscape and existing facilities, and the development of new facilities, are key ingredients to greater use of the river for recreation.** Many participants cited “good maintenance” as an important condition of their ideal setting for recreation, and they despaired about the poor current condition and lack of maintenance of the river edge in their neighborhood. Along with maintaining the water quality and vegetation, this concern translates to keeping the river landscape reasonably free of litter and debris, and keeping built facilities in good condition and free of graffiti and vandalism. Trails

were chief among the suggestions for new recreation facility development in the corridor; increased park and open space was a priority along some reaches (e.g., South Branch, Cal-Sag) where such areas are currently sparse.

- 4. Increased safety and access are also needed before more people will perceive and use the river as a recreational resource.** Current problems with safety were cited as impediments to wider use in nearly every focus group. Suggestions for increasing safety varied according to the specific safety concerns. Solutions ranged from heavier vegetation, fencing, and railings to keep children from falling into the river; to better lighting, less vegetation, and more patrols to ward off crime. In a similar sense, various strategies might improve access to the river, from clearing weeds and other vegetation to enhance views of the river to purchasing land and developing facilities to promote close, convenient physical access.
- 5. The diversity of the corridor is both a strength and a challenge that must be acknowledged in future development efforts.** The natural and social diversity existing within the corridor prevents any generic approaches to development. By recognizing this diversity, corridor planners and managers might more successfully work within the constraints and opportunities it allows. Those participants who talked about the corridor as a whole mentioned the need to balance recreational development with industrial, commercial, and residential land uses. In the case of recreational development, this balance requires a sensitivity to the “context” of development and the degree of naturalness or level of development that is appropriate to the urban or suburban setting. This information may help planners and managers understand local problems and priorities and in turn help their constituencies understand the corridor as a diverse but interconnected system.
- 6. Outreach efforts can promote local awareness, interest, and action in river improvement activities.** A final point gleaned from discussions about the future potential of the river dealt with how river improvement efforts are communicated to the public. Participants who were informed about river cleanup projects tended to have a much more positive outlook on the river than those who were not aware of these projects. In fact, for several of the attendees who knew little about the river, participation in the focus group exercises and discussions helped improve their perceptions of the river. These findings show the critical need for, and power of, better public communications by agencies, municipalities, and advocacy groups. From the many experiences recounted by participants, it is clear that awareness can build interest and concern, and in some cases, even lead to individual and grassroots community action in river improvement projects. Many of the participants who used the river in their neighborhood showed a high concern for it and a willingness to take at least partial responsibility for ensuring its protection and improvement.

BY-REACH SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Participants’ current perceptions and uses of the river in their neighborhood, as well as their recommendations for future improvements, are summarized in Table 2.1 for each focus group.

PART I INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Research on urban corridor recreation opportunities has shown that most who visit a local trail or greenway tend to come from nearby residential neighborhoods, often less than a mile away (Young and Flowers, 1982; Furuseth and Altman, 1991; Moore et al., 1992). Nearby residents are often the most frequent users of trails and greenways, and their support can affect the ultimate success of a greenway as a recreation resource (Gobster, 1995). Most importantly, those who live near park and open spaces often have an intimate knowledge of these resources, their assets and shortcomings. For these reasons, the project investigators felt it important to find out more about how nearby residents perceive and use the Chicago River.

The objectives of this study were:

1. To include a sample of participants that reflects the geographic, age, gender, economic, and ethnic diversity of residents who live near the Chicago River corridor and in the surrounding metropolitan region.
2. To examine residents’ awareness, perceptions, and uses of the river corridor, its sites and reaches, and to solicit their ideas and opinions on improving the corridor for recreation and other resource values.
3. To suggest how study findings might be used to develop planning, design, and management strategies for the river corridor.

STUDY METHODS

THE FOCUS GROUP AS A METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Focus group interviews were used to gather information on awareness, perception, and use from nearby and metropolitan residents. As a social science method, the focus group interview is being increasingly used to identify and explore people’s perceptions and behavior (Goldman and McDonald, 1987). Focus groups allow investigators to probe salient issues and uncover ideas and insights that may not surface through traditional mail and telephone surveys (Krueger, 1994). Although the qualitative nature of this method does

TABLE 2.1
Summary of current perceptions and future prospects by focus group

MIDDLE FORK/LAKE FOREST (REACH 2)	
• River Recreational Use:	Passive, e.g., walking, sitting, nature exploration
• Places Used:	Backyards, road dead ends, Middle Fork Savanna
• Positive Characteristics:	Beauty and solitude, rare plants
• Problems:	Turbidity and natural debris in water, steep banks are hazards for children
• Improvements/Changes:	Purchase and development of Middle Fork Savanna
• Recommendations:	Remove downed trees and deal with flooding, increase safety, ensure appropriate level of development for Savanna
SKOKIE LAGOONS/GLENCOE (REACH 3)	
• River Recreational Use:	Frequent use for walking, biking, skiing, and other activities
• Places Used:	Forest Preserves, Botanic Garden
• Positive Characteristics:	Wildlife, natural vegetation, picturesque landscape
• Problems:	Turbidity and natural debris in water, deer overpopulation, exotic vegetation, littering
• Improvements/Changes:	Dredging of lagoons has improved water quality
• Recommendations:	Continue lagoon cleanup efforts, control deer population, restore native vegetation, remove fallen trees, “manicure” landscape near some use areas, reduce littering
NORTH SHORE CHANNEL/EVANSTON AND SKOKIE (REACH 4)	
• River Recreational Use:	Walking, biking, jogging, nature exploration, ball playing, harvesting of wild edibles
• Places Used:	Trails along canal in Skokie and Evanston, Sculpture Park, Ladd Arboretum
• Positive Characteristics:	Good maintenance, convenient access
• Problems:	Water pollution/odor, lack of safety in park areas with dense vegetation, steep canal banks are hazardous to children
• Improvements/Changes:	Pollution reduced, “Deep Tunnel” stormwater storage project seen as positive
• Recommendations:	Increase safety by thinning vegetation and by increasing lighting, patrols, and through traffic; balance nature with safety concerns
NORTH BRANCH/CHICAGO-RAVENSWOOD AND ALBANY PARK (REACH 5A & B)	
• River Recreational Use:	Various park activities, but limited by crime and gangs
• Places Used:	City parks along the river: Gompers, River, Horner
• Positive Characteristics:	River lends “country” atmosphere to urban scene; good maintenance of yards by riparian residents
• Problems:	Water quality problems with pollution, odor, dumping; poor maintenance of park landscape and facilities; gangs and crime
• Improvements/Changes:	Few improvements or changes noted
• Recommendations:	Increase safety, increase cleanup efforts
NORTH BRANCH/CHICAGO-LATHROP (REACH 5B)	
• River Recreational Use:	Limited due to lack of public space; some fishing and viewing from bridge
• Places Used:	Bridges
• Positive Characteristics:	Aesthetic and functional (transportation) values
• Problems:	Little physical or visual access to river, severe pollution—odor and dumping, safety hazards to children
• Improvements/Changes:	Few improvements or changes noted
• Recommendations:	Clean up water and shoreline, make water more usable for fishing and boating
MAIN BRANCH/CHICAGO-LOOP (DOWNTOWN AREA) (REACH 6)	
• River Recreational Use:	Walking, jogging, biking, picnicking, viewing, boating
• Places Used:	Riverwalk, North Pier, Wolf Point
• Positive Characteristics:	Scenery—views of and from the river; contrast of nature with urban scene; good maintenance
• Problems:	Water quality—litter; personal safety
• Improvements/Changes:	Many positive changes noted in water and landscape quality
• Recommendations:	Develop continuous riverwalk, develop more restaurants and other riverside destinations reachable by foot or boat, mixed feelings about proposed riverboat gambling
SOUTH BRANCH/CHICAGO-CHINATOWN (REACH 7)	
• River Recreational Use:	Viewing; use limited by lack of public open space
• Places Used:	Bridges
• Positive Characteristics:	Aesthetic (contrast/change of scene) and functional (industry, economic development) values
• Problems:	Pollution, lack of open space
• Improvements/Changes:	Proposed park development along river could increase recreation opportunities for the community
• Recommendations:	Clean up pollution, develop park space and a riverwalk, develop shore with sensitivity to needs of the community
CAL-SAG CHANNEL/PALOS HEIGHTS, PALOS PARK (REACH 10A)	
• River Recreational Use:	Hiking, biking, picnicking
• Places Used:	Palos Forest Preserve, I&M Canal trail, Lake Katherine
• Positive Characteristics:	Wildlife, natural vegetation and scenery, barges and functional values of the canal
• Problems:	Water pollution, concern for safety when alone in remote areas of the forest preserve
• Improvements/Changes:	Sidestream Elevated Pool Aeration (SEPA) plants are a sign of water quality improvement; more fish and fishing noticed along waterways
• Recommendations:	Continue water cleanup efforts, keep corridor largely natural with some limited development for recreation (marina, stores)

TABLE 2.1 (Continued)
Summary of current perceptions and future prospects by focus group

CALUMET RIVER/CHICAGO-PULLMAN; BLUE ISLAND (REACH 10C)	
• River Recreational Use:	Some boating and other uses; use limited by lack of public open space but especially by poor water and landscape quality
• Places Used:	Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve
• Positive Characteristics:	Some areas with natural or pioneer vegetation
• Problems:	Severe water pollution—smell, toxics, etc.; landfill smell and pollution also constrain use
• Improvements/Changes:	Sidestream Elevated Pool Aeration (SEPA) station in Blue Island is a sign of improved water quality
• Recommendations:	Clean up water and landfills, enhance corridor for recreational and business opportunities
METROPOLITAN EAST-CHICAGO	
• River Recreational Use:	Occasional tour boats and river tours; walking and bike riding
• Places Used:	Mostly downtown
• Positive Characteristics:	Views from bridges; downtown generally well kept
• Problems:	Water pollution—turbidity, smell, toxics, dumping; poor landscape maintenance
• Improvements/Changes:	Aeration plant near Devon Avenue
• Recommendations:	Clean up water; more bike trails, trees, and downtown riverside restaurants; maintain variety of settings in corridor
METROPOLITAN WEST-WEST SUBURBAN DUPAGE COUNTY	
• River Recreational Use:	Low awareness and use; some viewing, tour boats
• Places Used:	Mostly downtown
• Positive Characteristics:	Historical value; river dyed green on St. Patrick's Day; bridges and downtown views; use for transportation, industry
• Problems:	Polluted, unattractive
• Improvements/Changes:	Better sewage treatment
• Recommendations:	Improve water quality and shoreline aesthetics; increase recreation opportunities

not allow for generalizing study results to a larger population, the flexibility of the approach and the depth of understanding that can be attained make it an ideal method at the early stages of issue assessment and a particularly valuable complement to quantitative surveys (Fern, 1983). We worked cooperatively with Adam Davis of Decision Sciences, Inc., in developing the sampling design and interview questions, and implementing the focus groups for this study. Davis also facilitated all the focus group sessions.

SITE SELECTION

We conducted 11 focus groups in all—9 from neighborhoods close to the river and 2 from the Chicago metropolitan region at large. For the nearby resident groups, riparian and nearby (1-2 blocks away) residential areas throughout the river corridor were identified through large-scale maps. The nine neighborhood areas were chosen for their geographic, socioeconomic, and ethnic differences, and because of important local resources and current projects or issues. The two metropolitan groups were included to get a feel for how average metropolitan residents who do not live on the river think about and use the river, and how they might differ from nearby residents. The reaches and neighborhood areas are shown in Figure 2.1 and are characterized below:

1. Middle Fork/Lake Forest (Reach 2): This area, in the suburb of Lake Forest near the headwaters of the North Branch, is sparsely populated, predominantly Anglo American, and upper income. The river here is narrow and flows through a complex of residential, wetland, prairie, and woodland areas. A new oak savanna restoration project by the Lake County Forest Preserves and The Nature Conservancy is located here.

2. Skokie Lagoons/Glencoe (Reach 3): The Skokie Lagoons area includes 7 pools and 190 acres of water surrounded by a 400-acre woodland-marsh complex owned and managed by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Although the neighboring community of Glencoe is primarily Anglo American and well-off, the Lagoons area itself is an important regional attraction for an ethnically and economically diverse group of recreationists. At the time of the focus group interview, the lagoons were being dredged as part of a recreational and ecological restoration project.

3. North Shore Channel/Evanston and Skokie (Reach 4): The corridor is mostly park land in this section, owned by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and managed by the City of Evanston and the Village of Skokie. Adjacent neighborhoods are middle class and racially mixed. The Evanston side of the channel has many older trees, a paved trail, and picnic facilities. The Skokie side was recently improved for recreation with new plantings, a paved trail, and a sculpture park.

4. North Branch/Chicago-Ravenswood and Albany Park (Reach 5A & B): The river in this area flows through several parks and other open spaces, and is one of the few stretches where people have homes bordering the river. Neighborhoods are a mix of housing densities, incomes, and ethnicities. Public agencies and private groups recently made open space improvements and have plans for more. There has been a controversy over riparian residents who have built piers and decks on the riverbank without the consent of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, which owns it.

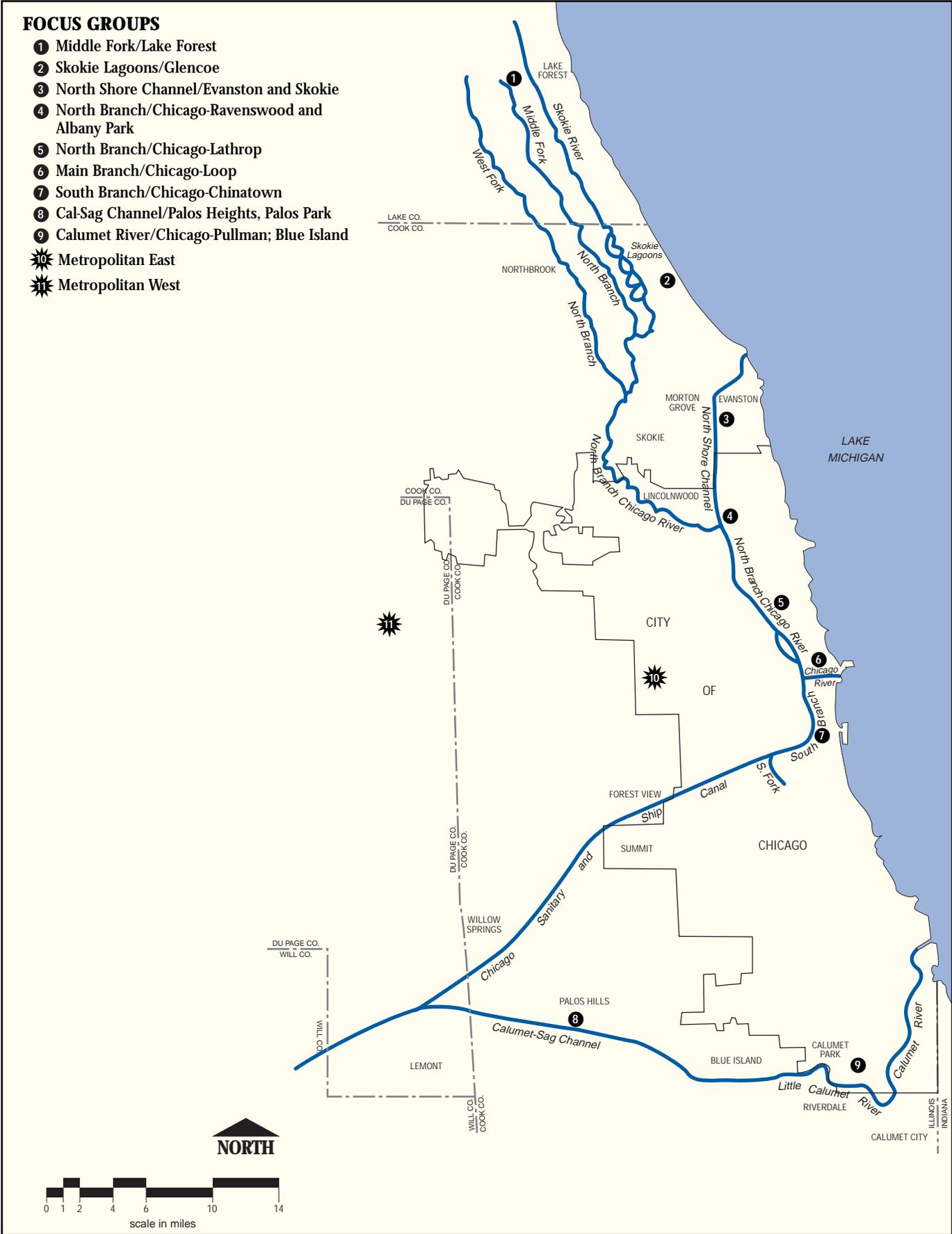


FIGURE 2.1
Map of study reaches with location of focus groups

- 5. North Branch/Chicago-Lathrop (Reach 5B):** The river here is channelized, its fenced-off banks have little natural vegetation, and riparian land use is mostly commercial and industrial. The area includes Lathrop Homes—a Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) development—and surrounding blocks of mixed-density housing. Residents are low- and middle-income African Americans, Anglo Americans, and Hispanics. There is little access to the river, although public agencies and private groups are working on a project at Lathrop Homes that will increase open space and recreation opportunities.
- 6. Main Branch/Chicago-Loop (Reach 6):** The Loop refers to downtown Chicago and includes the Main Branch of the Chicago River and short segments of the North and South Branches. The river here is wide and channelized, and its banks are developed with high-rise office and residential buildings. Loop residents are mostly upper income Anglo Americans. Open space along the river is mostly hardscape plazas and cafes, and there is a riverwalk along here that will eventually be made continuous through the Loop. Recreational boating and fishing are becoming increasingly popular.
- 7. South Branch/Chicago-Chinatown (Reach 7):** This stretch of the river is mainly commercial and industrial, though abandoned areas have grown up with pioneer vegetation. Chicago's Chinatown, which fronts the river here, has a high proportion of the city's Chinese American residents and has one of the lowest amounts of open space per capita. Chinatown residents are working with the Chicago Park District on plans for a 12-acre park along the river's east bank.
- 8. Cal-Sag Channel/Palos Heights, Palos Park (Reach 10A):** The neighborhood area is just east of the Palos-Sag Forest Preserves, one of the largest contiguous open spaces in Northeastern Illinois. Barges and tugs use the channel, as do some recreational power boats. The suburban residents of Palos Park and Palos Heights are primarily upper middle class Anglo Americans. The Lake Katherine Nature Center was recently developed along the channel in a unique public-private development partnership, and recreational use could be expanded on the Cal-Sag and nearby Sanitary and Ship Canal corridors.
- 9. Calumet River/Chicago-Pullman; Blue Island (Reach 10C):** The river, less channelized here than along the Cal-Sag, is actively used for commercial and recreational boating. Land use is mostly heavy industrial and commercial, with some open space and forest preserve areas nearby. Some working class Anglo American and African American residential neighborhoods are located along the river in this area. Some river fishing occurs on this stretch, and there are plans to increase wildlife and recreation opportunities.

The two regional metropolitan groups included:

- 10. Metropolitan East:** Residents from various neighborhoods in the City of Chicago.

- 11. Metropolitan West:** Residents from west suburban DuPage County.

Although these focus group descriptions identify both reaches and neighborhood areas from which participants were selected, the targeted sampling approach makes the neighborhood area a more accurate label for the groups and will be used for the rest of the report. Because participants were asked to think about and respond in terms of “the river in your neighborhood,” findings from a given focus group may not reflect perceptions of resource conditions for an entire reach.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Maps identified residential streets near the river, and residents' names and phone numbers were identified by reverse telephone directories. Phone numbers for the nearby resident focus groups and the regional metropolitan groups were called at random, and an adult male or female from those households was selected to balance group composition by gender. We also included teen-aged participants in some of the focus groups, to help expand the issues and perspectives that would be discussed. Some recruitment in Lathrop CHA homes was done through networks established from previous studies, where it was found that many residents did not have telephones. To minimize any biases that people might bring to the groups, individuals were solicited without divulging the nature of issues to be discussed.

Fourteen participants were recruited for each focus group. From our past experience, we'd learned that an ideal group size of 8-10 would show up and that groups larger than this could inhibit the pace of the discussion and flow of ideas.

The actual results of the sampling procedure are summarized in Table 2.2. The 11 focus groups ranged in size from 6 to 13, with a mean size of 9. In all, 98 people participated in the study. Most groups were balanced with respect to gender and age. Each group reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of the neighborhoods described in the previous section on site selection. Background questionnaires filled out by participants showed a wide variety of occupations, from professionals to laborers to homemakers, retirees, and students. In some cases, the characteristics of the areas from which focus groups were solicited reflected a particular socio-demographic orientation. Few participants from the Palos and Loop groups had children living in their households, the Lake Forest and Glencoe groups were upper income, and the Pullman-Blue Island and Lathrop groups were lower income.

FOCUS GROUP FORMAT

Each focus group session was held in a convenient neighborhood location and lasted about 1½ hours. Three major topic areas were addressed in the sessions:

1. Outdoor activities participants do in their free time, and the settings where they do these activities.
2. Awareness, perceptions, and uses of the Chicago River in general, and in participants' neighborhoods specifically.
3. Attitudes toward river development and enhancement in their neighborhood, reaction to development “prototypes,” and recommendations for river enhancement.

TABLE 2.2
Focus group composition

Variable	STUDY AREAS											
	Middle Fork Lake Forest	Skokie Lagoons Glencoe	N. Shore Ch. Evanston-Skokie	N. Branch Ravenswood-Albany Park	North Branch Lathrop	Main Stem Loop	South Branch Chinatown	Cal-Sag Palos	Calumet Pullman-Blue Island	Metro East	Metro West	All Groups
GENDER												
Male	4	6	5	2	6	6	5	4	2	5	4	49
Female	5	5	7	5	7	2	1	4	5	3	5	49
AGE (YEARS)												
<18	–	4	–	1	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	8
18-34	1	1	1	3	4	3	4	–	2	2	2	23
35-54	6	1	4	1	7	5	1	1	3	3	4	36
>55	2	5	7	2	1	–	–	7	2	3	2	31
RACE/ETHNICITY												
Anglo American	9	11	5	6	3	8	–	8	5	6	9	70
African American	–	–	7	–	7	–	–	–	2	1	–	17
Hispanic American	–	–	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	1	–	4
Asian American	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	–	–	1	–	7
HOUSEHOLDS W/ CHILDREN												
Yes	8	7	8	4	9	1	6	2	5	4	5	59
No	1	4	4	3	4	7	–	6	2	4	4	39
EDUCATION												
Less than H.S.	–	2	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
Some H.S.	–	2	–	2	3	–	2	–	1	2	1	13
H.S. Grad	–	1	–	1	3	–	1	2	2	3	1	14
Some College	4	2	3	3	3	1	–	3	2	2	1	24
Tech. Degree	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	–	–	–	1	4
College Grad	1	2	7	–	–	4	2	3	2	2	4	27
Post College	4	2	2	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	1	13
GROSS ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME												
<\$30,000	–	–	1	4	12	2	3	–	5	4	2	33
\$30,000-39,999	–	–	2	–	–	2	2	4	1	–	–	11
\$40,000-49,999	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	1	–	1	2	6
\$50,000-59,999	1	1	4	1	–	2	–	1	–	2	2	14
\$60,000-69,999	1	–	2	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	5
>\$70,000	7	5	3	2	–	1	1	–	–	1	2	22
TOTAL	9	11	12	7	13	8	6	8	7	8	9	98

Topic areas were addressed through a combination of worksheet exercises filled out by each individual, serial questioning between the facilitator and each participant, and interactive discussion among participants. Initial worksheets and questioning got participants thinking about their outdoor leisure generally, without reference to the river. Once participants were comfortable talking and expressing their feelings, successive questions zeroed in on progressively narrower issues relating to the river. A copy of the moderator guide is shown in Appendix 2.1.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data from the worksheets were summarized for each group. Each focus group was videotaped and audiotaped, and discussions were transcribed for analysis. Although analysis of the worksheet data was relatively straightforward, the richness and sheer amount of textual information in the tran-

scripts (over 170 pages of text) entailed a more involved approach to analysis. A computerized scheme was developed to code each person's responses according to the response itself, the context in which it was made, and the pertinent issues it conveyed (Fielding and Lee, 1992; Silverman, 1993). A complete description of the coding process, including a coding example and the codebook for focus group comments, appears in Appendix 2.2.

Using data summary and sorting procedures, the coding system allowed us to establish some basic quantitative measurements of issue importance and saliency, such as the percentage of comments referring to "water quality" as an issue, and to compare these issues between groups. Although this information provided a partial basis for our discussion of the focus group findings that follows, a full account of the statistics themselves is less central to the presentation and is

thus provided in Tables 2.3.1 through 2.3.7 in Appendix 2.3. Table 2.3.1 provides an overall accounting of how responses were distributed among all context and issue codes. Tables 2.3.2 through 2.3.7 detail response data for particular contexts and issues.

The coding system enabled us to identify and explore the breadth of issues that arose out of the discussions and to probe the various facets of these issues. In this way, participants' comments could be organized in ways that helped to reveal a higher level of meaning than might be attained from reading the transcripts one-by-one (Wolcott, 1994). The coding system also was an efficient way to retrieve quotations on a particular issue, and to separate them by context, group, and/or individual. We have included quotations in this report to help the reader better understand the depth of issues discussed and the range and variety of perceptions that exist.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

We present and discuss our findings here in two parts—the first focusing on what the Chicago River *currently is* in the minds of people, and the second on what the river *could be in the future*. Within each of these contexts, we describe relevant issues using the worksheet and text code data where appropriate, and we discuss and illustrate the issues with representative quotations. Together, this information provides the basis for recommendations on how to plan and manage the physical and social aspects of the Chicago River environment.

PART II CURRENT PERCEPTIONS AND USES OF THE RIVER

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE RIVER

CURRENT LEVEL OF AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE RIVER AMONG RESIDENTS

We began focus group discussions of the Chicago River with a free association task, to get a first look at how people generally perceived the river. Using a worksheet, focus group participants were asked to put down the first thing that came into their minds when presented with a list of area park, open space, and water landmarks. Among these was “the Chicago River in your neighborhood.” Nearly half of the responses included such words as “dirty” or “pollution,” conveying that many people had a negative impression of the river. What was somewhat surprising, however, was that more than one-third of the participants had “no association,” or simply put down neutral words such as “water,” “green,” or “boats.”

Subsequent discussion of this question showed that some people were confused when asked about the Chicago River in their neighborhood, especially those who lived along the far northern and southern reaches of the corridor, as exemplified by these responses:

From the Lake Forest group: *[Brian] My thought of the Chicago River is downtown. This is the first I've known that these ditches are even connected to that.*

From the Glencoe Group: *[Babette] I was wondering whether the Lagoons are in fact part of the North Branch of the Chicago River and I'm not sure they are.*

From the Palos Group: *[Pat] It's not in my neighborhood.*

For some, part of this confusion was due to the many different names given to different reaches of the corridor. In addition to the “official” names of the reaches, local residents may refer to their part of the Chicago River by a variety of colloquial names, such as these from the Lake Forest group:

[Mark] Skokie Ditch.

[Kati] The creek on Everett Road.

[Monica] Until Philip said what it was, I had no idea what it was, I didn't even know it had a name.

...the Evanston-Skokie Group:

[David] We call it the canal.

[Halette] The Sanitary District Canal.

[Georgette] Everyone has a different name to call it. I grew up calling it the North Branch, it goes from Wilmette Harbor where the locks are...

...and the Ravenswood-Albany Park Group:

[Brenda] About four blocks from where I live...[near] California and Roscoe, there is a branch and I guess it's the North Branch but it's like a channel...

[?] I live about a half block on the other side of Horner Park, the other side of the river, and we just call it the river.

The perceptions of those in the regional metropolitan groups are particularly interesting. This dialogue from the Metro West group provides an inkling of what the average person's knowledge and awareness of the river might be if he or she does not live near the river:

[Facilitator] What is the first thing that came to mind when I said Chicago River?

[Rudolf] The first thing that came to mind was that it is still polluted with stockyard waste.

[Brian] A movie that John Belushi was in where a car went flying out of a parking lot and into the river.

[Julie] It's dirty and polluted. I grew up boating on the river every summer and I just remember it was nothing but dirt all along the sides—pollution, cans, papers, dirt and junk. This was at Marina Towers.

[Louis] Green river on St. Patrick's Day.

[Michelle]...I only associated it with that Lower Wacker Drive area where you get on the boats.

[Louis] Well it has some historical value because that's where Old Fort Dearborn was located, where the Michigan Avenue bridge is.

In other cases, the knowledge that people did have of the river, in their neighborhood or elsewhere, was inaccurate. Misperceptions about cleanup efforts, sources of pollution, and other aspects showed up in nearly every focus group. Misperceptions are underlined in the following quotes:

On pollution of the Skokie Lagoons and ongoing dredging efforts:

[Babette] Yea, but I think the dredging that's been done, it's been going on for three years, partly from the droppings of all the millions of geese that's being cleaned out—and deer—they're trying to get the water so...they're recycling it somehow. I'm not sure...

On the smell of the North Shore Channel and the discontinuance of water chlorination:

[Larry] I really don't think it's the canal that you're smelling. In the Howard-McCormick area what you're really smelling is the sewage treatment plant. They used to chlorinate the water until recently, when they felt that the cost of treating it was prohibitive so they discontinued it; that has increased the smell.

And on the operation of the Cal-Sag “waterfalls”:

[Pat] They said they'd have that waterfall operating but they didn't turn it back on until about the beginning of May. I thought: “Gee why isn't it working year 'round?” It would keep aerating the water and it would probably do so much more. Somebody has to sit there and watch it, and if you're paying someone to watch it, it seems like the thing should be working. To sit and watch something not work for six months would drive me mad.

Although discussion of these topics formed a relatively small part of the overall focus group discussion, it did uncover some potential challenges planners might face in dealing with public perceptions about the river. First, some individuals and groups have a low level of awareness about the Chicago River, both as a system and as a water body that flows near their homes. Part of this low awareness might result from the many different names given to different reaches of the river. Second, the river may not be a salient part of some people's lives, especially for those who live further away from the river. And, as with other less striking issues or objects, people's knowledge and awareness are often reduced to a few simple facts—some of which may be misconstrued. In contacting individuals and community groups on river issues, care should be taken not only to clarify the locality of the reach in relation to where people live, but also to convey that the reach is connected to the larger system.

RESIDENTS' OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF THE RIVER

One of our principal objectives was to find out what those who did live near the river felt about it as a resource. To begin to address this, we followed up the free association task with another worksheet that had participants rate on a 0-100 (low-high) scale how they felt about the Chicago River in their neighborhood, along with other park and open space landmarks. The variation in responses across focus groups was quite revealing, as shown in the plot of mean ratings in Figure 2.2. Mean ratings were lowest for the Ravenswood-Albany Park group, followed by the Pullman-Blue Island and Lathrop groups. Ratings were highest for the Loop group, followed by the Glencoe, Metro East, and Lake Forest groups.

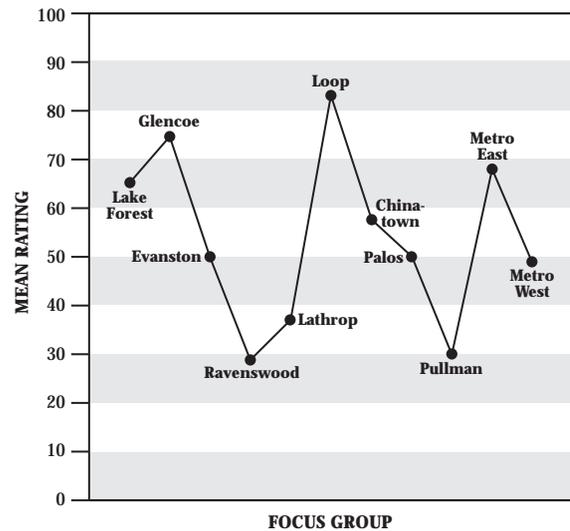


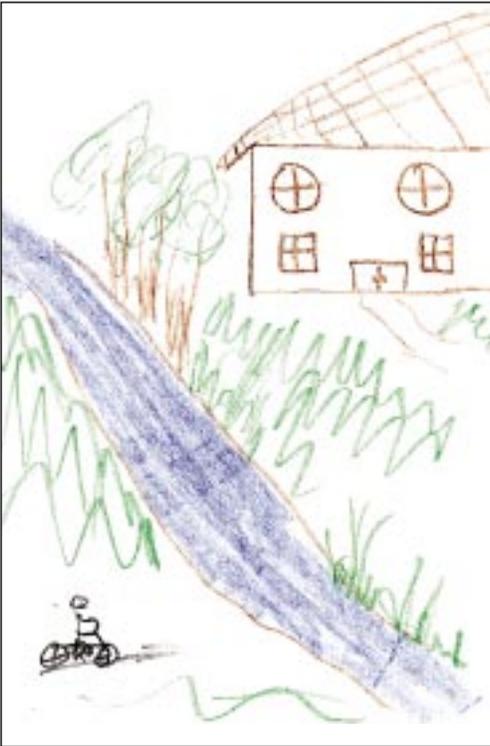
FIGURE 2.2
Plot of mean ratings of “The Chicago River in Your Neighborhood” exercise, all groups

Participants' overall feelings for the river in their neighborhoods were further explored in a subsequent worksheet. Participants were each given a box of crayons and asked to draw the river as it flowed through their neighborhood. When they were finished drawing, they were told to turn the sheet over and complete the sentence: “I am the Chicago River in your neighborhood; I am...” Samples of these drawings are shown on pages 15-19. Drawings for the highly rated reaches of the Middle Fork and Skokie Lagoons showed abundant trees and greenery; the water was usually colored blue, and the scenes often included wildlife. Loop participants focused on the urban scenery of the Main Branch—skyscrapers, bridges, boats, and formal tree plantings. Drawings for the lowest rated reaches showed a bleak view of the river; the river tended to be colored black or brown, and drawings often showed floating debris, pollution outflows, and few signs of green shoreland vegetation.

Representative comments from the “I am” part of the worksheet reflect this wide variation in people's images of the river as it flowed through their different neighborhoods.

Two points about these statements should be underscored. The first, already mentioned and confirmed by people's drawings and ratings of the river, is that the statements illustrate the sometimes radical variations in perceptions of different river reaches. Participants in the far northern reaches of the study area and the Loop were for the most part pleased with how the river currently is and hopeful that it will be preserved and improved. This outlook differed from those of focus group participants in other reaches, who tended to be much more negative and despairing about the future. This was particularly the case for the Pullman-Blue Island group, whose statements coincided with the lowest ratings given by any of the groups in assessing the river in their neighborhood.

MIDDLE FORK/LAKE FOREST



Middle Fork. A house along the stream surrounded by trees and greenery; a bicyclist pedals nearby.

- *I am part of a large river that has a history and has been here for a long time. I provide water to animals and plant life.*
- *I have been neglected until recently when interest arose to develop the land, fighting between developers and people wanting to preserve vegetation.*
- *I am quiet, gentle, relaxed. I am nature undisturbed.*
- *I am a treasure, do not abuse me. I can provide pleasure for the human race as well as animals and wildlife. If I am lost, I cannot be replaced. Take care of me.*
- *I am a tiny little drainage creek, but I add some feeling of solitude to my neighborhood. If I was bigger, maybe the community would give me a better name.*



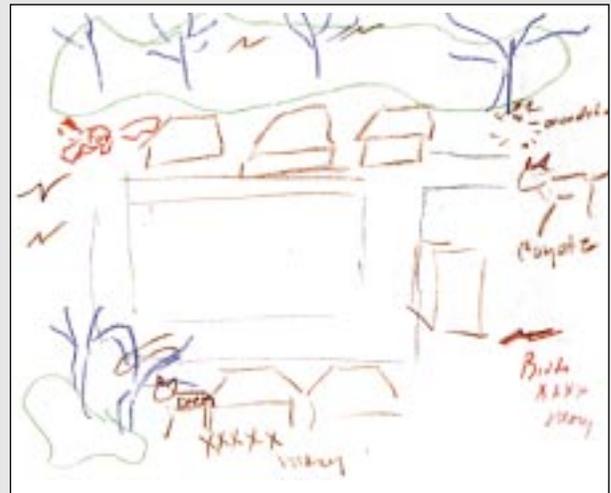
Middle Fork. Houses, a pond, and the Middle Fork with trees and other greenery, with Everett Rd. crossing the stream near the neighbors' houses.

SKOKIE LAGOONS/GLENCOE

- *I am so happy that so many people come to sit by my banks and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. I am happy that I have fish for people to catch. I wish that there could be a way to clean up a little.*
- *I am a dirty yet grumpy old pond that keeps overflowing. I would like to be cleaned up, yet I corrode all the boats that try to help clean me up.*
- *I am happy that people of all races, creeds, and backgrounds enjoy me; fishing, hiking, running, seeing the flora and fauna I support, picnicking, and in winter skiing, sledding, etc.*
- *I am a place for families to come to and enjoy picnicking, sailing. It is a place to get away from the stress of everyday life and unwind.*



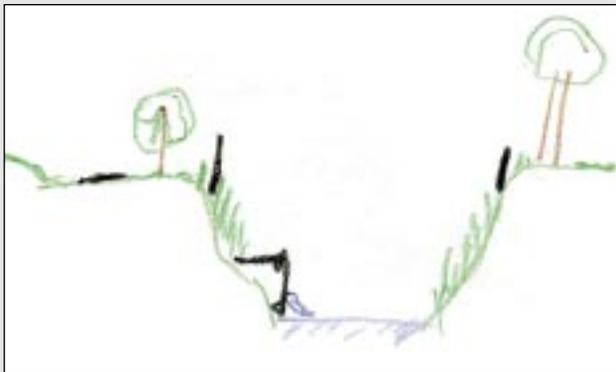
Skokie Lagoons. Lagoons with trees, flowers, a fish, and a deer; a bicyclist pedals along the forest preserve trail.



Skokie Lagoons. A residential neighborhood surrounded by trees and inhabited by a multitude of wildlife.

NORTH SHORE CHANNEL/EVANSTON-SKOKIE

- *I am dirty but trying to clean up.*
- *I am trying to clean up my act, please people also help. Keep me clean. I'm not just a sewer; I help you control your flooding.*
- *I am deep, dirty, and dangerous. I've many unguarded areas. In winter, children try to cross on the ice. Derelicts sleep under my bridges.*
- *I am a moving, viable body. Birds and ducks enjoy my water. I help avoid flooding in areas. Landscaping my banks is wonderful.*



North Shore Channel/Evanston. Steep, tree-lined canal banks are fenced off. A boat is docked at a pier.



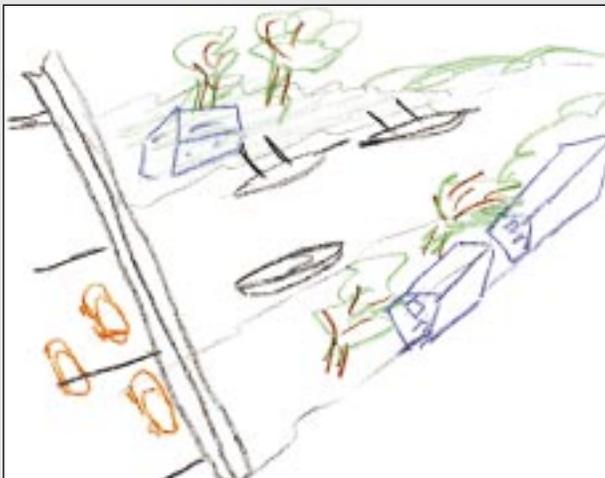
North Shore Channel/Evanston-Skokie. A tree-lined corridor and McCormick Avenue

NORTH BRANCH/RAVENSWOOD-ALBANY PARK

- *I am the Chicago River, get me out of here. I'm being used as a dump site. Everywhere around me there is pollution. I would not be surprised if underneath me there were cars, bodies, you name it.*
- *I'm so dirty. Please don't throw things in me. God didn't give me to you for a garbage dump. Would you like to swim in me like this?*
- *I am the Chicago River running through Ravenswood Manor. I am beautiful visually, but I am still badly polluted and need a major cleaning effort.*
- *I am a river. I want to be clean and clear. I want fish to live in my waters. I do not want to be a receptacle for everyone's castoffs—such as shopping carts, etc. I want people to stroll my banks. I want animals and birds to reside nearby. I want to be an asset to the community.*



North Branch/Ravenswood. One river bank is green and tree-lined and the other is fenced off and residential. A tire floats in the river.



North Branch/Ravenswood. A green, tree-lined residential river corridor shows boats docked by houses and a bridge.

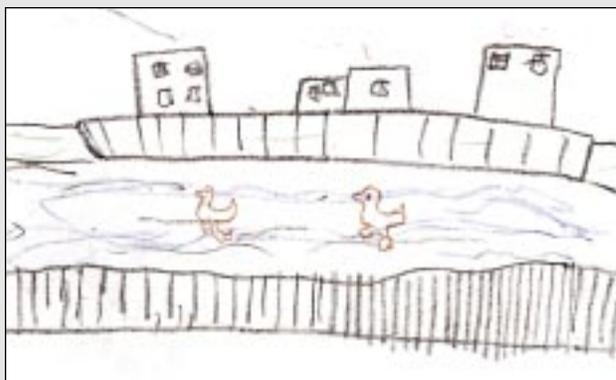
NORTH BRANCH/LATHROP

- *I am the Chicago River in the Lathrop Homes, and I am the most disgusting, dangerous, foul, and dirty body of water in the Chicago area. I want and need to be cleaned. Please save me before it's too late.*
- *I am so dirty, I stink, and I am tired of people throwing all that trash in me, and children play in me even though they know I am dangerous. And so many rats, they die here and pollute my water. I wish the city would clean me up.*



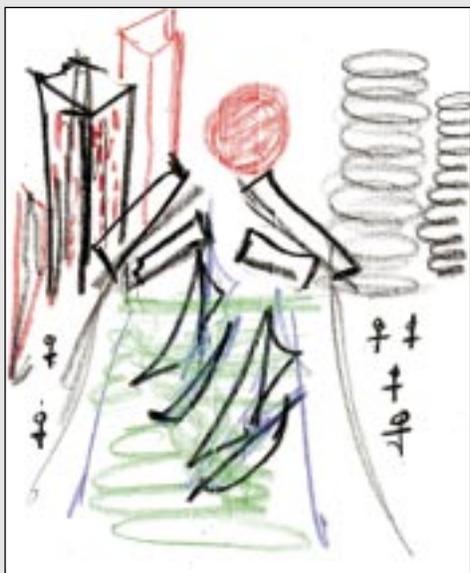
North Branch/Lathrop. The river is fenced off and bordered with houses and a bridge crossing. Bottles, a shopping cart, and other debris float in the river.

- *I am near death. Too much filth and scum are constantly poured into me. I look best on St. Patrick's Day when "da Mare" pours green dye into me. Fish would much prefer to be elsewhere. It would be nice to be back to the state I was in before Chicago became a city, where one could see a few feet into me. Chicago already has enough sewers.*
- *I am tired of the dirt, garbage, and there's a dead rat. Boy! I need to get cleaned up. The land around me needs a lot of work. Too many weeds, no one can even see me with this garbage and tall weeds. I'd love to be clean and blue as I was before the bad chemicals made me cough.*



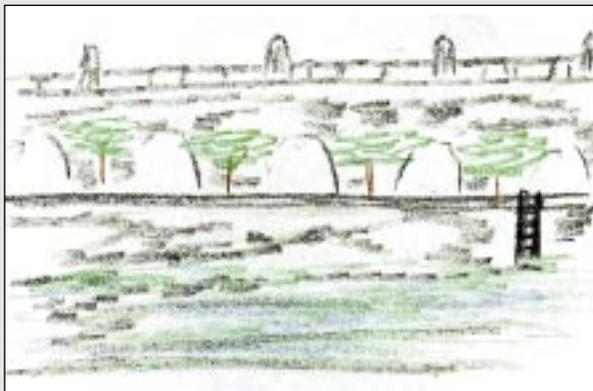
North Branch/Lathrop. The riverbank is walled and fenced off, and bordered by a road and the Lathrop CHA homes. Ducks float in the river.

MAIN BRANCH/LOOP



Main Branch/Loop. Bridges rise as sailboats move down the river. People are shown on the riverwalk near Marina City and other high-rises.

- *I am wishing the buildings recognized me more. The occasional small spills at the marina fuel dock are choking me because the flow is slow on the Main Branch. Thank you Friends of the Chicago River for your efforts.*
- *I am a creation of God. Ultimately you have power to change my course, hurt me, use me, or rape me. But the God that created everything will judge you on the last day...[and] I will be used to judge you all.*
- *I am the flow of life and beauty, sound and breath off the lake and winds holding back the teeming millions to stop and reflect, look, listen, smell.*
- *I am the Chicago River. The former mayor, Richard J. Daley, used to talk of its potential. But that potential has yet to be realized. I am a great resource to Chicago for business and for entertainment, but I am undeveloped as yet.*



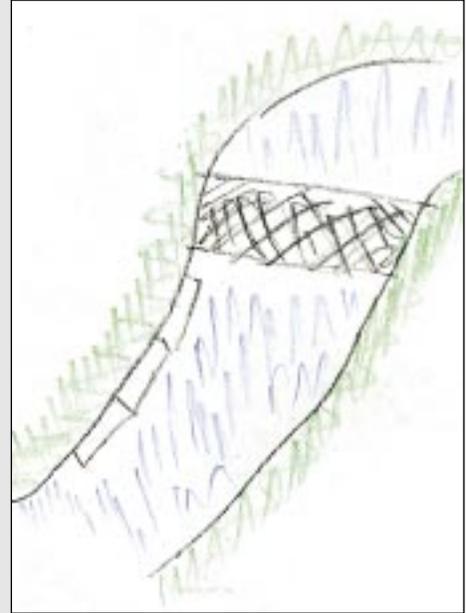
Main Branch/Loop. The riverwalk along Upper and Lower East Wacker Drive. Evenly-spaced trees line the river bank.

SOUTH BRANCH/CHINATOWN



South Branch/Chinatown: An exhaust-spewing car crosses the bridge, throwing garbage into the river. Pollution, a dead fish, and junk float on the surface.

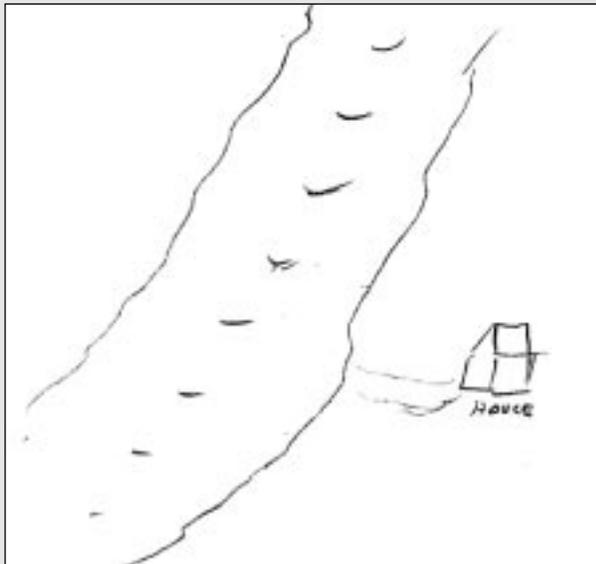
- *I am the Chicago River, I help the city's population survive every season of the year. Without me, they will have no water to quench their thirst or for sanitation.*
- *I am happy about people coming to the riverside to barbecue, etc.*
- *I am the Chicago River. I feel I have been neglected, poisoned, used, and abused. I have provided a means, a highway for transport. What have you done for me?*
- *I am filthy and sick of being in this neighborhood of yours. Why can't I just stick to the Chicago downtown area? I wish I were dead. After all, no one enjoys me here. All people do is drive across the bridge and soil me.*



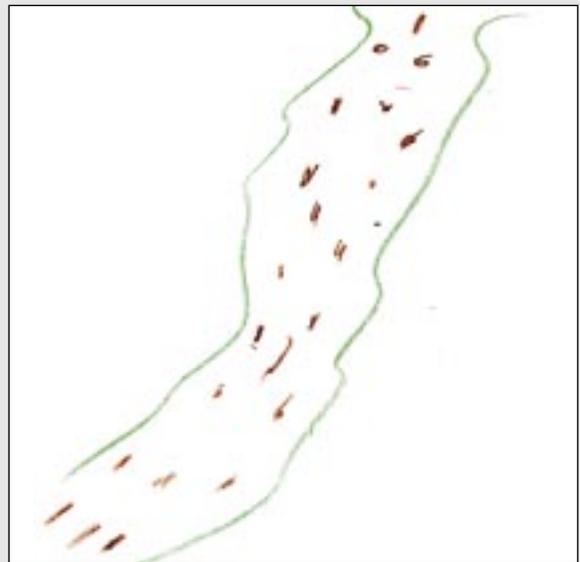
South Branch/Chinatown: A green riverbank and bridge crossing are shown.

CAL-SAG CHANNEL/PALOS

- *I am feeling that Chicago is a beautiful city. I am happy through it.*
- *I am the Chicago River and am a historic engineering marvel. I run backwards.*
- *I am a river serving seven million people. They do not all treat me properly, but I still try to serve them.*
- *I am a massive belch, a putrid, offensive scar on the earth.*

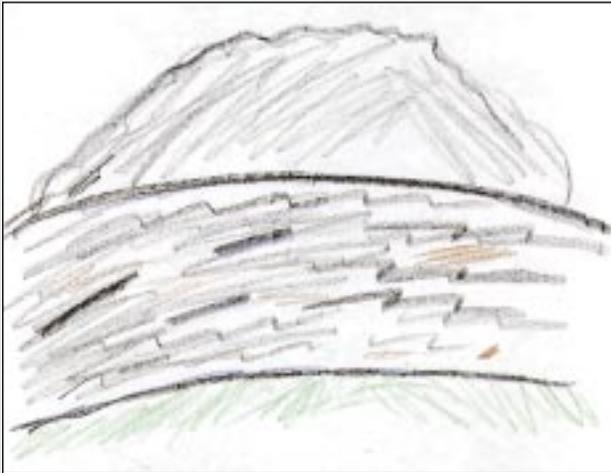


Cal-Sag/Palos. A house with access to the river is shown.



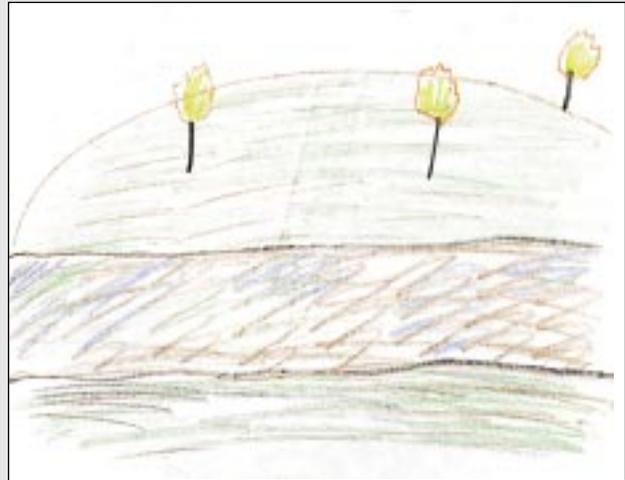
Cal-Sag/Palos. Green riverbanks are shown with brown particles floating in the water.

CALUMET RIVER/PULLMAN-BLUE ISLAND



Cal-Sag/Pullman. River flowing past the landfill. Other side is colored green (Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve?), but the river itself is colored black and brown.

- *I am dying, help me.*
- *I am in pain, please help me. I can't breathe, I'm dying, help.*
- *I am very sad, dirty, and I wish there was a way everyone or someone would help clean me up. Please help me, don't pollute.*
- *I am trying to breathe, please give me clean air.*



Calumet River/Pullman. Landfill is drawn with flames burning off the methane gas emissions. River is colored brown and blue.

The second major point from this exercise is that these statements convey, in vivid and sometimes poetic terms, the full range of perceptions and emotions many people hold toward the river. These include many positive aspects about the river—its history, wildlife, and beauty—and what these aspects give those who experience the river, such as enjoyment of many different activities, a sense of solitude, and feelings of rootedness or connection with the river and communities along it. The negative perceptions and emotions, however, are what stand out most. By giving a voice to the river, people were able to personify the effects of pollution and mistreatment using such emotional terms as pain, illness, hurt, rape, and death—words that powerfully convey what stacks of statistics about water quality seldom can. Above all, these statements—whether positive or negative—demonstrate the high level of concern that participants have for the river, a concern for how good or bad they see the river today, but more importantly, a concern for how it could be tomorrow. This concern seems to hold even for those who know little about the river, including those from the two metropolitan-wide groups.

Together, the rating, drawing, and imagery exercises were helpful in identifying the spectrum of issues for further discussion. In subsequent discussions, the facilitator keyed in on the concerns expressed by participants, allowing us to identify and explore current perceptions of the river in greater detail. In the following sections, we examine specific issues and their implications for river planning and management.

ANALYSIS OF KEY QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

To identify important issues regarding current perceptions of the river, we first looked at the percentage values of general issues codes for statements whose contexts referred only to current conditions, perceptions, and uses of the river (See Table 2.3.2).

For all groups, the issues most often brought up concerned the current condition and maintenance of the river landscape, river characteristics, activities that participants currently engaged in on or near the river, and current aspects of river development. Other issues that figured importantly in some group discussions included the reputation of the river for the two metropolitan-wide groups, river access for the Ravenswood-Albany Park group, and safety for the Evanston-Skokie, Ravenswood-Albany Park, Lathrop, Loop, and Palos groups. These data gave us clues about which aspects of the discussion to investigate more closely. An analysis of these issues follows.

HOW DO PEOPLE USE THE RIVER?

To understand how people currently used the river, we looked at those specific issue codes dealing with recreation activity and river development. Participants mentioned 39 different activities they engaged in along the river; of these, top mentioned activities included land-based corridor activities

such as walking and bicycling, and varied children's activities. Water-oriented recreation, however, dominated people's conversations about river-oriented activities; these activities included boating, watching the river and activities on it, and fishing. The largest subcategory of comments referring to boating dealt with tour boats, which several participants mentioned as a unique way to experience the river and one that is accessible to everyone:

From the Glencoe group: *[Dan] It's not like you're being bussed, it's not the normal kind of tour where they say: "Look out your windows now on your left and your right." I mean you're on the boat and it's different, you get to see all the buildings from different sides than you would if you were on land.*

From the Loop Group: *[Chuck] I drove architecture tours on the river for years and never got tired of going down that river. People just love it and there's good reason, by day or by night, spring, summer, or fall.*

From the Metro East group: *[Monique]...As a matter of fact, I go down the river once a year. I take a tour boat with a friend, mother, dad, or one of the kids; my husband is tired of looking at it...I will skip lunch to make sure I have the money. I get in the boat from the river and go into the lake and it's very uplifting.*

In categorizing comments on river development, we found that more than two-thirds of them dealt with open space and recreational facilities. Participants in the Lake Forest, Glencoe, Palos, and Pullman-Blue Island groups talked about forest and nature preserve sites they had visited, while those in the more urban reaches focused on park and riverwalk areas. In terms of facilities development, trails were mentioned by many groups, while boating facilities, restrooms, and bridges were important topics of discussion in selected groups.

Linear activities: Discussion about activities and river development most often focused on the linear nature of the corridor. Comments from participants in groups where facilities are currently available illustrate how the corridor provides multiple activities throughout the year:

From the Glencoe group: *[Sheldon] I'm quite familiar with the Skokie Lagoons and Botanic Gardens. I'll start from my street and I'll jog through up around the Botanic Gardens until I get to the north end of the gardens, back around through the whole garden, back out and down the trail. I do that when it's nice. I also cross country ski during the winter, not through the gardens but there's a bike path around there. And I also bike ride.*

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Phil] The Sculpture Park is excellent for biking and walking. That whole area.*

From the Loop group: *[Chris] I have a boat I park in front of the building so I boat quite a bit on the river.*

From the Palos group: *[Joseph]...I bike at Lake Katherine and along the I&M Canal—a marvelous area—and I golf in the area wherever I can pick up a match free.*

Special places: But just because the river is a linear resource doesn't mean that it is used or needs to be used solely for linear activities. Much of the river use we heard about was confined to certain locations on the river, often for passive activities:

From the Lake Forest group: *[Brian]...I take my little boy into the grassy areas and walk around back there with him. There's a little wooden bridge where he sits down and watches the water go by and it's great, I love it.*

From the Loop group: *[Mary Anne] We feed the ducks, we picnic along the river frequently. In various spots there are little park-like areas although a lot of people don't know about them so that is part of the fun of kind of exploring the river in the area and you are only a few feet away and you see just millions of people streaming by and you're real isolated in a very beautiful little area. You see a lot of people drawing and painting, taking pictures, and film-making.*

From the Palos group: *[Pat] There is one section of Lake Katherine where you can sit and watch the boats go by. I like the barges and the boats.*

From the Metro East group: *[George] If I have to do something downtown—like go where you pay your traffic tickets—and you walk across the bridge, that's a nice view.*

Visual use: And for some participants, river use didn't require direct access or on-site activity at all; to those living near the river, visual access is important and can often result in positive benefits:

From the Glencoe group: *[Michael] It's right behind my house, I just have to look out my window...*

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Georgette] It's the area I look out at from my bedroom window.*

From the Lathrop group: *[Maxine] I can only see it from the bridge, and my kids wave at the boats when they go by...*

From the Loop group: *[Ann]...My balcony floats over it and I sit mesmerized just about every summer evening. Sometimes there's a blimp, and there's trains. The horses used to go across the Kinzie Street bridge, and it's just fun to see all the different things. It's heavenly, really.*

HOW DO PEOPLE CHARACTERIZE THE RIVER?

What about the Chicago River matters to people? What elements of the Chicago River are important to people's enjoyment and use? In our discussions, we found that the river environment has many facets, each of which is important in characterizing "the river" (See Table 2.3.3). A few people mentioned the physical characteristics of the river and its shoreline, implying it is significant because its size and extent. Others, especially in the Loop group, thought the built environment was a big part of the riverscape, and they appreciated the buildings, bridges, and other architectural elements that give the river its distinctive character. The most significant aspects of the river, however, were its natural characteristics and the aesthetic and functional benefits it provides.

Characteristics of the Natural Environment: One of the highest percentages of comments about the characteristics of the Chicago River referred to the natural environment. Most codes pertained either to vegetation or wildlife; both of these elements of the river landscape were usually referred to positively, adding to people's experience of the river no matter which reach they lived near. In the most urbanized sections of the river, landscaped areas of trees, grass, flowers, and general greenery increased the appeal of the river:

From the Loop group: *[Chuck]... You know, it's nice to live nearby. [Across the river, on the other bank] you've got those nice green trees. It's the only green we've got around there...*

From the Metro East group (in reference to the new park along the south bank of the Main Branch): *[Monique] It's one of Chicago's best hidden secrets because we are in a big industrial city and when you discover little areas like this... The man is right how they've cleaned it up. And in that location they've put trees that give it a different outlook. It even gives you the feeling that you can be safe and enjoy.*

Groups from along the less developed stretches talked mainly about the natural landscape, as shown by the high percentages reported for the Lake Forest, Glencoe, and Palos groups in Table 2.3.3. This focus is illustrated by the following two discussion segments about wildlife and native vegetation from the Lake Forest group:

[Facilitator] What can you tell me about the Middle Fork Savanna?

[?] Is that the Open Lands property?

[Phil] It was known as the Halligan Estate, or the Circle H Ranch. Then it was sold to a developer, and a lot of public pressure was put on. So the city and the Lake County Board bought it, and now we're safe...

[Vern] It's one of the very few places where the situation is the same as the settlers found it when they came here.

[Mark] It's just never been built on.

[Vern] The Illinois prairie is really what it is.

[Meredith, and others] Birds,...deer.

and from the Glencoe group:

[?]...I think probably what I do more than anything is watch the wildlife and really track that, and today we had a baby deer born in our neighbor's yard.

[?] I've seen a fox in there.

[Michael] About two months ago we saw a coyote in our backyard.

[Robbie] I saw two snapping turtles today.

[?] In the Botanic Garden there's a little pond and every couple of days I watch the frogs and tadpoles in it.

[Babette] We are so lucky!

Vegetation and wildlife along the river were also referred to in some negative ways. In some focus groups, unmaintained vegetation was cause for concern, as was dense vegetation and its implications for safety. These topics will be discussed in more detail in separate sections on maintenance and safety. People in several focus groups mentioned problems with rats along the river, and some attributed mosquitos and other pest insects to the river. The Skokie Lagoons presented an interesting case of the benefits and problems with urban wildlife. While most participants in the groups loved to see deer and geese, they also recognized that the current high populations of these animals was cause for concern. More will be mentioned about wildlife and the Skokie Lagoons in a subsequent section on issues specific to particular reaches.

On the whole, however, the natural environment was an important, positive characteristic of the river environment. In both wild and developed reaches, vegetation and wildlife can be an important attraction to those who live and recreate near the river. In listening to those living near significant natural areas, in particular the Lake Forest, Glencoe, and Palos groups, we came away with the feeling that the quality of their lives had been significantly and positively affected by daily interactions with nature along the river.

Evaluative Characteristics: The highest percentage of comments about the current characteristics of the river referred to participants' evaluations of the range of benefits the river provides to individuals, neighborhoods, and the region as a whole. Most comments here were aesthetic in nature: the beauty and scenery afforded by river views, the peace and solitude of being down by the river's edge, and the presence of the river as a contrasting element within the urban fabric:

From the Loop group: *[Mary Anne] Well I just have a real fondness for the river and Olive Park and the beach in that particular area because you have all the tranquility and peacefulness of being right on the water and yet, this extreme contrast of the incredibly busy city with the beautiful skyline.*

From the Chinatown group: *[Ken] I like it for the water scenery about it and its contrast with all the commercial and factory development. At least you can see something, you can look out and see the water rather than looking at the factories; people looking at that day in, day out, they get tired of it and this is a change of pace or setting and they feel better.*

Less often mentioned but noteworthy were the many functional or utilitarian benefits the river provides:

- **As an intake and outlet for industry:**

From the Chinatown group: *[Gene]...about all it does is provide water. It's dirty, I mean it's like a pollution dump for the factories. And there isn't much use for it.*

- **For drainage and flood prevention:**

From the Lake Forest group: *[Phil] I realize how important it is—you're talking about the Chicago River...That's our drainage; we'd be lost without it.*

- **As a location for industry and residential land use:**
From the Metro East group: *[Mike]...it's a working river, it's not a river of beauty, so to me it's just like industry's there, homes are there, they're part of the river.*
- **As a transportation route:**
From the Lathrop group: *[Lee] Well I think it is very good—I mean it could be improved by all means, but I feel that it's OK. We transport things through that river, too, so although we have the negative part about it [pollution], we have the positive part, too.*
- **As a sanitary system:**
From the Palos group: *[Joe]...It was built as a relief for the Chicago River system. To accept all the sludge and pump it on down to somewhere.*
- **And as a problem not good for anything:**
From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Dorsey] I don't see any purpose of the canal. That whole area should be just completely closed. It should be filled in and then make an embankment on both sides.*

Some of the most thought-provoking comments came from several participants who had difficulty reconciling their appreciation of the beauty of the river with their knowledge of its current condition and misuse:

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Tom]...It's visually appealing although it's still very polluted, because it's very wide and in the summertime there's trees all over and you look down and see homes, you see these terraces going down to the river, some of them have gardens all over them, and then you have the boats down there. It looks real cute, like you're in the countryside. For three blocks or so you can pretend you're not in the middle of Chicago, and you can pretend it's not the Chicago River, although you don't even want to touch it.*

From the Loop group: *[Alan] How do you answer that question? I think it's really polluted but it's a beautiful view and I think there is a big difference between here and just a few blocks away.*

As these two comments illustrate, people can perceive the river in both positive and negative ways. These seemingly conflicting perceptions are important to understand, for they can affect how people will use the river. Although most people we talked with felt the river provided some positive benefits, many limit their use because of significant problems they perceive. Most of these negative perceptions relate to the current condition and maintenance of the river and its corridor, the subject of the next section.

WHAT IS THE PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF THE RIVER LANDSCAPE?

Discussions about the current status of the river focused mainly on perceptions of river condition and maintenance. The heart of this topic was water quality condition and maintenance (See Table 2.3.4). The condition and maintenance of the adjacent landscape and facilities and the vegetation were also talked about, but were less central to this part of the discussion.

Water Quality Condition and Maintenance: Two important findings about current perceptions of water quality condition and maintenance should be pointed out. The first is the very strong perception among focus group participants that the water near where they live is polluted. This was evidenced by a high percentage of participants' comments referring to the word "polluted" and its variants (e.g., "dirty," "filthy," "gross") in describing the current condition and maintenance of the river landscape. However, most Loop participants felt the water of the Main Branch was, if not pristine, then at least not seriously polluted.

A second important finding was that "pollution" meant different things to participants in different reaches. Representative quotes illustrate how pollution was interpreted by the different focus groups:

- **As natural debris:**
From the Lake Forest group: *[Phil] We have mosquitos, but I have to stand up for that ditch; it's not a dirty thing, it's a good thing. Our problem managing that ditch is that people don't want their particular bank cleaned. There's a tree that they loved and then it falls over into the ditch and they don't want it removed.*
- **As turbidity:**
From the Glencoe group: *[Robbie] Well, I have no problem, even with the water, because that's just the way it is. I mean even in nature where no one's ever been sometimes the water's gross just because of the mud around it or whatever. A lot of it's just runoff and there's nothing you can do about it. I think it's really beautiful, but it could be kept up better.*
- **As odor:**
From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Bernadine] My first instinct was to put down odor and pollution because that's the perception I have of it from when I was growing up around there. You couldn't drive down McCormick without having to roll your windows up because the odor was suffocating. But in recent years it has gotten better.*
- **As dumping and littering:**
From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Rakesh]...you see people coming home from my school, they drink a pop or something and the can—they just throw it in, or a food bag. It doesn't look like a river, it looks like a landfill.*
From the Lathrop group: *[Theresa] There is so much debris thrown in and I don't think they ever take time to clean it out.*
- **As water color:**
From the Loop group: *[Chuck] When the river is high the sluice gates in the locks aren't flushing as much water through, and so the Main Branch water slows down so you get the brown water and all the garbage that would normally be flushed away, it just hovers around.*
- **And as hazardous waste:**
From the Pullman-Blue Island group: *[Jennifer] If you go into Hammond where the [Grand Calumet] goes into Illinois, they have signs up that say "Hazardous Water—Danger" along the river. And that's scary, it doesn't even look like water. There is a lot of pollution being put in that way.*

Two other key issues of water quality condition and maintenance included flooding and fish. Flooding was an issue for the Lake Forest and Evanston-Skokie groups, the latter group in reference to the Deep Tunnel stormwater storage project. The subject of fish was touched on by several of the groups. The relationship of fishing to water quality and condition is important, for many saw fishing as a sign of improved water quality:

From the Lathrop group: *[Terell] Some people fish in there; they swear that there's catfish in there, but I just don't know.*

From the Palos group: *[Jim] The fish are starting to come back. I was out for a walk [along the river] last summer and I saw a couple of guys at nighttime, they were floating by and they had fishing poles and I said: "Hey, how'd you guys do?" and they said: "Well, we got a couple of carp" and I said: "Where were you at?" and they said they were fishing in the Cal-Sag and I said: "No you weren't; nothing can survive there."*

Although many saw the presence of fish in the river system as a positive sign, the specter of pollution remained in most people's minds when they thought about eating fish caught in the river:

From the Glencoe group: *[Nerissa]...I like to see people fishing there but I saw one group barbecuing fish, and I could never do that, because they live in such polluted...*

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Dawn]...It's not that bad—I mean I wouldn't swim in it or anything, I wouldn't want to eat any fish that came out of it, either.*

From the Lathrop group: *[George] Then what's the point of fishing if you've got poison in the water? I mean the fish are our barometer for the toxins they are going to ingest.*

As shown by these quotations, many of the pollution-related problems that concerned focus group participants were ones that impacted their senses. These sensory experiences can create strong and lasting images for people, images they may continue to carry even if the situation improves.

In some cases, recent cleanup and maintenance efforts have gone unnoticed by focus group participants, especially those from the two metropolitan-wide groups who do not see the river frequently. For the most part, however, at least some of the participants in each group were aware of cleanup and maintenance efforts near where they lived. Those efforts most often referred to included dredging at the Skokie Lagoons, the Deep Tunnel stormwater storage project along the North Shore Channel in Evanston and Skokie, the skimmer boats that clean floating debris from the Main Branch, and the Sidestream Elevated Pool Aeration (SEPA) plants or "waterfalls" on the Cal-Sag. These representative quotes reveal the positive signs of encouragement that come with awareness of such activities:

From the Glencoe group: *[Michael] Well, it's being cleaned right now. It's in its last year. It's been cleaned. They've been putting in fish. It was dirty, and it still is a bit dirty, but it's being cleaned.*

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Larry] Well yes, it will help [the flooding problem], and the Deep Tunnel will also give residents new streets and curbs, etc. It's a good deal for the residents, the benefits are outstanding compared to the short term problems with construction.*

From the Palos group: *[Joe] It's very promising if the waterfall was more effective. The ultimate goal is to pump enough oxygen in there so the carp can live, and in the process, clean it up.*

From the Pullman-Blue Island group: *[Bill]...I'm enthused about the way they're trying to clean it up. I've said they've polluted it for 200 years, now it could take that long to clean it up, but at least they're working on it.*

Landscape/Facility and Vegetation Condition and Maintenance: Comments in the other two categories dealing with condition and maintenance of the river landscape were much fewer in number than those dealing with water quality, but are nonetheless important to note. People commented on how nicely some of the grounds along the corridor were maintained; these places included the Skokie Sculpture Park and Ladd Arboretum along the North Shore Channel, the homes in Ravenswood Manor along the North Branch, and the riverwalk downtown along the Main Branch. Places mentioned that were poorly maintained included the River Park ballfields on the North Branch, the river edge near Lathrop on the North Branch, and the Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve boat landing along the Calumet River. Many of the comments about lack of maintenance dealt with a pervasive but relatively easy to correct problem: litter. This dialogue from the Glencoe focus group illustrates how different participants viewed the problem:

[Robbie] It is pretty dirty; the only reason I gave it high marks is because at least it is a place with trees and greenery, and a lot of people don't even have that opportunity. So I gave it a 65 but there is so much trash there.

[Allen] But that's a spring and summer occurrence isn't it? When they throw the beer cans?

[Babette] Yea, I think they keep it pretty well picked up.

[Michael]...When we go out there we don't throw things around because we know that the next time we go out there, it'll still be there. But when people come from other places, they throw their stuff everywhere because they know they are never going to see it again.

[Babette] I think that's interesting, because considering how many people do use it, I really feel that people pretty much do use the trash cans.

WHAT OTHER ISSUES CURRENTLY CONCERN NEARBY RESIDENTS?

Of the remaining issues discussed within the groups, two stand out as important despite the relatively few comments about them. These issues are safety and access.

Safety: The issue of safety had many dimensions as it was discussed within the context of current perceptions of the river. More than two-thirds of comments about safety dealt with issues of personal safety. The bulk of these comments came

from participants in the Evanston-Skokie, Ravenswood-Albany Park, and Loop focus groups, and centered on concerns about criminal activities that occurred along the river and on the effect that vegetation has on perceived safety. Representative comments included:

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[David] It seems that on the Evanston side there's more of the trees, the dense forest, it's more closed, and when it's like that people can hide and do things. You get more of an element coming into those areas. On the Skokie side, it's more open, more sunshine, fewer trees, it's more visible and it's more safe. If you're going to have an area it's going to have to be more like the Skokie side.*

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Rakesh] We used to go to the parks but not anymore because there's too many gangs out there. River, Gompers, Horner Park. We'll play baseball there but only if you go over with the whole team, not as an individual and not when there's shooting going on...*

From the Loop group: *[Chuck] There's two ways of looking at the river. There's the river down at river level and then there's the river where you're up above...[When] you have to go down the stairs, that's where the security problem comes up, because anybody can come along Lower Wacker Drive and quickly go out...*

Most of the remaining comments about safety involved physical safety. These comments focused mainly on people's fears of children falling in the river or on the consequences of direct body contact with the water:

From the Lathrop group: *[Theresa] I've seen children being pulled out that have drowned and that isn't a very nice scene.*

From the Loop group: *[Bradley] I know it looks very beautiful, but I have friends that work on the barges and they have to continuously get tetanus shots and check-ups. It is a very polluted area...the sewage treatment in the city is decent up to a point, but it's a very dirty river and I think only the carp survive there. If you ever fell in it you would have to go through a lot of tetanus shots and you wouldn't want to get a mouthful. It's not like a spring creek, you know.*

From the Palos group: *[Jim] I can remember reading an article ten years ago that really stuck in my mind. They said that if you were to fall into that canal just by accident, and swallow a mouthful, you were dead.*

Access: Access was another topic with few but very insightful comments. The focus groups identified many dimensions of what it means for the river to be accessible. These dimensions included convenience and proximity of getting to the river by car or on foot; physical versus visual access to the river; the mix of public and private land along the shore and the adequacy of public open space; access and the pros and cons of fencing; the ability to walk along the river edge and the continuity (or lack thereof) of riverwalks in the downtown and other areas; and the disparity of access to facilities and enhancements on some stretches of the river. In those groups where it was discussed, most felt that public access to the river was a priority. However, as this comment from the Ravenswood-Albany Park focus group shows, some recog-

nized the fine balance that must exist between providing public access and protecting the interests of individuals who own land along the river:

[Tom] My neighbors have their boats parked down there; it's very nice. The only thing is, rumor has it that people are beginning to wonder if the river is public and if so, why are there boats parked on the river while the public pays for it? There are also rumors that there is going to be a major bicycle path coming down from the north along the river and will hit Lawrence, where it will have to stop because it all becomes private homes and people have concrete terraces down to the river and boats down there. It's kind of nice that people are living on it, but it blocks and you can't walk through there because it's all fenced off. It's denied public access so there's some talk about it. Legally, I suppose they can just put the bike path through. Legally, we should be able to walk anywhere on the river because it's public. But it isn't set up that way. It goes back and forth because the neighborhood looks nice there and the people keep it clean because the people are using it as their private property. But at the same time you are denying everyone access to it. If the public did get access, the homeowners would lose enormously in terms of property values.

HAVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE RIVER CHANGED?

Another central issue about current perceptions of the river has to do with change. During our conversations with focus group participants, it became clear that although many spoke of serious problems and concerns with the present state of the river, many also felt that significant improvements had been made. Nearly every focus group referred to improvements in water quality, landscaping, and/or facility development:

From the Glencoe group: *[Dan] Well, when I found out they were cleaning [the Skokie Lagoons], a year later I saw that it was actually cleaner. I took a close look at the water.*

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[David]...the Sculpture Park is real nice. The area is much improved from when we first moved out to the area.*

From the Lathrop group: *[Theresa] I believe they have improved it somewhat because years ago, as I said, children used to go down there and they would lose their balance and fall in the river. Now they have a high fence around it.*

From the Loop group: *[Mary Anne] I've been in the area for so many years and I've seen, compared to how it was 12-15 years ago, it's amazing, the difference along the river now.*

From the Palos group: *[Dick] I think they are doing a terrific job on it and if they continue on it, it's going to be even better. The number of pleasure boats alone that are in there [are a sign of its improvement]...of course, they are not helping the quality of the water. The increase in them in the last couple of years has been tremendous.*

From the Metro East group: *[George] Aesthetically, I have to say, too, over the years the river looks a little cleaner the few times that I've passed by, and I would like to know how they monitor that. Who's in charge of that? Is there an environmental agency that gets after them or what?*

From the Metro West group: *[Rudolf]...clean up efforts are underway and they show promising results. I get a lot of*

company from Europe so every year at least once or twice we go downtown sightseeing. The Chicago River is part of the sightseeing and it really became a lot cleaner. You can see at least two feet down now. Before it was a soup, now you can see. And I also heard that some fish are in there, but I wouldn't want to eat them...

But this perception of improvement was not universal among groups, and the following comment is more representative of the feelings of participants in the Pullman-Blue Island group:

[Jennifer] I put 100% scummy, dirty. I see nothing since growing up in that area that I would call a sign of improvement...It seems to be getting worse as the years go by—smellier, dirtier, thicker—[laughter].

WHAT PERCEPTIONS AND USES OF THE RIVER CHARACTERIZE PARTICULAR NEIGHBORHOODS AND REACHES?

Looking at participants' perceptions on a group-by-group basis can help characterize particular neighborhoods and reaches.

- **Middle Fork/Lake Forest:** Several of the participants did not know the "correct" name for the Middle Fork; most referred to it as "the ditch." Few were aware the Middle Fork connects with the greater Chicago River system. Residents appreciated the area for its natural aesthetic qualities, affording solitude and a place for passive activities like walking with children and dogs, and exploring nature from people's backyards or where roads dead ended at the river. Considerable discussion time on places and activities was devoted to the new Middle Fork Savanna preserve under development near participants' homes. Most knew it was a rare and valuable plant community and were pleased to have it as part of their neighborhood. Concerns about river landscape condition and maintenance focused on turbidity and natural debris in the water as a threat from flooding. Although both of these conditions are "natural" occurrences, they contributed to some participants' perceptions that the water was polluted:

[Sharon] The reason [I gave it a low rating] is I remember a few years ago the people who live back there, it overflowed and their basements and everything were flooded.

[Meredith]...I have no objection to the drainage ditch at all. It doesn't smell, there's no odor from it at all. It's brownish water and that's why when I said "pollution," I don't know that you'd go down there and drink it, you know it's not a Colorado creek kind of water but it doesn't bother me one way or the other...

- **Skokie Lagoons/Glencoe:** Participants in this group identified very closely with the forest preserves that surround the river and their homes, and they use them frequently for walking, bicycling, skiing, and other activities. Specific places mentioned along the river included the Lagoons and forest preserve areas in Glencoe along Forest Way, and the Chicago Botanic Gardens. The natural environment of the Skokie Lagoons setting—including its plants and wildlife—

was highly regarded, and the landscape as a whole was cherished for its picturesque qualities. Both the aquatic and terrestrial environments of the Lagoons, however, are suffering problems, and participants knew about these problems and efforts to rectify them. Many felt the Lagoons were polluted, but saw signs of improvement from the ongoing dredging project. One participant succinctly described the magnitude and complexity of trying to restore the natural dynamics of the wildlife-vegetation communities of the Lagoons area:

[Nancy]...It's a long term plan that involves culling the deer and then restoring the plant life. The wildflowers that used to be in the woods are gone, they're all trampled, and the forest has been taken over by a certain vine. I don't mean to sound pessimistic, but there are many dead trees, very few leaves. It's just changed.

- **North Shore Channel/Evanston-Skokie:** Focus group participants referred to the channel by several different colloquial names, but most called it the "canal." Most of the participants used the recreational trail along the canal for walking and biking; other activities included ball playing, nature exploration, and harvesting of wild edibles. The lands along the canal were generally well liked, and participants thought they were for the most part well maintained. Specific places mentioned by participants included the sculpture park in Skokie and the arboretum in Evanston. Many in the group felt that the canal was polluted, and although some thought there was an odor problem, others felt significant improvements had been made in this area. Completion of the Deep Tunnel stormwater storage project was seen as a plus to participants, who recognized its benefits but are affected by road closures, noise, and other construction impacts. Some in the group felt the high density of vegetation on the Evanston side made for unsafe conditions, while for others the vegetation was one symptom of a greater problem in safe park use:

[June] Right off the street behind my house there's a very nice park that goes all the way to the canal. It's roomy, it's got a few pieces of equipment there, and it would be an ideal place to go because families could make their own picnics, make your own fun, but then you're interrupted by so many outside things until you just don't feel really comfortable.

[Lashar] The first thing I wrote down [about the canal] was "It's dangerous for children."

- **North Branch/Ravenswood-Albany Park:** Participants from this section of the North Branch felt fortunate to have many parks with good facilities near them, including Gompers, River, and Horner. However, their use of these parks was limited by gangs, crime, and poor maintenance. The Ravenswood Manor residential neighborhood has well-maintained homes along the riverbanks, and although no one in the group owned property here, they had mixed feelings about plans to develop a public trail through this stretch. Some participants liked the natural aesthetic

quality the river lends to this urbanized landscape, but most perceived this stretch of the North Branch to be very polluted from people dumping things in it. Over all of the focus groups, Ravenswood-Albany Park participants rated the river the lowest; most explained their 0-100 (low-high) ratings in terms of their perceptions in water quality:

- 80 *River creates Ravenswood Manor neighborhood.*
- 60 *Although it smells bad and is dirty, it gives the neighborhood character and 'possums.*
- 30 *Polluted, needs to be cleaned up so the ducks that live there will survive.*
- 30 *Used for dumping. River banks undeveloped and unsafe.*
- 0 *Very dirty.*

- **North Branch/Lathrop:** There is little public space along the river in this stretch, and most of the participants stated that they went outside the community to recreate. Focus group participants mentioned more pollution-related problems with the river here than in any other focus group—general pollution, smell, turbidity, hazards of eating the fish, shoreside dumping, and instream debris. In contrast to the Evanston-Skokie, Ravenswood-Albany Park, and Loop discussions, the issue of safety was brought up here only in the context of the potential hazards of children falling into the river. Focus group residents generally appreciated the aesthetic and functional qualities the river provides, but felt their physical access to the river was limited by the lack of developed public space. In addition, some participants in the Lathrop group felt that even their visual access was restricted because much of the fencing along the shoreline was overgrown with weeds:

[Maxine]...you can't really see the river. On the Levitt Street side, you can see it because there's concrete in front of it, but over here the weeds are so high and trees and everything that you can't really see unless you go over the bridge. [The vegetation] needs to be cut down and that would also help people see if their kids are going in there...

- **Main Branch/Loop:** Loop participants rated the river in their neighborhood higher than any other group; they had many positive things to say about its aesthetic qualities and the range of recreational opportunities it provides. Many participants used the river for walking, dog walking, jogging, bicycling, and picnicking, and a few owned or had friends who owned boats that they docked on the river downtown. Special places along the river mentioned by participants included Wolf Point, North Pier, the riverwalk, and the views of and from the high-rise buildings. Several participants remarked on the recent improvements in water quality, though some thought the litter in the water was a continuing problem. Personal safety along the riverwalk was also a concern to many participants, perceiving the water-level walkways hidden from view by trees as especially dangerous places and hangouts for muggers and the homeless. One thing Loop participants seemed to note more than other groups was the high degree of positive change happening—not just a matter of improvement over time, but also the contrast of change as a function of distance:

[Alan] When you go east of Michigan Avenue, that area is just being developed and a lot of the buildings there are less than two years old and everything is being built a lot different than it is west of Michigan. West of Michigan is more established, you have to walk down the steps and everything and it's like the palisades along the river. East there's the water cannon, the Centennial Fountain, it's a whole lot different but it's a brand new area. It's kind of undiscovered territory. Everything is wide open. East, along the river you've got the Sheraton, Cityfront Center, North Pier Terminal, and it's well built up, well lit, and pretty open. It's not better or worse, it's just different.

- **South Branch/Chinatown:** The Chinatown community area ranks among the lowest in the city in acreage of open space per capita, and focus group participants commented on the lack of space and facilities for recreation. No public open space exists along the river, although the Chicago Park District plans to develop a 12-acre riverside park on land it recently purchased. Participants generally welcomed this idea, but saw potential problems because of the polluted nature of the river. Current recreational use of the river is limited to viewing it; however, in contrast with other focus groups, Chinatown participants seemed to recognize the multiple uses and potentials of the corridor for aesthetics and recreation, for functional uses for industry, and for opportunities for further economic development:

[Brian2] I gave it a high rating because of the prospects for economic development. Hopefully riverboat gambling. I agree with what he said, it's a break in the scenery and it has prospects of recreation although it is polluted. It isn't being used for recreation now.

- **Cal-Sag Channel/Palos:** Much like those in the Skokie Lagoons focus group, Palos participants cherished the natural qualities of the environment surrounding the Cal-Sag Channel and Sanitary and Ship Canal, especially the wildlife and scenery of the Palos Forest Preserves. They used these wildlands for hiking, biking, picnicking, and other activities, and they also used nearby trails on the I&M Canal and at Lake Katherine. Barge use here was seen as a positive aesthetic element as well as a functional use. Although most thought the water was quite polluted, several were aware of efforts to clean it up. Participants in the Palos group had a somewhat different perspective on safety; many participants in the group were of retirement age, and although they pursued active recreational activities, the potential hazards of being alone in remote sections of the forest preserves concerned them:

[Joseph] The I&M Canal is a little hazardous because you're out there all alone. But Lake Katherine has the peace and the quiet with a general semblance of safety.

[Pat] I like Lake Katherine; I walked around it since before it was built when they were just digging a hole in the ground. I've usually walked around it by myself; however, I don't go into a forest preserve by myself. I would have qualms about that.

- **Calumet River/Pullman-Blue Island:** Participants living near the Calumet River had few good things to say about it; most felt that the water and adjacent shore were severely degraded. Participants rarely used the river directly or indirectly for recreation, but a few have gone boating on it and the Cal-Sag or knew friends who did, and some mentioned marinas in the area. The odor of the water was the principal indicator of pollution for several participants, while others referred to its color, toxics, and hazards of eating fish or body contact. The landfills across from Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve were another major cause for concern, because of their increasing size and the smell and other forms of pollution they bring to the land and water. Most participants accepted the industrial nature of the corridor, but did not accept the need for barges and factories to pollute the water. One person in the group was very positive about the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District's new Sidestream Elevated Pool Aeration station near his home in Blue Island and hoped it and other plants would improve the water quality of the channel. On the whole, however, the Pullman-Blue Island group was the most pessimistic of all focus groups about river improvements:

[Jerry] We originally bought in that area because they had grand plans of cleaning up all those boatyards and it was all supposed to be made into modern marinas. That was twenty years ago. We had a home built right there. It never came, none of the plans came to fruition...The river itself is polluted, there is no way that you can do anything right now. It will take a really long time, I think, to clean it up.

PART III FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE RIVER

Our discussions with participants about their current perceptions of the river established the context for looking at how they would like the river improved for recreation and related values. We combined structured exercises and open discussion to get at what people thought about the future potential of the river and how it might meet their needs for recreation.

IDEAL SETTING FOR RECREATION

We began our discussion of the future potential of the corridor with an exercise that asked participants to describe their "ideal recreation setting." Because the context of that exercise was general and did not focus on the river corridor, we do not detail those results here (see Table 2.3.5 for a statistical summary of responses). The exercise did, however, set the stage for discussions of future river enhancement options, and we thus note that participants' responses mentioned these key factors as important for making an ideal setting for recreation:

- Natural, scenic, pleasant surroundings
- Good maintenance
- Varied open space and facilities that support a range of passive and active pastimes
- Convenient, open access to all
- Safety

TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT PREFERRED ALONG THE CORRIDOR

ANALYSIS OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF RIVER DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

A subsequent exercise related to ideal settings focused people's attention directly on the river corridor. In this exercise, participants passed around a set of seven 8" x 10" color photos depicting various places along the river and were asked to rate each on a 0-100 (low-high) scale of "overall appeal." These photos are shown on pages 28-30, and include: 1) a boat ramp across from a landfill site; 2) a small downtown plaza with a man seated on a bench; 3) a section of the Chicago Riverwalk downtown with formal tree plantings; 4) a concrete walk alongside a downtown factory/warehouse with no vegetation; 5) a paved bike path along a naturally vegetated river channel; 6) a footbridge crossing a small stream in a natural wooded setting; and 7) an aeration facility on the North Shore Channel with open grassy banks and walled shore.

The mean ratings for these photos, averaged over all individuals and groups, are shown in Figure 2.3. The highest rated scenes included the two that were the most natural appearing (scenes 5 and 6), and the downtown riverwalk scene (scene 3). The lowest rated scene was of the downtown factory/warehouse (scene 4).

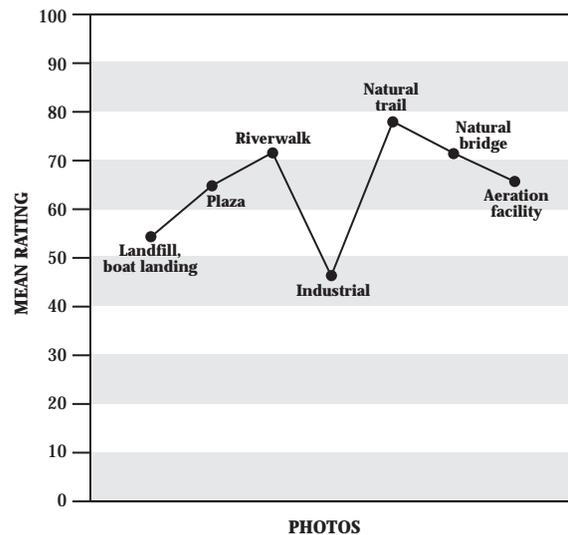


FIGURE 2.3
Mean score ratings for photos,
averaged over all groups

Discussions of people's ratings were helpful in identifying the attributes of river development that affect visual appeal, and in defining which kinds of river development alternatives were preferred for the sections of the river in which participants lived (See Table 2.3.6 for statistical information). Important general attributes included river and landscape characteristics such as the natural environment and aesthetic surroundings; condition and maintenance of the water, vegetation, and landscape; the context of development and characteristics of open space development; and safety. Specific attributes were more important to some scenes than to others. Below is a summary of the major positive and negative attributes for each scene:

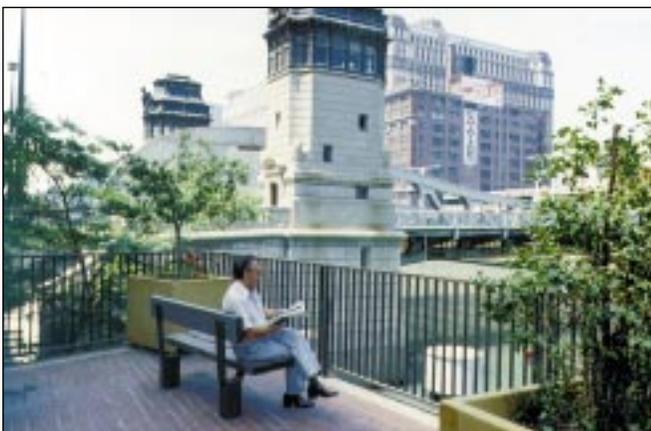
• **Scene 1—Landfill and Boat Landing**



Some viewers could not tell that the large hill across from the boat landing was a landfill. Thus, those who gave it positive ratings often did so because they thought the landfill was part of the natural topography. Most, however, didn't like this scene, and overall it was rated the second lowest. Representative comments from the Chinatown group include:

- [Adrienne] I gave it a 60. I'm not too interested in this place.*
- [Brian2] It's barren.*
- [Ken]...I just felt a little bit negative about it and put down a 40.*

• **Scene 2—Downtown Plaza**



Positive comments about the small downtown plaza revolved around its intimate scale; relaxing, user-friendly atmosphere;

and pleasant combination of natural and built elements. Representative comments include:

From the Glencoe group: *[Allen] It's an interesting concept of man-made material with nature. A very pleasant setting.*

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Brenda] I got a peaceful feeling out of it, for being in the city. There's not all this hustle and bustle, and you can sit there and relax.*

[Tom] Nice refuge.

From the Chinatown group: *[Adrienne] There is not a lot of space in this picture. But it seems to be very nice and comfortable and very nice just sitting there.*

Negative comments referred to its overly urban setting, the small scale, and potential social problems:

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Dawn] I think it needs bigger trees, to make it seem more comfortable because right now although it's planted, you're still surrounded by concrete.*

[Susan] It looks so crowded [claustrophobic], it looks like it's piling in on top of him and he looks uncomfortable sitting on what looks like a hard bench that just doesn't look like it's in place.

From the Loop group: *[Gene] I can just imagine people walking by asking: "Any change?"*

• **Scene 3—Chicago Riverwalk**



This scene of the downtown Chicago Riverwalk was the second-most discussed photo among the participants. Comments were mostly positive, focusing on the trees, the cleanliness of the water and shore, the accessibility to the water, and the apparent safety of the surrounding area. Representative comments include:

From the Lake Forest group: *[?] The trees help beautify.*

From the Glencoe group: *[Jeremy] It's festive, it's inviting, a place to stop and you would stop there. I mean you would buy things, or walk through. You'd notice it.*

From the Loop group: *[?] You can get down close to the river and you don't feel like you're isolated from everyone.*

From the Metro West group: *[Kathy] It's neat, clean looking, it's colorful, the red awnings make that picture, it's bright.*

Negative comments were few and relatively minor in comparison to what people liked about the scene:

From the Lake Forest group: *[Mark] It's a little cold.*

[Eliz.] My first impression was the trees. I like the trees but they don't look like they belong there, they're like potted plants or something. But it's pleasant, and the water looks clean.

• Scene 4—Industrial Land Use



This scene was rated the lowest, mainly due to its industrial land use, stark expanses of concrete, and lack of vegetation. The following comments summarize the feelings of many who rated this scene low:

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[?] Number four has too much cement.*

From the Lathrop group: *[?] Well, this river is a highway, you know, just another road. And there's no green, no nature there at all.*

From the Loop group: *[?] With some work you can crack that up and put in some trees.*

[?] Yea, but the way it is now there's no trees, no landscaping; you wouldn't want to sit there and look at the river, I'm sure.

Comments about this scene were not entirely negative. Positive comments mentioned by participants focused on the issues of good maintenance and utility:

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Brian] I like the fact that you can tie up your boat along there, there's cleats and it provides a useful function as well as recreation.*

From the Loop group: *[?] At least [the path] continues, I mean you can ride a bike down there.*

From the Pullman-Blue Island group: *[?]...You can go walking there, biking, keep it well lit. If industry is going to own river front property, they should make it look nice.*

• Scenes 5 and 6—Natural Areas



Scene 5

These two highest-rated scenes had much in common and were often discussed together within the focus groups. As a pair, they were also the most discussed of all the pictures. Many of the positive comments had to do with the mix of natural vegetation and recreational development. Representative comments include:

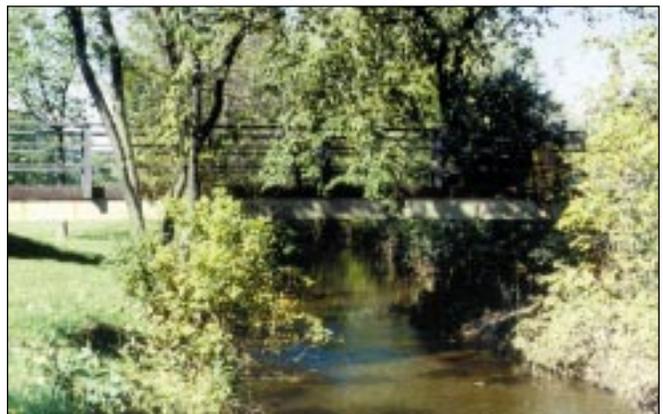
From the Lake Forest group: *[Monica] I gave it a 100 and said it was nice and seems like a very enjoyable place to ride your bike (scene 5).*

[Phil]...My comment there is: "That was created by God." And all man has to do is respect it and keep it somewhat orderly (scene 6).

From the Glencoe group: *[?] Wildflowers. It's natural yet managed and groomed (scene 5).*

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Larry] It's natural (scene 6).*

From the Loop group: *[Chuck] I like it because it's one of the few [scenes] with trees that come right down to the water's edge with no retaining wall, so I feel like it's a real river (scene 5).*



Scene 6

Several participants imagined that natural recreation settings such as these might offer significant psychological benefits to users:

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Tom] Calm and pretty (scene 5).*

From the Lathrop group: *[George] It seems like an escape, that's what it seems to me that a river could provide—some greenery, maybe you can see some wildlife instead of belly-up fish (scene 5).*

[Terell] I gave it a 100 because it looks so peaceful and serene away from a whole lot of other stuff, city stuff. This looks great, I like it (scene 5).

From the Loop group: [Bradley] The greenery is excellent and it's obviously a continuous path which means you're not going to be teased with about a hundred yards of walking space and then find yourself out on the street...(scene 5).

The high levels of naturalness and density of vegetation were perceived positively by some and negatively by others. As the following comments illustrate, some saw these features as vestiges of wilderness while others saw them as signs of neglect or limits to human use:

From the Lake Forest group: [Brian] It's not overly manicured—people tend to want to manicure everything. This doesn't have that feel. It's just natural. It would be a place I'd want to take my kids to. I like that better than [photo] 5 actually (scene 6).

From the Glencoe group: [?] I think we like to be able to use nature, but if it's overgrown with trees everywhere, it's hardly used (scene 6).

From the Lathrop group: [Lee] Number 6 looks totally ridiculous to me. The trees need to be trimmed...

[?] You'd have to do stuff, go and cut stuff down (scene 6).

From the Palos group: [Jim] My favorite picture was one you just showed with just a simple blacktop and it looks like a sort of park off to the left or it might be the edge of a golf course or something, and leaving things wooded and as wild as possible (scene 5).

From the Metro West group: [Rudolf] I rated it 50 because it's an area of benign neglect (scene 5).

[Michelle] I like the way they did it because it preserves the wildlife area. It's not all commercialized and overcrowded. It's a relaxing picture to look at (scene 5).

The safety of river landscapes with dense vegetation, like those pictured in the scenes, was also discussed in several groups. There were varied responses to such conditions, as evidenced in this dialogue between two Ravenswood-Albany Park group participants about scene 5:

[Eliz.] First, it looks unsafe, too many high overgrown places, there's that little pond over there that somebody could wander into, a child and you know, get lost. It's not well kept, the path is OK but the whole setting would be one I wouldn't want to go into.

[Dawn] I like it a lot. I love the plants and the wildflowers, I love when things grow wild but you know I think it really looks nice and like anywhere else, you have to be aware of what's around you to be safe, regardless. I mean there's paths like that in the suburbs and they're nice.

[Eliz.] But I wouldn't want to go in there by myself

[Dawn] I disagree—some people are always kind of paranoid about going into places—I don't want to insult you—if you're afraid of everything, you just can't be that way and live. But you do need to be aware of what's going on around you.

Water quality was also an issue of some disagreement, much of it based on the color or clarity of the water portrayed in the scenes:

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: [Susan]...The river looks clean, it looks like you can just dive in head first without having to worry whether or not you are going to hit a couple of pairs of dirty tennis shoes or a car that was thrown in or something, or an old inner tube...(scene 5).

From the Metro West group: [Kathy] I would have rated it higher if the water didn't look so muddy (scene 5).

[Herb]...Whether the river is muddy or not, it would be nicer if it weren't muddy and you saw fish jumping, but I guess if it doesn't smell, you're not seeing debris floating or even under the surface, I can enjoy it if there are other things around it (scene 5).

From the Evanston-Skokie group: [Bernadine] The water looks dirty (scene 6).

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: [Susan] I liked the other one [scene 5] but I don't like this one because the water looks murky (scene 6).

[Brenda] It looks more like a creek, with a mud bottom and stuff (scene 6).

• Scene 7—Aeration Facility



Much of the discussion of scene 7 focused on trying to decide what was making the white foam in the water. Once they knew this was an aeration facility, several participants commented positively on the cleanup efforts and the well-maintained landscape, while others felt that the design of the facility could be more natural and user-friendly:

From the Lake Forest group: [Brian] Way too industrial.

From the Glencoe group: [Annette] I just put urban and controlled.

From the Lathrop group: [Lee] I really do like that one. It's better scenery that way. Everything is trimmed and everything looks perfect for a river.

From the Chinatown group: [Adrienne] Picture seven I gave an 80. For the green, trees, spaciousness, and it looks clean.

[Brian1] I gave it an 80, too. Clean water, it looked a little bit more artificial and stuff, it wouldn't be so ideal for people. The sides make it look artificial.

ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF PREFERENCE

People's comments about the seven photos showed us how the elements of an ideal setting might play a role in river corridor development:

- **Clean water:** The apparent color and clarity of the water seem important indicators of preference, and signs of water cleanup activities are also viewed in a positive light.
- **Green vegetation:** Whether in formal urban plantings or in natural masses, trees and green vegetation are important contributors to river settings across the development spectrum.
- **A well-maintained landscape:** In urban and suburban settings, maintenance of natural and built features is important. Care is reflected in many things, including the appearance of water and vegetation; the presence of litter, graffiti, or vandalism; and the upkeep of facilities.
- **Good design:** Built features along the riverscape should show sensitivity to detail, have a good sense of scale, invite use, and respect the nature of the setting.
- **A relaxing, aesthetically pleasing atmosphere:** By their very nature, rivers seem to have special inherent qualities that foster relaxation and psychological renewal (Kaplan, 1977). Riverscape design and management of water, vegetation, and facilities can enhance these important psychological benefits, as well as enhance recreation and aesthetics.
- **A high level of safety:** As described in this and earlier sections, the perception of safety can vary widely among different people, and a place that is perceived safe by one person may be considered unsafe by another. Dense vegetation can be a potential threat to safety, and can thus affect the desirability of using river areas for recreation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

Although these attributes were mentioned as desirable in many of the scenes, there were marked differences in how some attributes were interpreted as a function of the *context* or setting in which the scene was discussed. Focus group participants made an important distinction between the kinds and levels of development that were appropriate where they lived and those appropriate to other settings. These other settings include urban commercial, urban industrial, and urban and suburban open space. Comments on the scenes below illustrate how participants saw the relationships between context and appropriate development:

• Scene 2—Downtown Plaza

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Larry] Number two is for cities only.*

From the Chinatown group: *[Brian2] I liked it, but it's not really a park setting that I sort of envisioned [for the new Chinatown park].*

• Scene 3—Chicago Riverwalk

From the Lake Forest group: *[Kathy] For downtown it is appealing.*

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Georgette] It's good for urban.*

[David] I think that's good for the city, but I don't like it for the suburbs.

From the Chinatown group: *[Gene] Three is good but realistically you can't...I don't think it's suitable for our neighborhood...*

• Scene 5—Natural Area with Trail

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Larry] I would never touch that, that's pretty. You're talking about nature, but you know it depends on where you're looking at. If you're looking at Evanston or some place like it, that would be better up north along the Skokie Lagoons area...I think [the North Shore Channel in] Evanston still looks nice, but they need a little more openness...*

The next section elaborates on what specific levels of naturalness and development people felt were appropriate to the stretch of river they lived along. Referring to participants' discussion of the photographs, however, we did find some sketchy evidence of culturally based preferences for levels of naturalness and development. One comment by an older participant of the Chinatown focus group expressed this cultural distinction:

[Ken] This one (photo 2) in terms of Chinese people would be better than the other one (photo 3). This (#2) is more like a setting for Chinese people. The other (#3) is for American people.

Many participants in the Evanston-Skokie, Lathrop, and Pullman-Blue Island groups who were African American expressed greater preferences for scenes showing high levels of maintenance and facility development as well as vegetation that was more open, formal, and manicured. On the other hand, Anglo American participants in these groups and especially in the suburban Lake Forest, Glencoe, and Palos groups often expressed preferences for less developed scenes with a higher density of natural vegetation. It is not certain whether these variable preferences are based on ethnicity or are a function of urban-suburban residency, and there is evidence in the related literature to support both hypotheses (e.g., Schroeder, 1983; Kaplan and Talbot, 1988; Dwyer and Gobster, 1992). Nevertheless, the variability in preferences expressed by groups due to culture, location, or other factors makes it all the more important to consider the context of development in river planning and management.

RIVER IMPROVEMENTS

With information about ideal settings and responses to photographs of river development alternatives to build on, we ended our focus groups with an open discussion of how the river could be improved for recreation and other purposes. Participants generally focused on many of the same issues as they did in discussions of ideal settings and photo ratings: an emphasis on improving the condition and maintaining the quality of river water, vegetation, and landscape; a focus on different river development alternatives; and a concern for protecting the natural and aesthetic characteristics of the

corridor (Table 2.3.7). Specific comments on these issues, however, are best understood by how they help to answer three important questions about improving the river for recreation and other purposes: 1) Can development proceed if the water is not clean? 2) What general recommendations can be made for improving the corridor? 3) What specific recommendations did participants make about the river in their particular neighborhoods? These questions are addressed in the following sections.

CAN DEVELOPMENT PROCEED IF THE WATER IS NOT CLEAN?

Most participants did not expect that the Chicago River would or should be made into a pristine environment, and while most wanted to see water quality improvements made, they realized the urban nature of the river and its non-recreational uses. Many remarked that they can still bicycle, observe wildlife, and enjoy other in-stream and streamside recreational activities even though they know the water is polluted, as long as it doesn't stink. Most of all, our sample of nearby residents cared deeply for their river, and while they realized that water quality remains a significant problem, they held high hopes for the future:

From the Palos group: *[Helen] I may not see [the improvements] in my time, but I'm sure they're going to happen.*

From the Metro East group: *[Matt]...even the people who thought the river was polluted—and I think just about everyone here thinks that—it's still a wonderful resource and it's something that we really care about.*

From the Metro West group: *[Emily] I think the river just adds to Chicago and makes it all the more beautiful. I always thought the river was beautiful and I mean even though it's dirty, it's nothing that can't be improved.*

[Herb] Look at cities in Europe and how important the rivers are there. And they maintain their importance to the state even though they are polluted.

[Kathy] The river itself doesn't do a lot for me. I think it's how they set it up. Obviously in that picture it's what they do along the river to make it look attractive, because the river itself is dirty. To me it is anyway, so how can they make it look attractive with the buildings and the settings and what not around it even though the water itself is dirty.

This optimistic outlook was found in all the focus groups, except the Pullman-Blue Island group. Participants in that group had an underlying despair for the future of the river in their neighborhood:

[Jennifer] I'm pessimistic about the future of the rivers.

[Louise] Like I said, it would be nice if you could develop all the shore area there. I think there is a lot of possibility but as long as the landfill is there I don't see any potential. Because no matter how nice you make it look, it's still going to stink.

[Jerry] They have to stop the pollution that's coming from Indiana. They did try to clean up the Cal at one time and they noticed that just too much pollution was coming from Indiana and if you don't have cooperation between states you're not going to get anywhere fast. Unless they do some interstate cooperation, I don't really see any future for the Cal-Sag.

One person had an interesting perspective on the sequence of water pollution cleanup and river development activities, and put it this way:

From the Metro East group: *[George] If they do it step-wise, if they beautify it first with trees and landscaping, then maybe people will force the politicians to clean it up. Because if you beautify an area, then the next thing is you don't want it polluted as much anymore. So maybe instead of going in there and cleaning it up, you beautify it first. It's like if you're wearing a clean shirt and you get a spot on it—maybe people will notice the pollution more once you get the trees and landscaping along all these different branches.*

WHAT GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE MADE FOR IMPROVING THE CORRIDOR?

Many of the recommendations participants made for improving the river in their neighborhood involved issues common throughout the corridor. These issues are itemized below, illustrated by comments from participants in different focus groups:

- **Continue to improve water quality:** For most groups, the need for water quality improvements was chief among the recommendations made. Again, various of perspectives were given from the different reaches along the corridor:

From the Glencoe group: *[Dan] I think it should be cleaned faster so that people can swim in it.*

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[?] It would be nice if the river was clean and you could have picnics by it without worrying about rats or perverts.*

From the Lathrop group: *[George] If they are going to have riverboat gambling they are going to have to clean it up to make it attractive for the out-of-state business coming in, all the high rollers. But again, I'm rather cynical about that, I mean there's a lot that could be done that needs to be done—we have the mechanisms to clean water. There's other places where filth can be poured instead of the river. If there was some will on the part of the enforcement agencies. The river looks best on St. Patrick's Day when they dump green dye in it, that's when it looks good. Other than that it's just a waterway. You know transportation is something, but waterways can be much cleaner and also be used for more than transporting goods.*

- **Improve the vegetation:** Recommendations dealt mainly with adding trees and other greenery to the corridor:

From the Metro East group: *[Tim] More trees. Daley's got a good thing going with his trees. And certain people here would like the architecture and other parts of it preserved as well—don't just make the whole thing trees. It's a varied river, you know, it's quite a bit different along different parts of it. I like the variety, beautify certain parts of it, and clean it.*

From the Palos group: *[Ann] They really should plant more wildflowers and other things that will beautify the area. You know they've just got this, it just goes down this bank and then there's scrub grass and a few bushes and weeds. I would like it to be cultivated a little bit more so we had some color and flowers and stuff like that.*

- **Improve landscape maintenance:** Recommendations here related to cleanup of litter and maintenance of riparian vegetation:

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Susan] I would like to see the shoreline tree lined, the other vegetation cleaned up, and a lot of the glass and other garbage that has been thrown in there needs to be removed.*

From the Lathrop group: *[Maxine] If you kept [the chain-link fence] free of weeds and tall grass, you could see through it to the river and then maybe the kids wouldn't be tempted to climb over it.*

From the Pullman-Blue Island group: *[Jennifer]...get the beer bottles and the litter out of there and get some nice, fresh, healthy land.*

- **Aim for an appropriate level of development:** Development recommendations varied greatly across the reaches of the corridor, but in general participants felt that development—whether for economic, recreational, or environmental purposes—should be carried out with sensitivity to the context of surrounding land uses:

From the Loop group: *[Bob]...I wish the Chicago River was developed with more of a promenade approach, where you have a place that people could come to with cafes or just stroll along on it. Right now you've got this discontinuous link: you kind of walk along it and then you have to go around it then come back to it.*

From the Palos group: *[Joe] I'd like to see a generally enhanced, limited development consistent with the country-fied ambiance that we have now...I think the pressure to commercialize it is going to be enormous. I like commerce naturally, but when the rush is on such as when Crestwell gets permission and sets a precedent by building that marina on the south side of the canal, I think it's going to go bonkers.*

From the Pullman-Blue Island group: *[Jennifer] I think there could be more businesses. They might even create some jobs in the area. There would be a lot of potential there if it was clean, if it wasn't so bad, but people stay away because of that.*

- **Create a balance and variety of uses along the corridor:** Although each reach might dictate development-specific approaches, it is clear that no single theme can or should be forced upon the entire corridor. Instead, as one discussion from the Lathrop focus group illustrates, perhaps the best strategy for corridor planning might be to recognize, plan for, and celebrate the variety that is the Chicago River corridor:

[George] There are many things you can have, many different views along different parts of the river, and the means of transportation to get to each of them. If you have functional areas like that area where the water was being aerated, grow some trees, grow some greenery, it doesn't have to be overhanging. However, leave some areas that are unspoiled where the trees can hang the way they would grow normally. Many different parts of the city have different uses, different functions; the river is needed in some areas for transportation—you won't get the kind of greenery there, it doesn't make any sense to have overhanging trees. Other places it can be more

like a park. I mean, you have residential there, we have parks here. Picture number five comes closest to what I have in mind for this area.

[Lee] Yeah, yeah you hit it right on the button, brother. A variety of all of them.

- **Develop a corridor trail system:** Along some reaches that do not currently have them, the development of trails was recommended to enhance recreational quality:

From the Lake Forest group: *[Kati] I think they could put in a path, not with gravel but with chips like a hiking trail almost.*

From the Lathrop group: *[George] Build it up, I've seen proposals for bike paths and stuff. With some greenery around the shore, it would be an area where you would want to go, where you would want to spend some time...*

From the Loop group: *[Bradley] I would like to see continuous jogging, walking, and biking paths along the river; ultimately leading out of the city. Where you can take the branches all the way out to the forest preserve areas. Some people can run that distance.*

From the Chinatown group: *[Brian2] I was thinking more in terms of the San Antonio Riverwalk...a riverwalk—to walk, shop, bicycle.*

From the Palos group: *[Ann] Great potential. I would love to see some of it blacktopped so we could walk along it...*

From the Metro East group: *[Matt]...I don't see any reason why you couldn't have a small strip of land along the river that was park-like and would be taken care of. And you could have a running path and a bicycle path and a few places where you could have other parks and ballfields...*

- **Increase safety:** Recommendations for increasing the safety were diverse, and in the case of vegetation management and fencing, were often conflicting:

From the Lake Forest group: *[Brian] If you maintain fairly heavy vegetation along the top of the embankment, it would act as a disincentive for a kid to try and get down there. And there's a lot of that now; I've never really tried to access it from the yards, but looking down the stream from the end of the road there's a pretty heavy cover of vegetation along it.*

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Dorsey] A fence on the steep embankment would help but, I think a lot of the greenery—the trees, the shrubs—a lot of that just needs to be cut away...*

[Larry] Kids are going to jump cyclone fences, kids are going to do whatever they want to do. You can't stop them. People know they can't walk near the edge, I mean older folks walking in the neighborhoods aren't going to walk along the edge of the water and fall into it...

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Claire] Where we're talking about they need to put up a fence. There is one that they have, but a car crashed through and knocked the fence over and now it's pretty pathetic...*

- **Improve access:** As was mentioned in previous sections, the issue of access had many dimensions for participants. Few specific recommendations were given in this section for improving access, with most comments referring to physical access:

From the Loop group: *[Ann] I think they should really concentrate on just making a path where people could go continuously walking.*

From the Palos group: *[Ed] What they really need to do with it is make the area accessible; right now there are no pre-planned paths or anything...*

- **Tell current success stories:** Up and down the corridor we heard many positive stories of river cleanup efforts, recreational facility developments, and plant and wildlife preservation projects. In some cases this knowledge was widespread among participants, but in most instances only one or two participants were aware of activities going on. Better promotional campaigns by agencies, municipalities, and interest groups could raise public consciousness about these activities, as shown by the following two comments from participants in the southern reaches of the corridor about cleanup efforts by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District along the Cal-Sag:

From the Palos group: *[Dick] The only thing I would say is we know that this waterfall is in there and it's supposed to be aerating the water or it's cleaning the water; I don't think it's filtering it. But maybe there should be more PR as to just how well is it functioning. Has the pH level changed, what's happening? It's been running for a year except for when it was closed down...What was the water like when it started, and after all this money was spent, what's the water like now?*

From the Pullman-Blue Island group: *[Bill] Well I'm hoping what they're trying to do is going to work. It remains to be seen. I know there were five projects on the books and I know that two of them are built and operating and they are both in nice-looking areas. The water is still dirty, but they're working on it.*

- **Use information to change perceptions:** Information about cleanup efforts and other ongoing projects can go far to change people's perceptions of the river corridor. These current efforts provide excellent opportunities to showcase the river. In many cases, however, the river can "speak for itself" in attracting people's interest and enthusiasm—all they have to do is see and/or experience the river, something those who do not live near it rarely do. As these comments from the Metro West focus group illustrate, the color photographs of scenes along the corridor changed the perceptions of two of the participants:

[Brian] I was going to say you can change your opinion just from a picture. Her opinion was way down low and now all of a sudden she sees a picture and realizes it's the river she's just been downplaying the whole time, you know suddenly it just looked beautiful to her. A picture can tell you a thousand words and apparently it did for her.

[Herb] I guess I would say that the river's natural creative beauty is for the most part probably gone so what it's going to be is up to people. It can be many things and that's possible, certainly with a commitment on the part of people. As much as anything, it's a matter of knowing—and your pictures are one way—that there really are beautiful spots even now, and changing the negative perceptions that people have.

- **Encourage local action and responsibility:** One final issue that cut across the focus groups concerned how such a formidable task as river cleanup can actually happen. Many participants looked to governmental bodies to clean up, regulate, and monitor the environmental quality of land and water resources. In several focus groups, however, participants also talked about the need for individuals and local groups to share responsibility for cleaning up the river:

From the Glencoe group: *[Robbie] Clean up. People should take responsibility for themselves more or less, I mean, it doesn't even have to be a group thing, it can be a personal thing. If everyone just picked a spot today you wouldn't even need to have these [focus groups].*

[Jeremy] It's been said but I'd also like to say that I'm glad all the people out there are willing to clean it up, helping to clean it up, and I'd like to see that continue and have people go out there everyday to clean so it's not dirty anymore.

From the Evanston-Skokie group: *[Larry]...people just have to police themselves and police their neighborhoods...*

From the Ravenswood-Albany Park group: *[Susan] I think a lot of the time we depend on other people to do the work for us, and I think a lot of the time a community effort would be a heck of a better idea, because when you depend on the city to do it for you, you could sit on your backside until the millennium comes and you know that it ain't going to happen. But if you can get a bunch of people that are actually saying: "I'm tired of this," you can really get something done.*

The issue of local responsibility and need for community action is well summarized in this dialogue from the Lathrop focus group participants:

[James] Instead of talking about it, they should do something about it.

[Lee] Who do we need to contact for the making of a better river?

[Terell] Let's get some action.

[Maxine] We can start this weekend by helping out on the river cleanup.

[Lee] But is that our job?

[Maxine] Yes. It's our community and if we don't put something into it, no one else will, either.

WHAT SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE MADE FOR IMPROVING PARTICULAR REACHES?

In addition to corridor-wide recommendations, issues of concern within particular focus groups inspired participants to recommend specific actions for improving conditions in their neighborhood and along their reach:

- **Middle Fork/Lake Forest:** One suggestion was to deal more effectively with flooding by cleaning up some of the downed trees and other obstructions that cause water to back up into people's yards and basements. Another was to increase safety near the river and lessen the chance that children will slide down the bank and into the water.

Suggestions here included planting denser vegetation along the crest of the hill to deter access and installing a natural path with rope railing at key use areas, e.g., where roads dead-end at the river.

The most important discussion dealt with the appropriate level of development for the Middle Fork Savanna area. An initial suggestion by one participant was questioned by others, but soon a general consensus was reached by those living near the savanna on how they felt it should be developed for use:

[Brian] A paved bike path near where we go would enhance the area. The other thing I think would enhance it without changing the nature area is, and some people will disagree with this, but since I have little kids I would love to see some understated swing sets or something down in that area for kids to play...

[Vern] I have an objection there. I think the savanna should be made for nature study. I think there are other facilities available for baseball and so forth, but that's a rare, a very rare thing and if we lose it, it's gone forever.

[Meredith] I agree that it should be left in its natural state; the area behind our house is going to have paths so there are other wildlife preserves available where you could do that type of thing. I don't know whether putting in a natural path or something would disturb it, but it's supposed to be one of the rarest pieces of savanna in the State of Illinois, there's such few left, and I don't know about tampering with it.

[Kati] Yea, I think they could put in a path, not with gravel but with chips like a hiking trail almost.

[Sharon] People get carried away once they start cleaning it up and putting in a path. Lake Forest always does the biggest and the best, but then pretty soon you're going to have tennis courts and everything else.

[Brian] What I've seen in other areas first they put in a path, then they do fences and pretty soon you're decorating it up. Just a simple path without decoration is what's best.

- **Skokie Lagoons/Glencoe:** Participants in this focus group agreed that the naturalness of the area should be maintained, except in some recreation areas where a more groomed look could prevail. The Skokie Lagoons cleanup effort should be continued; some participants imagined a future in which the Lagoons would not only be fishable, but swimmable as well. Cleanup efforts should also be increased along the shore areas, with better self-policing of litter by forest preserve recreationists and some removal of fallen trees near areas of human use.

Perhaps the biggest problem that participants would like managers to focus on is the exploding population of deer and their impact on people and the native vegetation of the forest preserve:

[Sheldon]...I would also like to see animal control where...I think the Skokie Lagoons offers, it's such a natural thing where you have animals and people in a playground you know. That's where people meet nature, you know you have the animals here but I would like to see the deer controlled

somewhat but not killed. Perhaps something could be done to prevent them from roaming and still maintain them there. Like an electronic fence. It's really going to be I think dangerous. I would hate to see a deer lying dead on Forest Way.

[Francine] There was one on Dundee Rd. last week.

[Nancy] I think everything has been said. I guess it's the balance between the deer and the wildflowers that I see as the problem, but it is the loss of the wildflowers in particular that I most deplore.

- **North Shore Channel/Evanston-Skokie:** Most recommendations from participants dealt with the safety issue. The dilemma for management is: How do you maintain the natural, pleasing quality of the landscape yet maintain a comfortable level of perceived safety? Recommendations included the following:

[Larry] I think Evanston and that area still looks nice, but they need a little openness.

[David] Yeah, it's a little dangerous, a little dense, but it's like Larry said, you don't want to touch something like that, it's beautiful. The only problem is that late at night you probably would want to close it off like [they do in the forest preserves]. Close it off, fence it off late at night so you can't cross it, but in the daylight I think that's ideal.

[June] The main thing is the patrolling, because the park is already really nice.

[David] Either that or open up that street again. I think that would be a big help.

- **North Branch/Ravenswood-Albany Park:** Increasing the safety was the main suggestion of participants in this focus group; their solutions echoed many of those touched on by Evanston-Skokie participants. Community-based strategies to increase safety and clean up water and shore areas were seen as playing important roles in an overall effort:

[Brenda] Like neighborhood watches; get together everyone in your neighborhood that lives in the general vicinity of Horner Pk. [to police the area by the river], because you formed the neighborhood watch with the neighbors so the community ought to get together and do it.

- **North Branch/Lathrop:** The main suggestion of participants was to improve the water quality of the river—to decrease the smell, reduce the garbage thrown into it, and make it more usable for boating and fishing. Solutions here included community-based initiatives and fines for polluters who dump or throw trash into the river. Another set of suggestions was aimed at improving the shoreline area so that it could be better used by residents:

[Maxine]...They need to cut some of the weeds down and clean up and then people can have more respect for it.

[Emmet] If they made a major change to the shoreline it would be better; it would give a good outlook on life. It maybe would help people have something to do instead of just sitting around in the house, talking, hanging out.

- **Main Branch/Loop:** Recommendations specific to the downtown sections of the corridor included increasing the safety of walkway areas, increasing the continuity of the riverwalk, and developing more cafes and restaurants that can be reached on foot and by boat. The proposal to develop a riverboat gambling facility near the downtown area was a major topic of discussion, and opinions were mixed on what the city should do:

[Chris]...I think it would probably improve the quality of our building, as far as we could get more out of our condo and things like that. It would improve our value because I think if it would be done, they would have to make sure they did it right and it would beautify the area instead of degrading the area, and they would have to be responsible for that branch of the river, too.

[Chuck] I say if it does come, I say put it on a boat instead of Navy Pier.

[Gene] I think it's ridiculous to put it on a boat when you've got all this undeveloped land. We're talking about 30,000 jobs. What is the point in having it, what Daley is talking about now is a moat, a moat boat, that's basically it. That's ridiculous, why not just build it on the ground? People come to Chicago, the rest of the state lives off Chicago. Definitely put it on land. We're talking about two billion dollars worth of development.

[Chris] It doesn't matter to me.

[Bradley] I don't like it. I don't like organized crime, period.

[Mary Anne] I think we're still lucky to have such a wonderful resource like the Chicago River and the whole lakefront, and anything that gives people more access to that, I think it should be utilized. There is a certain charm and sense of freedom that you get on a boat that goes along with recreation, gambling, or being in a nightclub atmosphere. I think it's a lot of fun.

- **South Branch/Chinatown:** Recommendations by Chinatown participants for their stretch of the river were to increase river cleanup efforts, and develop park space and a riverwalk along the South Branch. Some participants were concerned that while increased river development might be good for the local economy, shoreline restaurants, recreational boating operations, and the like would not meet the needs of Chinatown residents:

[Facilitator] Is there potential in your neighborhood for this kind of development?

[Brian1] None that I see.

[Ken] No, not in my neighborhood...you know, you have to consider if people can afford that type of thing.

- **Cal-Sag Channel/Palos:** Recommendations included cleanup of the river, restrictions on further industrial development, some limited commercial-recreational development including the construction of a marina (already proposed), and enhancement of recreational opportunities with path development along the shore of the canal. Palos participants were highly concerned that further develop-

ment should respect and enhance the natural qualities that now exist:

[Jim] I'd just really like to see them continue with their efforts to clean it up. As far as developing along it, try to preserve as much of the wildness as you can. Keep it clean, keep it simple...

[Ann]...I think there is great potential there and I would just love to see that developed as they have talked about through the years, and having some little areas where there are restaurants or recreational facilities so that you could stop to watch the ducks or whatever.

[Ed] Maintain its current natural setting, don't really upheave the whole thing to make it professional looking. Let it be the natural look. And make it accessible to people so that they don't have any fear about walking through it, either.

[Helen] I want it kept pretty much the way it is. I like the way it is.

[Marie] I pretty much feel the same way, I'd like to clean it up, not a lot of building and things but I would like a marina where you could stop in and walk. Of course, the path sounds great.

- **Calumet River/Pullman-Blue Island:** Participants would like to see their river enhanced for recreational and business opportunities. But before any development can happen, they overwhelmingly stressed the need to clean up the river and adjacent landfill:

[Regina] If they cleaned up Mount Trashmore that would be a big help. A lot of the pollution coming into the Cal-Sag is coming from Indiana and they are not stopping it because it's Indiana's so it's coming over the border and polluting everything. If they cleaned up the river, even if they got 30 percent of it out of there, it would make the area a little bit nicer. You know, it would bring some of the summer boating in and some of the people back, and maybe rebuild the area around there.

[Jennifer] I think what she said about Mount Trashmore is holding up a lot. I think the water should be cleaned up—it's a living thing, it needs to breathe basically. I think it needs to be cleaned somehow, just to bring the life back to it—it's like a big sludge puddle.

PART IV CONCLUSIONS

This study provided some insights into how an important constituent group, nearby neighborhood residents, perceive and use the Chicago River corridor. Although many specific thoughts and ideas were generated from the different focus group exercises and discussions, these findings can be condensed into three general themes to guide future planning efforts: the issues of central importance, the dynamics of the corridor, and the means to successful implementation of planning goals and objectives. We conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of each theme.

- **The Issues: Water Quality, Naturalness, Aesthetics, Maintenance, Safety, Access:** These six issues emerged time and again during the focus group discussions—from initial discussions of ideal settings for recreation, to perceptions of the river in participants’ neighborhoods, to preferred features of river scenes, to suggestions for future development. Although these issues helped define what was important to the study participants, the various ways in which the issues were talked about revealed the specifics of what participants felt they had, didn’t have, and wanted to have. With water quality taking the lead, a comprehensive understanding of these issues will help ensure the success of planning, management, and programs for the Chicago River and other urban river corridors being considered for improvement. This study has provided the basis for such an understanding, and it has shown not only the importance of these issues, but also their complex, multidimensional nature.

- **The Dynamics: Change, Variability, Diversity, Context, Appropriateness:** Although the six issues mentioned above might be thought of as required considerations for urban river corridor enhancements, another underlying but important theme conveyed frequently in this report signals caution to those wishing to apply any wholesale solutions to corridor planning, management, and programs. This theme refers to the dynamics of the corridor, dynamics that have temporal, spatial, social, and personal components to them. The corridor is diverse, both geographically and socially, and this diversity is reflected in the varied ways in which focus group participants talked about the present and desired condition of the river in their neighborhood. Solutions to river corridor problems must therefore be appropriate to their context. Even within a neighborhood or reach there will be multiple values and attitudes toward a given issue, and thus solutions need to accommodate differences or work toward consensus. Finally, it must be recognized that perceptions and uses of the river corridor will continue to change as more and more improvements are made. As is generally the case with environmental quality improvements, as people come to recognize the value of the resource they demand more of it. For the Chicago River corridor, demands for recreation development will no doubt increase as the environment of the corridor improves; corridor planners and managers should begin now to think about what this could mean, not just in the near future, but 30 to 50 years from now as well. In some cases, this will mean capitalizing on opportunities for land protection and enhancement in areas that currently do not receive much use or attention, while in other cases it will dictate stronger actions toward ensuring the continued balance of river uses for industry and commerce along with recreation. Either way, research such as this can help identify policy directions to help guide long-range decisionmaking.

- **The Means to Success: Awareness, Knowledge, Use, Experience, Concern, Action:** The final theme expressed in study findings is a critical one to keep in mind for planning, management, and program implementation. The success of future efforts in the corridor will depend largely on the receptivity of the corridor constituents, a receptivity that begins with awareness and knowledge, which in turn can lead to use and experience of the resource, and might ultimately result in concern and positive actions to protect and enhance the resource. This study showed the difficulty of realizing such a turn of events, for the awareness and knowledge of river and river improvement activities tend to be very localized and can drop off dramatically the further away people live from a given stretch of river. To the extent that the public can be informed about the river and improvement activities through news stories and features and through on-site information such as signs and facility tours, perceptions can be formed or improved. Sincerity is the key to any informational program, for misleading claims could work against the best intentioned of efforts.

Use and experience are the essential counterparts to information for establishing an appreciation and concern for the corridor. Land and water trails can be ideal for bringing people into direct contact with the resource; and in many cases can become educational as well as recreational experiences for participants. Guided tours, an important way to reach and target particular audiences, can “initiate” those unfamiliar with the resource and who might not otherwise seek it out on their own.

Public participation in resource management activities is one increasingly popular and successful way to accomplish environmental improvement goals; it has been used successfully by the Friends of the Chicago River and other environmental groups in Chicago and elsewhere. River restoration programs include river cleanup, ecological restoration of vegetative communities, and water quality monitoring. The direct interaction with the environment the activities offer participants is more than a recreational or social experience, and many who become involved in restoration find it provides them with deep aesthetic, symbolic, and spiritual values (Jordan, 1993).

In conclusion, this chapter offers some ideas for how we might better plan for river improvement by understanding the perceptions and preferences of one important user and interest group: nearby neighborhood residents. Knowing the issues and their dynamics is the important first step to action, but engaging the public to assist in action will surely be the key to success.

APPENDIX 2.1

FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR GUIDE

I. Introduction (5 minutes)

- A. Written Exercise—Worksheet 1: Have participants complete background questionnaire including demographic questions.

II. Free Associations, Ratings and Imagery (15 minutes)

- A. Written Exercises—Worksheets 2 & 3: Have participants free associate and rate on a 0 degree (cold/negative) to 100 degree (warm/positive) scale a list of general and area-specific landmarks and/or outdoor recreational developments, including “The Chicago River in Your Neighborhood.”
- B. Imagery Exercise—Worksheet 4: Pass out boxes of crayons and have participants draw a picture of “The Chicago River in My Neighborhood.” When finished, have them turn the sheet over and complete the sentence: “I am the Chicago River in your neighborhood. I am...”

III. Outdoor Recreation Behavior and Attitudes (15 minutes)

A. Activities

1. Discussion: What outdoor recreation activities have you done in your neighborhood during the last 12 months? What about other members of your household?

B. Motivations

1. Written Exercise—Worksheet 5: Have participants list words and phrases that would describe their ideal setting for outdoor recreation activities in their neighborhood.
2. Discussion: People want to get outside to recreate in their neighborhood for different reasons. What do you want out of your outdoor recreation activities? Why do you do the things you do? Where in your neighborhood do you go? Why do you choose a particular site or setting over another one? Specific probes: importance of adjacent land use, water quality, environmental quality, feeling of wildness, aesthetics, access, facility development, safety, and congestion.

IV. Chicago River Imagery (35 minutes)

- A. Discussion: Results of Free Association Exercise—Worksheet 2. Probe for specific reasons for associations to “The Chicago River in Your Neighborhood.”
- B. Discussion: Results of Rating Exercise—Worksheet 3. Probe for specific reasons for ratings of “The Chicago River in Your Neighborhood.”
- C. Discussion: Results of Imagery Exercise—Worksheet 4. Have people discuss their drawings and descriptions of the river in their neighborhood; probe for features or feelings included in their imagery.
- D. Discussion: Specific Probes—Thinking about the Chicago River in your neighborhood, how do you feel about adjacent land use? Water quality? Environmental quality? Feelings of wildness? Aesthetics? Access? Facility development? Safety? Congestion? Why?

V. Chicago River Corridor Development (20 minutes)

A. Development Scenarios

1. Written Exercise—Worksheet 6: Show participants pictures of river corridor development exhibiting different aesthetic, land use, and recreational opportunity options. Have them rate and record their comments about each picture.
2. Discussion: Reasons for your ratings? Which pictures show the kind of development you’d like to see for the Chicago River corridor? Should there be different kinds of development along the river? Are there specific places that should have a certain kind of development?

B. Attitudes and Suggestions for River Improvement

1. Discussion: What principles should guide development of the Chicago River in your neighborhood? What would you like to see done and not done? What final message would you give to river corridor planners and managers for improving the river corridor, in your neighborhood or elsewhere?

APPENDIX 2.2

FOCUS GROUP CODING PROCESS

CODING PROCESS

To begin the coding process, we first thoroughly familiarized ourselves with the tapes and transcripts. Upon each iteration (up to 9 iterations per focus group), codes were formulated and revised until a system was developed for accurately and reliably coding participants' responses. Using a combination of statistical software packages including the Text Analysis Package (TAP) Version 1.0 (Drass, 1986) and SYSTAT for Windows Version 5 (SYSTAT Inc., 1992), we coded each response made by a person to identify:

- 1) The **response** itself—the unique number of the response, the individual who made it, and the group he or she was in;
- 2) The **context** in which the response was made—whether or not the response dealt with the river, whether it dealt

with current perceptions and uses or future prospects and alternatives;

- 3) The pertinent **issues** conveyed in the response—general issue of concern (e.g., safety) and specific issue of concern (e.g., falling in the water).

In practice, each response received three response codes, one of five context codes, and up to three issue codes. The TAP program was used to code the context and issue codes; however, because TAP is limited to a maximum of 4 codes per response, some of the more lengthy and complex responses were split to adequately capture the number of issues they addressed. The box shown here gives a typical example of a how a respondent's comment was coded from the transcript.

EXAMPLE

In response to the facilitator's lead question, the respondent answers with three activities he and his family often engage in close to home:

1 2 nr1 h110 h150 h170 [Mark] Walking, bicycling, rollerblading.

Response Coding: The first two columns identify the respondent's focus group number and the unique number assigned to this comment. The text itself includes the respondent's name in brackets.

Context Coding: The third column identifies the context code, indicating the comment referred to the one (in bold italics) of five context codes below that described activities in general, not specifically associated with the Chicago River.

- yr References to activities, places and perceptions related to the Chicago River
 - yr1 Current conditions, perceptions, and uses of the river
 - yr2 River development prospects & alternatives—including activities they would like to do
 - yr3 Response to photographs of river development—Use photo numbers yr31 to yr37
- nr References to activities and places not on the Chicago River
 - nr1 Activities currently engaged in, generally or in other places but not on the river**
 - nr2 Ideal settings for recreation

Issue Coding: Columns 4-6 include codes for each of the activities mentioned by the respondent. The issue codes provide information of a hierarchical nature, from general to specific. At the most general level, the 3 activities each fell into letter "h" or "k" general categories:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| a. River place names and locations | e. Reputation of the river | i. Safety issues |
| b. History and river facts | f. Current and future development | j. Crowding, conflict, other social issues |
| c. Characteristics of the river landscape | g. Access issues | k. Demographics |
| d. Current condition and maintenance | h. Recreation activities | |

Although each of the issue codes can be accessed on this general level, actual responses were assigned codes of a much more specific nature. Within the "Recreation activities" general category, codes 100-900 were used to assign the activities to a more specific activity category:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| h100 Linear and solo active activities | h400 Water activities | h700 Winter sports |
| h200 Passive activities | h500 Active group sports | h800 "Urban" activities |
| h300 Children's activities | h600 Nature and arts activities | h900 Community-based activities |

Finally, at the most specific level (for this issue), codes 10-70 were used to identify the specific activities mentioned:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| h110 Walking | h140 Walking pets | h170 Biking |
| h120 Running, jogging | h150 Rollerblading, skating | |
| h130 Exercising | h160 Skateboarding | |

CODEBOOK

Context Codes (use “p” extension to indicate specific place names on or off the river)

- yr References to activities, places, and perceptions related to the Chicago River
 - yr1 Current conditions, perceptions, and uses of the river
 - yr2 River development prospects & alternatives—including activities respondents would like to do
 - yr3 Response to photographs of river development—Use photo numbers yr31 to yr37
- nr Reference to activities and places not on the Chicago River
 - nr1 Activities that respondents currently engage in generally or in other places but not on the river
 - nr2 Ideal settings for recreation

ISSUE CODES

- A River place names and locations
 - A101 Problems in identification of river name
 - A102 The river system and branches; connectivity of the system
 - A103 Colloquial names for the river—ditch, canal, channel, etc.
 - A104 West Fork of North Branch
 - A105 Middle Fork of North Branch
 - A106 East Fork of North Branch/Skokie River, Skokie Lagoons
 - A107 North Branch
 - A108 North Shore Channel
 - A109 The Chicago River downtown
 - A110 South Branch
 - A111 Sanitary and Ship Canal
 - A112 Cal-Sag Channel
 - A113 Calumet River
 - A114 Little Calumet River
 - A115 Other rivers not in the system
 - A116 Specific places along river
- B History and river facts, perceptions, and misperceptions
 - B100 Exploration, settlement, and establishment of Chicago
 - B200 Reversing the flow
 - B300 Digging the channels
 - B400 Early landscape of Chicago—marsh and prairie lands
- C Characteristics of the river and landscape
 - C100 Physical characteristics of the river proper
 - C110 Wide
 - C120 Narrow
 - C130 Straight
 - C140 Bends, curves
 - C150 Deep
 - C160 Shallow
 - C170 Pond, lake
 - C180 Walled shore
 - C190 Natural shore
 - C200 Physical characteristics/features of the built environment
 - C210 Architecture—buildings/skyline
 - Bridges (use F489)
 - Boats (use H430 - H440)
 - C300 Physical characteristics/features of the natural environment
 - C310 Vegetation—plants and landscapes
 - C311 Trees
 - C311a Mature trees
 - C311b Trees too small
 - C312 Bushes
 - C313 Grass
 - C314 Flowers
 - C315 Prairie; wildflowers and grasses
 - C316 Wetland, floodplain
 - C317 Forest, woods (see also F430 for references to forest preserves)
 - C318 Native, historic, or indigenous landscape; natural environment; rare or endangered natural landscape
 - C319 Wild brush, pioneer vegetation
 - C31a Green

- C320 Wildlife
 - C321 Deer
 - C322 Birds
 - C323 Small animals; foxes and coyotes
 - C324 Mosquitos, bugs
 - C325 Rats
 - C326 Shorebirds and waterfowl
 - C327 Other water wildlife (e.g., frogs and turtles)
- C330 Sun, shade
- C340 Hills and topography
- C400 Evaluative characteristics
 - C410 Aesthetic and affective attributes—general statements “like” and “love” the river, landscape
 - C411 General views, sightseeing
 - C412 Beauty, scenic, attractive, awesome
 - C413 Peace, solitude, quiet, relaxing, uncrowded, secluded
 - C414 Pleasant, nice feeling, appealing
 - C415 Freedom
 - C416 Fresh air, clean air
 - C417 Clean (place)
 - C418 Escape, refuge
 - C419 Contrast of nature with the city/green-built, etc.
 - C41a Naturalness, lack of development
 - C41b Boring, dull, no feeling for it
 - C41c Gray, drab
 - C41d Cold, sterile
 - C41e Uninviting, not “people friendly”
 - C41f Just don’t like it
- C420 Functional attributes of the river—generally
 - C421 For drainage, prevents or controls flooding
 - C422 For recreation
 - C423 For transportation
 - C424 For sewage disposal
- C430 Economic attributes
 - C431 Riverboat gambling
 - C432 Industry and commercial activity will create jobs
- D Condition and maintenance of the river landscape
 - D100 General statements about cleaning, care, and maintaining the river environment (water, shore)
 - D110 Manicured
 - D120 Messy, untended
 - D130 Stewardship, respect for nature, personal responsibility
 - D140 Condition is good considering its urban nature (context)
 - D200 Improvement plans, information about improvement efforts
 - D2A00 Water quality condition
 - D2A10 Clean water
 - D2A20 Pollution—general statements of “dirty,” “filthy,” “gross,” etc.

- D2A30 Smell
- D2A40 Toxics
- D2A40 Color
- D2A41 Dyeing the river green on St Patrick's Day
- D2A50 Turbidity, etc.
- D2A60 Natural debris—floating, sunken, etc.
- D2A70 Dumping and littering of stuff in the river (not naturally caused)
- D2A80 Fish—as indicators of/referents to water quality; restocking efforts
 - D2A81 Presence of fish, types of fish that live in the river
 - D2A82 Eating the fish
- D2A90 Flooding
- D2B00 Water quality maintenance: pollution control
 - D2B10 General statements of making the water clean or cleaner
 - D2B20 Water aeration/filtration
 - D2B21 Waterfalls
 - D2B22 Devon aeration facility
 - D2B23 Centennial fountain
 - D2B30 Water garbage pickup efforts
 - D2B31 Downtown skimmer boats
 - D2B32 Condition and maintenance along shore (non-water, non-vegetative)
 - D2B40 Dredging/cleanup
 - D2B50 Deep Tunnel
- D400 Landscape and facility condition and maintenance—shoreline, land, & facilities
 - D410 General statement on care, maintenance
 - D411 Good care
 - D412 Poor care
 - D420 Land based cleanup efforts (not community based)
 - D430 Eroded
 - D440 Litter
 - D450 Dog litter
 - D460 Graffiti
 - D470 Vandalism
 - D480 Landfill
- D500 Vegetation condition and maintenance
 - D510 Unmaintained vegetation, generally
 - D520 Overhanging trees, overgrown and in need of trimming
 - D530 "Manicured," formal
 - D540 Plant more trees and flowers, more landscaping needed
 - D550 Loss of native vegetation
 - D560 Barren, lack of landscaping
 - D570 Plant wildflowers
- E Reputation of the river
 - E100 Change in environmental (water/land) quality over time
 - E110 Has improved
 - E120 Has stayed the same
 - E130 Has gotten worse
 - E200 Change in environmental quality as a function of location
 - E300 Comparisons with Lake Michigan
 - E400 Prospects for environmental quality improvement
 - E410 Good
 - E420 Poor
- F River recreation use and development
 - F100 Prospects of river development
 - F110 Development shouldn't proceed until water is cleaned up
 - F120 Development can go ahead even if water isn't clean
 - F140 Balance of recreation with "working river"
 - F150 Low prospects for development/improvement
 - F200 Development mix
 - F210 All natural, preserve wildness
 - F220 Mostly natural
 - F230 Mix of natural and developed
 - F240 Mostly developed
 - F300 Compatibility/context of development
 - F310 Compatible, appropriate for this setting
 - F320 Too artificial, urban, or overdeveloped
 - F330 Too wild
 - F340 Keep it like it is
 - F350 More recreational development needed
 - F400 Open space development
 - F410 Recreation facilities in general
 - F420 Parks and plaza areas
 - F430 Forest and nature preserves
 - F440 Golf courses
 - F450 Private clubs
 - F460 Playgrounds
 - F470 Fishing and boating
 - F471 Ramps
 - F472 Marinas, boatyards, and rental places
 - F473 Fishing docks, piers
 - F480 Facility development
 - F481 Trails and paths
 - F481A Blacktopped
 - F481B Unpaved
 - F482 Benches
 - F483 Lights
 - F484 Attractive paving
 - F485 Fencing (see also Access-fencing and Safety-fencing)
 - F486 Restrooms
 - F487 Fountains and statuary
 - F488 Buildings—fieldhouses and pavilions
 - F489 Bridges
 - F48a Athletic facilities—playing courts, etc.
 - F48b Swimming facilities
 - F490 Open space protection activities
 - F491 Acquisition
 - F492 Easement
 - F493 Regulation of land use
 - F494 Regulation of users
 - F495 Enforcement of pollution control
 - F496 Leasing
 - F500 Development types
 - F510 Residential
 - F511 Property values—gain or loss
 - F520 Commercial—restaurants, cafes, bars, and shops
 - F530 Industrial
 - F540 Transportation
 - F550 Boating-oriented development
 - F600 Development spectrum
 - F610 Urban
 - F620 Suburban
 - F630 Rural—country
 - F640 Wild
- G Access
 - G100 In general
 - G110 Visual access
 - G200 Convenience, proximity

- G300 Public vs. private land
- G400 Adequacy of public open space and parks
- G500 Adequacy of space for development
- G600 Fencing and access (see also fencing and safety)
- G700 On foot
 - G710 To get right down to the river
 - G720 Continuity of riverwalk
 - G730 Upper and lower levels by downtown
- G800 By car
 - G810 Parking
- G900 Equity in distribution of space and facilities, programs
 - G910 Cost of access to places and programs
- H Activities—in general, varied activities
 - H100 Linear and solo active activities
 - H110 Walking
 - H120 Running, jogging
 - H130 Exercising
 - H140 Walking pets
 - H150 Rollerblading, skating
 - H160 Skateboarding
 - H170 Biking
 - H200 Passive activities
 - H210 Picnicking and BBQing
 - H220 Sitting, relaxing, getting some sun
 - H230 Looking at area (e.g., from home)
 - H300 Children's activities
 - H310 Walking children
 - H320 Free play
 - H330 Playground activities
 - H340 Kid's park programs
 - H400 Water activities
 - H410 Fishing
 - H420 Swimming, beach
 - H430 Boating:
 - H431 Canoeing, kayaking
 - H432 Motorboating
 - H433 Sailing
 - H43a Paddleboats
 - H434 Tour boats, tours, and river excursions
 - H435 Crewing/rowing
 - H440 Watching river activities, boats, its flow, and the general landscape
 - H450 Playing by or in the river
 - H500 Active group sports
 - H510 Baseball
 - H520 Basketball
 - H530 Football
 - H540 Golf
 - H550 Soccer
 - H560 Tennis
 - H570 Volleyball
 - H600 Nature and arts activities
 - H601 Nature study
 - H610 Watching, feeding wildlife interaction
 - H620 Art—painting, drawing
 - H630 Film and photography
 - H640 Gardening, lawn maintenance
 - H650 Plant collecting
 - H660 Zoo
 - H670 Cutting wood
 - H700 Winter sports
 - H710 Skiing
 - H720 Skating
 - H730 Hockey
- H740 Snowmobiling
- H750 Tobogganing
- H800 "Urban" activities
 - H810 Tourism
 - H820 Shopping
 - H840 Festivals
- H900 Community-based activities
 - H910 River cleanup, land cleanup efforts
 - H920 Neighborhood watch/park watch programs
 - H930 Community policing
 - H940 Socializing
- I Safety
 - I100 General—physical safety
 - I200 Falling in the water
 - I210 Fencing or lack thereof
 - I220 Body contact with water
 - I300 General—personal safety, safe from crime, security
 - I400 Vegetation
 - I410 Dense vegetation, foliage as hiding places for criminals and perverts, openness (antonym)
 - I420 Children getting lost in the woods
 - I500 Criminal activity, gang activity, selling drugs
 - I510 Perverts, child molesters
 - I600 Homeless, panhandlers
 - I700 People drinking and/or doing drugs
 - I800 Rowdies, yahoos
 - I900 Patrols
 - IA100 Lighting
 - IA200 Visibility
 - IA300 People/activity as a deterrent to crime
- J Crowding, conflicts, and other social issues
 - J100 People
 - J200 Car traffic
 - J300 Boat traffic and speed
 - J400 Noise
 - J500 Pets
 - J600 Inappropriate behavior
 - J700 Management conflicts
- K Demographics—references to "all groups"
 - K100 Age—reference to "all ages"
 - K110 Young children
 - K120 Teens
 - K130 Middle age
 - K140 Older adults
 - K200 Gender
 - K210 Males
 - K220 Females
 - K300 Social group composition
 - K310 Singles
 - K320 Couples
 - K330 Families
 - K400 Occupation
 - K410 Blue collar
 - K420 Professionals
 - K430 Students
 - K440 Homemakers
 - K450 Retirees
 - K500 Ethnicity—references to "all ethnic groups"
 - K510 African American
 - K520 Anglo American
 - K530 Hispanic American
 - K540 Asian American
 - K541 Chinese American

APPENDIX 2.3 STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

TABLE 2.3.1
Percentage of context and general issue codes for focus group transcript statements by group

	STUDY AREAS											
	Middle Fork Lake Forest	Skokie Lagoons Glencoe	N. Shore Ch. Evanston-Skokie	N. Branch Ravenswood-Albany Park	North Branch Lathrop	Main Stem Loop	South Branch Chinatown	Cal-Sag Palos	Calumet Pullman-Blue Island	Metro East	Metro West	All Groups
CONTEXT CODES												
Refs. to Chicago River	76.7	86.1	82.0	80.7	79.0	94.1	69.2	89.7	90.0	84.0	60.4	81.5
Current perceptions, conditions, activities	35.7	53.6	51.9	37.6	27.8	50.7	23.1	41.2	61.4	54.3	31.5	42.5
Devt. prospects & alternatives	19.4	9.6	9.8	8.6	15.8	12.5	9.9	36.0	22.9	29.6	7.2	16.1
Responses to photos	21.7	22.9	20.3	34.4	35.3	30.9	36.3	12.5	5.7	0.0	21.6	21.6
Refs. to other places	23.3	13.9	18.1	19.4	21.1	5.9	30.8	10.3	10.0	16.1	39.6	18.5
Current perceptions, conditions, activities	16.3	6.0	6.0	7.5	10.5	5.2	20.9	2.9	2.9	16.1	27.9	10.6
Ideal settings	7.0	7.8	12.0	11.8	10.5	0.7	9.9	7.4	7.1	0.0	11.7	7.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Context Codes (n)	129	166	133	93	133	136	91	136	70	81	111	1279
GENERAL ISSUES CODES												
River names	7.5	2.4	12.4	4.6	1.3	0.0	0.8	1.4	0.7	0.6	2.6	3.4
River history & facts	0.0	0.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	2.5	3.7	0.9
River characteristics	22.1	23.5	8.9	15.3	17.3	25.2	26.0	14.0	11.7	18.6	25.0	18.9
Condition & maint.	15.6	26.3	14.7	23.9	40.4	7.9	12.2	19.2	54.0	24.2	23.4	22.7
Reputation	.0	2.8	3.1	0.0	1.9	3.7	0.0	2.8	5.1	12.4	7.8	3.6
River development	28.1	21.9	20.0	14.8	16.0	22.0	21.4	40.2	17.5	16.8	18.8	22.1
River access	4.5	2.4	2.7	4.0	4.5	6.5	7.6	2.3	0.0	1.9	0.5	3.3
Activities	15.1	17.5	16.0	15.9	14.1	19.6	21.4	7.9	6.6	17.4	17.2	15.4
Safety	5.5	.8	19.1	20.5	4.5	14.0	4.6	8.9	2.9	4.4	0.5	8.1
Crowding, etc.	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.1	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.9	1.5	0.6	0.5	1.1
Demographic	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.5
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Issue Codes (n)	199	251	225	176	156	214	131	214	137	161	192	2056

TABLE 2.3.2
Current perceptions of the river—percentage of general issue codes for transcript statements by group

	STUDY AREAS											
	Middle Fork Lake Forest	Skokie Lagoons Glencoe	N. Shore Ch. Evanston-Skokie	N. Branch Ravenswood-Albany Park	North Branch Lathrop	Main Branch Loop	South Branch Chinatown	Cal-Sag Palos	Calumet Pullman-Blue Island	Metro East	Metro West	All Groups
River names	19.5	4.3	22.1	10.5	3.9	0.0	3.1	3.6	1.3	0.0	7.9	7.5
River history & facts	0.0	.7	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	5.1	7.9	1.5
River characteristics	28.6	29.1	8.7	4.0	11.8	21.0	37.5	19.3	11.5	22.8	20.6	19.0
Condition & maint.	24.7	27.0	18.9	27.6	49.0	9.2	31.3	30.1	60.3	25.3	25.4	27.7
Reputation	0.0	5.0	4.7	0.0	2.0	6.7	0.0	2.4	3.9	19.0	14.3	5.5
River development	11.7	12.1	11.0	19.7	7.8	13.5	12.5	16.9	10.3	11.4	11.1	12.6
River access	2.6	0.0	0.8	6.6	9.8	5.0	3.1	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	2.3
Activities	9.1	19.2	15.0	10.5	5.9	24.4	12.5	13.3	7.7	13.9	11.1	14.3
Safety	3.9	.7	14.2	21.1	9.8	18.5	0.0	12.1	2.6	1.3	0.0	8.4
Crowding, etc.	0.0	2.1	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	2.6	0.0	1.6	1.1
Demographic	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Issue Codes (n)	77	141	127	76	51	119	32	83	78	79	63	926

	STUDY AREAS											
	Middle Fork Lake Forest	Skokie Lagoons Glencoe	N. Shore Ch. Evanston-Skokie	N. Branch Ravenswood-Albany Park	North Branch Lathrop	Main Branch Loop	South Branch Chinatown	Cal-Sag Palos	Calumet Pullman-Blue Island	Metro East	Metro West	All Groups
Characteristics of the river proper	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	8.3	0.0	11.1	11.1	15.4	5.1
Characteristics of the built environment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	23.1	3.4
Characteristics of the natural environment	90.9	68.3	45.5	33.3	33.3	12.0	0.0	62.5	33.3	22.2	0.0	43.2
Vegetation	50.0	4.9	36.4	0.0	16.7	12.0	0.0	18.8	22.2	5.6	0.0	15.3
Wildlife	40.9	58.5	9.1	33.3	16.7	0.0	0.0	43.8	11.1	16.7	0.0	26.7
Other	0.0	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1
Evaluative characteristics	9.1	31.7	54.6	66.7	66.7	68.0	91.7	37.5	55.6	61.1	61.5	48.3
Aesthetic benefits	4.6	29.3	27.3	66.7	16.7	68.0	50.0	18.8	33.3	55.6	53.9	36.9
Functional benefits	4.6	2.4	27.3	0.0	33.3	0.0	25.0	18.8	22.2	5.6	7.7	9.7
Economic benefits	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	16.67	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Issue Codes (n)	22	41	11	3	6	25	12	16	9	18	13	176

	STUDY AREAS											
	Middle Fork Lake Forest	Skokie Lagoons Glencoe	N. Shore Ch. Evanston-Skokie	N. Branch Ravenswood-Albany Park	North Branch Lathrop	Main Branch Loop	South Branch Chinatown	Cal-Sag Palos	Calumet Pullman-Blue Island	Metro East	Metro West	All Groups
General statements about condition and maintenance	15.8	7.9	0.0	14.3	12.0	0.0	10.0	12.0	4.3	10.0	0.0	7.9
Water quality condition and maintenance	79.0	55.3	91.7	75.8	84.0	90.9	90.0	88.0	89.4	85.0	100.0	82.5
Condition: Key Issues	79.0	39.5	58.3	71.4	72.0	63.6	80.0	52.0	59.6	70.0	93.8	63.3
Pollution (gen.)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Smell			*		*				*	*		*
Toxics							*					
Color											*	
Turbidity					*							
Natural Debris	*											
Dumping/litter				*	*	*	*			*		
Fish		*		*	*			*				
Flooding	*		*									
Maintenance: Key Issues	0.0	15.8	33.3	4.8	12.0	27.3	10.0	36.0	29.8	15.0	6.3	19.1
Cleanup (gen.)					*		*		*			
Aeration/filtration						*		*	*			
Garbage pickup						*						
Dredging		*										
Deep tunnel			*									
Landscape/facility condition and maintenance	5.3	31.6	8.3	9.5	4.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.0	8.2
Vegetation condition and maintenance	0.0	5.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	5.0	0.0	1.6
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Issues Codes (n)	19	38	24	21	25	11	10	25	47	20	16	256

*Identified as an issue by around 10% of the group or higher.

TABLE 2.3.5
Ideal settings—percentage of key general and specific issue codes by group

	STUDY AREAS									
	Middle Fork Lake Forest	Skokie Lagoons Glencoe	N. Shore Ch. Evanston-Skokie	North Branch Ravenswood-Albany Park	North Branch Lathrop	South Branch Chinatown	Cal-Sag Palos	Calumet R. Pullman-Blue Island	Metro West	All Groups ¹
Characteristics	25.0	25.0	3.6	7.1	0.0	13.3	52.9	40.0	41.2	21.6
Natural environment	*						*			*
Aesthetic surroundings	*	*				*	*	*	*	*
Condition & maintenance	10.0	14.3	0.0	21.4	50.0	6.7	0.0	10.0	11.8	13.2
Clean water								*		
Well-maintained landscape	*			*	*					
Development	0.0	32.1	50.0	14.3	38.9	26.7	11.8	20.0	17.7	25.7
Open space development		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Access	10.0	10.2	17.9	0.0	0.0	33.3	17.7	0.0	5.9	11.4
Convenience, proximity	*						*			
Activities	20.0	10.2	10.7	7.1	0.0	6.7	11.8	20.0	17.7	11.4
Linear activities	*					*				
Active group sports								*	*	
Safety	20.0	0.0	17.9	42.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	5.9	10.2
All other issues	15.0	7.1	0.0	7.1	11.1	13.3	5.9	0.0	0.0	6.6
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Issue Codes (n)	20	28	28	14	18	15	17	10	17	169

*Identified as an issue by around 10% of the group or higher.
¹This question was not discussed in the Loop or Metro East groups.

TABLE 2.3.6
Photo ratings—percentage of key general and specific issue codes by photo

	PHOTOS								All Photos ¹
	Photo 1 Landfill & Boat Landing	Photo 2 Downtown Plaza	Photo 3 Downtown Riverwalk	Photo 4 Industrial Land use	Photo 5 Natural Trail	Photo 6 Natural Bridge	Photo 7 Aeration Facility		
Characteristics	58.3	22.5	35.1	39.4	36.1	28.2	41.3	34.8	
Natural environment			*		*				
Aesthetic surroundings	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Condition & maintenance	16.7	6.1	13.5	12.1	17.4	48.7	21.7	18.6	
Water condition & maintenance			*			*	*		
Vegetation and landscape condition & maintenance	*			*	*	*			
Development	0.0	49.0	33.8	42.4	29.1	12.8	30.4	31.6	
Development mix					*				
Context of development		*	*	*			*	*	
Open space development		*		*	*		*	*	
Access	0.0	0.0	4.1	6.1	2.3	5.1	0.0	3.8	
Activities	25.0	2.0	6.8	0.0	2.3	5.1	0.0	3.8	
Safety	0.0	10.2	6.8	0.0	12.8	5.1	4.4	7.4	
All other issues	0.0	10.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Issue Codes (n)	12	49	74	33	86	39	46	339	

*Identified as an issue by around 10% of the group or higher.
¹This question was not discussed in the Metro East group.

**TABLE 2.3.7
Future potential—percentage of key general and specific issue codes by group**

	STUDY AREAS											
	Middle Fork Lake Forest	Skokie Lagoons Glencoe	N. Shore Ch. Evanston-Skokie	N. Branch Ravenswood-Albany Park	North Branch Lathrop	Main Branch Loop	South Branch Chinatown	Cal-Sag Palos	Calumet Pullman-Blue Island	Metro East	Metro West	All Groups
River characteristics	9.1	8.0	11.1	22.2	7.4	40.7	0.0	4.0	2.5	22.6	35.0	12.7
Natural environment				*							*	*
Aesthetics			*			*					*	*
Condition and maintenance	13.6	60.0	14.8	27.8	48.2	7.4	7.7	15.2	60.0	34.0	40.0	28.2
Water condition and maintenance		*		*	*			*	*	*	*	*
Vegetation and landscape condition and maintenance	*	*		*	*				*			
Reputation	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	10.0	7.6	10.0	3.8
River development	61.4	20.0	11.1	0.0	25.9	37.0	69.2	61.6	25.0	26.4	15.0	37.9
Prospects of river development							*				*	
Development mix	*	*						*				
Context of development	*	*						*				
Open space development	*				*	*	*	*	*	*		*
River access	2.3	4.0	0.0	0.0	3.7	11.1	7.7	2.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	2.5
Activities	4.6	4.0	7.4	27.8	11.1	3.7	15.4	2.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	4.8
Safety	9.1	4.0	48.2	22.2	3.7	0.0	0.0	8.1	0.0	3.8	0.0	8.4
Other issues	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	1.5
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Issue Codes (n)	44	25	27	18	27	27	13	99	40	53	20	393

*Identified as an issue by around 10% of the group or higher.

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NOTES

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