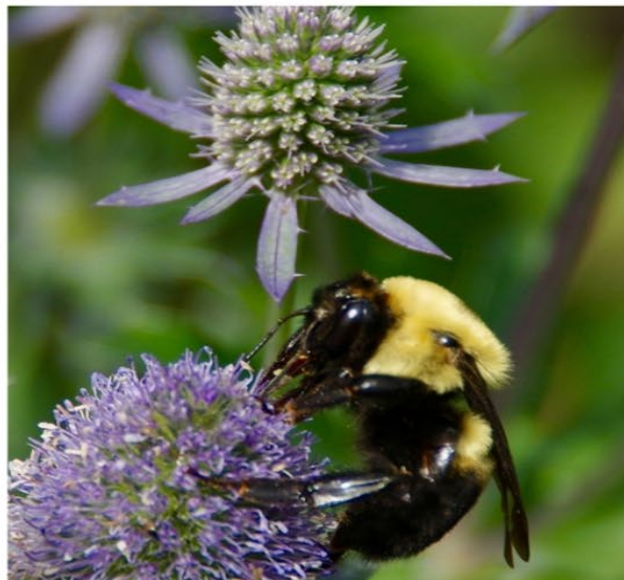


CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

2019 PARTICIPANT PROFILE



AIB Participation History:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Recognized Criterion</i>	<i>Outstanding Achievement (Criterion) Award or Other Award</i>
<i>2013</i>	<i>3 Blooms</i>	<i>Urban Forestry</i>	<i>Art Banner Project</i>
<i>2018</i>	<i>8 Stars</i>	<i>Celebrating Heritage</i>	<i>Life of the Party Award</i>



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“WEST CHICAGO IS ALL-IN FOR AMERICA IN BLOOM”

Introduction to West Chicago, Illinois



Similar to a “central city,” West Chicago is a microcosm of successful urban counterparts with all the benefits of being situated in the western suburbs, 32 miles from Chicago. It boasts cultural diversity, a plethora of housing options from affordable to luxury estate homes, excellent schools, commercial businesses which include several Fortune 500 companies, and dedicated open space - all surrounding a vibrant, expanding City center.

Like spokes on a wheel, all points lead to downtown West Chicago, which is currently enjoying a rebirth through the arts. Downtown West Chicago, with its beautifully preserved and restored buildings, tells the story of the

community’s individual identity and personality. The City Museum serves as a dynamic history and art center that inspires and involves the community through research, programs, education and exhibits. Family-owned, ethnically diverse restaurants; small, independent retailers and service businesses that know their customers by name; and, an art gallery supported by the City of West Chicago through its Cultural Arts Commission, have served to nourish and strengthen this center of culture and community life.

Unique Transportation History

West Chicago’s claim to fame dates back to the 1850s when three railroads met to form the first junction in the State of Illinois, giving the town its first name ~ Junction. The name was short-lived, however, when in 1873 the town incorporated as the Village of Turner, named after John B. Turner, a benevolent local landowner and one of the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad’s early presidents. Later, as part of the effort to attract industry, the community once again changed its name in 1896 to the Village of West Chicago. Several manufacturing plants opened in West Chicago despite a depression in the 1890s. As industry located in town and new jobs became available, the population increased. By 1906, the village reincorporated itself as the City of West Chicago.

Community Spirit and Pride

It’s more than just the stars that are aligned in West Chicago. It is its people joining forces with a shared vision for the future that has driven initiatives which set the community apart and position it for stellar success. A Prairie Stewardship group, a dynamic special events calendar, and a Main Street art gallery are examples of what the collaborative spirit has accomplished. West Chicagoans embrace their diversity, draw strength from a rich, unified history and forge ahead with confidence into the future as **One West Chicago**.

COMMUNITY-AT-A-GLANCE

Community name: **City of West Chicago**

Population: **27,447**

Website: <https://westchicago.org/>

Contact name: **Rosemary Mackey**

AIB committee chair contact: **Rosemary Mackey**

County/township: **DuPage County**

Form of government (mayor, council, manager, etc.)



One of landscape beds planted by volunteers this year.

Council with Mayor

What jurisdiction(s) operates the public-school system? **Community School Districts 33 & 94**

What jurisdiction operates the utilities (water, sewer, electrical, trash, recycling, etc.? **City of West Chicago**

Area in square miles: **15,766**

Acres of active recreation: **390 acres of parkland divided into 13 park sites**

Acres of passive recreation: **305 acres of West Chicago Prairie Forest Preserve adjoining the Illinois Prairie Path**

Do you have a volunteer coordinator? **The City's Special Events Coordinator, Bethany Bayci, serves as volunteer coordinator related to our downtown planting efforts and special events.**

Have there been any challenges this year weather-related or otherwise that the judges should know about? **Due to an early winter ice/snow storm in November 2018, many community shrubs suffered, and many impacted trees needed replacement.**

Spring continues to be erratic. It has been unseasonably cold and rainy with morning temperatures in the fifties which climb to sixties and low seventies during the day. The lack of sun has not only impacted spirits, it has taken a toll on many community flower gardens. Even though we planted after Mother's Day (typically a safe bet for our region) an unexpected overnight that dipped into the thirties "burnt" the tops of our Canna which we use as the centerpiece in twelve downtown planters

Also, weather factored into the delivery and scale of the hanging baskets that were generously donated by Ball Horticultural Company this year. Baskets would have benefited from more time in the greenhouse, however, by mid-June a decision was made to hang them.

Community Vitality

What adds to a community's vitality? In West Chicago it is addressing the needs of all community members and finding ways to meet them. There are many organizations and efforts taking place in West Chicago that significantly contribute to its vitality and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that West Chicago is a community that cares. Several examples are highlighted below.



Students participating in Local Government Academy.

Policies, Plans, and Programs

The [West Chicago Strategic Plan Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) are documents that outline the collective vision of a broad cross-section of the community's diverse population. It serves as a work plan for staff and elected officials of the top priorities that were identified by the community to strengthen the downtown, capitalize on the City's diversity and increase engagement with the Latino population, attract and retain new businesses, increase intergovernmental partnerships and collaboration, and much more.

One program in particular, **One West Chicago**, was developed as a call to action to broaden participation in community leadership, invest in long-term relationships, and form partnerships with all members of the West Chicago community to reinforce that there is one unified West Chicago, made stronger by its diversity. The Local Government Academy was developed specifically to teach and inspire Latino students in middle and high school about government operations and community service. Ten graduates of the first eight week session were honored at a City Council meeting earlier this year.

DuPage Habitat for Humanity (DHFH) is a locally run affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing organization. DuPage Habitat serves DuPage County, Illinois and works in partnership with people in need to build modest and affordable housing by building and renovating houses using donated materials and volunteer labor. These houses are then sold to limited-income families needing decent shelter. Those who qualify must demonstrate their commitment to home ownership by investing 250 hours of sweat equity and repaying the cost of their house through an affordable mortgage. This "giving a hand up—not a hand out" approach gives families pride in their accomplishment of homeownership. In serving 100 families since 1995, it was in West Chicago where DuPage Habitat for Humanity built the affiliates first home. This family has raised three generations since then and has now paid off its affordable mortgage. It is success stories like these that DuPage Habitat helps families to become housing stable and provide additional opportunities to increased education, trade skills, and confidence and pride in being a homeowner. Since then, DHFH has served 25 families in West Chicago. Most recently DHFH finished a single-family subdivision of 11 homes located on Sherman and West Pomeroy.

Educare West DuPage is a state-of-the-art early childhood school that gives under-resourced young children and their families in West Chicago a strong start for a successful future. The comprehensive program incorporates what science says young children need to flourish. The school is part of a national network of effective early learning schools. Educare West DuPage serves 193 children from birth to five years old and their families in a model early learning school. Its dual-language program gives young children a solid foundation in English and Spanish.

Healthy West Chicago

The past year has been a busy one for Healthy West Chicago (HWC), a community collaborative supported by City leadership and committed to strengthening the health of West Chicago. Nutrition and Movement are its two main focuses and the following 2018/19 programs support its mission in these areas:

Cooking Matters Adult and Cooking Matters Parent Cooking Class: HWC has partnered with the national nonprofit Share Our Strength to offer Cooking Matters® in West Chicago. Cooking Matters teaches families at risk of hunger how to get more food for their money and better nourishment from those foods, as part of the No Kid Hungry campaign to end childhood hunger in America. Volunteer culinary and nutrition experts lead six-week cooking and nutrition courses and hour-long Shopping Matters® grocery store tours where participants learn how to select nutritious and low-cost ingredients and prepare them in delicious and healthy ways. Cooking Matters is nationally sponsored by the ConAgra Foods® Foundation and Walmart.

Class participants: one of five sessions: 61
Graduates: attended four of six sessions: 53
Graduation Rate: 86.8%

HWC Grocery Store Tours are led by Registered Dietitians. Participants learn how to find healthier options, learn to compare unit prices to find bargains, learn to read the food label, and learn how to identify whole grains and how to stick to your budget. Guests will receive a \$10 produce gift card, reusable grocery bag, and healthy recipe ideas.

There were 57 participants.

HWC is now offering the **Healthy for Life®** program to West Chicago community members. Healthy for Life® is a community-based nutrition and wellbeing program that focuses on empowering people to make healthy food, nutrition and lifestyle choices. In the Healthy for Life® program, individuals gain new skills to prepare and experience healthy food, receive culturally relevant healthy recipes, budget and shop for healthy foods, and increase their level of comfort with healthy foods. These Healthy for Life® Educational Experiences were created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of the Healthy for Life® 20 By 20 Initiative. HWC is proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans. Healthy for Life® is a registered trademark of Aramark.

Twenty-eight participants completed this four week nutrition education program

Meals for a Healthy Heart: Engaged over 500 participants since August 2018

For **National Heart Health Month**, registered Dietitian, Melissa O'Brien, with HWC presented ideas on how to plan and prepare meals for a healthy heart. Melissa discussed the American Heart Association (AHA) heart health guidelines.

This Senior Group at the West Chicago Park District had 45 participants.

For **Older American's Month:** Meals for a Healthy Heart, Melissa O'Brien, presented the same program on planning and preparing meals for a healthy heart and discussed the AHA heart guidelines. HWC provided a heart healthy lunch including Turkey Provolone Pesto Wraps, Quinoa Garden Salad and Fruit.

Silver Sneakers Lunch & Learn

Through the West Chicago Park District during “**Older American’s Month**”, HWC sponsored a FREE heart healthy lunch and presentation entitled “Meals for a Healthy Heart”. Laura Barr from the University of Illinois Extension discussed healthy lifestyles which may decrease incidence of hypertension, and introduced the new guidelines for blood pressure released by the American College of Cardiology and the AHA. The new guidelines were designed to identify and address hypertension sooner. Research shows a very clear link between high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, which can make a person twice as likely to suffer a stroke or heart attack. HWC provided a heart healthy lunch of fresh grilled chicken wraps, Napa salad, and fresh fruit salad.

This program served the Silver Sneakers Group of 37 seniors.

Kids: 3 DREAM programs (average 65 participants)

Additional Nutrition - Nine education offerings serving over 450 individuals in 2018

Garden to Table: 17 participants

GardenWorks Project education: Create your own salsa

Cooking Demonstration at the 2018 Food Festival: 45 participants

Partnership with the AHA and District 33 Preschools- 2018 presentation with The Kitchen Table educated mothers on the benefits of gardening and eating fresh herbs and vegetables through a hands-on cooking demonstration presenting a fresh home-made marinara sauce with zucchini noodles.

Common Threads Kids Cooking Classes

Small Bites after school clubs: eight 60 minute classes per session

World Cuisine Class at St. Michaels: 40 participants

HWC 5K Walk and Health Celebration – 19 Exhibitors

Total of 101 individuals that participated in the fair

Total of 27 individuals who participated in the 5K walk

Rethink Your Drink was displayed at over 15 events in 2018 to over 600 participants.

Community Garden Project – St. Michael’s Church provides a vacant parcel of land across from the Church for use as a community garden. Raised beds are sponsored by HWC for families with food security needs. Per 2018 judges’ recommendations last year, signage is planned for the garden to make it more visible and inform people how they may volunteer for the program.

2018 HWC sponsored 8 new garden beds in the Community Garden

2019 HWC is sponsoring 10 home gardens in West Chicago

2019 HWC is sponsoring 15 gardens at the West Chicago Community Garden

HWC partnered with Northwestern Medicine’s Team (NM) on May 25, 2019 to do a complete garden refresh at the West Chicago Community Garden, located opposite St. Michael’s Church, 400 West Washington Street. Team NM consisted of 20 employees and their families. HWC with the partnership of the GardenWorks Project identified seven apartment living families with food security needs. With the help of these West Chicago families, 15 garden beds were planted during the Community Garden Refresh. Of the 15 garden beds, one garden bed has been designated for a program of the West Chicago Community School District 33.

HWC has offered or participated in 22 movement events since February of 2018 including:

Move with the Mayor – this program is sponsored by the National Forum for Stroke and Heart Disease Prevention, and gets people out each Saturday in the month of September for a 30-minute walk

Total: 266 community members participated last year

Total steps taken: over five Million

World Heart Day Celebration in which 150 attended

HWC Back to School 5k with 115 registered participants and a final number of participants being 175

Frosty 5k: 139 registered participants; 96 of whom crossed the finish line; 8 kids in the Fun Run

Community Workout – partnered with local gym to offer free weekly workout with 10-13 participants weekly

West Chicago Walking Challenge App now averaging 45 active participants

West Chicago Raises Tobacco Sales Age to 21- Supports Clean Air

West Chicago joined several west suburban communities in raising the tobacco sales age to 21 in 2018. Revisions to West Chicago's Tobacco Sales Ordinance were prompted following a presentation on "Tobacco 21" by Carolyn Serf of the American Heart Association and two West Chicago Community High School students who offered the following data in support of the change at the Public Affairs Committee meeting of April 23, 2018:

- Tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of death in the United States.
- Nicotine use during adolescence and young adulthood has long-term impacts on brain development.
- E-cigarettes and vaping have led more people to start a real smoking habit.
- Kids who vape are more likely to start smoking cigarettes.
- E-cigarettes have become the most commonly used tobacco product by young people in the United States.

Looking Toward the Future: A New Building for Neighborhood Food Pantries

Neighborhood Food Pantries (NFP) is a non-profit group which operates six food pantries in northwest DuPage County. One of these locations has been in serving the West Chicago community for over twenty years. Originally the Pantry was located at St. Mary's Catholic Church, and since 2012, has been located in a stand-alone building behind the former First Congregational Church of West Chicago, now owned by Real Life Church, on Route 59.

While NFP has been able to expand its services and product handling at this location--including the addition of refrigerated storage which allows for the handling and distribution of perishable food items--the overall operations at this site have been constrained due to the size and design of the building, and the fact that there is no water or sewer connection for the building, and therefore no washrooms. Real Life Church has indicated that the building which houses the existing pantry will eventually be demolished, and the long-term future of the pantry was in question.

Four organizations are working together to provide for a new home for the Food Pantry, which will be larger, better meet the future anticipated needs of the community, and provide a permanent future location. This plan includes the relocation of the Food Pantry operations to an existing commercial building in downtown West Chicago, at 123 Fremont Street. This building is approximately 5,700 square feet, with masonry construction, and with off-street parking. The building has previously housed a bakery, an office supply store, and a supermarket.

The property has been purchased by the Risch-Dieckmann Family Foundation and gifted to St. Michael's United Church of Christ, along with a cash donation for building repairs and renovations.

The legacy members from the First Congregational Church of West Chicago have made a significant cash donation to St. Michael's United Church of Christ, for the purpose of renovating and equipping the property for use as the Neighborhood Food Pantries West Chicago site.

The property will continue under ownership of St. Michael's United Church of Christ and its leaders, who will enter into a building use agreement with NFP, which will manage and operate the food pantry.

The planning and renovation work have been underway for the past year, with a targeted completion date and ribbon cutting ceremony planned for mid-August.

Volunteerism

Involved, excited, enthusiastic are the words that describe the volunteer effort in West Chicago. Thanks to AiB, we are doing a better job of tracking volunteer hours, which is a very powerful metric for illustrating the West Chicago spirit. The following lists some of the many organizations which provide rewarding volunteer opportunities.

The West Chicago Garden Club is the devoted caretaker of the historic gardens at the Kruse House Museum. The gardens serve as a peaceful reminder of days gone by when a prominent member of the community, Celia Kruse, tended many of the heirloom varieties that remain today. From April through July 2019, the Garden Club conservatively estimates members have devoted 300 hours to maintaining the gardens.



Volunteer members of West Chicago's Cultural Arts Commission

First United Methodist Church of West Chicago is the site for Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) and has been for the past 33 years. It is open from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. the next day, Thursdays from the first of October through the end of May. Brian Hendricks is the coordinator and has been with it since the first night. Approximately 100 volunteers serve at the PADS shelter. There are volunteers who take the bedding home to wash, and a volunteer food coordinator.

The West Chicago Historical Society is a volunteer only not-for-profit organization. The Kruse House Museum, 527 Main Street, is open from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Saturdays from the first of May through the end of September. There are approximately 20 docents, and the estimate for the number of hours served is 80. The Ice Cream Social and Silent Auction is the main fundraiser held the second Saturday in September. Volunteers solicit gifts and certificates from various businesses and work the event. There usually are 33 volunteers baking for the Social, most of who are not members.

Churches rely on volunteers for many of their activities. Members at **St. Andrew Lutheran Church**, 151 Prince Crossing Road, maintain the gardens, mow the lawns and shovel. Several work days are scheduled during the different seasons for clean-up of the properties.

The **City's special event calendar** provides a great opportunity for community involvement and it benefits greatly from the input and hands-on assistance offered by dedicated volunteers. The following lists approximate statistics on their efforts both in planning and execution of these events in 2018*:

- Blooming Fest: 35 volunteers volunteering four hours each = Total of 140 volunteer hours
 - Food Festival: 15 volunteers volunteering four hours each = Total of 60 volunteer hours
 - Halloween Festivities: 10 volunteers volunteering two hours each = Total of 20 volunteer hours
 - Frosty 5k: 45 volunteers volunteering four hours each = Total of 180 volunteer hours
 - Frosty Fest: 20 volunteers volunteering four hours each = Total of 80 volunteer hours
- Total Volunteers: 125
Total Volunteer Hours: 480

* Not included are volunteers for the Hello Summer & Fireworks, Railroad Days, National Night Out, and Mexican Independence Day Festivals, which are either City-sponsored but externally managed or managed by someone other than the City's Special Events Coordinator. Also not included are the volunteers recruited by community groups to execute various event activities that are free to the public at these events (children's activities, music performances, educational programming, etc.).

Flowers

Nothing says spring after a long Midwestern winter, than flowers. West Chicagoans flock to the City's annual Blooming Fest to stock up on plants from the West Chicago Garden Club and many other vendors who sell colorful annuals and perennials.

Policy, Budget, Leadership, and Volunteerism Commitments to City Beautification

The management of West Chicago's flower display program is a team effort, with involvement and support from elected officials, staff, businesses, and community volunteers. Each year, the City leads by example. Budgets are set and vendors are secured for the semi-annual downtown flower/greens displays. Seasonal summer workers are recruited to assist with watering and other garden maintenance needs. Beautification is most definitely prioritized.

Also planned with intention are 14 cast stone planters that are strategically placed along Main Street. These are professionally designed and coordinated by an area greenhouse involved in the America in Bloom Program, Heinz Bros. Greenhouse. Every year, the planters create a huge impression for those traveling on foot or by car on Main Street. They add color and vibrancy to the historic downtown, while also creating an inviting atmosphere for the public to the many locally owned shops and restaurants. These, along with the beds, are regularly fertilized, watered daily during the week, and weeded when necessary by seasonal employees and Public Works staff.

One of the recommendations of our 2018 AiB judges was to add more planters in other parts of the City. While we had other improvements requiring budget allocations, we had to think creatively to accomplish this. The answer was sitting in a corner of our Public Works garage since the 1960s – two concrete water troughs from the bygone days when West Chicago was home to stockyards which served as a stopover point for livestock being shipped east from western grazing lands from 1918 – 1964. It is hoped these new planters will be installed in time for the 2019 judges' visit.

The original thought was to position them on the grounds of the old stockyard, which is now a landmark natural prairie. However, due to the remoteness of the location, maintenance (watering plants) would be a challenge and our Committee felt a more heavily trafficked area would be better. Therefore, we chose to locate the planters along a Prairie Path which runs along the rail line near Sesquicentennial Park – the same rail line which transported the livestock. Logs from a downed oak tree were repurposed for use in constructing the stands for the troughs, and holes were drilled in each for drainage. Historic markers are also planned to accompany the troughs so people interested in these unique planters may learn about their original purpose in the community.

Blooming Fest - One of the Special Events Prioritized in City's Strategic Plan

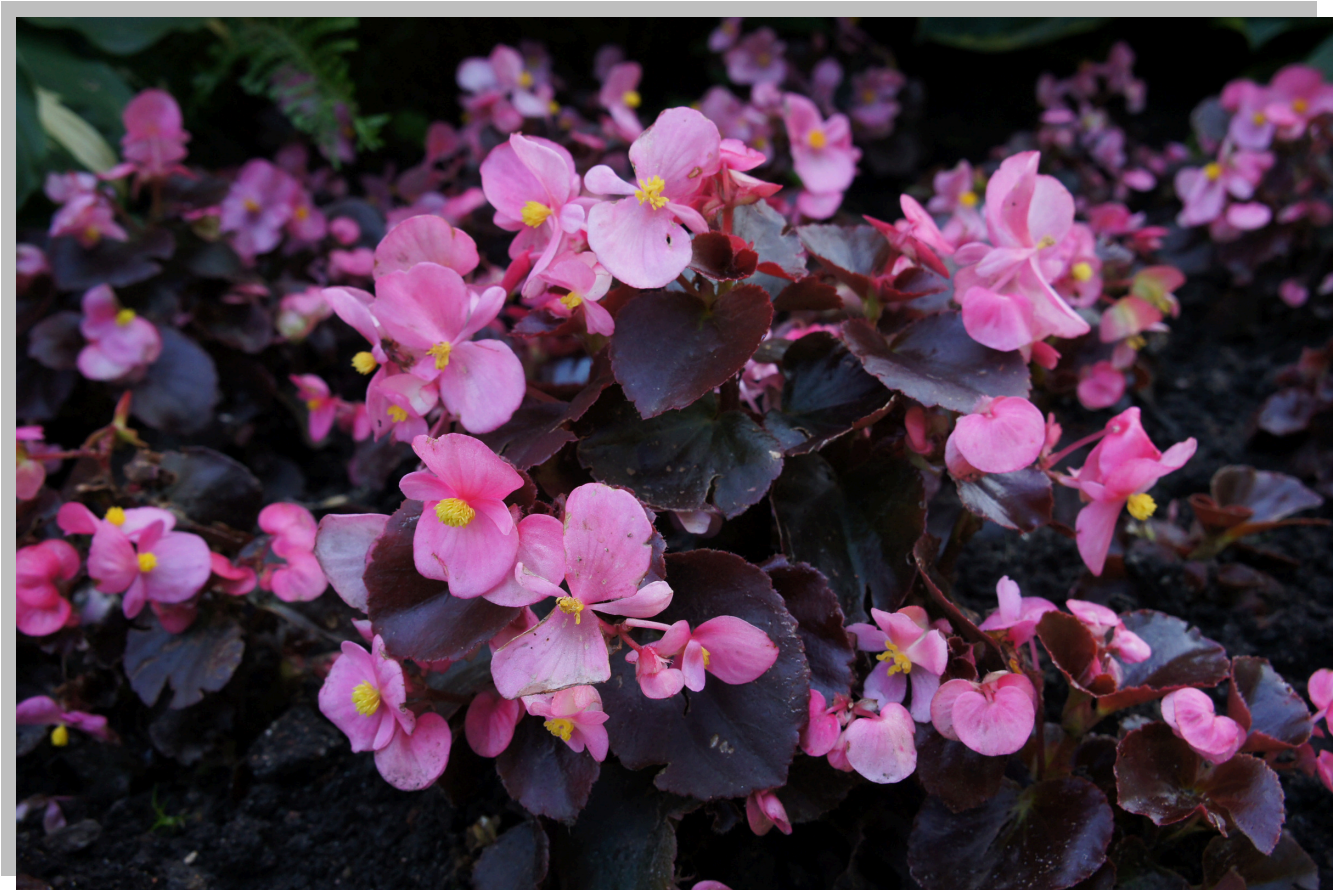
The City coordinates and funds the garden festival through in-kind services of its Police and Public Works Departments and a full-time Special Events Coordinator who handles this and other community festivals. It provides an annual budget of \$10,000 which is used for advertising and toward the many expenses that are required to produce a quality event which encourages residential planting throughout the community. Growing the Next Generation of Garden Enthusiasts

The Horticulture Club from Community High School District 94 has a large presence at Blooming Fest, as well. Teacher and Club Advisor for the past 17 years, Mrs. Stieglitz, and her students have been working all winter to prepare for the event. Community High Science teachers have made a strong commitment to growing the next generation of garden enthusiasts. The greenhouses have been in operation at the school since the 1970s. The Club provides opportunities for students to meet after school and work with annuals and perennials under different growing conditions, such as using different soils and managing the amount of lighting needed to provide ideal growing conditions. It has partnered with Ball Horticultural which has

supported both the Club and the Botany class by donating plugs that would have otherwise been recycled. The students learn the difficulty in growing from seed, but have success when transplanting the plugs. Not only are students learning how to grow the plants, they are seeing the business and marketing side as well.

The Club had specific difficulty in its greenhouse with pests, such as aphids, and students learned some of the ways to manage pests without the use of pesticides. The community supports the Club by purchasing plants at Blooming Fest so students do not have to pay dues to be in the Club. It also sells plants to the High School staff for Mother's Day and provides centerpieces for special events held at the school. There is little doubt these young people are positively impacting their individual homes and neighborhoods through their passion for horticulture.

An Abundance of Begonias



A surplus of begonias at We Grow Dreams Greenhouse and Garden Center, 1055 West Washington Street, led to an exciting incentive for downtown businesses to beautify their storefronts. Approximately 200 flats of colorful begonias were made available for pickup to businesses free of charge as a way to add a warm welcome to their business and for further floral impact downtown.

The City communicated the generous offer through e-News blast to all downtown businesses, a personal phone call to some, and also personal door to door visits to distribute fliers in English and Spanish announcing the offer and explaining the City's efforts with the America in Bloom program. This outreach included the Wayne and Helen Fox Community Center, which is the repurposed C&NW railroad depot which was cited in the judges' evaluation as an area of opportunity to double down on nearby landscaped areas with shots of color near the entryway.

One of our Homeowners' Associations also benefited from WeGrow's support. Normal landscape plans were a casualty of a transition in this HOA's Board, and flowers were not budgeted. The kind offer of free begonias not only beautified three different entryways for this large subdivision, it also promoted tremendous good will and forged new friendships. Plus, the City was able to use the "floral windfall" to significantly boost the bloom factor in several public beds throughout the community, including our LED monument sign and Metra lot. The West Chicago Park District used some of the surplus flowers to dress up the entry to Kress Creek Farm. We Grow Dreams received well-deserved accolades.

Seeing Double

Residents and visitors to downtown West Chicago accustomed to seeing a lush hanging basket on street poles along Main Street will be seeing double this year. That's because, of the recommendation of 2018 judges to double up the baskets on each lamp post for greater impact, and the generosity of corporate sponsor Ball Horticultural which provided them as a gift to the community.

Once it was determined that our existing fiberglass lamp posts could accommodate the weight of two baskets at approximately 50 pounds on each side, the City ordered the double bracket for 20 posts. Due to the challenging weather conditions this spring that delayed many planting projects, the hanging baskets took a bit longer to establish themselves once hung. For the first time in memory, they were actually installed after Blooming Fest and could have benefited from yet more time in the greenhouse. Still, the intent to double impact was accomplished.

Flower Markers

A high point of the 2018 judging tour was the "thoughtful use of annuals alongside low maintenance displays of blooming perennials at Reed-Kepler Park". The swathes of color were noted as effective accents to public art gracing the grounds and welcome to the visitors who flock to the Park to enjoy recreational opportunities at the ARC and the wet and wild fun of Turtle Splash. The West Chicago Park District has been a supportive partner in community beatification efforts and takes rightful pride in its care and maintenance of all West Chicago parks. The suggestion of the 2018 AiB judges to install simple plant markers for the benefit of introducing the public to new-to-market plant varieties from Ball Horticultural and other growers was passed along to the Friends of West Chicago Parks Foundation and positively received, with the outcome being implemented this summer.



Landscaped Areas

Throughout the City, a number of new business developments has sprung up, and along with the construction plans for the facilities, landscape plans are also required. This added element of a landscape plan for the build-outs not only enhances the overall aesthetic quality of the project, it also reflects well for the entire business community and City.

Municipal Leadership and Policy

[Signs; Landscaping Required](#)

[Landscaping Requirements](#)

Notable Landscapes – The following are new businesses which have submitted plans and fulfilled the requirements cited. *Landscape Plans for Little Prince's Daycare Center and Everclean Car Wash are included in the Additional Resources section of this Community Profile.*

Little Prince's Daycare Center

550 E. Washington St.

- Southwest corner of Route 59 and Washington Street
- Updated an old building/site
- Nice playground

Everclean Car Wash

330 W. North Ave.

- South side of North Avenue near Menards.
- Includes native planting area and shade trees

Residential Standouts

Acres of beautiful rolling hills and almost a thousand Hostas consisting of 700 different varieties await visitors at the **Caligiuri home** in unincorporated West Chicago. Also for view are four types of Red Buds, Red Oak, White Oak, Burr Oak, a Tulip Tree and many other varieties of spectacular flowers.

David & Daniel Wilcox have created the beauty of a natural prairie on their grounds. The Wilcox brothers started planting prairie and native species about 20 years ago, which have since matured. The naturalized areas include tall grass and short grass, as well as a wide variety of woodland plantings. About an acre is landscaped with native plants, complemented by flagstone paths to make viewing more enjoyable

Historic Kruse House Home and Gardens

527 Main Street

This 1917 Foursquare home built for Fred and Bertha Kruse, immigrants to West Chicago, is filled with family heirlooms and Chicago & Northwestern railroad memorabilia. The landscaped gardens surrounding the house are equally special. Daughter Celia Kruse, never married, and when she died in 1975, she willed the home and contents to the West Chicago Historical Society. She was an avid gardener, and photos contained at the Kruse House and the West Chicago City Museum, show her frequently in the garden. Currently, the West Chicago Garden Club enjoys a partnership with the West Chicago Historical Society as a public service project, maintaining the landscaped gardens, which are open and free to the public to enjoy. Photographs of the original grounds assist the Garden Club in remaining as true to Celia's vision as possible. The well-tended landscape beds have become a casual sanctuary for an untold number of visitors, birds and pollinators.

Downtown landscape beds are amended and readied by City staff to receive the quality assortment of plant material purchased from a not-for-profit greenhouse in the community, whose mission is to provide job experience in the horticultural industry to young adults with special needs. Working with the Executive

Director of We Grow Dreams Greenhouse & Garden Center not only allows the City to support the organization's mission, it also provides the City with expert advice on plant selections based on location suitability, coordinated color palette, height, texture, and bed size and design for visual interest, dramatic effect, and low maintenance. WeGrow team members assist the day of with delivery, set up and planting.

Volunteers, recruited through service clubs, businesses, intergovernmental organizations, schools and online volunteer platforms are at the heart of the downtown planting effort. This year approximately 30 volunteers made quick work of the 13 downtown beds and then moved on to Sesquicentennial Park, where three new gardens were planted with pollinator varieties including two different color coneflower and Mexican Hibiscus, on the recommendation of AiB judges.

This team effort also fostered the improvements at Sesquicentennial Park for some hardscape repairs. Three weathered benches were refinished, and many broken memorial pavers were replaced. The observation made by AiB judges to these overlooked areas helped make this a top of mind repair.

Residential Recognition Programs ~ Current and Future

Plans for a **Residential Garden of the Month Program** are in the works for 2020. AiB Committee member Merle Burleigh will begin developing a program of recognition for outstanding residential landscapes with City staff at the end of summer 2019 for roll-out in the first quarter City newsletter.

Pride of dwelling space is evident throughout the City, and a formal program seems like it will be a good fit. This year, during a visit from AiB representative Bill Hahn to Blooming Fest to celebrate the City's CN EcoConnexions From the Ground Up grant for the 2019 Parkway Tree Planting Program, an impromptu walk through of an adjacent neighborhood introduced Bill to that kind of personal pride. Along the way, he met no less than four people who were tending their gardens and who were delighted to share the results of their labors of love through conversation and, in some cases, personal tours of their yards. The sharing of information was one of the highlights of his visit for all involved. It was also a great way to talk about AiB and cultivate interest in joining the Committee.



AiB's Bill Hahn (in red shirt) tours a West Chicago neighborhood and spends time with some resident "green thumbs" who were out tending their gardens.

Currently, the **West Chicago Garden Club maintains its Select Gardens Program**, which identifies excellence in landscape design among its members. This year, two gardens were selected and will be highlighted on the judges' tour.

Last year, several members of the Garden Club invited the judges to tour their residential landscapes and shared their garden triumphs and challenges. The landscapes were unique reflections of the individual styles and tastes of the residents.

Educating the community, sharing the passion for quality landscapes

The West Chicago Garden Club has a well-established reputation as one of the leading Club's in the region for its resources, camaraderie, and monthly programming which provide members with knowledge and skills throughout the year – all for an annual individual membership of only \$15.

Educational programs presented by garden experts provide residents what they need to know for success in their efforts. In February, **Nancy Koziol, who writes for the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Landscape Contractor and Chicagoland Gardening**, presented Simple Pleasures – Inspiration for Gardeners, giving attendees a much needed reminder that spring would arrive and with it, the possibilities awaiting them in their gardens.

March brought **Tricia Berthke of the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Program** to talk about Jumping Worms & Other Invasives.

In April, Garden Club member **Ed Max provided the program entitled *Ephemerals***.

A workshop on **Hypertufa** was offered in May at a member's home.

June and July take Garden Club members on **field trips**, in June to three **Garden Club Select Gardens** for tours, and in July, to the nearby Fabyan Forest Preserve in Geneva on the Fox River for the Club's annual **President's Picnic**.



Glorious Dahlias will be the topic at the August meeting, and in September, the Club holds its annual **Bulb Bingo**, with a large variety of bulbs straight from Holland as the prizes – and each player goes home a winner. Club members will also talk about spring annuals, what works and what doesn't. The year rounds out with a **Silent Auction and Potluck Dinner**.

City Acknowledged for Landscape Efforts

West Chicago celebrated Pollinator Week by sharing information and resources to the public. The City was honored for its commitment to managing landscapes in pollinator-friendly ways and for its promotion of Pollinator Week, by DuPage Monarch Project and the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, with an interpretive sign designed for display in demonstration beds or naturalized areas. Currently, the City is working with the group to have the City seal added to the sign, and then our AiB Committee will choose one of the many appropriate pollinator-friendly landscapes in town in which to proudly display it.

Urban Forestry

So many wonderful developments this past year have taken place with regard to West Chicago's tree stock.

Leadership and Policy

As responsible environmentally conscious modern citizens, residents might expect to have tree-lined streets, and discover that many cities in the United States have "tree policies" of some sort. In West Chicago's Municipal Code, one may find not only the definition of the parkways, but also specific instructions on types of tree allowed along with their placement: trees not susceptible to disease, and those that are not prone to making large messes (like mulberry trees) as well as a variety of plantings are important. When the Dutch Elm disease hit the United States 50 years ago, many cities lost hundreds of side-by-side-planted trees that lined their streets. At one point in West Chicago's history, homeowners were expected to share the cost of the tree plantings and maintenance in addition to their property tax obligation, but currently the City pays this cost. So, how did West Chicago get such a tree policy?

In 1868 some land owners (Joseph and Mary McConnell, John Elliott, Edward Rees, Philip McGrath, Richard Murphy, Mary Lynch, Daniel Healy, Michael Cary and Mary Parkison) gave land for Arbor Avenue. As they gifted this land, they included these stipulations in the legal document:

...reserving and stipulating that all the trees standing and growing within the bounds of said described new road shall be reserved and preserved alive and growing except a space in the center of said road two rods wide for a carriage way be cleared and graded, hereby decreeing that no person, shall have the right to cut down, dig up or wantonly mutilate said trees, but shall preserve them to ornament and beautify said Avenue.

145 years later West Chicago is still benefiting from their foresight. The City is very intentional about maintaining a diversified tree stock, replacing damaged or diseased trees, and identifying areas where the addition of a new tree is appropriate and makes landscape sense. By doing so, it keeps its tree stock healthy and, if done regularly, reduces the high cost of replacing a large number in one calendar year.

[Landscape Standards Ordinance Related to Tree Stock Infested, Diseases, Dead, and/or Dying Trees](#)



City leaders celebrate 2019 Parkway Tree Planting Program and CN EcoConnexions From the Ground Up Grant.

The devastation inflicted to West Chicago's tree stock by the Emerald Ash Borer, and the resulting loss of trees from its activity, caused many of our tree-lined streets to have suddenly been stripped. In 2011, once the discovery was made, the City took swift action. City crews immediately removed the trees before female beetles were able to lay any new eggs, spreading infestation, and an Ash tree inventory which identified approximately 1,992 parkway Ash trees, was completed on all City properties and rights-of-way. An action plan was created to minimize environmental and financial impact of this threat to West Chicago's urban forest. Treating those larger, mature trees that could still be saved was part of the plan. City Council approved a contract with Emerald Tree Care, LLC for professional services related to the 2011 EAB Insecticidal

Treatment Program. A similar program, at the same unit pricing, was offered to residents, businesses, and/or property owners by Emerald Tree Care, under a separate contract agreement.

On a Happier Note

The City applied for and received the **CN EcoConnexions From the Ground Up Grant** to assist with its 2019 Parkway Tree Planting Program. A matched grant of \$25,000 was awarded to West Chicago because of its involvement with America and Bloom and its commitment of intentional maintenance and replacement of damaged or diseased trees annually. Through this grant, America in Bloom (AiB) and the CN Railway support collaborative community greening projects that enhance landscapes, improve quality of life in communities, and improve environmental stewardship in communities neighboring CN rail lines. Approximately 200 trees in total were planted. Among the species planted were English Oak, Red Oak, Pin Oak, Hackberry, Tulip, Skyline Honey Locust, Frontier Elm, Stately Manor Kentucky Coffee, Shantung Maple, and Ivory Silk Lilac.

A community celebration to recognize the Program and the support it received from AiB and CN, appropriately took place on May 18, 2019 at the City's annual Blooming Fest. The City was truly honored to have Bill Hahn of AiB and Larry Lloyd of CN come out to the Fest and speak on behalf of their organizations' commitment to communities nationwide. Both representatives were warmly welcomed by Mayor Ruben Pineda, City Administrator Michael Guttman, and many members of the City Council.

Inspiring Arbor Day Donation



West Chicago Garden Club members donate and break ground for three new Hickory Pecan trees at Reed-Kepler Park.

This year the **Garden Club** took on a project to extend its love for plants by **donating three trees to be planted in celebration of Arbor Day**. Billie Childress, Garden Club member for almost 20 years, worked with Michael Gasparini, Superintendent of Parks at the West Chicago Park District, to find the ideal trees for this event. The West Chicago Park District recently coordinated a Tree Inventory Project of Reed-Kepler Park, the jewel of the community. Following some research, Childress and Gasparini agreed on the planting of three hickory pecan trees (*Carya ilinoensis*), as there was currently none of this kind of tree at the Park out of over one thousand trees in managed areas. The trees will feature a bracelet that marks their donation by the Garden Club.

The donation of these trees will greatly assist the Park District's current efforts for Reed-Kepler Park to gain Tier One Arboretum status through the program recommended on the 2018 AiB Evaluation Report (www.arbnet.org). The Park District recognizes the benefits of accreditation, which include:

- Community pride for residents
- Physical benefits of planned forestry efforts for beauty, shade, environmental benefit, and promotion of wildlife
- Recognition for achievement of specified levels of professional practice
- Identifying other organizations at similar or higher levels to provide comparative benchmarks and serve as models
- Earning distinction for the community
- Provides opportunities for collaboration with other arboreta

The **West Chicago Park District's Superintendent of Parks Mike Gasparini** worked with an **Urban Forestry Consultant, Certified Arborist and Municipal Specialist Phil Graf**, to create a **Comprehensive Tree Inventory Report** that maps each tree at each Park within the boundaries of West

Chicago, which amount to approximately 400 acres. This was done with a handheld GPS receiver, which recorded the corresponding data – species, size, condition, and structural defects, among other data collection parameters. This process was completed on August 30, 2018, at which time 2,394 trees were recorded.

This comprehensive data collection has many benefits. First, it identifies all tree species, which helps to diversify plantings. Second was to get a prioritized plan for removals. According to Mike, this has been by far the most beneficial part of the inventory for the maintenance staff. He has given the staff access to the app and they can walk to the tree and know for sure that is the tree that needs to be removed. Also, knowing how many species are in Reed-Keppler Park has given the Park District the ability to apply for Tier One, and in the near future, Tier Two Arboretum status. A copy of the Tree Inventory Report is attached to the Community Profile as supporting documentation of West Chicago's commitment to best practices in Urban Forestry.

A Memorial Tree & Bench Program is offered as an opportunity for residents to contribute to the beauty of the parks while memorializing a loved one. Memorial trees must be purchased through the District and can be done so at any time throughout the year. However, the trees will only be planted in the spring and fall of each calendar year. As purchasers of a memorial tree, people may choose from a shade or flowering tree. After installation, purchasers will be notified of the exact location of their specific memorial tree so that everyone wishing to remember their loved ones can visit it. Due to maintenance issues, a memorial plaque is not included with a memorial tree or permitted after installation. The total cost of a memorial tree is \$240, which includes the purchase and installation of a tree, and a one year warranty. Benches are another way to memorialize a loved one and also enhance the aesthetics of the District's park system. Memorial benches must be purchased through the District and can be done so at any time throughout the year.

Weather permitting, the installation of the benches can only be completed from April - October and will be completed at the earliest possible date from the District's receipt of the bench. After installation, the purchaser will be notified of the exact location of the bench so that everyone wishing to remember their loved ones can visit it. Although there is only one type of bench and a standard color to choose from, each memorial bench will include a 4" x 6" brushed stainless plaque that can be engraved with a short memorial message. The Parks Superintendent or designee must approve memorial messages. The total cost of a memorial bench is \$1,000, which includes the bench, three replacement plaques, delivery, plaque engraving and installation.

Trail Watchers

A great program offered through the Site Operations Division and the Law Enforcement Division of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage is the **volunteer Trail Watch Program**. Volunteers bike or walk the DuPage Forest Preserve trails that run through West Chicago to provide information and safety tips to Forest Preserve visitors. They distribute Forest Preserve maps, monitor trail conditions and report emergencies as required. The volunteers always wear identification badges and other identifying clothing while biking on the trails. They commit eight hours a month from March through October, with two hours of credit for attending training and or monthly meetings. Volunteers also pick up trash and recyclable materials left on the trails. They remind trail visitors to follow posted rules and to be mindful of staying on the trails to avoid contact with poison ivy or poison oak.

West Chicago Prairie Habitat Restoration - Summary of Work

Over the past 35 years, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and the West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group, led by AiB Committee member Scott Hensey, have made progress to improve habitat at the West Chicago Prairie Preserve, one of the District's highest quality prairies. Most recently, the

District has removed invasive woody brush, planted native species and used prescribed fire for maintenance. According to its website, in winter 2018-19 the District will continue to improve habitat, specifically in 7.6 acres of immature upland forest along the Prairie Path in the MacQueen Savanna. This restoration project will create a larger restored landscape and increase the quality of the site, resulting in healthier and more sustainable habitat.

The District continually removes invasive brush and trees not historically found in the area. Desirable native trees and shrubs remain to flourish, and native plant seeds are sown. By removing these invasive plants, the District will return an ecosystem that not only supports more wildlife, but also provides visitors with springtime wildflowers and impressive views of prairies, wetlands and woodlands. Workers will use chainsaws and landscape construction equipment to remove the invasive brush, and chipper trucks and burn piles for disposal. Temporary trail closures may be necessary at certain times during the project. The \$34,000 project will be funded by an Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation 3-to-1 cash match from community donations (\$25,000) and community donations (\$9,000). Volunteer support from the Prairie Stewardship Group continues to play a large role in keeping the West Chicago Prairie Preserve a community treasure.

The “Back Story” of the Prairie

This year, the community chose to honor former Mayor Richard Truitt, 94-year old D-Day hero and local community leader. He is one of the few remaining brave soldiers who served during the invasion of Normandy, as a tank driver. He took part in the Battle of the Bulge in the 3rd Armored Division, 83rd Reconnaissance Battalion, in World War II. He was injured twice during these campaigns.

At the end of the war in 1945, Truitt returned home to West Chicago and soon married his high school classmate, Catherine, a cadet nurse. He chose teaching as his profession and worked locally for the Waterman and Wheaton School Districts, teaching primarily fifth grade, and completed his Master’s Degree at Northern Illinois University. Truitt was instrumental in shaping youth both in and out of the classroom, and is known in the community for establishing the local football and wrestling programs. Mayor Truitt continued his lifetime of community service and involvement, which included serving as an Alderman and City Clerk, and as Mayor from 1971 – 1977. His contributions to West Chicago’s future may be seen today and will be enjoyed by future generations of West Chicagoans.



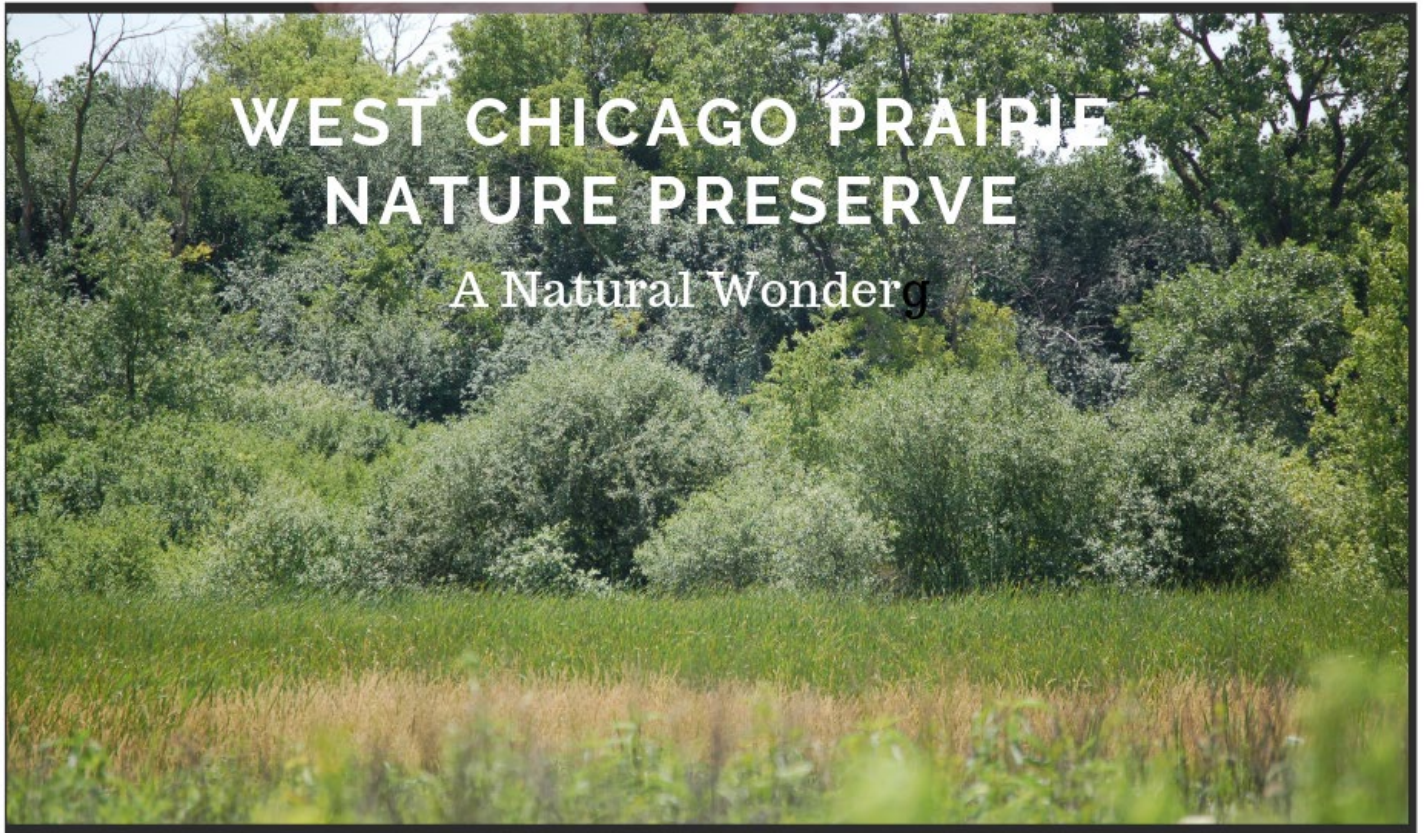
Former Mayor Richard (Dick) Truitt championed the West Chicago Prairie Preserve

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment by Truitt for his hometown of West Chicago was his championing of a tract of land vacated by West Chicago’s stockyards in 1960. The land, which was purchased by a developer sat vacant because of its natural water retention. During his tenure as Mayor, Truitt, a nature enthusiast, made the discovery that its plants were very special. While taking a class on prairie plants at the Morton Arboretum, he recognized plants that he had seen when playing as a boy at the stockyards in the 1930s. He engaged ecologists to inventory local species, eventually cataloging 622 plant and animal species – making it one of the most ecologically diverse areas in Illinois.

Through his passion, insight, and advocacy, Truitt convinced the Forest Preserve District of DuPage and the City of West Chicago to purchase the property in 1979. It subsequently received the highest County level of protection with the rare designation of a State Preserve, the West Chicago Prairie Forest Preserve. An approximate one-third section was dedicated in 2006 as the Truitt-Hoff Nature Preserve, in honor of Mayor Truitt and Melvern Hoff, founder of the West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group. West Chicago’s remarkable Prairie was the highlight of our 2018 Judges’ Tour. Both judges marveled over

the breadth and scope of the plant and animal species that are thriving within the majestic environs of the property. The recommendation they provided to our Committee to widen the footpath to allow easier access was implemented this year, making a walk a less rugged endeavor.

However, in a passionate discussion at the Committee wrap-up meeting where our 2018 Evaluation was discussed at length, those on the Committee who intimately knew the background and history of the Prairie were adamant about maintaining its pristine beauty and were resistant to the idea of making it more “functional” as a tourist destination by adding a children’s educational center or other such amenity, an idea floated by judges as a way to ensure that through documented usage, it would remain protected. Our City historian and other long-term residents explained that protecting the land is not an issue because of the actions of a visionary leader and advocacy of forward-thinking community partners (the City, Forest Preserve District, Stewardship Group, The Nature Conservancy, and the Nature Preserve Commission) ensured, through formal designation, that the West Chicago Nature Preserve was approved for Illinois Nature Preserve status and hence protected for future generations.



Environmental Efforts

The City of West Chicago contracts with Groot Industries, Inc. for resident garbage and recycling collection. Groot's Recycle Guide and Poster are available on the City's website, as well as a Special Recycling Guide from DuPage County. Electronic Recycling and Household Hazardous Waste Recycling information may also be found on the City's website.

Through a variety of community partners, Environmental Efforts in West Chicago take many forms: paper shredding and recycling, rain water recycling through the sale of rain barrels, holiday lights and recycling. Data collected since 2011 provide a glimpse of the success of these programs.

At the **Winfield Township Recycling Extravaganza** on Saturday, September 29, 2018, which is promoted by the City to its residents and businesses, the following data were collected:

- 402 vehicles drove into the site to drop off varied items.
- The exact poundage of televisions and computer monitors will not be available until next month, \$2,200 was collected.
- E-paint Recycling Service collected 600 gallons of latex and oil paint.
- The poundage of scrap metal also will not be available until next month.
- There were two truckloads of shredded paper, totaling 6,825 pounds.
- The collection of six boxes of books, five boxes of school supplies, two boxes of holiday lights, five musical instruments, thirty ink cartridges and forty keys were donated to SCARCE for recycling.
- Ten bikes were donated to Working Bikes, an organization which "gives donated bicycles new life by redistributing them as tools of empowerment in local and global communities."
- The 496 pairs of glasses were donated to the West Chicago Lions Club.
- There were 16 propane tanks totaling 40 pounds, and 13 propane tanks totaling 16 pounds.
- Other items collected were 49 flags, 222 cell telephones, 13 fire extinguishers and four industrial batteries.

First United Methodist Church of West Chicago (FUMCWC) collects Styrofoam, and used shoes for the Shoeman Water Project. The Church collects clean styrene (styrofoam) from members and delivers it to Dart Container Corporation for recycling. The congregation also collects pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House in Winfield, empty medicine bottles for SCARCE which go to Doctors Without Borders, and depleted printer cartridges for recycling (credit used for school supplies).

The Church has now collected over 30,000 pairs of shoes for the **Shoeman Water Project** which started in 2012. This program keeps the shoes out of the landfill, it provides small business opportunities in developing countries and the money from selling the shoes in the world market is used to purchase well drilling equipment for deep water sources in Kenya, Haiti and other places, along with water purification systems. When young children and women no longer need to walk 10 miles for untreated water (rivers, ponds, etc.) the children can attend school and women can garden and raise animals for food and/or to sell.

The **West Chicago Environmental Commission and the Green Disciples of the FUMCWC** teamed up again in 2018 to collect pumpkins for composting. For the past two years, an annual pumpkin collection has yielded approximately one-ton of pumpkins each year for composting. Decomposing organics make landfills the third largest producers of methane gas. About two-thirds of landfill waste contains biodegradable organic matter from households, business and industry. As this material decomposes, it releases methane gas. As a potent greenhouse gas, methane traps up to 20 times more heat in the atmosphere as compared with carbon dioxide. Reducing methane reduces greenhouse gas. Composting returns nutrients and water back to the soil – pumpkins are nutrient rich! They are ninety percent water, making pumpkins good for our soil, but bad for our landfills. Most of the pumpkins processed in the United States are grown in Illinois. Composting pumpkins will keep the water and nutrients here where they are grown. This information is communicated with the public to increase awareness about composting. Another one of the City's partners, Winfield Township, sponsors a used vegetable cooking oil drop off site

one day a week from 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (excluding holidays). For communities with public sewer service, grease and oil collect in grease traps and over time, oil and grease accumulate causing backups to the water system, or worse, blockages of the entire sewer line. Pouring used cooking oil outside can attract vermin and can run off into streams and rivers.

Recycling opportunities like these and others are vigorously **promoted through the City’s website, social media and LED monument signage.**

The City strives to set an example to crowds attending its many special events by placing ample recycling receptacles throughout the grounds. These receptacles are provided free to the City by its contracted waste hauler.

Monarch Conservation Education and Efforts

Students at Community High School District 94 explored the delicate balance between humans and nature through the visually beautiful independent film, *The Guardians*. Almost 800 students viewed *The Guardians*, a Spanish-language documentary film with English subtitles, which interweaves the lives of the threatened Monarch butterfly with an indigenous community fighting to restore the forest it nearly destroyed. The license to show the film was made available to West Chicago Community High School through a grant from Eidolon Films acquired by the City. It permits multiple showings for one calendar year which will enable the High School to add subsequent showings when the new school year begins, and to possibly host a free public viewing of the film for families and other community members in the fall. Students from Science, World Languages, and ESL classes viewed the film, which was shown every period during the day in the School Auditorium one day this spring. The film dovetailed with the ongoing interest by **Club Green**, an afterschool program at West Chicago Community High School, to become involved in Monarch conservation. The Club started **cultivating a butterfly garden of native plants all winter which will be planted outside their building this spring.** The hope is to create another natural environment in the community for Monarchs to visit for nourishment and to lay eggs. Currently, **Club Green is looking for peer volunteers to become “butterfly foster parents” next fall, to raise caterpillars until they shed their skin and become viable butterflies.**



Mayor Ruben Pineda share the City’s efforts for Monarch conservation .

A second license for public showing of the film, ***The Guardians***, was obtained by the City of West Chicago for People Made Visible, the not-for-profit arts organization that operates Gallery 200 in downtown West Chicago. Attendance was amazing, with some people coming from other suburbs. Following a welcome message from Mayor Pineda, those in attendance watched in rapt silence as the story of an indigenous Mexican community struggling to survive and protect its forest habitat unfolded. Following the film, **special guest Michael Rizo, Urban and Community Program Specialist for the U.S. Forest Service, answered questions posed by audience members.** Additional showings of the film have already been arranged through People Made Visible.

West Chicago is doing its part to help Monarch conservation. Since 2017 when he signed the **Mayor’s Monarch Pledge, Mayor Ruben Pineda has taken a lead role** in advancing awareness and support for the importance of providing Monarch-friendly habitats throughout the City. The most recent example of this is a new pollinator garden at Sesquicentennial Park planted by City leaders and community volunteers.

Advocacy through groups like the Green Disciples of the First United Methodist Church, the DuPage Monarch Project, the West Chicago Environmental Commission, America in Bloom of West Chicago, People Made Visible, Community High School District 94, and others are making a difference.



AiB Committee member and Master Naturalist Judith Horsley (left) presents Mayor Pineda (right) with a gift of her artwork to celebrate the dedication of a Monarch Waystation.

AiB Committee member, artist, and Master Naturalist Judi Horsley has been recommended by the Coordinator of DuPage Monarch Project, Lonnie Morris, to take part in a three-day course sponsored by the partnership between the United States Forest Service International Programs, the Monarch Joint Venture, and the University of Wisconsin – Madison Arboretum on Monarch and Science Inquiry Learning. Judi will attend as a Generalist and will accompany two West Chicago teachers who are also attending. This course is offered through the

North American Monarch Institute and will be held July 10-12, 2019. The goal of the program is to bring together teams of teachers from across the country to study Monarchs and to build lasting collaboration and networking along the Monarchs' migration flyway route to Mexico.

Specifically those attending will:

- learn monarch biology and ecology;
- participate in conservation efforts and research for monarchs;
- learn to rear monarchs in your classroom;
- be able to receive up to \$1,000 to plant a schoolyard garden;
- become part of an international science partnership between educators, researchers and students along the monarch migration flyway;
- receive lots of great classroom materials;
- and earn one graduate credit from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Don't forget the bees!

The spotlight has been on honeybees for years. It's the bee that comes to mind when discussing pollinator decline, likely due to their strong connection with people. Honeybees perform essential pollinator services for several food crops, they make honey and their picture has been featured on a popular breakfast cereal box until it was replaced by a ghost-like silhouette to highlight the honeybee decline.

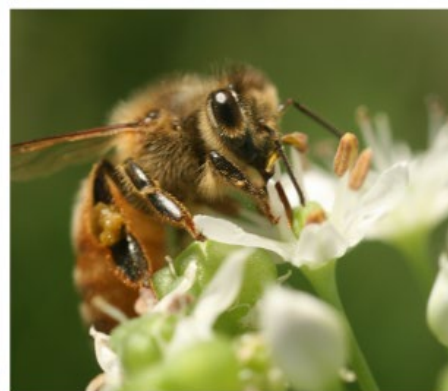
Beekeeping is a longstanding tradition at West Chicago's Kline Creek Farm, the 1890s living history farm at Timber Ridge Forest Preserve. Restored farmstead structures and historically costumed interpreters, operate the farm using the tools and techniques of the past. Since 1984, volunteer beekeepers have managed the farmstead's apiary by caring for the bees, extracting and processing honey, and leading educational programs and tours that focus on the honeybees' role as primary pollinator for two-thirds of all U.S. crops. The sale of honey at the Timber Ridge Visitor Center helps to support farm programs and operations.

Recently, **WGN-TV News did a feature on another local farm in the bee-saving business.** Bill Whitney is the owner at City Bee Savers on West Washington Street and has been breeding and cultivating honeybees at his farm for more than two decades. Millions of bees on the farm are already producing hundreds of thousands of pounds of raw honey that will be distributed to farmers markets all across the

Chicago area. The goal is not only to create honey, but help save the honeybees. The farm hosts garden clubs, teaches planting for pollinators and even beekeeping classes in the community.

Sam Chripczuk's 18" x 24" encased bee colony gets things buzzing on Main Street at West Chicago Blooming Fest each year. Thousands of people swarm downtown to attend the community's signature spring event, many leaving with a jar of his local honey. Sam's setup at the Fest gives children and adults a chance to marvel at the inner workings of a hive, and to taste the sweet produce of the busy bees. The awareness and information he and his wife provide about these pollinators have promoted a better understanding of their importance to our environment.

Resident hobbyists like Sarah Bass and David Sabathne are doing their part too. Both are finding the tremendous rewards of raising bees in their backyards. Dave's goal is to get to a surplus point where he can provide fresh jars of honey to the food pantry, as he does now with his surplus vegetables grown in several raised beds he tends in his large yard. Sara has been a beekeeper for five years, but acknowledges in presentations she makes at schools, public libraries and park districts, that no beekeeper "keeps bees" because they are wild and untamed by nature. She sees herself rather as a steward of bee colonies, and by them we are granted the opportunity to cultivate the art of observation (for in order to become a good keeper, you must learn to see the little things). Sara's presentations have inspired an appreciation for bees, which aligns with the City's efforts to encourage environmental friendly habitats for these and other important pollinators.



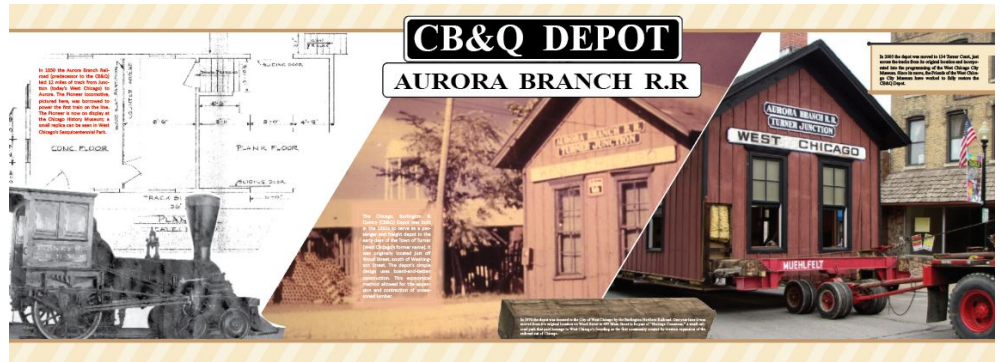
Celebrating Heritage

Last year, West Chicago received a special commendation from AiB for its efforts in celebrating its rich heritage. This accolade deservedly goes to all the community groups and individuals that foster a sincere appreciation for West Chicago's historic character, diversity, railroad ties, mom-and-pop businesses, and sense of community.

Leadership

West Chicago has a Historical Preservation Commission which serves many functions. It identifies property, structures, or areas that are historically significant; it provides designation of property/structures as Landmarks or Historic Districts; and it reviews proposed structure and property modifications within the East Washington Street and Turner Junction Historic Districts.

A recent project of the City Museum has involved **creating signage for the “rail trails” that run through West Chicago**, and which was reviewed by the Commission. Areas that were once right of ways on which train tracks originally ran but have since become bike and walking paths, including the Illinois Prairie Path, will now benefit from signage that informs people about the path's origin and the related train history. There will also be information as to where to go to learn more (i.e. the City's website and the City Museum). A total of six signs are being proposed for installation within the next two years, three of which will occur this year. *Renderings of these signs may be found in the Additional Resources Section of this Community Profile.*



Activities of the Mexican Cultural Center DuPage (MCCD)

This not-for-profit group founded and located in West Chicago, promotes Mexican heritage, culture, and traditions through celebration, education and partnerships, with a vision of preserving the pride of Mexican heritage for future generations to carry on as their legacy. It does this through showcasing Mexican cultural contributions and heritage in the U.S., educational programming that accurately reflects Mexican traditions, partnerships that expand the organization's vision, and the identification of role models and the empowerment of future leaders to maintain that legacy. A two-page flier is attached in the Supporting Documents section of the 2019 Community Profile.

Last year, judges recommended the creation of a **Farmers Market in West Chicago**. While the Western DuPage Chamber of Commerce manages the weekly Winfield Farmers' Market where West Chicago residents may easily access, the MCCD is taking it a step further and has proposed an exciting, creative, and historically relevant local alternative, a **West Chicago Boxcar Market**, for 2020.

West Chicago's well-known history as the first Illinois community established around the first junction of rail lines in Illinois meant that a lot of migrant labor was recruited to work on the lines. Recent immigrants to the United States were a large portion of this labor force. Boxcar camps were set up west of town and by the mid-1920s and Mexican immigrants began to dominate the railroad worker population. Over the next few decades, they slowly moved from company housing in boxcars to their own homes in town. Bringing a Boxcar Market to West Chicago that offers fresh produce, flowers, handcrafts and more would be a wonderful, culturally rich return to the early history of the City, and provide a touchpoint for current

residents to gain new insights on the founding of this great community.

The **Miss Mexican Heritage Program** exists to provide personal and professional opportunities for young Latina women. This program allows the young women to promote their voices in the community and provides scholarships so that they can continue their education. It provides a forum for today's young Latina women to express their viewpoints, talents and accomplishments to the public-at-large during the ensuing year. Most contestants are in the process of earning their college degree.

Union Pacific's Big Boy Steam Engine Pays a Visit

West Chicago was honored to receive notice from the **Union Pacific Railroad** that it will be an official display stop on the '**Great Race Across the Midwest**' for the **Big Boy No. 4014 Locomotive**. The newly restored Big Boy No. 4014, the world's largest steam locomotive, is returning to the rails for its own "Great Race across the Midwest" as part of the 150th anniversary celebration of the transcontinental railroad's completion. The Big Boy will be on public display from July 27 – 29, 2019.

This is an historically relevant event for West Chicago, which has a long railroad history of its own. The original name of Junction was a logical choice for the people and families who first settled the area, as the community sprang up around the intersection of three major railroads: the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad (now the Union Pacific), the St. Charles Branch Railroad (which later merged into the C&NW), and the Aurora Branch Railroad (now the Burlington Northern). The railroads were instrumental in the community's growth. The population – and subsequent construction of new homes and schools – increased tremendously from the mid-1870s to the turn of the century; the 1900 census indicated that 40 percent of the workers employed in non-agricultural jobs worked for the C&NW.

Young Latinas Day



West Chicago supported the **Fig Factor Foundation's** celebration of **Young Latina Day** on April 11, 2019. The Fig Factor Foundation is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to giving vision, direction, and structure to young Latinas. Last year, West Chicago was one of three municipalities to host and proclaim Young Latina Day, and this year that number grew to seven. Young Latina Day is a celebration of the programs' participants as they continue along with their journey to transformation by providing educational leadership platforms, mentorship, and powerful experiences through the context of sisterhood.

People Made Visible & Arts Programming

West Chicago has long known what is becoming and more and more accepted - the arts make communities wonderful places in which to live! West Chicago formed its Cultural Arts Commission in 1991 and the City Museum revamped its mission in the early 2000s to include art as a way to further promote culture and history throughout West Chicago. In 2009, a local arts not-for-profit, People Made Visible, was formed to augment the work the City had been doing through the Cultural Arts Commission and the City Museum. People Made Visible, with the support and collaboration of the City, hosts pop-up art installations and exhibitions to complement community events.

People Made Visible also runs an **Artist-in-Residency Program**, which has hosted 16 artists to date, many of whom come from outside of the United States. The residency is focused around community, social practice art that involves community members and brings individuals together on a personal level as they work with the artist and the specific project. The projects also involve local schools and organizations, most recently a partnership with the Mexican Cultural Center DuPage to create specific pieces that were displayed at the annual Mexican Independence Day Celebration and are now on semi-permanent display at the local art gallery.

People Made Visible is also the parent organization for **Gallery 200**, the local art co-op which features the work of 30 local artists. The co-op artists display and sell their work at the Gallery, as well as host a rotating monthly art show that brings in the work of other regional artists, and students of both the local elementary and high school districts. The Gallery also **hosts art classes, workshops and demonstrations, as well as other local cultural groups for special meetings and rehearsals.**

Gallery Theater, a local storefront performing arts group, is also housed within People Made Visible, providing further access to a variety of cultural opportunities for residents that not only enrich their lives, but bring community members together around unique experiences.



West Chicago Sister Cities Celebrates its 20th Anniversary

Since 1999, **West Chicago and Taufkirchen (Vils) Germany** have enjoyed a strong bond of **friendship through Sister Cities International**. Over the years, citizens of both countries have traveled to meet each other and exchange ideas, learn each other's customs and culture and build international fellowship. The relationship with its German Sister City has resulted in art and music exchanges with student performances in both cities. This year, West Chicago Sister Cities is planning to take a contingent of West Chicago residents to Taufkirchen (Vils) to celebrate the significant anniversary.



City hosts reception for friends from Taufkirchen (Vils) Germany.

Museums Preserve the Past, Provide Insight for the Future

History is important to West Chicago; the City’s museums and historic sites preserve and celebrate the past. The **West Chicago City Museum** is housed in what was Turner Town Hall from 1884 to 1976. The narrow two-story building, typical of the era in which it was built, is now listed on the National Register of Historical Places. A new exhibit titled **Home**, which is scheduled to debut at the City Museum at 132 Main Street, on Saturday, May 18, 2019 and run through Saturday, April 18, 2020, will focus on an exploration of community, specifically as told through histories of people who currently call, or who have at one time called, West Chicago home. Additionally, select artifacts from the Museum’s collections will be incorporated into the exhibit. Chosen artists will work with Museum Director Sara Phalen and exhibit co-curator Anni Holm to create compelling original artwork that will be inspired by the stories of those journeys to and in the community. Like the indelible imprint of the Monarch population to the West Chicago environmental landscape, the unique stories of people who made a home in West Chicago will illustrate the profound ways in which they have contributed to the cultural landscape.

The **Kruse House Museum**, operated by the **West Chicago Historical Society** and located at 527 Main Street in a 1917 Prairie-style home, displays the furniture and possessions of the Kruse family and other early settlers of the community who worked for the railroads.

Kline Creek Farm, located on the eastern edge of West Chicago, is a living history museum which demonstrates life on an 1890’s farm through the use of costumed interpreters. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County operates Kline Creek Farm.

Community School District 33 Programs



Two new clubs that have formed at Lemay Middle School have been taking the community by storm with the exciting performances they share at special events and community gatherings – Mariachi los Rayos and Ballet Folklórico Dancers. These talented young people, under the direction of teachers and mentors equally passionate about preserving the beauty and legacy of this rich culture, have added meaningful opportunities to preserve and celebrate Mexican heritage.



Lemay Middle School Mariachi los Rayos and Ballet Folklórico celebrate Mexican culture.

Overall Impression

Through combined efforts of leadership and policy, amenities, maintenance, and community involvement, West Chicago's overall impression is one which instills pride of ownership for residents and businesses and warm welcome for visitors.

Leadership and Policy

Code Enforcement Ordinances for overgrown lots, etc. follow.

[Refuse containers](#)

[Weed control](#)

[Natural landscaping areas](#)

[Inoperable, Abandoned and Improperly Stored Motor Vehicles](#)

[Pollution Control and Environmental Protection](#)

[Storm Water Control](#)

[External Maintenance Requirements](#)

Downtown Enhancements

Between the **American flags, art banners, hanging baskets, planted beds, and iconic fountain, downtown West Chicago's aesthetic vibe is brimming with pride.** However, last year, judges noticed several empty storefronts which to some extent detracted from the efforts of volunteers, businesses, and the City. Staff explored best practices in dealing with such inevitable instances in other communities. A decision was made by the City, to invest in attractive window decals that marketed the properties' potential uses (restaurant, retail, art gallery) while providing a better overall impression for the entire downtown. Property owners were contacted to seek permission, and the project resulted in a win-win for them, the community, and the existing business community on Main Street. The total cost for this upgrade to three storefront windows was approximately \$2,500.

Sesquicentennial Park improvements, as outlined under Landscaped Areas, added to the overall impression of the City for people walking along the adjacent pedestrian path, and commuters on the Metra line.

West Chicago Park District Amenities

The Shell at Reed-Keppler Park is an entertainment venue created out of the partnership between the West Chicago Park District and the City of West Chicago to foster and celebrate music, drama, the arts, and family memories. The Shell provides a myriad of activities that families and friends can enjoy in a beautiful outdoor setting. Events include a concert series, movies in the park, outdoor fitness classes, youth entertainment series and much more. The 2019 Summer Schedule may be found on the City's website and the Park District's website and is promoted through both organizations.

A new facility at **Reed-Keppler Park, Zone250**, features over 16,000 square feet of hardwood floors and the capability for practices, games, tournaments, skill development, events and a variety of multipurpose activities in a pay for play framework. The focus centers on basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse and programs. Zone 250 is the place to develop athletic and performance skills.

Wiggly Field Dog Park and Southpaw Dog Park (for the little guys) provides enclosed fun for the furry community living in West Chicago. Clean and well maintained (cleanup cans and bag holders readily available), dogs owners can enjoy a place to play with their pets off-leash seven days a week, from sunrise to sunset.

Voted as one of the Top 10 Indoor Playgrounds by Kidlist, **The Treehouse at Reed-Keppler Park** provides over 3,500 square feet of fun including a multiple-story indoor playground, toddler playground and much more. The Treehouse is available to book for birthday parties, and a Drop & Go program allows parents to take a break, work out, run errands or even do some shopping while children are supervised in a 1:12 supervisor to participant ratio.

Turtle Splash Water Park features a five acre enclosed facility, 12' Tortuga Waterfall, zero-depth entry, Blue Thunder Bucket Drop, Squirt Tot Slide, the Hard Shell Café, Captain's Corkscrew Slide, Snapper Tube Slide, Crush Body Slide, Tortoise Landing, free parking and locker rooms and showers. New this year is Aqua Zumba, a Latin-inspired, easy to follow, calorie-burning, dance-fitness party that makes working out a splash.

Public Art

The Monarch butterfly's wondrous migration and subsequent transformation has become something of a metaphor for the diverse community of West Chicago itself, which will be celebrating ***The Year of the Butterfly*** through an exciting calendar of art, film and history events.

The Butterfly Effect, a public art project of the West Chicago Cultural Arts Commission, West Chicago Garden Club, People Made Visible and the America in Bloom Committee, added 36 artist-designed butterflies to public gardens throughout the City. An interactive map accessible on Smart phones is available on the City website's map portal to assist people in finding all 36 butterflies, and to provide information about the artists who designed them.



A cross-section of 16 of 36 butterfly wings designed by artists for *The Butterfly Effect*.

Recently approved by the West Chicago City Council, a public art mural will be dedicated later this fall. The artist, Juan Chawuk, is a Tojolobal Maya from Chiapas, Mexico, and is considered by many to be the best artist in Chiapas, an area known worldwide for its artistic excellence. The butterfly-themed mural will continue building on the affinity and connection that West Chicagoans have for the Monarch butterfly. Communication and Image Marketing

Robust communications platforms which carry the messages of City success stories are impacting the overall impression of West Chicago. Through press releases, a visually striking website which includes a community calendar, social media channels, and e-News blasts, the City has grown its relationship with the community as a source for all that is happening and keeps the regional media informed as well. America in Bloom has encouraged the cross-promotion of our community partners' efforts and strengthened inter-governmental relationships to the extent that we now share each other's good news with the community more frequently.

Mayor's State of the City Address

The [2019 State of the City Address](#) outlined the transformation that is taking place in West Chicago. The process of butterfly metamorphosis was cited as a perfect analogy for this transformation. The **historic growth that is taking place in the business community, especially at the DuPage**

Business Center, has been the big story for West Chicago since last year when ground was broken for three outstanding developments. In other exciting development news, the City is currently reviewing the responses to a Request for Proposals for its **Central Main Street Redevelopment Plan**. This once in a generation opportunity will realize West Chicago's enormous transit-oriented development potential and represents the largest single physical transformation to downtown West Chicago in its history.

Signage

The addition of an **AiB sign at City Hall** and two attractive recognition signs for the **CN EcoConnexions From the Ground Up Grant** make a positive statement of our greening efforts.

Volunteer Recognition

Volunteer Recognition & Appreciation for the recent Downtown Planting Party is an example of what is done by the City for similar volunteer efforts:

- Small thank you gift provided to each volunteer after they complete their volunteer activity. Examples of gifts provided last year were water bottles, stainless steel coffee mugs, t-shirts, candy, or chocolate. Oftentimes these gifts are donated by community partners for this purpose.
- Thank you email sent to each volunteer after their service.
- If requested, verification letters are provided to volunteers that need to track their service hours for their school or employer.
- Snacks and water are available at each volunteer opportunity.

For longer-term efforts, a simple reception is held to thank volunteers for their work over a period of time. A recent example of this kind of reception was for the Blooming Fest Committee. For Blooming Fest, each volunteer committee member dedicated several hours leading up to and at the event to assist with logistics planning and execution of activities and programs. The post-event volunteer appreciation reception was held at a local West Chicago business, Kindred Coffee Roasters. The City took time to thank volunteers over coffee, tea, and treats.

It couldn't happen without all the many wonderful community champions.



Ball Horticultural Company's enthusiastic team support West Chicago's Adopt-A-Highway Program.

Best Idea

Downtown Enhancement Inspired by AiB

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A decision was made by the City, to invest in attractive window decals that marketed the properties' potential uses (restaurant, retail, art gallery) while providing a better overall impression for the entire downtown. Property owners were contacted to seek permission, and the project resulted in a win-win for them, the community, and the existing business community on Main Street. The total cost for this upgrade to three storefront windows was approximately \$2,500.

The response from community members has been wonderful. Several people commented that the windows looked like dynamic works of art.

While it is still too early to ask for feedback, we will follow up with property owners and/or commercial brokers to see if the window treatments have increased interest from potential tenants.



Map

