

# **Chicago River:**

## **Past – Present – Future**

# **Choices and Changes**

**Developed by the DePaul Center for Urban Education  
in Collaboration with IMAGINE CHICAGO  
and the John G. Shedd Aquarium**

### **Social Studies Benchmarks**

The project will reinforce student progress in the following benchmark areas:

- Use the tools of historical research.
- Exhibit an understanding of the chronology and significance of events.
- Use charts, graphs, and other geographical tools.
- Examine how contemporary issues influence public policy.

### **Writing Benchmarks**

- Write with precision and thoroughness, developing topics in depth and using standard conventions.
- Use language to generate and develop topics and ideas of community interest.

### **Math Connections**

Students can integrate the use of numerical data in any topic, thereby incorporating the following benchmarks:

- Apply data analysis principles to statistical situations involving real-life problems.
- Use mathematical language in written and graphic form.

### **Contents**

- Project Options: A range of topics to research and report.
- Data Bank: An outline to involve students in creating a class or school data base on the river.
- Writing Standards – Correlates with IGAP standards.
- Bibliography Plus: Relevant Resources.

# Project Options

This set of project options is set up as a unit or as a set of projects for independent work. Each of the following topics can be a starting point for a research activity by students. You can work on a Chicago River unit, with individual students or with a team specializing in one topic.

## Mapping Chicago: Building Geography

- Make a map showing the river and the buildings along it today.
- Make a map key identifying the buildings and telling reasons why people would have built these buildings along the river.

## Charting Chicago Changes

The following chart can be adapted to display the results of students' research on any topics. Based on what the students learn about the past and the present, individual students and the whole class can make plans for the future.

SPECIFIC FOCUS	What Was	What Is		What Can Be	What Will Be
	Choices and Consequences	Assets	Challenges	Opportunities	Choices for the Next Century
<i>Water quality</i>					
<i>Buildings on the banks of the river</i>					
<i>Transportation <b>on</b> the river</i>					
<i>Transportation <b>across</b> the river</i>					
<i>Ecology of the river</i>					

## Research Topics

- **Bridge Construction**

What kinds of technology did the building of bridges across the river bring to Chicago?

How did that technology influence:

Chicago's development at that time

Chicago's development today

- **River Flow**

Why did Chicago leaders decide to change the flow of the river?

How did that choice influence:

Chicago at that time

Chicago today

- **River Traffic**

What kinds of boats traveled on the river at different times?

What does the difference in that traffic tell you about:

Work in Chicago at that time

Changes in transportation in the United States

- **River Ecology**

How have people's decisions changed the ecology of the river? To answer:

- 1) Make a list of changes in the way people have used the river.
- 2) Make a list of changes in the ways people have treated the water.
- 3) Choose one change and figure out the effects of that change on the river's ecology.

- **Building along the River**

Choose one building along the Chicago River.

Figure out:

Why people chose to build it there.

What changes its construction brought to that area.

- **Your Topic**

What is another important choice about the river that has led to changes that affect people today?

## Points of View

Research and then report on the points of view of individuals about changes in the Chicago River. Here are some examples.

- **Early 1800's: Building a settlement along the river.**

Points of View: Research the situation and tell what each person would have thought about the change. Include information based on your research to support the positions.

- Soldier at Fort Dearborn
- Chicago trader
- Pottawatomie leader

- **Early 1900's: Changing the direction of flow of the river.**

Points of View: Research the situation and tell what each person would have thought about the change. Include information based on your research to support the positions.

- Owner of a barge company
- Family living along the south branch of the river
- Fisherman

- **1970's: Deep Tunnel Begins**

Work begins on the Deep Tunnel project, designed to reduce the sewage in the river.

Points of View: Research the situation and tell what each person would have thought about the change. Include information based on your research to support the positions.

- Worker on the project
- Family living in a home along the river
- Family living in a home near the tunnel construction

- **1970's: Water Treatment Changes**

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District stops the chlorination of water (due to federal regulations)

Points of View: Research the situation and tell what each person would have thought about the change. Include information based on your research to support the positions.

- Fisherman
- Sanitation worker
- Owner of a home along the river

## **The Future**

### **1997: Open Land**

There are areas in Chicago along the river that are open – no buildings or other uses are made of the land in these areas.

Imagine you are the alderman for that part of Chicago.

What should people build along the river?

- A factory, creating 200 more jobs
- Homes
- A park

*Use history in your decision.*

### **2000: More to Do**

Citizens – and government – will make a choice in the next century. It is proposed that Chicago should build more tunnels and reservoirs to maintain the river's balance and to help avoid pollution when there are heavy rainstorms. Those tunnels and reservoirs will cost more than 1 billion dollars.

What might the positions on this choice be of:

- A business owner
- A family living far from the river
- The mayor

Do current research: interview these individuals.

If you cannot contact the mayor directly, read about his position in the newspaper. Or contact your alderman to get another perspective.

*What is your recommendation?* Use history as you make your choice. Explain your choice based on what you have learned about the history of the river.

### **2020: Chicago River Map**

What will the map of the Chicago River show in 2020?  
Develop answers based on your research.

# River Data Bank

**An outline to involve students in creating  
a class or school database on the river.**

As students collect information, they can use the following format so that your class will set up a data base in a card file or computer to be used by other students in the school now and in the future.

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Question:**

**Information:**

**Source:**

**Connections:**

What other topics does this topic relate to--list key words here:

## **CRITERIA FOR WRITING**

These criteria are based on the Writing Scoring Guides of the Illinois State Board of Education IGAP Student Assessment. You can share them with students directly--have them use this set of criteria to assess their own work.

### **FOCUS**

The subject is clear.

The reader knows what the purpose of the writing is.

The reader knows what the main ideas are.

### **SUPPORT/ELABORATION**

Information helps the reader understand the key points the writer is making.

### **ORGANIZATION**

The writer has organized the paper clearly.

There is a logical beginning.

There is a clear development of ideas within the paper.

There is a clear conclusion.

### **GRAMMAR/CONVENTIONS**

The writer follows the rules of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, sentence construction, paragraph construction.

### **INTEGRATION**

The paper does its job--it accomplishes the purpose.

## Relevant Resources

### Chicago Connections

*Organizations with Information about the Chicago River*

The following organizations have information relating to the Chicago River.

#### **Center for Neighborhood Technology**

2125 W. North Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60647  
(312) 278-4800

#### **Cook County Environmental Information**

Department of the Environment  
Chicago, IL  
(312) 744-7606

#### **Friends of the Chicago River**

407 S. Dearborn  
Chicago, IL  
(312) 939-0490

#### **Illinois Environmental Protection Agency**

Chicago, IL  
(312) 886-6706

#### **Metro Chicago Information Center**

104 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60603-5903  
(312) 580-2878

#### **River Watch Network**

208 S. LaSalle, Suite 1666  
Chicago, IL 60604-1003  
(312) 201-0650

#### **Sierra Club**

1 N. LaSalle, Suite 4242  
Chicago, IL 60602  
(312) 251-1680



**Water Reclamation District**

Public Information Office  
111 E. Erie  
Chicago, IL 60611  
(312) 751-5600

**Chicago Museums**

Students can find information in materials available at the bookstores of these museums as well as in exhibits at the museums.

**Chicago Historical Society**

Clark Street and North Avenue

**Field Museum**

Roosevelt Rd. and Lake Shore Drive

**John G. Shedd Aquarium**

1200 S. Lake Shore Drive

**Internet Resources: Chicago River**

Each of these Internet connections can provide information relating to the Chicago River.

A Chronological History of Chicago; 1673-  
<http://cpl.lib.uic.edu/004chicago/chihist.html>

The Nature Conservancy; Illinois Chapter  
<http://www.mcs.net/~prb/html/info.html>

NOAA Environmental Information Services Gopher  
<gopher://gopher.esdim.noaa.gov>

US EPA; Office of Water  
<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/>

United States Army Corps of Engineers – Chicago District  
<http://bbsun.crrel.usace.army.mil/ncc/>

Urban River Regeneration  
<http://astral.magic.ca/~marwill/rivers.html>

US Water News On-line  
<http://www.mother.com/uswaternews/>

Volunteer Water System Information  
<http://peak.org/~robertr/fishing.html>

Water Resources Center  
[http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/water\\_resources/page.html](http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/water_resources/page.html)