An aerial photograph of the southern tip of Chicago, showing the city's grid pattern and the coastline of Lake Michigan. The image is split vertically: the left side shows the city's urban layout, and the right side shows the dark blue water of the lake. The text is overlaid on this image.

*We pray  
in different  
languages  
and we  
express  
our  
deepest  
commit-  
ments in  
different  
religious  
terms.  
But we  
share a  
special  
place  
on this  
planet –  
the area  
at the  
southern-  
most tip  
of Lake  
Michigan,  
around  
the great  
human  
settlement  
called  
Chicago.*

# ONE CREATION ONE PEOPLE ONE PLACE

A Statement  
of the  
Interreligious  
Sustainability  
Project of  
Metropolitan  
Chicago

## The Interreligious Sustainability Project

**T**his project is a collaboration among members of diverse religious traditions to build a faith-based interreligious vision for a sustainable Chicago metropolitan region. The statement, "One Creation, One People, One Place," is the result of this collaboration.

We believe that the religious community has a special responsibility – and deep spiritual resources – to address the current crisis of our relationship with the Earth. Reorienting our social and economic priorities from the short term to a concern for our grandchildren and their grandchildren requires religious imagination and commitment.

### HOW TO USE THIS STATEMENT

"One Creation, One People, One Place" is intended to spark discussion and debate within the 3,700 religious congregations in the six-county area and among congregations of different faiths. It presents a vision for the future, with maps and information that can help determine whether we are moving toward – or away from – our vision.

This statement can be used in many different ways: as the text for study groups, the focus of religious services, or the theme of youth retreats.

"One Creation" is a call to action. If we want our great-grandchildren to have a healthy and prosperous world, we must begin to act today. Five specific actions by individuals and congregations are suggested on the back page. There are many others that are appropriate.

### PROJECT SPONSORS

**THE CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD TECHNOLOGY** helps build prosperous, sustainable and inclusive urban communities by linking economic, ecological, and community development. The Center's work in public policy, market development, and community planning is grounded in the Chicago region, but national in scope.

**THE CHICAGO PROGRAM ON ECOLOGY, JUSTICE, AND FAITH**, anchored at Meadville/Lombard Theological School, encourages innovative and cooperative graduate theological education, integrating ecology, justice, and faith in theory and practice.

**THE CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL INITIATIVE FOR ECO-JUSTICE MINISTRY** is comprised of faculty from the Association of Chicago Theological Schools (12 seminaries with 3,000 students), along with representatives of other civic agencies and schools of religion in Chicago. It provides leadership and education for seminarians, pastors, and laity in matters of environmental justice.

**THE METROPOLITAN ALLIANCE OF CONGREGATIONS (MAC)** is a regional, institutionally based citizens' organization with a membership of 120 urban and suburban institutions in Cook, Will, and DuPage Counties.

# A CALL FOR REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

*"The changes that are now needed in society are at a level that stirs religious passions. The debate will be a religious one whether that is made explicit or not. The whole understanding of reality and the orientation to it are at stake... [The solutions will be created] by those who can draw forth these deepest energies of the centered self and give them shape and direction. Getting there, if it happens at all, will be a religious event."*

*For the Common Good, HERMAN DALY AND JOHN COBB, JR.*

We are one people, one people part of one creation.

We pray in different languages and express our deepest commitments in different religious terms. But we share a special place on this planet – the area at the southernmost tip of Lake Michigan, around the great human settlement called Chicago. We look out onto the fresh waters of Lake Michigan, and all around us, for thousands of miles, stretches some of Earth's richest farmland.

Chicago is our common home, the place where we encounter each other and the natural world every day, as we work, play, raise our families, and worship together.

Chicago is also the place where our deepest commitments need to find their fullest expression. As people who have come to this place from all over the world, we are called to a special relationship with our shared home. We need to understand Chicago better and then transform it in the direction of our shared vision – one which embodies wise choices, one we are proud to leave to our children, grandchildren, and generations to follow.

## THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

Today's challenges differ from those of the past. Problems that used to be limited to particular communities, regions, or countries are now planetary in scale. Global warming, for example, affects the whole globe and requires a world-wide solution. So far, the scale of the problems is far greater than the scale of our responses.

Ecological citizenship requires that we re-think our assumptions about life and society. Our problems are interconnected. Air pollution results largely from auto use, which in turn is determined by land use and job patterns; these same patterns, in turn, separate poor families from jobs, causing family economic instability which forces children to move from school to school. These same families face disproportionate exposure to lead and other environmental threats.

Justice requires that we link ecological concerns with social and economic ones. Yet how do we meet people's basic needs without harming the environment? The decisions we are now called on to make require that we first create community, recognizing our independence, and then work within that community for the common good.

Our religious traditions can give critical guidance as we make these decisions. A faith perspective focuses on long-term, rather than short-term goals; affirms the interdependence of all people and of people with nature; and calls us to use our time, talent, and wealth to promote our deepest values.

This statement addresses three areas of religious concern: Ecology, Economy, and Community. These problems are interconnected and are likely to be solved together, or not at all.

## Acting as Responsible Citizens of Creation

**P**eople and the natural world are all part of Creation. We cannot separate ourselves from the fate of the natural world.

For thousands of years, religions have spoken of the interdependence of all life. Ecology has brought that insight to light within contemporary science. Ecology maps the complex web of relationships that link microorganisms with frogs, dolphins with humans; it describes the world in terms of linked

systems that learn and adapt based on new information.

People have the unique capacity to manipulate and alter our natural habitat. When we act as if we can live independently from the rest of Creation, the consequences can be disastrous. Our religious traditions call us to act differently. They call us to use our gifts responsibly as citizens, not as owners, of Creation. We must exercise the restraint appropriate to our limited place in Creation, always honoring the rights of the rest of Creation.

### RESTORE THE PURITY OF CREATION

**M**any religious traditions see air, water, fire, and earth as the fundamental elements of the universe. Others identify air (or breath) with Spirit.

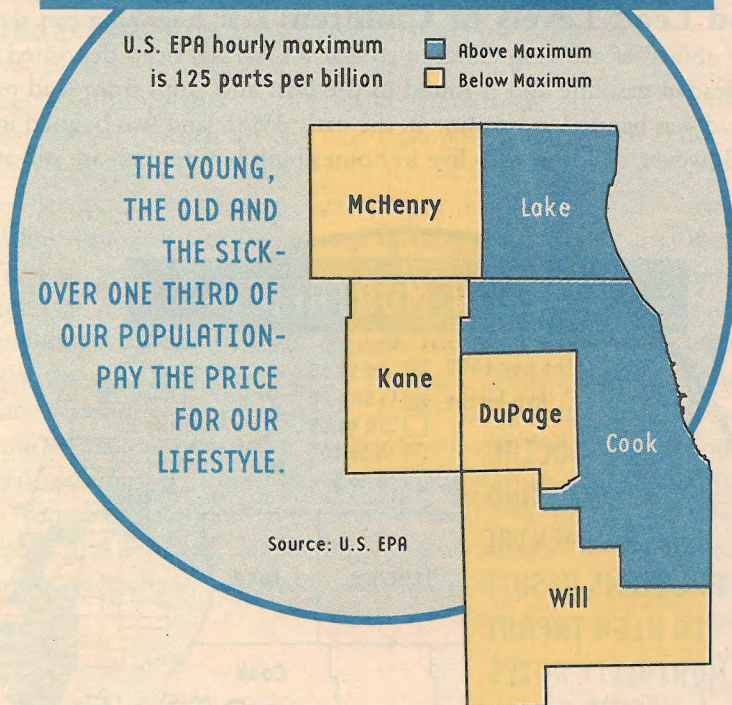
Land has religious significance as the source of food, that is, of life itself. It is a special gift from the Creator, a creative force with which we must form a partnership.

Today, when water must be filtered for drinking and land routinely must be tested for pollution before it can be sold, we are called to restore the purity of Creation. Our air, water, and land are interrelated. When we clean them up, we need to avoid simply moving pollution from one to the other.

Clean air, clean water, clean land are not luxuries for the rich, but are the heritage of every citizen. Their restoration is a spiritual act.

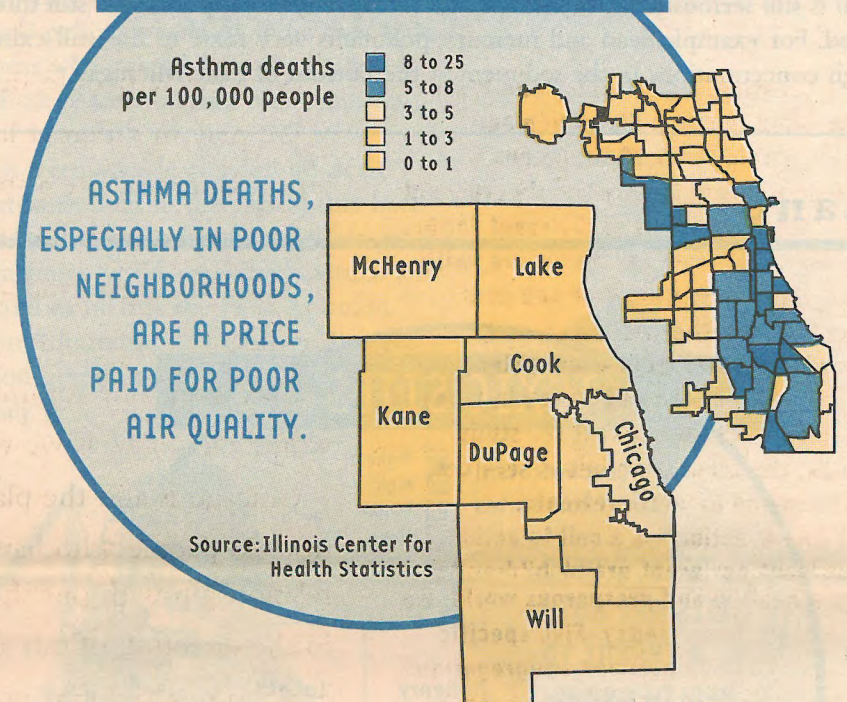
### Air

#### 1996 PEAK OZONE EXPOSURE



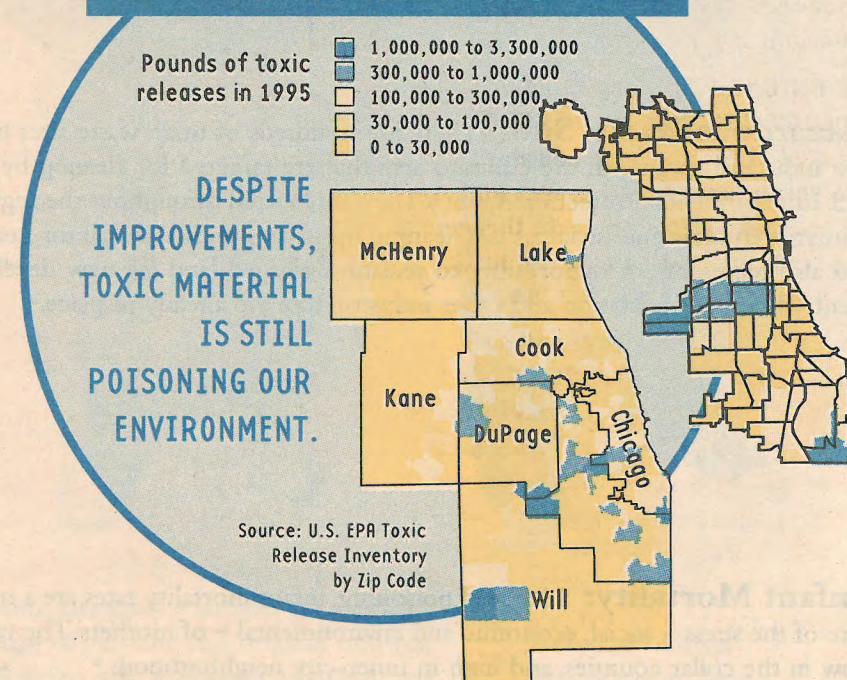
**Ozone Emissions:** Our air is damaged partly by pollutants created locally – by driving, producing electricity, manufacturing products – and partly by sources far away. Ozone, caused by the interaction of sunlight with hydrocarbons and other pollutants, damages lungs, especially in young children. It is the leading reason that the Chicago region is not in compliance with federal air quality standards, with Cook and Lake counties having the highest levels.<sup>1</sup>

#### ASTHMA



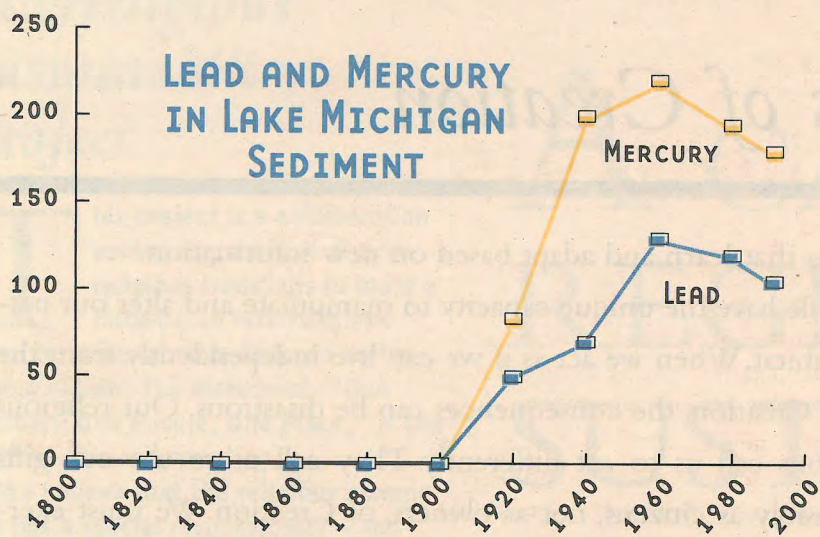
**Asthma:** The incidence of asthma, especially asthma deaths, is one measure of the impact of poor air quality. In 1995, 213 people died from asthma in the Chicago region. The Austin community on Chicago's West Side alone had more asthma deaths in 1995 (9) than four of the five collar counties: DuPage (8), Kane (8), McHenry (2), Will (8).<sup>2</sup>

#### TOXIC RELEASES



**Toxic Industrial Releases:** Industrial toxins fundamentally threaten the survivability of all life. They cause long-term degenerative diseases in people, animals, and plants. More extensive use of manufacturing processes designed for pollution prevention can not only improve the environment, but also increase manufacturing productivity and profits.<sup>3</sup>

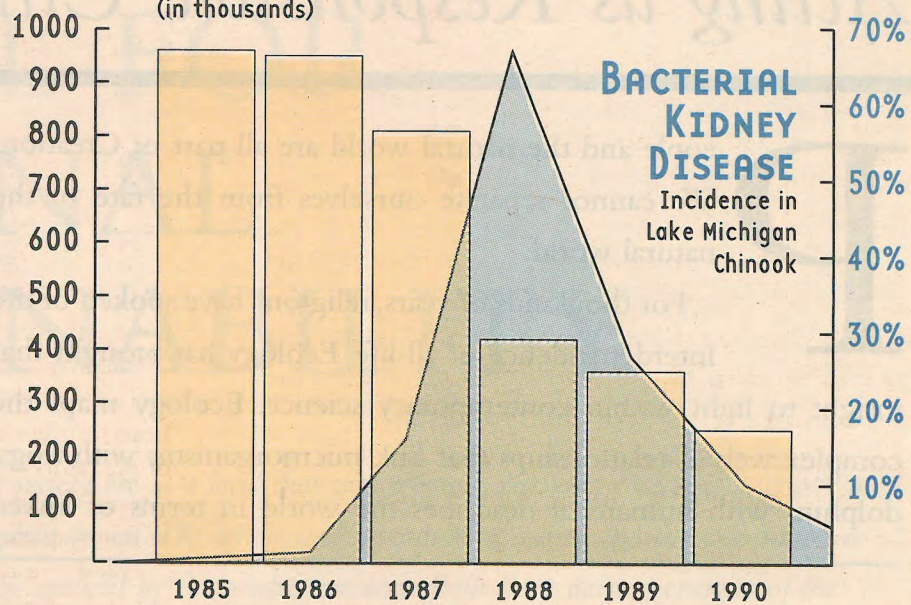
## Water



**The Quality of Lake Michigan Water:** Chicagoans are blessed by living beside the greatest concentration of fresh water in the world. In the past, we have used Lake Michigan as a place to dump untreated sewage and industrial wastes. Today, we are more careful, but the lake continues to be polluted. Rain flushes agricultural chemicals and hydrocarbons from roads and deposits air pollution into the lake. Over the past 25 years, Lake Michigan's water quality has improved – and it looks much clearer – but the lake's ecosystem is still seriously out of balance and its capacity to support life is still threatened. For example, lead and mercury, pollutants very toxic to life, still exist in high concentrations in the sediment at the bottom of Lake Michigan.<sup>4</sup>

## SALMON HARVEST

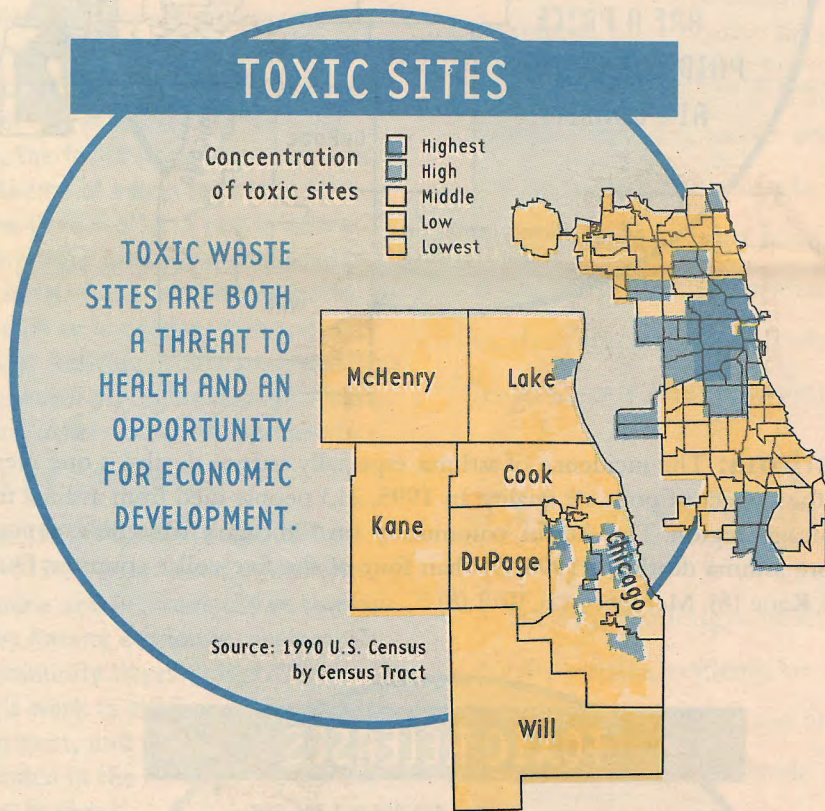
Chinook salmon caught in Lake Michigan (in thousands)



**Lake Michigan Chinook Salmon:** The rise of bacterial kidney disease in Chinook salmon cannot be attributed to any one pollutant or factor. Instead, scientists view it as an indication of an out-of-balance ecosystem that makes all parts of the ecosystem more susceptible to disease, including people.<sup>5</sup>

## Land

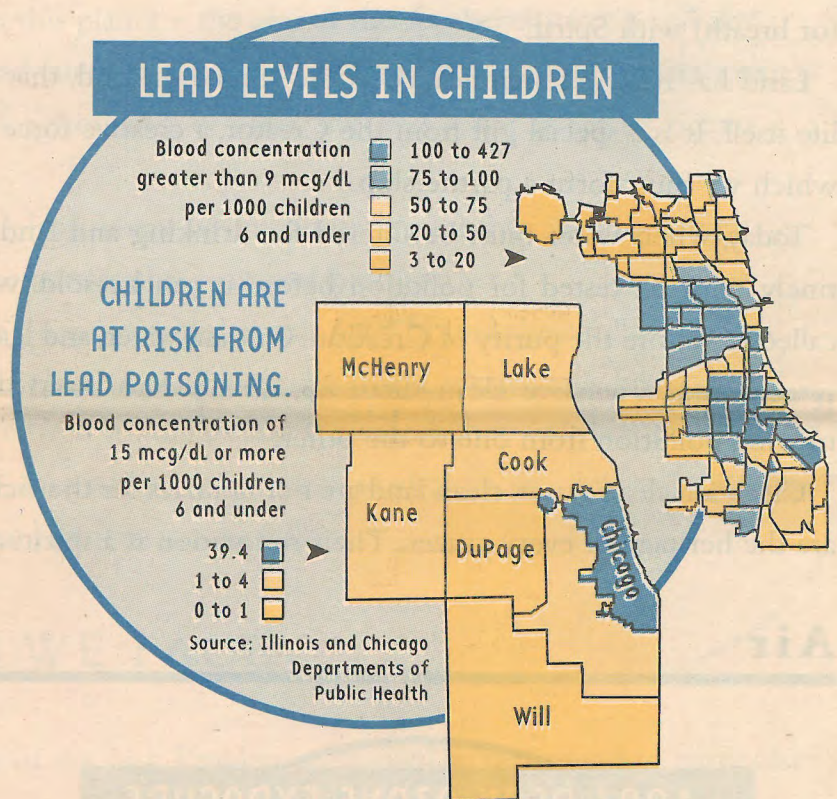
### TOXIC SITES



**Hazardous Waste Sites:** There are hundreds of toxic waste sites from past industrial activity in the Chicago area that are targeted for cleanup by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. They are located throughout the region, primarily in older industrial areas. Cleaning up toxic sites is essential for health, and also represents an opportunity to reclaim damaged land for new development where transportation and other infrastructure are already in place.<sup>6</sup>

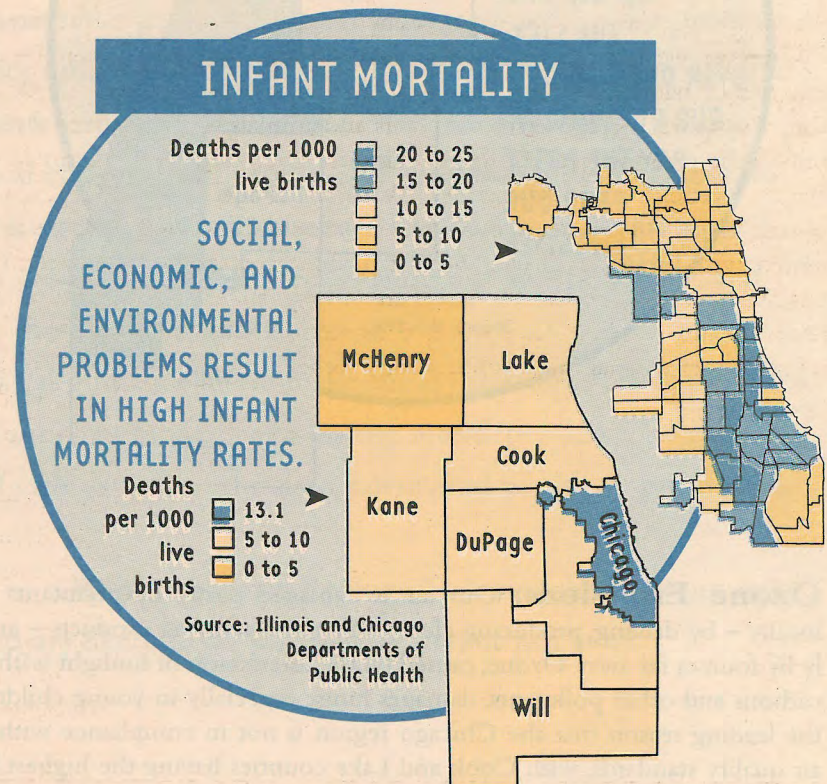
**Infant Mortality:** Like lead poisoning, infant mortality rates are a measure of the stress – social, economic and environmental – of mothers. The rate is low in the collar counties, and high in inner-city neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup>

### LEAD LEVELS IN CHILDREN



**Elevated Lead Levels in Children:** Lead poisoning can seriously impair the ability of growing children to learn. Lead has been deposited in the soil from leaded gasoline and is found in the dust and chips from lead paint in homes. Lead was banned in gasoline in the early 1980s, and was banned in paint in 1978. However, children who live in homes built before then are still at risk.<sup>7</sup>

### INFANT MORTALITY



# PRESERVE THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE

All of Creation has integrity and value, regardless of its usefulness to people. However, we sometimes act as if we alone are important – whether from ignorance or self-interest.

Every animal and every plant is connected with every other animal and plant – and with us. Together we form Creation’s rich, complex web of relationships. Every species is valued in the eyes of the Creator, and so should be valued in our eyes as well. The loss of any species is an incalculable loss to the whole of Creation.

# RESTORING NATURAL HABITATS

Habitat restoration is the work of restoring to a healthier state degraded wetlands, prairies, savannas, and woodlands. In recent decades, we’ve learned that protecting natural areas by designating them as parks and preserves has not been sufficient to maintain their health.

Fragmentation of habitat, suppression of natural processes such as fire, introduction of aggressive non-native species like European buckthorn, changes in water and air quality, removal of predators – all of these factors have resulted in the deterioration of many natural areas and the increasing disappearance of many species.

Habitat restoration provides an opportunity for citizens throughout northeastern Illinois to help nature heal by helping to restore remnant areas of native prairies, savannas, wetlands, and woods. Depending on the season, the work of habitat restoration involves collecting and planting seeds of native plants, clearing brush, and pulling weeds. At some sites, trained crews set prescribed burns when conditions permit. Many of those engaged in habitat restoration find it enormously fulfilling.

Chicago Wilderness is a remarkable consortium of 61 conservation-minded organizations in this region that have provided leadership for habitat restoration in the Chicago area. This consortium includes world-renowned cultural and scientific research institutions such as the Field Museum, Brookfield Zoo, Morton Arboretum, and Chicago Botanic Garden, and conservation groups such as the Sierra Club and The Nature Conservancy. It also includes public landowners such as the forest preserve and conservation districts of six counties, the Chicago Park District, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service, among others.

That so many groups have joined together to work and plan on a regional scale is truly unprecedented. But they have done so here because the 200,000 acres of protected public and private natural areas in the Chicago region are home to the greatest concentration of threatened and endangered plant and animal species in the Midwest. In fact, the Chicago metropolitan area – not the surrounding farmland – harbors the world’s best remaining assemblage of our true and original midwest “wilderness”: tallgrass prairies, oak woodlands, savannas, and marshes.

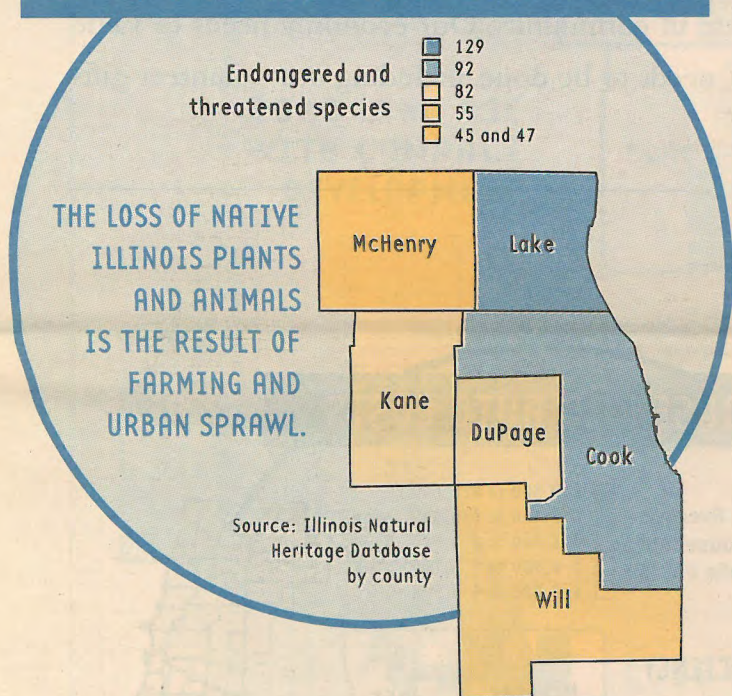
For more information, contact the Chicagoland Environmental Network at (708) 485-0263 Ext. 396 or visit the Chicago Wilderness Web site ([www.chiwild.org](http://www.chiwild.org)).

HABITAT RESTORATION PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP NATURE HEAL BY HELPING TO RESTORE REMNANT AREAS OF NATIVE PRAIRIES, SAVANNAS, WETLANDS, AND WOODS.



Barbara and George Birmingham are habitat restoration stewards at the Theodore Stone Forest Preserve in Hodgkins.

## ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES



### Habitat Preservation and

**Endangered Species:** Despite the intense agriculture and urban sprawl of the past century, the Chicago region provides a surprising abundance of habitats, some of which are the best examples of their type in the world. One reason they still exist is the far-sighted leadership of previous generations that established forest preserves and conserved open space.

Wherever we live in the Chicago region, there are examples of native habitats close by. This diversity of habitats supports a great variety of plants and animals – some of the greatest diversity in the Midwest. Yet these habitats continue to be threatened by urban sprawl. Existing protected open space is often small and fragmented, with limited ability to support natural ecosystems. We need to act while there still are habitats to be preserved and restored, supporting ecosystems while providing recreational opportunities for people.<sup>9</sup>

## Meeting Basic Needs Sustainably

**O**ur economic actions are accountable to the purposes of Creation. Justice and sufficiency are central to these purposes.

Justice demands fairness in how goods and services are produced, exchanged, and distributed. It also requires responsible use of Earth's limited resources.

Sufficiency demands that we learn to say "enough." Our religious traditions teach us that ever-increasing consumption and accumulation of wealth is not the goal of human life. When all of us consume only what we need, there will be enough for everyone. Rather, we need to use our gifts, including our wealth, to act in the common good to build a sustainable future for everyone.

Present day economic markets do not allocate education and health care equally. In the absence of limits imposed by the community, each person receives education and health care in proportion to his or her wealth. The marketplace needs to be guided by laws, regulations, and practices that watch out for community, not just private, interests.

The marketplace also fails to protect and cherish "the commons":

the air, streams, and oceans that no individual or corporation "owns." Currently, economic activity takes the commons for granted and, as widespread pollution shows, fails to protect it. The commons can only be preserved through local, national, and international civic action.

We need to challenge any definition of "growth" measured exclusively in terms of dollars. The Gross National Product, for example, equally values education and the manufacture of toxic chemicals, because both involve the exchange of dollars. Instead, we need to measure growth in terms of the things that we value most. This change is in keeping with religious traditions that call us to shift our focus from the *quantity* of what we produce and own to the *quality* of our lives and our community.

Work — both paid and unpaid — is a basic economic need. Religions tell us that work is sacred, that it is essential for a full and meaningful life. Work is also one of the most important ways in which we participate in community. Our economy needs to value the work that most needs to be done, including our volunteer gifts of time and energy.

## GROW RESPONSIBLY

**B**etween 1970 and 1990, developed land in the Chicago region increased 55 percent while population increased only four percent. We are running away from each other, consuming open space and farmland 10 times faster than population is growing. During this same period, 444 square miles of farmland was consumed by low-density sprawl, an area twice the size of the city of Chicago.

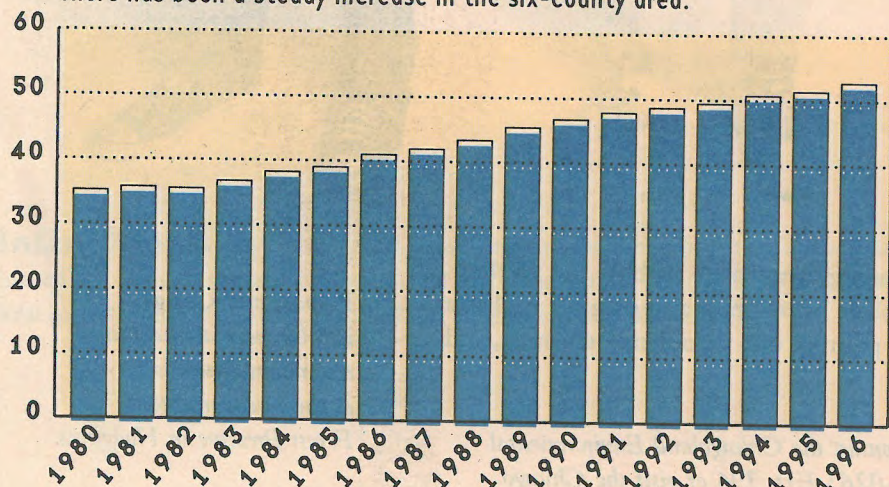
The Midwest has some of the most fertile farmland in the world — a resource desperately needed for the long-term production of food. Yet we are consuming farmland to build new suburban subdivisions at an alarming rate.

This new development on the fringe, moreover, is at such a low density that access to stores, schools, and community is only possible by automobile. The city of Chicago has a density of 12,000 people per square mile; all of Cook County has a density of 5,000, while the five collar counties have a density of only 1,200 people per square mile. Transit service, however, requires 7,000 people per square mile; new developments along the urban fringe are unlikely ever to reach this density.

### VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED

In Billions of miles.

There has been a steady increase in the six-county area.



Source: Ill. Dept. of Transportation

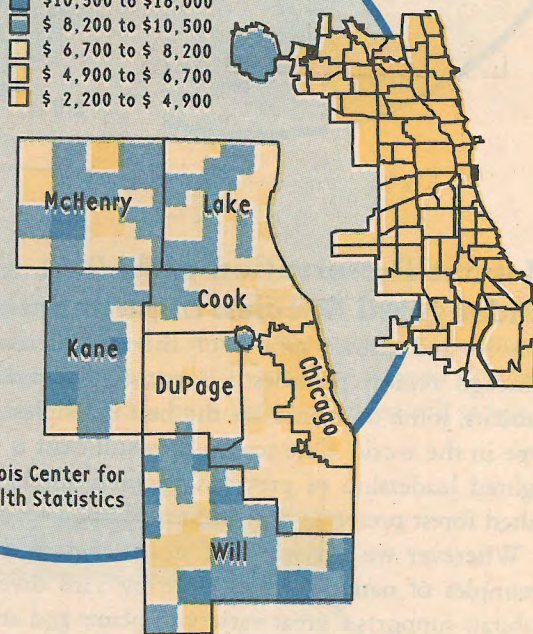
### HOUSEHOLD AUTO COSTS

Average household auto costs

- \$10,500 to \$16,000
- \$8,200 to \$10,500
- \$6,700 to \$8,200
- \$4,900 to \$6,700
- \$2,200 to \$4,900

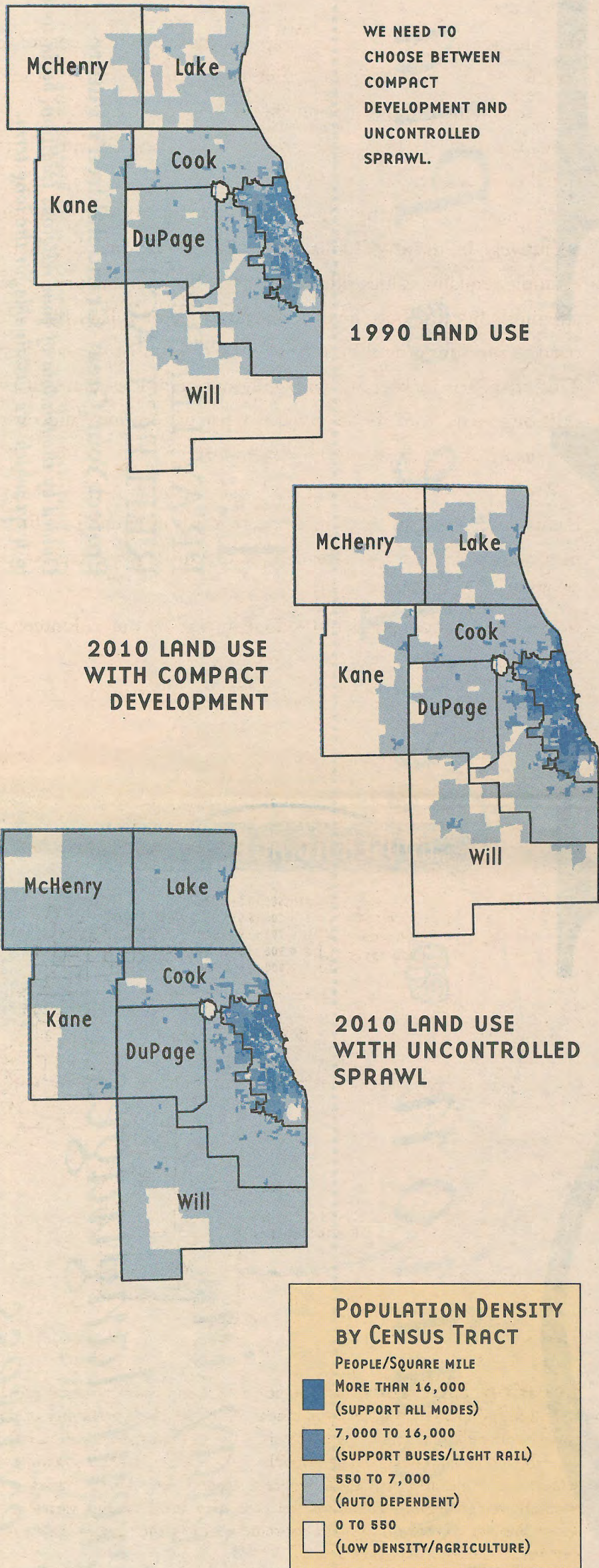
ONE EFFICIENCY OF CITY LIVING IS THAT IT'S CHEAPER TO GET AROUND.

Source: Illinois Center for Health Statistics



**Location Efficiency:** The solution of many environmental problems can be found in the city's "location efficiency"<sup>15</sup>: the close proximity of home, stores, work, and play makes for an efficient use of resources. Location efficiency also encourages the creative interchange of ideas and innovations upon which economic and ecological progress depend. But density varies greatly throughout the region. Therefore the cost of getting around varies greatly, depending on where you live. Transportation is now the second largest family expense, twice the cost of medical care.<sup>10</sup>

## HOW MUCH FARMLAND WILL BE LEFT IN 2020?



**Contain Urban Sprawl:** It is possible to accommodate the 1.8 million projected increase in the region's population by 2010 through "in fill" development in existing communities within walking or shuttle distance of transit.<sup>11</sup>

## FIGHTING FOR THE VALUE OF WORK

When E. J. Brach Candy began to show signs of severe financial instability within one year of the company's sale to a Swiss conglomerate in 1987, alarm bells rang throughout Chicago's West Side. Founded there in 1904, Brach Candy had become an economic "anchor" for the community. But in 1988, poor management and the pursuit of a flawed business strategy by the new ownership precipitated a crisis. By 1993 the workforce had been cut by 42 percent and Brach had lost key customers, as well as overall market share.

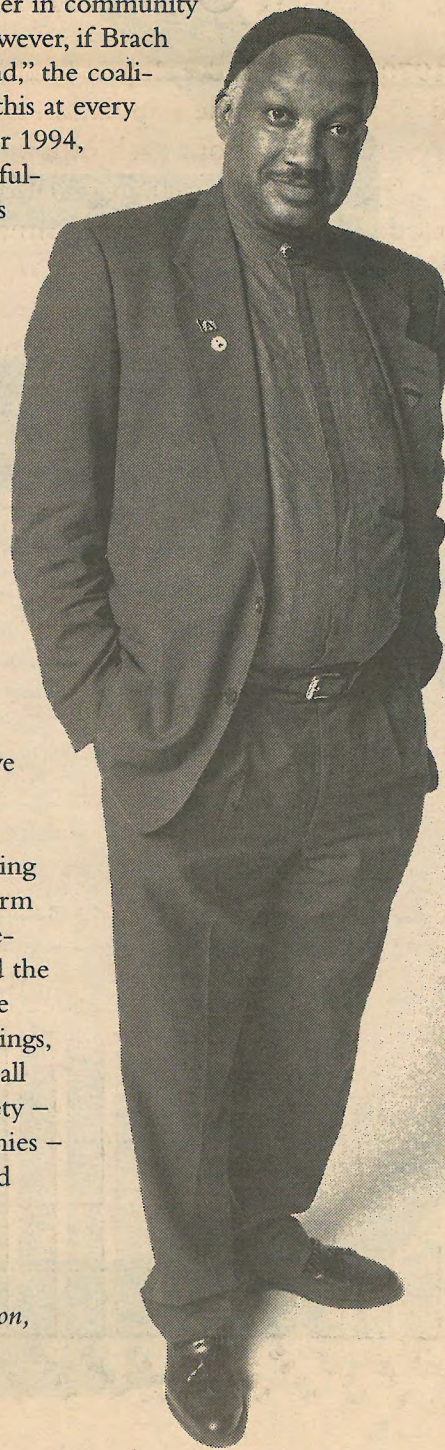
In response, the Garfield/Austin Interfaith Action Network, the Midwest Center for Labor Research, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 738 formed an alliance called the Coalition to Save Jobs at Brach. Together, they worked quickly to bring into their ranks a diverse group of constituents, which eventually included nearly 100 community, civic, and religious organizations.

The coalition offered to support Brach if it demonstrated a commitment to the "high road," offering decent wages and becoming a partner in community development. However, if Brach took the "low road," the coalition would fight this at every step. In November 1994, the group successfully blocked Brach's efforts to cut wages and benefits and to reduce labor and community strength, setting a positive example for Chicago's entire candy industry. Brach is still a major West Side employer.

As it engaged in the fight to save Brach Candy, the group's mission evolved into seeking proactive, long-term solutions that safeguard and uphold the value of work, the benefits that it brings, and the need for all members of society — including companies — to act morally and responsibly.

**THIS COALITION SUCCESSFULLY BLOCKED BRACH'S EFFORTS TO CUT WAGES AND BENEFITS AND TO REDUCE LABOR AND COMMUNITY STRENGTH.**

*Rev. Lewis Flowers is a Board Member of the Garfield/Austin Interfaith Action Network*



For more information, contact MCLR at (773) 276-5418.

WHAT  
CAN YOU  
DO?

# QNF

*Creation*

*People*

*Place*

*We pray in  
different languages  
and express*

1. PRAY, LEARN,  
REFLECT, ACT  
Protect Your Great-Grandchildren's Future

*Guided by the wisdom of your religious tradition, begin to act  
in ways which are sustainable for the long term.*



commitments  
in different  
religious terms.  
But we share a  
special place on  
this planet —  
the area at the  
southernmost tip  
of Lake Michigan,  
around the great  
human settlement  
called Chicago.



Reduce Your Consumption of the  
Earth's Scarce Resources

*Cut your use of natural resources by 10 percent and invest  
the savings in a just world.*

### 3. CREATE A MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY

Make Your Congregation a Green Zone

*Organize your congregation to embody sustainability as a  
religious value.*

### 4. HEAL THE EARTH

Restore the Habitat of Our Endangered Species

*Join with members of other religious congregations to help restore  
a site near where you live that is home to some of our region's  
endangered plants and animals.*

### 5. FIGHT SPRAWL, CONGESTION, AND AIR POLLUTION

Support a Regional Transit Access Pass

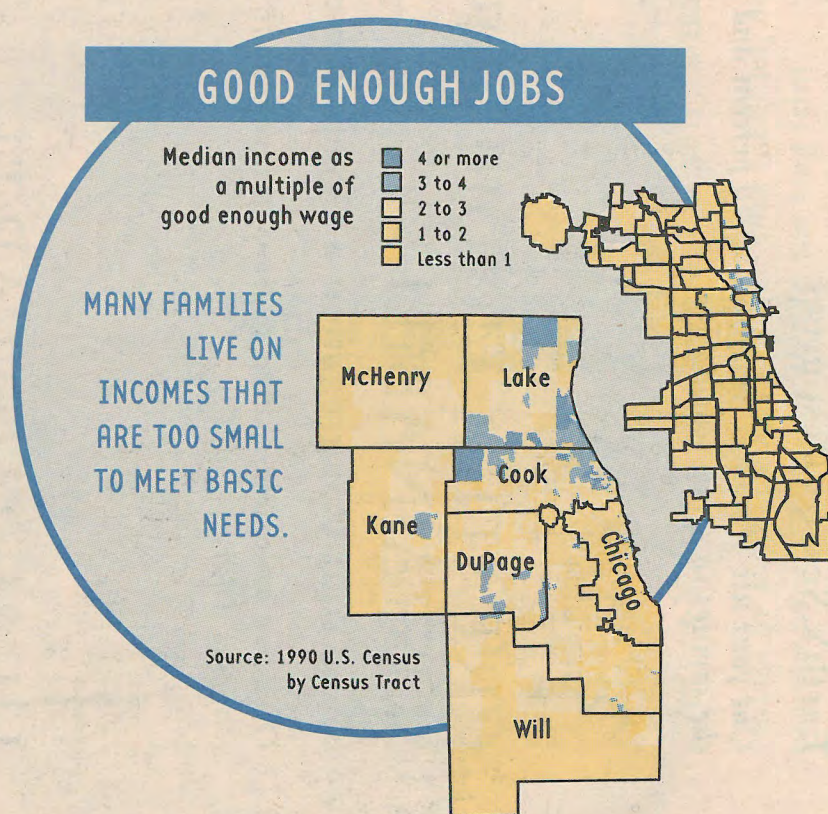
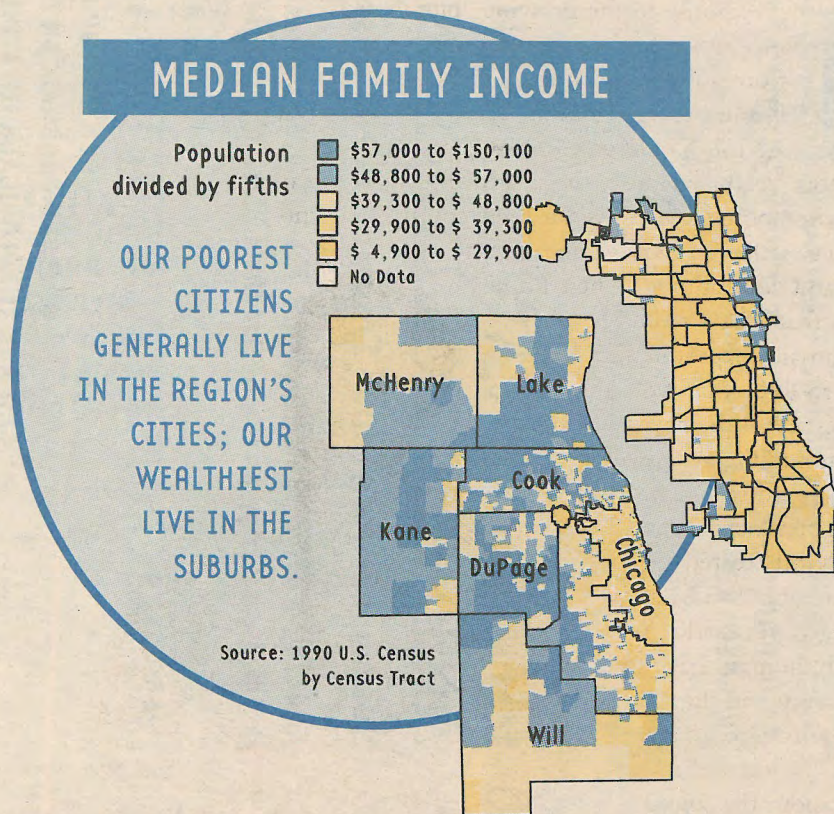
*Join a campaign for a Regional Transit Access Pass that  
permits easy transfers between the CTA, Metra and Pace.*

#### THE INTERRELIGIOUS SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT:

CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD TECHNOLOGY  
CHICAGO PROGRAM ON ECOLOGY, JUSTICE, AND FAITH  
CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL INITIATIVE FOR ECO-JUSTICE MINISTRY  
METROPOLITAN ALLIANCE OF CONGREGATIONS

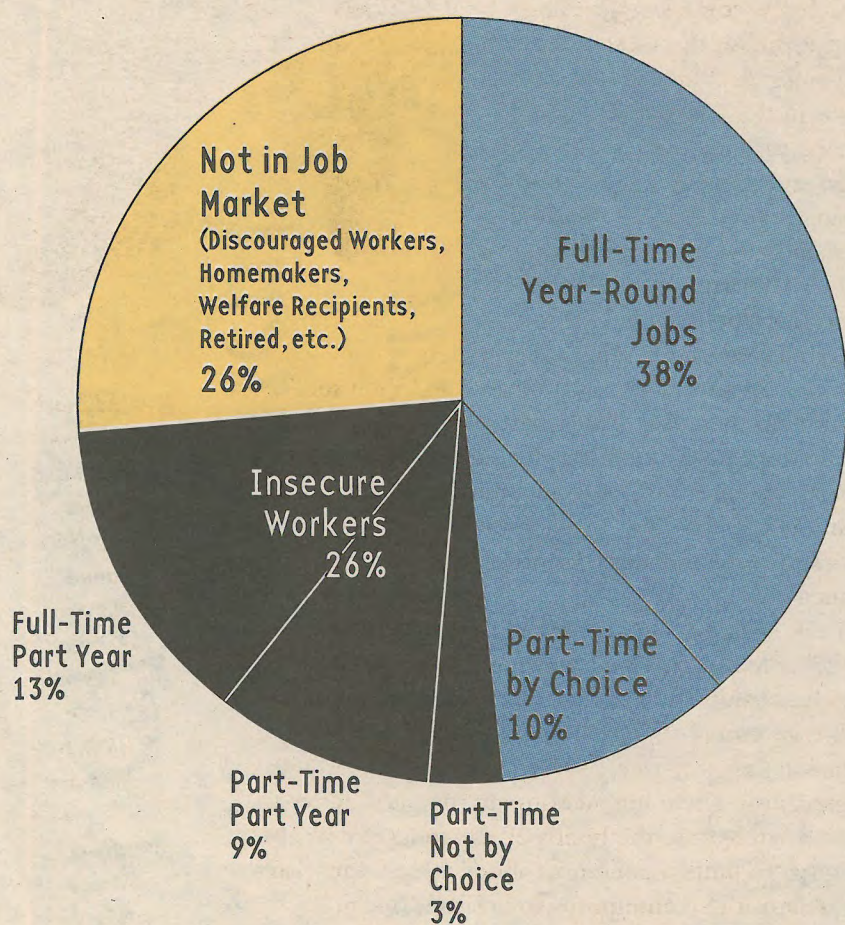
# PROVIDE JOBS THAT SUPPORT FAMILIES

A just economic system fulfills the basic needs of all members of a society. The United Nations, for example, calls for sustainable development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”



**Good Enough Jobs:** If we work, we all have the right to expect a job at a “good enough” wage – one that permits us to support our families. Today, income varies greatly in the region – from executives earning millions to service workers barely making minimum wage. A typical family of three needs to earn \$23,920 per year to fulfill basic needs. That translates into a full-time, year-round “good enough” wage of \$11.50/hr. This is more than twice the income earned from a full-time, year-round minimum-wage job.<sup>12</sup>

## SECURITY OF EMPLOYMENT



**Insecure Family Incomes:** Despite our booming economy and an official unemployment rate below five percent, 26 percent of the Chicagoans with jobs have an insecure footing in the local economy. This figure includes those working part-time but not by choice, full-time for less than the full year, and in temporary positions.<sup>13</sup>

## REDUCE THE WEALTH GAP

Wealth is not just money in the bank. It is what permits a family to survive economic emergencies, obtain higher education, and purchase the tools for creativity and productivity. Wealth inequality, in contrast, promotes social and economic instability and deprives families of the resources to improve themselves and their communities.

For most families, the home is the primary asset; thus increasing homeownership is a key to increasing family wealth. In Chicago, 69 percent of White families own their homes, but only 39 percent of African-American families own their homes.<sup>14</sup>

### U.S. SHARES OF INCOME AND ASSETS, 1988

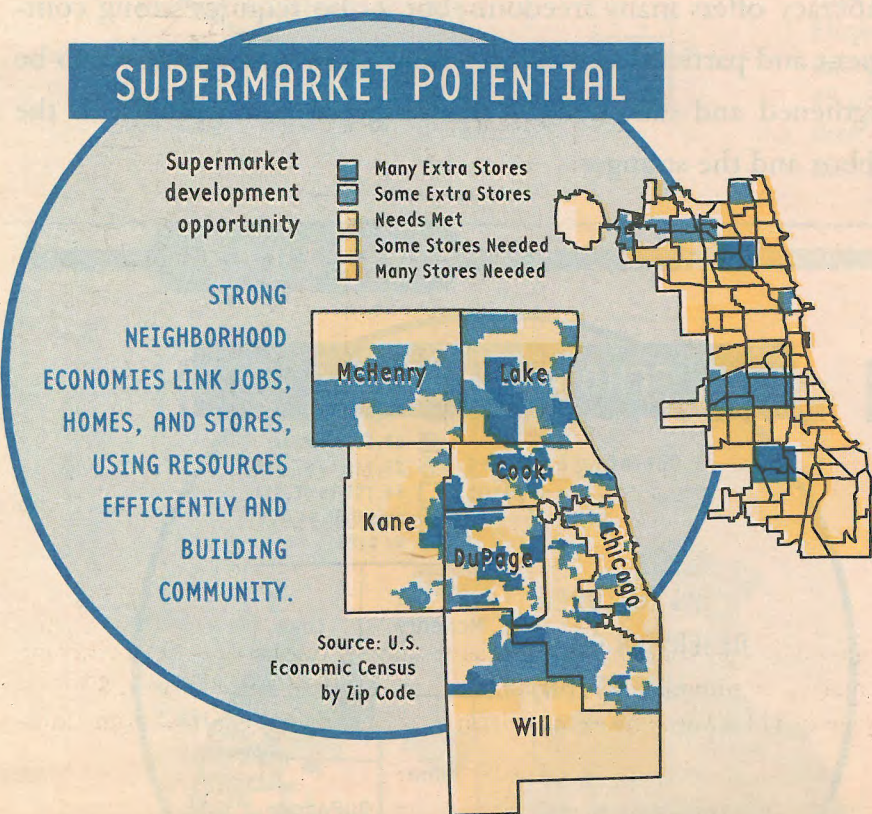
HELD BY	% SHARE OF INCOME	% SHARE OF NET WORTH	% SHARE OF NET FINANCIAL ASSETS*
Top 0.5 percent	2.2	7.8	13.9
Top 1 percent	4.1	11.6	20.1
Top 10 percent	26.0	47.3	67.4
20 percent	43.3	68.2	86.9
40 percent	68.7	89.8	100.6
60 percent	85.6	98.6	102.8
80 percent	95.8	100.5	102.9
Total sample median	\$23,958	\$34,720	\$3,700

\* Net worth minus value of home and vehicles. Some shares add up to more than 100 percent because of the inclusion of negative financial assets.  
Source: Melvin L. Oliver & Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*

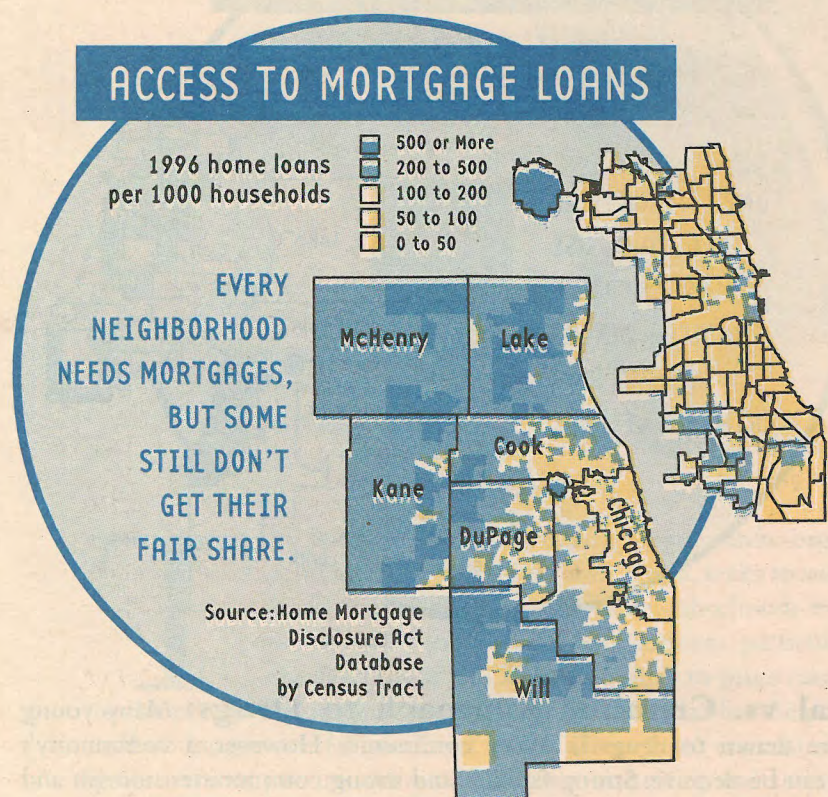
**Unequal Distribution of Wealth:** In the Chicago region, an estimated 25 percent of all families have a household net worth of less than \$5,000, nearly half of that number owe more than they own. At the same time, one percent of all families own 35 percent of all the region's wealth.<sup>15</sup>

# STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMIES

In urban communities, people, services, and jobs are close to each other, making for economic and environmental efficiencies. Stores and schools can be reached by walking, bicycling, and mass transit – all of which conserve natural resources and create less pollution. They foster strong communities where neighbors know each other and care for each other's children. This back-to-the-future vision of neighborhoods, however, goes against the current wisdom, which encourages the separation of housing and jobs, thereby increasing dependence on the automobile.



**Urban Economic Development:** Urban neighborhoods offer opportunities for economic development. Supermarkets are a good example. The amount of money a family spends on food at home varies from just under \$2,000 a year for the poorest families to an average of \$4,000 for the affluent. Poor neighborhoods have many small food stores, but few supermarkets, forcing residents to buy their groceries elsewhere. This lack of supermarkets is a business development opportunity, at a time when the suburban market is increasingly saturated.<sup>16</sup>



**Access to Loans:** Homeownership, home improvement, and small business ownership are open to most people only with the help of loans. But loans are not equally available throughout the region. Despite progress, many communities receive fewer loans than they need to build neighborhood economies.<sup>17</sup>

# CONGREGATIONS REBUILDING HOUSING

In response to the growing “blight and tension” in south suburban communities, a dozen pastors from a range of local congregations created a visionary organization, the South Suburban Action Conference (SSAC) in 1986. The pastors’ vision was to create a “powerful voice of institutions and citizens who felt their communities no longer reflected their values of family and community.” Their hope was that SSAC would become a “proactive, production-oriented force that would... re-establish their parishes as communities where all people felt proud to live, worship, and conduct business.”

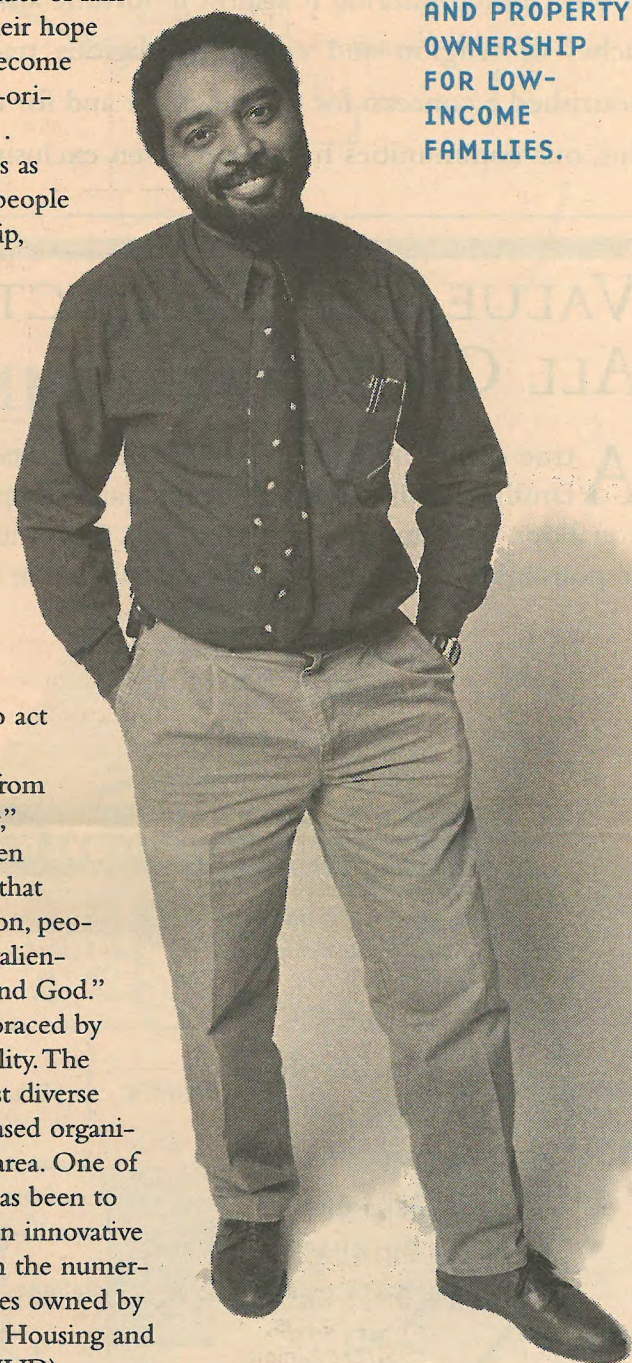
“God created humankind to be stewards of the world. As such, humans have the capacity and the responsibility to understand and make decisions that build and protect the world to sustain human and other life,” says Mike Kruglik, the director of SSAC. But our ability to act as stewards is weakened when we are alienated from the “structures of power,” from each other, and even from ourselves. He says that “to break social alienation, people must first transcend alienation from themselves and God.”

Today, the vision embraced by SSAC has become a reality. The group is one of the most diverse and extensive church-based organizations in the Chicago area. One of its principal initiatives has been to design and implement an innovative housing policy in which the numerous abandoned properties owned by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) throughout the south suburbs are bought by nonprofit organizations, rehabilitated, and then sold to first-time homebuyers. This strategy works to revitalize communities by creating jobs for skilled workers and property ownership for low-income families, and by ridding neighborhoods of abandoned housing structures that often serve as havens for drug dealers and other criminals.

At the heart of SSAC’s success is its emphasis on individual leadership and community empowerment. It offers leadership and other training to each congregation’s core group of delegates; they are then responsible for making face-to-face contact with the rest of their congregation. These interactions among parishioners not only strengthen the bonds of the congregation, but also serve to build a consensus about the priority issues or problems the community would like to address. SSAC then mobilizes grassroots actions to change public policies and secure the public and private resources needed to realize the community’s goal.

For more information, contact SSAC at (708) 335-1712.

WHEN THE MARKET DOES NOT WORK, RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS CAN STEP IN TO CREATE JOBS FOR SKILLED AND UNSKILLED WORKERS, AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES.



Rev. Michael Burnside is the founding president of New Cities Community Development Corporation, the development arm of the South Suburban Action Conference.

## Solving Problems Together

**W**e are all brothers and sisters in a Creation that came before us and will continue long after we leave. We are born into a family and survive only because of our family's commitment to our well-being.

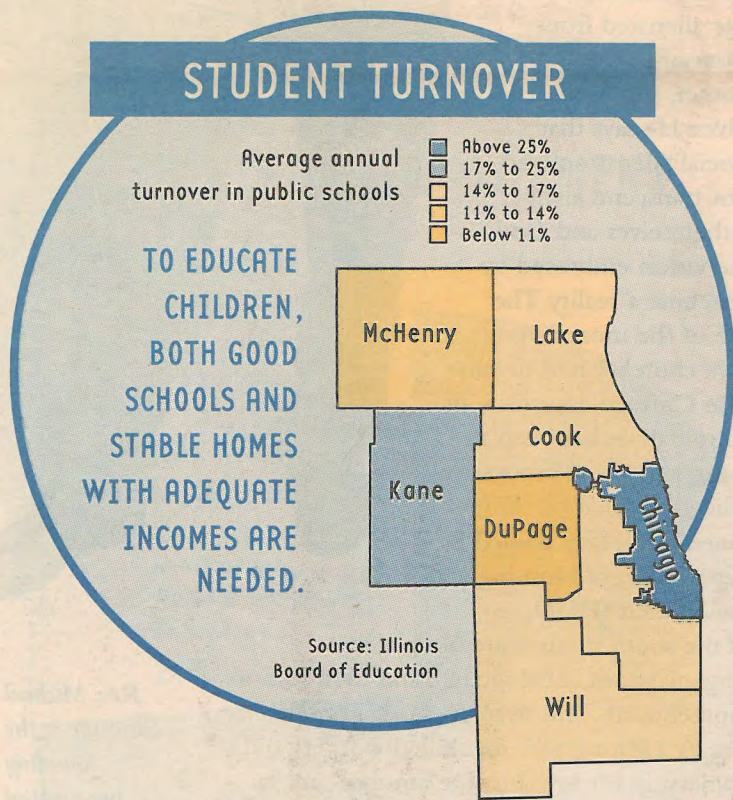
We are also born into a community which supports and enriches our family, buffering it against ill fortune and sharing with it the riches of religion and culture. Religious traditions always have nourished a concern for the neighbor and for the stranger. Despite this, our communities have often been exclusive, valuing and wel-

coming some people – often those like us – and excluding others.

Today we seek to affirm a vision of community that welcomes all people and sees community as the place where, in the midst of differences, we can succeed in finding and acting on a common good through our civic organizations. Democracy is our wonderful, if frustrating, way to reach agreement on our shared purposes. Democracy offers many freedoms, but it also requires strong commitment and participation by the entire community. It needs to be strengthened and enriched by this religious commitment to the neighbor and the stranger.

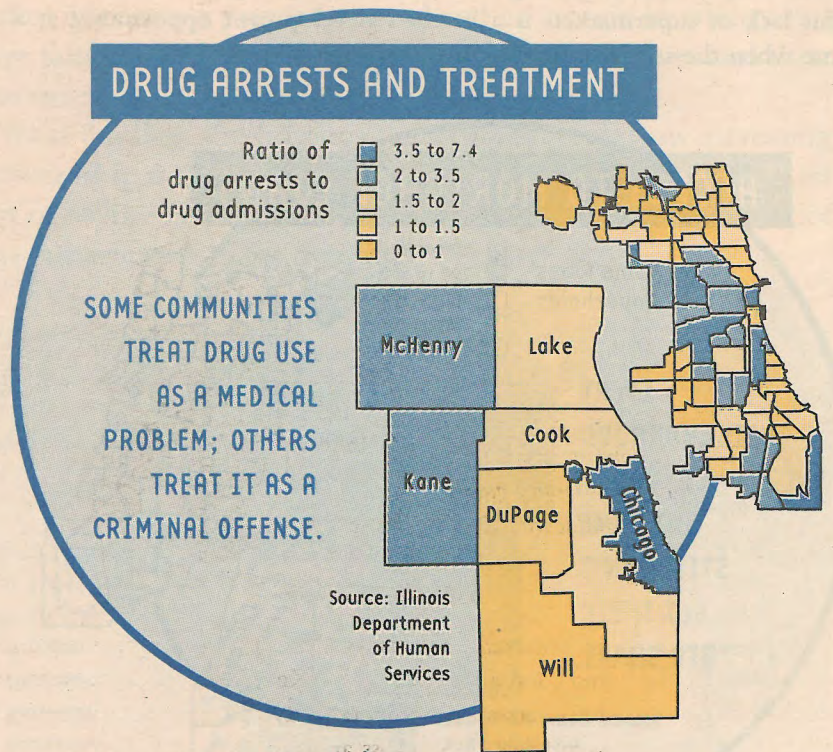
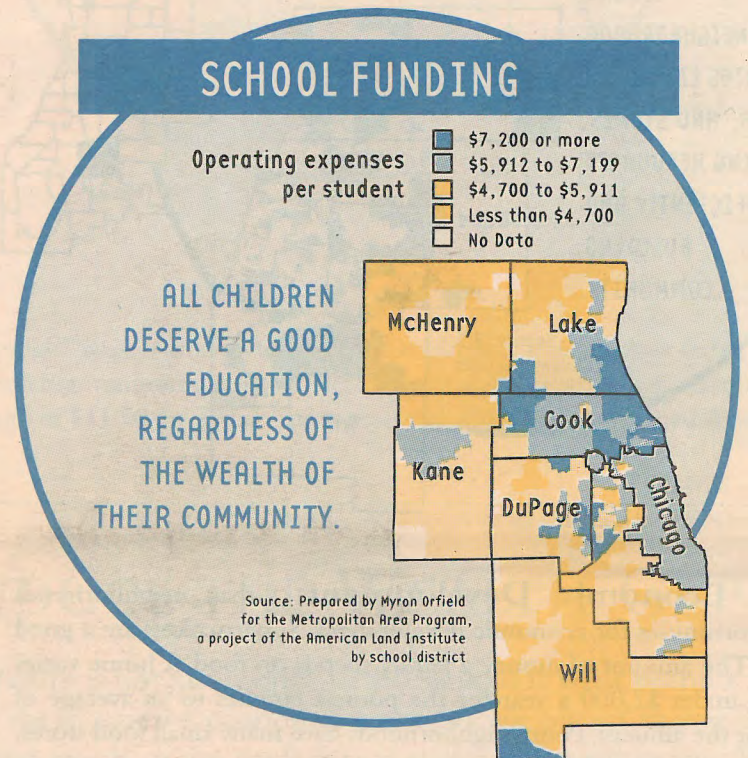
## VALUE AND PROTECT ALL CITIZENS

**A**true community values and protects all its citizens. It provides families with essential stability and support and guarantees equal opportunities to all its members. Communities have a special responsibility to protect their most vulnerable members.



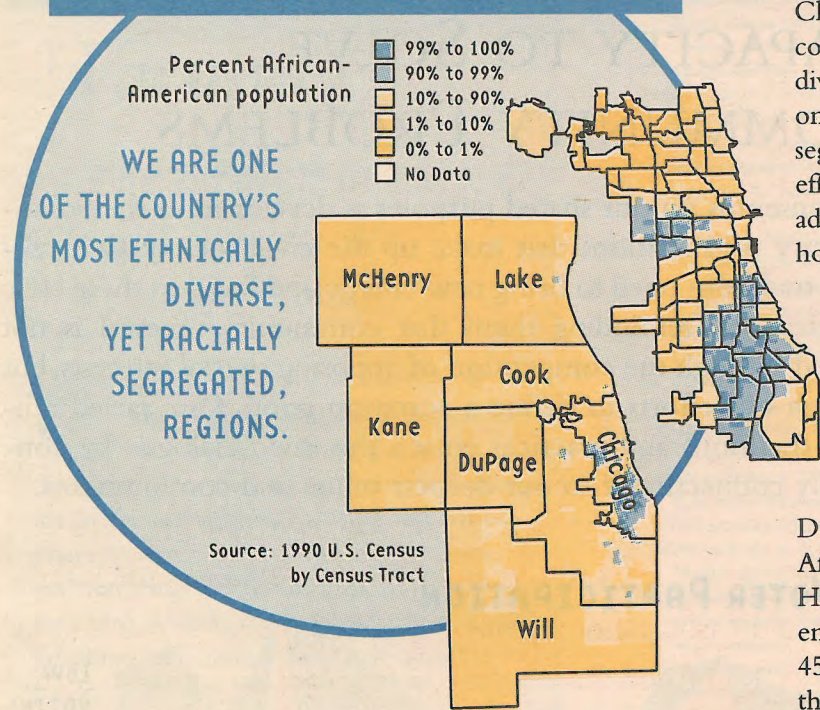
**Stable Homes:** When poor families cannot pay their rent, they pick up and move, taking their children out of one classroom after another. In Chicago, 53 percent of the public schools report a student mobility rate of 30 percent or more – an average of three children in 10 moving during the school year. This contrasts with a student mobility rate in DuPage County of about one child in 10 moving during the school year.<sup>18</sup>

**Unequal Funding of Education:** There is an enormous difference in property tax bases among school districts in the region. This is important because schools in Illinois are heavily dependent on property taxes for their operating revenues. A community's low tax base means that not all families can count on a good enough education for their children. This difference in tax base results in a greater than three-to-one disparity in annual operating expenditures per student, giving some children the best education money can buy, while other children cannot get textbooks. Some families are trapped in low tax base communities, others move out. This leads to sprawl and to racial and class segregation.<sup>19</sup>



**Medical vs. Criminal Approach to Drugs:** Many young people are drawn to drugs in every community. However, a community's response can be decisive. Strong families and strong communities nourish and support their most vulnerable members, protecting them from violence and offering them a compelling vision for their own future which can offset the lure of drugs. In many communities, drug use is addressed as a family and community problem leading to medical treatment. However, McHenry County, Kane County, and parts of Chicago tend to address drug use as a criminal problem, leading to arrest.<sup>20</sup>

## AFRICAN AMERICANS

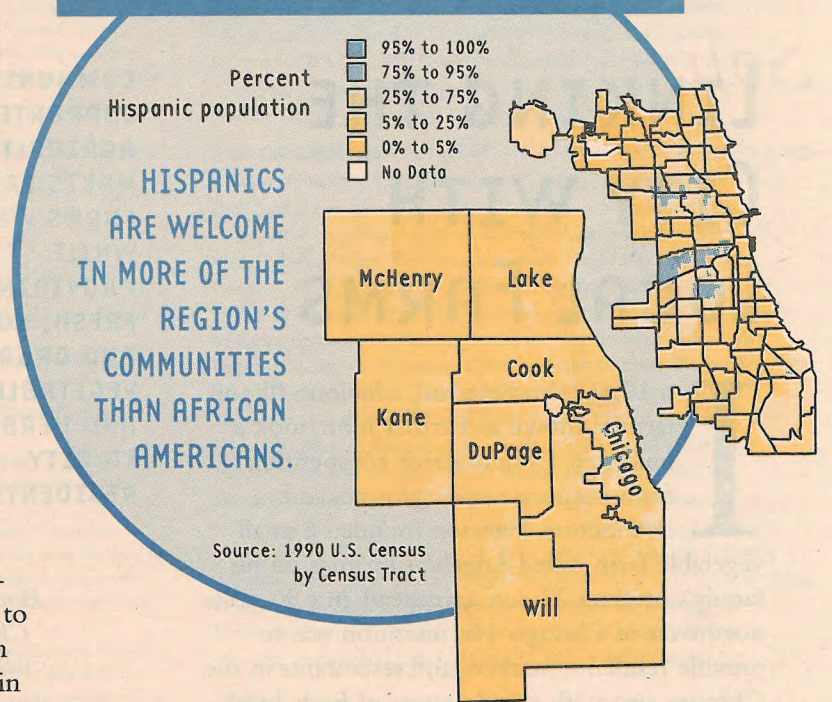


## Racial

### Discrimination:

Chicago is one of the country's most ethnically diverse regions. It is also one of the most racially segregated. Despite efforts over several decades to ensure open housing, our regional housing market continues to be closed to minorities. A 1989 study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that African-American and Hispanic families experienced discrimination 40 to 45 percent of the time in their search for housing in the Chicago area.<sup>21</sup>

## HISPANICS



## PROFILE

# URBAN GARDENING BUILDS COMMUNITY

URBAN GARDENS CAN BUILD COMMUNITY WHILE PRODUCING HEALTHY FOOD.



Mildred Gibson, Kirsten Akre, and E. L. Johnson work together to build community gardens on Chicago's South Side

The Resource Center, a Chicago community organization founded and directed by Ken Dunn, seeks to sustain and build community in the city's neighborhoods most wounded by job loss and disinvestment, particularly on the South Side of Chicago. "Injury to place causes injury to the people that inhabit the place. You have to care for the place, or it will no longer care for you," says Dunn. The center's community garden project is a way to initiate mutual healing, nurturing, and empowering of both people and place.

The center facilitates the transformation of abandoned urban lots into community garden plots by matching its own resources with those of the community. In addition to providing rich organic soil from its composting operation, the center organizes outside volunteer workers to help build gardens. In this way, urban lots, once sites of fly-dumping,

become places of beauty and life. Formerly dangerous places now produce healthy vegetables and bloom with purple blazing stars, cosmos, petunias, and towering yellow sunflowers.

Each garden that the center has helped create is unique, with its own history, character, and design. Some appear to thrive and take hold in the community better than others. But they all restore dignity in individuals and foster relationships among people of different generations and different, often neighboring, ethnic communities. "There is poverty in us all," Dunn notes, "and there are resources in us all." In Chicago's damaged, deteriorating communities, inherent resources in people and the land go unrealized, untapped. Creating the gardens literally and metaphorically reverses this trend.

For more information, contact The Resource Center at (773) 821-1351.

# LINKING THE CITY WITH LOCAL FARMS

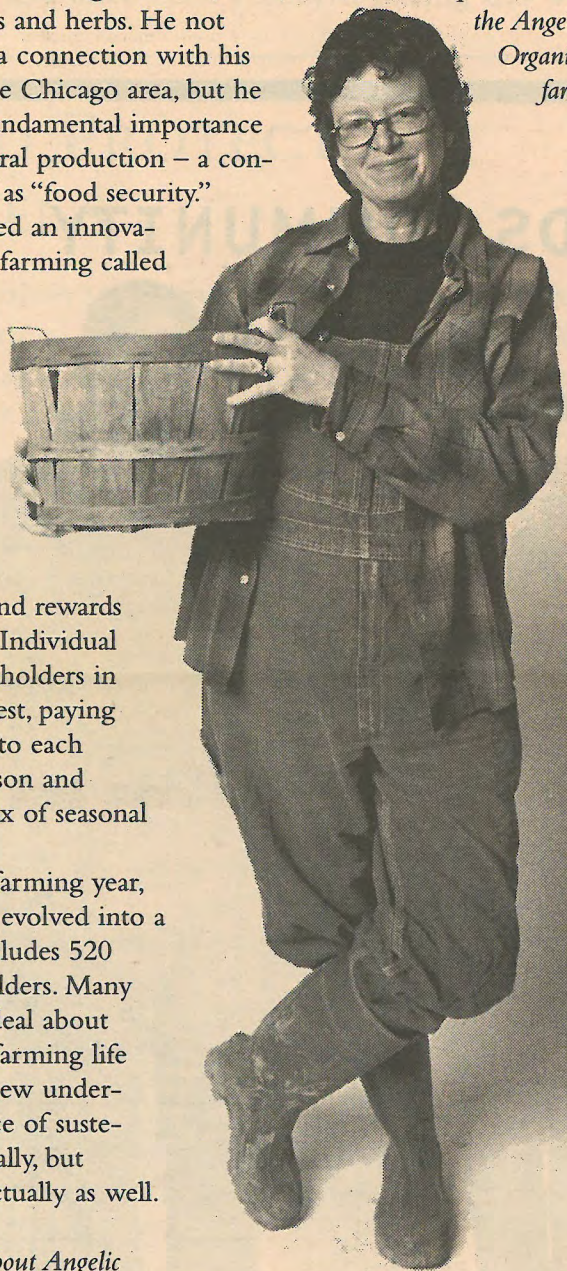
COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE MAKES FAMILY FARMS WORK WHILE PROVIDING FRESH, LOCAL, AND ORGANIC VEGETABLES AND HERBS TO CITY RESIDENTS.

In 1990, John Peterson, a lifelong Illinois farmer known as Farmer John, took a bold step. Despite fierce competition from corporate-scale growers and distributors, Peterson founded a small vegetable farm called Angelic Organics on his family's original 22-acre farmstead, just 90 miles northwest of Chicago. His intention was to provide residents, markets, and restaurants in the Chicago area with a wide range of fresh, local, and organic vegetables and herbs. He not only sought to foster a connection with his urban neighbors in the Chicago area, but he also believed in the fundamental importance of localizing agricultural production – a concept often referred to as “food security.”

Farmer John adopted an innovative model for family farming called Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). At its core, CSA is about forming a direct partnership in which the farmer and urban families share all of the risks and rewards of the growing cycle. Individual families become shareholders in the farm's yearly harvest, paying an up-front fee prior to each 20-week growing season and receiving a weekly box of seasonal produce.

Now in its eighth farming year, Angelic Organics has evolved into a farm “family” that includes 520 Chicago-area shareholders. Many have learned a great deal about the joys and trials of farming life and have found this new understanding to be a source of sustenance, not just physically, but spiritually and intellectually as well.

For more information about Angelic Organics, call (312) 409-2746 or visit their Web site ([www.angelic-organics.com](http://www.angelic-organics.com)).

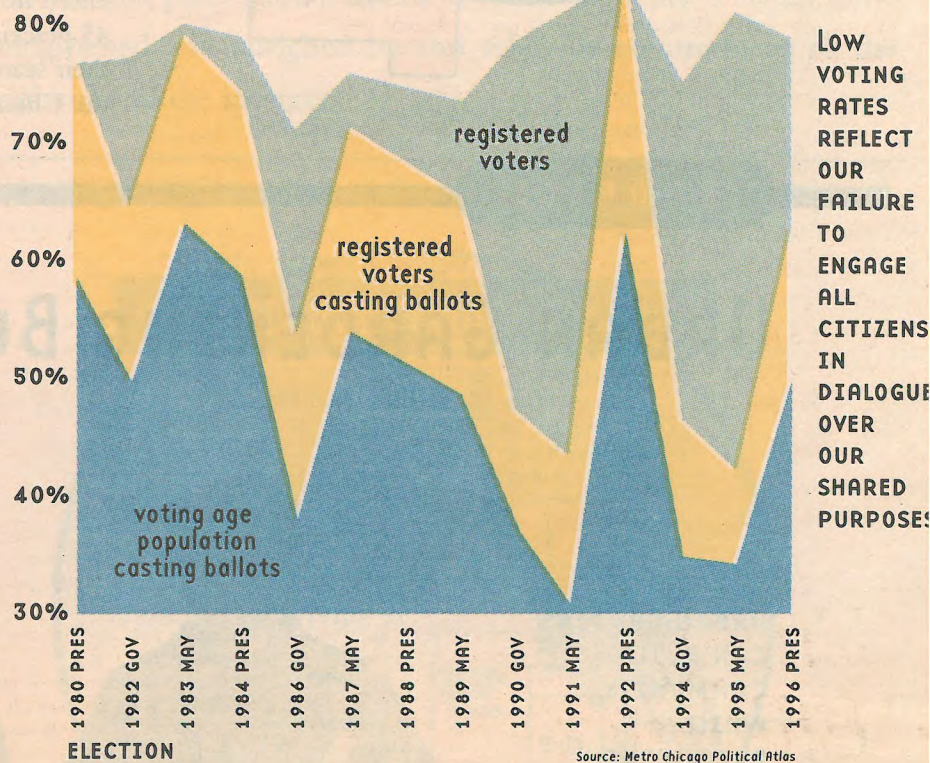


Mary Benson is a Chicagoan who works part time on the Angelic Organics farm

# BUILD THE CAPACITY TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Consensus on our shared purposes is developed in the voluntary organizations that make up the civic society. Our religious traditions need to bring new energy and focus to these civic organizations, reminding them that community renewal is not defined through the competition of opposing special interests, but through our efforts to define a common good. Our varied religious traditions and practices enrich this civic dialogue by continually connecting it to our deepest values and commitments.

## VOTER PARTICIPATION



**Voter Participation:** Voting is the foundation of citizen participation in the governance of our country, yet 50 percent of Chicago's citizens old enough to vote failed to do so in the last general election.<sup>22</sup>

**Participation in Community Life:** The Chicago region is blessed with a high level of participation in neighborhood organizations, tenant and condo associations, PTAs and Local School Councils, and local issue organizations. Communities are also places where we experience the vitality of different cultures through our wealth of museums, theaters, and concert halls. Nearly 100 percent of people in the Chicago region visit at least one cultural institution in a five-year period.<sup>23</sup>

## PARTICIPATION IN NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

	CHICAGO	SUB. COOK	LAKE	McHENRY	DUPAGE	KANE	WILL
PTA/Local School Council	16%	20%	20%	13%	23%	22%	24%
Neighborhood Association	17%	11%	11%	20%	11%	19%	10%
Tenant/Owner Condo Assn.	9%	15%	18%	18%	23%	11%	14%
Local Issue Organization	8%	7%	7%	8%	7%	8%	8%

## PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS

	CHICAGO	SUB. COOK	LAKE	McHENRY	DUPAGE	KANE	WILL
Art Institute of Chicago	44%	43%	38%	35%	43%	33%	27%
Museum of Contemporary Art	26%	16%	13%	15%	14%	17%	14%
Chicago Symphony Orchestra	17%	23%	17%	15%	14%	8%	11%
DuSable Museum	16%	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Mexican Fine Arts Museum	6%	5%	1%	5%	2%	2%	1%
Play at a Theater	42%	47%	47%	37%	49%	34%	36%
An Art Museum	57%	54%	57%	43%	56%	41%	45%
Live Classical Concert	26%	27%	30%	21%	29%	25%	24%

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH AT LEAST ONE PERSON PARTICIPATING  
SOURCE: MCIC SURVEY DATA 1991-1996

STRONG COMMUNITIES DEPEND ON CITIZENS' COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AND A BROAD SHARING OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE.

# Greenhouse Warming

*The answer, in part, is right here in the Chicago region.*

Current industrial technology is altering global weather patterns, thereby threatening the health of the planet. It is increasing the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, causing the atmosphere to store more of the sun's energy, and warming the Earth. This, in turn, threatens to melt ice caps and cause coastal flooding, with consequences impossible to predict.

A regional answer to global warming is "local cooling": the implementation of many small measures solving various problems can simultaneously decrease harmful emissions. Examples include energy efficiency, such as switching to efficient fluorescent lighting, minimizing the need for air conditioning by planting trees to shade buildings, and increasing the use of public transportation.

# Energy Efficiency

*Energy efficiency is essential for environmental and economic health. It improves air quality while increasing economic efficiency – and it pays for itself.*

The total annual energy bill of the Chicago metropolitan area is \$10.1 billion.<sup>24</sup> Conventional efforts towards energy efficiency could save up to \$2 billion, decreasing residential energy use by 20 percent and commercial energy use by 33 percent. The Chicago Energy Savers Fund, for example, achieved an average of 30 percent savings in the energy bills for multifamily buildings, at an average cost of \$1,300 per unit, with a payback of seven years, which is the equivalent of a 14 percent return on investment.<sup>25</sup>

Using "off the shelf" technologies, an estimated 8 percent to 10 percent of our regional energy bill could be saved through efficient lighting alone from investments with a payback of seven years or less. Such a strategy would also create more of "good enough" jobs and improve the region's long-term economic competitiveness. Even greater savings are possible with state of the art technologies.<sup>26</sup>

Although a lot of improvement is already happening in energy efficiency, it is not occurring uniformly or fast enough.

## FOOTNOTES:

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- 3 www.rtk.net/webpage/databas3.html; Joseph J. Romm, *Lean and Clean Management: How to Boost Profits and Productivity by Reducing Pollution*, 1994
- 4 De Vault et al, 1994, Toxic Contaminants. (SOLEC Working Paper). From The Great Lakes Information Management Resource, <http://www.cciw.ca/glimr/data/sogl-final-report/> (online)
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- 9 *Chicago Wilderness, An Atlas of Biodiversity*; Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and Openlands Project
- 10 "Accessibility vs. Mobility: The Location Efficient Mortgage", Hoeveler, Kim, Public Investment, American Planning Association, September, 1997
- 11 Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission
- 12 Steven Basler et al, "Good Enough Jobs for All Chicagoans," Center for Neighborhood Technology, 1991, updated using Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor – for Consumer Price Index: [www.stats.bls.gov/cgi-bin/survey/most](http://www.stats.bls.gov/cgi-bin/survey/most); and for minimum wage: [www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/win-wage/main.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/win-wage/main.htm)
- 13 "Secure worker" includes everyone who worked year-round, minus the part-time workers who want full-time work. "Insecure worker" is everyone else who worked at all in 1998, part-time or full-time. Some were unemployed at year's end. The remaining category is those who didn't work during 1989, including retired people, discouraged workers, housewives and househusbands, people on welfare, plus the economically independent. See: "The Real Unemployment Situation," United Auto Workers ([www.uaw.org/uawreales/jobs\\_pay\\_economy/missing4\\_96.html](http://www.uaw.org/uawreales/jobs_pay_economy/missing4_96.html))
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- 16 Economic Census, Retail Trade, U.S. Department of Commerce
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- 25 Center for Neighborhood Technology
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## THANKS TO:

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### Staff:

Project Director: Stephen A. Perkins, Ph.D.; Editor: Andrea Orcutt; Profile Writers: Brooke Russell and Debra Shore; Interns: Jean Darling, David Hoferer, Kathleen Kordesh, Christine Yerian; Intern-Seminary Internship Advisor, Professor Connie Kleingartener

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Center for Neighborhood Technology  
2125 W. North Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60647  
(773) 278-4800 Ext. 255  
fax (773) 278-3840  
email: [steve@cnt.org](mailto:steve@cnt.org)  
web: [www.cnt.org](http://www.cnt.org)

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Religious Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please send more information about:

- Distributing 'One Creation, One People, One Place' in my congregation.
- Making My Congregation a Green Zone
- Habitat Restoration
- The Regional Transit Access Pass
- A Sustainability Workshop at my congregation
- A Sustainability Dialogue in my community
- The Center for Neighborhood Technology
- The Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations

Mail to:  
**The Interreligious  
Sustainability Project  
Center for  
Neighborhood  
Technology  
2125 W. North Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60647**

# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

## 1. PRAY, LEARN, REFLECT, ACT:

### Protect Your Great-Grandchildren's Future

*Guided by the wisdom of your religious tradition, begin to act in ways which are sustainable for the long term.*

Approach your faith tradition prayerfully. What does it tell you about your responsibility to the Earth and to generations to come? Then, learn as much as you can about the Chicago region in which we live. What is working; what needs to be changed? Reflect on what your religious tradition calls on you to do; then act, in ways both small and large. Together, we can ensure a future for our children and grandchildren and the natural world they will share. Contact your local congregation for statements from your religious tradition and look at the Web of Creation ([www.webofcreation.org](http://www.webofcreation.org)).

## 2. WALK LIGHTLY ON THE EARTH:

### Reduce Your Consumption of the Earth's Scarce Resources

*Cut your use of natural resources by 10 percent and invest the savings in a just world.*

Most of us use much more energy and many more materials than we need to. And much more than other nations. The first step in cutting back is to audit your use of resources, then to explore ways to live well using less. Consider committing to an Eco-Justice Tithe in which you develop and implement a plan to cut your use of energy and materials by 10 percent and contribute the money you save to causes which promote social and economic justice. Contact the Center for Neighborhood Technology for information about a personal resource audit and see the CNT web site ([www.cnt.org/interreligious](http://www.cnt.org/interreligious)).

## 3. CREATE A MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY:

### Make Your Congregation a Green Zone

*Organize your congregation to embody sustainability as a religious value.*

Religious congregations can express their commitment to sustainable development in many different ways: in worship, education, religious practices, energy efficiency, recycled materials, landscaping, water conservation, community development and public ministry. In the spring of 1999, the Lutheran School of Theology, Inspired Partnerships, and the Center for Neighborhood Technology will co-sponsor "The Environment and Your Congregation: A Practical Workshop," a day of practical information on how your congregation can become a model of sustainability. There are over 3,700 religious congregations in the Chicago metropolitan area. Together we can make a tremendous difference. For more information, call: (773) 278-4800 Ext. 255.

## 4. HEAL THE EARTH:

### Restore the Habitat of Our Endangered Species

*Join with members of other religious congregations to help restore a site near where you live that is home to some of our region's endangered plants and animals.*

In natural areas all around the Chicagoland area, volunteer stewards spend their weekends preserving the region's biodiversity. They restore natural ecosystems to their original condition so that they can support a variety of native plants and animals. They remove non-native plants, creating habitats that are friendly to Chicago's endangered and threatened species. The Volunteer Stewardship Network would like to introduce you and your congregation to the hands-on work of habitat restoration, an activity appropriate for anyone over 10 years old, including senior citizens. For more information, contact the Chicagoland Environmental Network (708) 485-0263 Ext. 396.

## 5. FIGHT SPRAWL, CONGESTION, AND AIR POLLUTION:

### Support a Regional Transit Access Pass

*Join a campaign for a Regional Transit Access Pass that permits easy transfers between the CTA, Metra, and Pace.*

One of the best things about the Chicago region is its wealth of people, communities, activities, jobs, and culture. But to benefit from this richness and diversity, we need to be able to get around. Many cannot drive, many choose not to, others cannot afford to. Yet for public transit to compete effectively with the automobile, it must be convenient and economical. One step in this direction would be a Regional Transit Access Pass allowing passengers to transfer easily from the CTA to Metra to Pace. The Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations and the Chicagoland Transportation and Air Quality Commission are launching a campaign for a Regional Transit Access Pass. Find out about this campaign by calling (773) 278-4800 Ext. 2020.

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CHICAGO PROGRAM ON ECOLOGY, JUSTICE, AND FAITH  
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