



A DECADE IN THE MAKING

Stretching 2.7 miles along a former elevated railway through the Humboldt Park, Logan Square, Bucktown and Wicker Park neighborhoods, the 606 is Chicago's buzziest new park/trail/art space. Taking its name from the prefix of Chicago's zip codes, the 606 is a textbook lesson in adaptive reuse, taking a long-abandoned industrial infrastructure and turning it into a much-needed, functional yet beautiful public amenity.

And though it may be a public amenity, it's one that was achieved with relatively little financial investment from the city. Instead, the 606 is truly a marvel of private investment and community input, Steve Baird of Baird and

Warner and Chairman of the Trust for Public Land, noted. The concept for the 606 started with concerned citizens, who formed the Friends of Bloomingdale Trail. When the Trust for Public Land was approached about renovating a park just off the former railway, they were introduced to the citizen committee, and plans for the 606 bloomed from there. The Trust for Public Land, which has the goal of creating a park within a 10 minute walk of every citizen, assisted the Parks District in helping to acquire parcels along the trail to turn into parks and brought together a coalition of city and civic organizations to move the project forward, with much-needed financial, cooperative and logistical resources.



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The 606 is a signature project of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's push to create 800 new parks, recreation areas and green spaces throughout the city. Having parks and green space makes a great difference in any community, in terms of real estate and otherwise. "Lincoln Square is one of the poorest areas relative to parks and green space, in the city," Baird said. "This is creating a park for those who didn't have access to one. And, the 606 also takes something that was previously a neighborhood divider, and it turns it into a neighborhood connector."

It also serves as the only major East-West bicycle corridor, where commuters can hop on and not have to worry about

crossing a street or negotiating traffic. And with twelve different entrance/exit points and proximity to the 'L', Metra, Divvy stations and several major bus routes, the 606 is designed for access.

The 606, too, is a living work of art, uniting science, nature and culture through a series of trail events, an arts program with both temporary and permanent installations, and seasonal plantings.

The anticipated economic development, public health, safety, environmental and transportation benefits bode well for neighborhood real estate.

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"We've all heard it said that the three most important features a property can have are 'location, location, location,'" Grace Goro, co-founder of the REP Group at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, said. "The one criterion that is nearly impossible to change has, for many properties along the nearly three mile stretch. Residents have swapped their view of an old train line for bustling green space. The 606 offers a lifestyle that wasn't necessarily available in these neighborhoods before, and many people find that attractive."

Starting in the summer of 2014, listings began to boast of proximity to the proposed trail. With the trail's grand opening, pictures, maps and more information about the 606 is common in neighborhood real estate marketing and listing materials.

"[Whether or not] buyers will pay giant premiums to be close to the trail remains to be seen, but overall prices in the area are going up, especially as rehabbers and developers improve the quality of housing stock in the area," Michelle Penny, @properties, said. "People who have plenty of housing choices see it as a good value and desirable neighborhood. More than anything, I think the trail has brought development further west."

Mario R. Barrios, Expo Realty Group, notes that the desirability of the neighborhood, with its ready access to



THE
map



Digital Extra

606 Interactive Map

dining, entertainment, and transportation, is attractive. "The area has a mixed and healthy inventory of single family homes, multi-family buildings and condos, with single-family homes having the highest use. It's definitely a changing neighborhood."

For developers, though, finding land is a challenge. And rehabbed and new construction isn't exactly seen as affordable by long-time residents. But for new buyers, these neighborhoods are seen as a great value, because they can afford more space for the prices and have quick access to the 606.

The diversity of the neighborhood is reflected in the users of the trail, as well as in how neighbors interact with it.

"As a public space that came into existence in the age of social media, it has been fascinating to watch and participate in the 'trial experiences' of others using social media," Penny said. "I've seen people use the [Friends of Bloomingdale Trail page] to discuss trail etiquette and solve trail-related problems, for the community and for individuals. Neighbors are coming together on the trail in their real and digital lives."

The 606 joins the ranks of other great Chicago parks like Grant, Millennium, Union and Jackson. But, as organizers note, it's more than a path or a new park. Instead, the 606 paves its own way, bridging the gaps between four neighborhoods, elevating citizens above street-level, and giving community members space to gather, explore, journey and express themselves. And that's good for all of us.

Photos courtesy: The Trust for Public Land

