Calumet Collaborative is partnering with Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) Institute of Design (ID) on a project called “The Future of Brownfields”.

This project started in the spring of 2018 as a semester long course for Masters and PhD students. They were challenged to find innovative ways to approach the redevelopment of landfills, vacant homes, former industrial sites and unmanaged and most likely contaminated natural areas in the Calumet region. The course output was 2 reports and 4 community engagement prototype ideas that engage residents in brownfield redevelopment strategies.

Spring 2018 Course Outputs
“The Future of Brownfields” report
“Brownfields: Critical Paths for Regional Redevelopment” report

During the summer of 2018 IIT-ID was able to leverage funding received from the Chicago Community Trust to further develop the prototypes created during the spring semester course. Community feedback about the prototypes was collected through focus group testing and individual interviews. As a result, IIT-ID produced 3 in-depth studies of the prototypes and prepared them for the next step of micro pilots.

3 Prototype Booklets
ACT Calumet, FLAG Calumet, MINI Calumet

The Future of Brownfields project supports a larger initiative of the Calumet Collaborative: Brownfield redevelopment. This initiative aims to explore and align Brownfield redevelopment strategies that build off existing resources including: underutilized sites, brownfields, productive reuse examples, and identify opportunities for action.

2019 SPRING SEMESTER
Moving into 2019, IIT ID has secured funding from the Kresge Foundation to micro pilot the FLAG Calumet prototype. Additionally the ACT Calumet prototype will be further developed and explored through another semester long workshop with Masters and PhD students.

The 2019 Spring Semester ACT Calumet course focuses on empowering local residents to reactivate abandoned properties.

The course will explore if the introduction of new technologies, infrastructures (including digital platforms), and emerging financial services like blockchain could provide alternative ways to empower local residents towards reactivating abandoned properties and vacant lots in the Calumet region. The course considers the following objectives:

1. Explore how new empowerment platforms would/could function in the context of a neighborhood.
2. Build local capacity based on civic empowerment to overcome local challenges.
3. Provide local residents new references for decision-making based on access to data and the application of sensor technology.
4. Enable alternative futures facilitated by peer-to-peer dialogue and negotiation.
5. Utilize individuals knowledge regarding the local conditions to elevate the collective understanding of the current social, economic and ecological landscape.
6. Decentralize power in decision-making processes for intervening in abandoned properties.
7. Empower individuals to take actions to improve the conditions of their surroundings.
8. Strengthen local economies in the Calumet region.

The Calumet Collaborative convened the following organizations to provide strategic guidance throughout this project:

MWRD, UIC, SSMMA, NIRPC, Delta Institute, Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), City of Gary, Northwest Indiana Forum, Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago, Chicago Neighborhoods Initiative, Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), Illinois International Port, OAI Inc, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, The Cook County Department of Planning and Development.