In 2017, following a protracted negotiation between the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), private developers and residents, major renovation work began on the Great Depression-era Julia C. Lathrop Homes. The north side complex is renowned for its subtly detailed, well-proportioned brick buildings. Meandering green space originally designed by Jens Jensen, father of Humboldt Park, lends strong identity to the 34-acre riverfront site.

In transforming Lathrop Homes with more than 1,100 apartments split between market-rate, subsidized and public housing units, a deal was struck to replace 500 public housing units over time throughout various north side sites. This was primarily the work of a tenacious group of residents who spent years advocating for preservation of both the historic buildings and CHA units. Displacement to far-flung areas was and is a real concern, considering the multi-generational community that took hold at Lathrop for many long-term residents. There are also many advantages and opportunities to living on the job-rich, low-crime North Side.

The first 400+ apartments in 16 renovated buildings, located mainly on the north end of the site, opened to residents in fall 2018. Move-ins completed in October 2019. This development phase also includes a new six-story apartment building designed in context with neighboring brick row homes, and adaptive reuse of the old administration building as a boutique coffee roaster. Work to expand and improve the historic landscape is ongoing, with a partially completed river walk, boat launch and naturalized shoreline linking to a restored two-acre great lawn. Future phases involve redeveloping the section of Lathrop south of Diversey Avenue.

Further reading:
Residents reflect on rehabbed Lathrop Homes. Maya Dukmasova, Chicago Reader, September 18, 2019.
Bickerdike has neighborly approach to affordable housing. David Roeder, Chicago Sun-Times, November 29, 2019.