Fifteen miles south of Chicago's Loop sits Wolf Lake, a small wooded reservoir straddling the Illinois/Indiana border. Alive with fishing and sailing activities, most people only see it from their passing car on I-94. Instead of merely a fleeting vista, this lake has the potential to become a gateway for all Chicagoans.

Unfortunately, Wolf Lake is not easily accessible by bike or train, and nearby infrastructure stops short of this underutilized area. The goal of this project is to connect the communities of the 10th and 7th Wards to Wolf Lake and surrounding assets, while improving the quality of the current experience.

The vital connection between the north and south portions of the Burnham Greenway will be constructed with a branch directly to Wolf Lake. This will pull the millions of cyclists who ride the Lake Shore Path further south. Divvy stations placed at the Hegewisch Metra and Wolf Lake will connect casual visitors. This influx of people will create a catalyst for improved amenities, cafes and retail. New paths will connect the Illinois and Indiana bike networks, forming a loop around Wolf Lake with the addition of scenic bridges and greenery. An iconic bridge would connect the Burnham Nature Preserve with the Hegewisch Metra and Ford Calumet Environmental Center, making these wards a genuinely unique destination.
The Ford Calumet Environmental Center envisions a new way to build that draws solely from local, abundant materials and sand, demonstrating the importance of both industry and ecology in Chicago's 10th Ward and the surrounding Calumet region.

Using the nest-making process as a proven model for material reuse, the design for the Center is composed of salvaged steel from the Calumet industrial region and other remnant, recyclable materials such as slag, glass bottles, bar stock and rebar.

Visitors enter the building from the south porch, which doubles as a meeting space and outdoor classroom. Constructed of discarded steel rebar, the mesh enclosing the south porch protects birds from striking the structure’s transparent façade. The mesh, through which visitors can look out to observe the surrounding wildlife, doubles as a “blind” for visitors to observe the site and view exhibitions highlighting Calumet’s unique industrial and natural heritage.

Once inside the building, visitors can watch live lab work by scientists examining the site and view exhibitions highlighting Calumet’s unique industrial and natural heritage.

FORD CALUMET ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
STUDIO GANG
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS