

Chicago's Silicon Valley? A Summary of Everything Tech That's Happening on Goose Island



Will Flanagan - GM
9/12/14 @6:17am in Tech

🔥1.6K

Void of restaurants, parks, and retail properties, the only island on the Chicago River has always been known simply as “the place that brewery was named after.”

But Goose Island - the 160 acre artificial island in the Near North neighborhood - is having a renaissance. In fact, some are going so far as to call it “Chicago’s Silicon Valley.”

Yes, nothing has actually opened yet to warrant that moniker, but several significant developments have been started, commissioned, or announced that, together, formulate a state-of-the-art tech hub. Below is a quick roundup of everything that’s happening that will turn Goose Island into “Innovation Island.”

The Digital Manufacturing Lab:

The announcement that started everything. In February, President Obama officially selected Chicago as the home for a brand new public-private innovation institute, committing \$70 million in federal dollars to the project, named the Digital Lab for Manufacturing. With the potential of developing technology that will result in licensing and royalty income, this advanced-manufacturing facility signaled one of the biggest wins ever for the city’s innovation economy. Though Goose Island was always rumored as the destination, a lease wasn’t signed until early June, with the Lab locking down the old 95k square foot Republic Windows & Doors building. It’s scheduled to open in early 2015.

909 West Bliss:

In mid June, South Street Capital, a Chicago-based real estate investment firm, came public with plans to convert a vacant Goose Island facility into a 285,000 square foot high-tech office park and retail center, housing 500 tech employees and roughly 15k square feet of commercial space. The Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture-designed complex will include LEED certification, large green roofs, a gym, and indoor bike parking. The plans are drawn and the lease is signed; South Street is just waiting on an anchor tenant before moving forward with the build. (See mockups here).

Old Boat Yard Office Development:

This week, nearly a month and half after the 909 West Bliss news, South Street Capital decided to double down on Goose Island, announcing that



they’re teaming up again with Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture again on a 350,000 square foot state-of-the-art office development on the site of the old Goose Island Boat Yard. The six story, \$90 million project includes a pedestrian and cycling bridge connecting both South Street buildings to the Chicago Blue Line stop. (See mockups here).

Wrigley’s Global Innovation Center:

Though the GIC has been on Goose Island since 2005, it’s always stood alone. The state-of-the-art facility features three levels of flexible lab space and a “Pilot Plant” to test new machinery, manufacturing processes, and product samples. Because the facility was built as a catalyst for corporate invention, it never received credit for its contribution to Chicago’s innovation ecosystem as a whole. However, now with surrounding tech neighbors, it’s emerged as an ideal compliment and staple of “Innovation Island.”

Domino:

Just north of the island, Domino is the new shared space from the co-founder of Music Dealers. It’s a 5k square foot incubator focused on helping established startups execute and it’s opening in early October. Across from the space, the founders will be launching a new restaurant as well to cater to all of the area’s new tenants.

