



March/April 2018

THE CONNECTION POINT

Upcoming Events

March 13, 2018

RMAP Mobility Subcommittee
at RMTD East Side Transfer Center
- 10:00 AM

March 22, 2018

RMAP Technical Committee
at Loves Park City Hall
- 10:00 AM

March 22, 2018

Environmental Committee
at Regional Design Center
- 4:00 - 6:00PM

April 10, 2018

RMAP Mobility Subcommittee
at RMTD East Side Transfer Center
- 10:00 AM

April 14, 2018

NIU Smart Energy Day
at Regional Design Center
- 12:00 - 3:00 PM

April 19, 2018

RMAP Technical Committee
at Loves Park City Hall
- 10:00 AM

April 26, 2018

RMAP Policy Committee
at Regional Design Center
- 1:00 PM

April 26, 2018

R1PC Board Meeting
at Regional Design Center
- 1:30 PM

Cancellations will be posted on the website.

Becoming a Bicycle-Friendly Region

How does a region become more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly? Approximately 100 residents from the region attended R1PC and Transform Rockford's Community Conversation event on February 28, 2018, to find out. "Community Conversation: Becoming a Bicycle-Friendly Region" focused on the next steps needed to move from the planning process to implementation and was a follow-up to last year's event on planning for a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly region.

Sydney Turner, Metropolitan Planner with R1PC, presented on the vision, recommendations, and action plan of the recently adopted *Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan for the Rockford Metropolitan Area*. The majority of Turner's presentation focused on the Action Plan, or the framework, that will turn the vision of the Plan into reality. Michael Dunn, Jr., Executive Director of R1PC, also presented at the event on the costs associated with constructing and maintaining bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as the potential funding opportunities and challenges.

LimeBike's Regional General Manager, Jason Wilde, presented on the company's upcoming expansion of their bike sharing services into the Rockford Region. Wilde provided a brief overview of their company and business model, as well as their smart, dockless bikes. (*More information on bike sharing programs and LimeBike can be found later in this newsletter issue.*)

The event concluded with a panel discussion and audience Q & A on the efforts of various organizations to make the region more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. The panel was moderated by Director of Planning for Region 1 Planning Council, Jon Paul Diipla; and panelists included Tim Bragg, Park Planner and Ian Linnabary, Park Commissioner – Rockford Park District, Jennifer Smith, I Bike Rockford, and Michael Stubbe, Executive Director – Rockford Mass Transit District.



Mike Schablaskie,
Executive Director of
Transform Rockford,
opened the evening's
event.



Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) is located in the southern portion of the City of Belvidere and is the largest employer in the region.

Boone County Indicators On the Rise

Boone County is experiencing some recovery from the Great Recession, especially in job growth and a reawakening housing market, according to recent research completed by R1PC. The work was done for Growth Dimensions, the economic development agency for Belvidere-Boone County, as part of an ongoing effort to track county-level economic indicators.

Total jobs in the county passed pre-recession levels in 2015, and have increased since, especially with the recent expansion of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) and its suppliers. FCA employs a record 5,150 people in Belvidere, and its suppliers employ an additional 1,800, according to company reports. Updated overall county jobs totals for 2017 are expected later this year. Based on Emsi – an economic and labor market analysis tool used by R1PC – estimates from federal data, FCA and its suppliers represent approximately 20% of manufacturing jobs in the Rockford MSA, which includes Boone and Winnebago counties.

Other trends of note:

- In 2016, the county's population increased for the first time since 2011 and was one of only 13 counties in Illinois with an increase. The population still remains below 2007 levels.
- Not counting the months in 2017 that FCA was closed for retooling, unemployment dropped more than half a point to 5.2%. The state saw an even larger decline, from 5.6% to 4.8%.
- Average wages, however, have been relatively flat in recent years, according to Emsi estimates.
- Commercial vacancy rate has steadily dropped from 6% in 2010 to 4% in 2017, according to the U.S. Postal Service.
- There were at least 35 new home permits issued in 2017, more than the previous two years combined. It was still far less than the 250-400 per year before the Great Recession.

R1PC is proud to partner with Growth Dimensions. For more information on customized economic or social indicator reports for your geography, email tbona@r1planning.org.

BOOK REVIEW: *THE CREATIVE DESTRUCTION OF NEW YORK CITY: ENGINEERING THE CITY FOR THE ELITE*

Thomas Bona, R1PC's Research and Information Director, recently had his first book review published: an analysis of *The Creative Destruction of New York City: Engineering the City For the Elite* (Oxford University Press, 2017) by Alessandro Busà. It was published for *The Englewood Review of Books* (www.englewoodreview.org), a weekly online book review based in Indianapolis.

Growing up in New York City, Bona observed the effects of suburban flight, disinvestment, and urban decay, as well as its more recent rebound as part of a nationwide “back to the city” trend. But urban scholar Busà raised important concerns about the rising income inequality, unaffordable housing, and “hyper-gentrification” alongside that rebound. Busà contends that recent efforts to attract business investment and wealthy residents by rezoning, beautifying, and commercializing older, poorer, and underdeveloped neighborhoods has increased those problems.

Bona found the book thoroughly researched and written with “a storyteller’s deftness,” but critiqued Busà’s conclusions as being too nostalgic for New York’s “gritty” past and ignoring much larger historic trends to focus on recent policies. “Far-flung or otherwise undervalued parts of the city, especially waterfronts and old industrial areas, have long been the place the poor ended up,” Bona wrote. “Investing in those areas and cleaning up blight is not inherently a bad thing.”

Bona, a former journalist and a creative writer, plans to write more book reviews, particularly on topics related to R1PC’s work.



Quick Facts Can Help You Track Region's Growth

R1PC has created its first publicly available set of statistical indicators - the Quick Facts page of NorthernIllinoisSites.com (www.northernillinoissites.com/quickfacts). This is a tool that all of our partners can use to understand and promote the regional economy. It also serves as an example of the type of indicators reports, dashboards, and data commons type work R1PC can do.

NorthernIllinoisSites.com was created and is managed by R1PC for the Northern Illinois Qualified Sites program, a partnership between R1PC, Winnebago County, and the Rockford Area Economic Development Council to promote shovel-ready industrial sites to national and local businesses. The website shows the value of connecting the technical expertise of R1PC (including its colocation with WinGIS) with the needs of government and economic development partners.

R1PC's analytics team used its years of experience assisting the region's economic development organizations with site selection responses and other business requests to choose the indicators for this page. They include economic metrics, demographic statistics, a list of regional major employers, and the Rockford Region's relatively low Cost of Living Index compared to competitor regions. This data is updated regularly by R1PC staff, using federal, state, regional, and local data. The major employer list and Cost of Living Index data collection are both done by R1PC staff, showing our ability to generate primary data for our partners.

To learn more about possible indicators projects or other custom research for your geography or organization, contact tbona@r1planning.org.

QUICK FACTS



Northern Illinois has a strong workforce and growing economy attractive to companies looking to locate or expand here. Our major employers, particularly in advanced manufacturing and logistics industries, have found success here. Learn more about how you can as well.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

METRIC	ESTIMATE	CHANGE FROM 1 YEAR AGO
Non-Farm Employment (December 2016)	152,800	0
Private Sector Employment (December 2016)	136,400	+100
Unemployment Rate (December 2016)	5.1%	-1.4%
Metro Area Labor Force (December 2016)	163,505	-4,652
Labor Force Within 50 Miles (2010-2014 Average)	1,319,800	3,192
Personal Income (2015)	\$13.66 Billion	+\$159 Million
Personal Income Per Capita (2015)	\$40,254	+\$619
Real GDP (2015) in 2009 chained dollars	\$12.92 Billion	-\$28 Million
Exports (2015)	2,229,793,332	-4.08%

Screenshot of the Quick Facts page of the Northern Illinois Qualified Sites website.

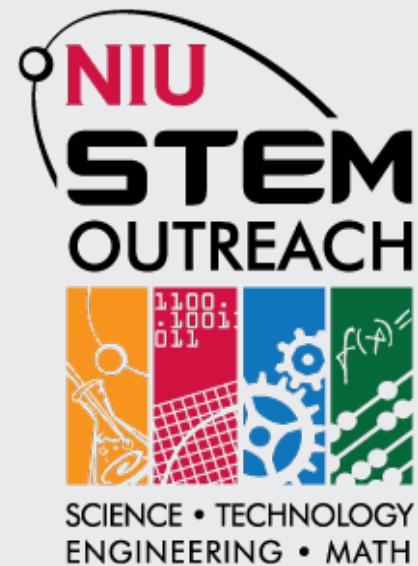
NIU STEM Outreach & R1PC to Host Smart Energy Day

Northern Illinois University STEM Outreach received a grant for 2018 to host community events promoting green energy efficiency and awareness in Rockford. Their goal is to put together a wide variety of events targeted at many different audiences. The first event took place on January 20th at the Muslim Community Center and Mosque in Rockford. It was organized by the Muslim Association of Greater Rockford (MAGR) with over 50 total people in attendance. Moving forward, there are several other upcoming events planned:

- A STEM Café speaking event will take place on Wednesday, March 21st at Giovanni's Restaurant and Convention Center (610 N. Bell School Rd, Rockford) from 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM hosted in partnership with AARP.
- Numerous classroom visits to area schools will take place this spring in partnership with the Rockford Public Schools.
- A community open house event will take place in the Regional Design Center (315 N. Main St, Rockford) on Saturday, April 14th from 12 PM – 3 PM hosted in partnership with the R1PC.
- An Energy Conference in October.

Over the coming weeks, we are looking for your help in distributing this information, engaging your partner organizations, and extending invitations to these events, specifically the community open house event on Saturday, April 14th. It will be free to the public, open to all ages, and have a variety of different interactive hands-on activities. Plus, it's a fantastic opportunity to learn how to reduce your energy bill, save money, and help the environment.

If you'd like more information on the April 14th event please contact Ben Rohr, Land Use Planner, at brohr@r1planning.org. For more general information on the grant or other upcoming events, please contact Sam Watt, STEM Educator at swatt1@niu.edu.



The NIU STEM Outreach delivers off-campus programs and on-campus activities that increase science, technology, engineering, and mathematics literacy and enthusiasm among P-12 students, their families, and educators. Their office is also a central place to find information on the numerous outreach programs offered by NIU's STEM departments and the colleges. For more information, visit www.niu.edu/stem/.

IPLAN MEETINGS LOOK TO IMPROVE HEALTH & WELLNESS

R1PC is a member of the steering committee for the Boone County Health Department's (BCHD) Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs (IPLAN). R1PC staff has attended several Local Public Health System Assessment meetings during the month of January. Each meeting covered one or more of the ten plan topics, which range from empowering the public and solving community problems, to finding new links between people and services. All six meetings were well attended with a wide range of local and regional stakeholders. Moving forward, R1PC and BCHD will continue to work together and collaborate on coordinating future initiatives and action steps between BCHD's IPLAN and the Boone County Comprehensive Plan's Health, Wellness, and Safety chapter.

Shared Resources & Community Response to Reduce Crime

Over the past several months, R1PC has been managing a research and planning process with Loyola University Chicago in partnership with the City of Rockford, Winnebago County State's Attorney's office, the 17th Judicial Circuit Court, States Attorney's office, the Illinois Department of Corrections, community practitioners/providers, and residents to develop a strategy to address gun violence in the community. Due to the multi-disciplinary team's (MDT) extensive work, we are pleased to announce the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) has awarded Partnerships and Strategies to Reduce Violent Crime implementation funding for Year 2.

Taking lessons from past attempts to implement this model, and using the Problem-Oriented Policing SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) process, the MDT examined the criminal justice and human service delivery system from point of contact to exit. As a result, an evidence-based focused-deterrence strategy was recommended and accepted as the model to address and deter violent crime in our community.

Three target populations were identified: Parolees, Probationers, and those at high-risk to offend. The SARA process confirmed that a large number of individuals are either on probation or parole, and therefore already being managed and under the authority of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) or Winnebago County Department of Court Services. Because case management was already in place for a large number of impending clients, and because we have strong case management providers already serving the justice-involved, it was determined to support, rather than duplicate, case management processes already in place.

The newly-hired Navigator will be coordinating services in conjunction with probation and parole, and assigning those not on probation or parole to funded programs in the community. This model respects the policies, procedures, and work of other stakeholders and fills a gap by providing feet-on-the-streets assistance to strengthen community efforts.

This is an example of a true sharing of resources and a true shared community response. The work is not over, but a hat tip to the team for their selfless commitment and their intentionality to include policies that would not hinder fellow stakeholders or the future success of the participants.

Bike Sharing Program Rolls into the Region

Access to a sustainable mode of transportation will become easier for those who live, work, and play in Rockford Region. Headquartered in California, LimeBike seeks to revolutionize urban mobility with smart, dockless bike sharing programs at no cost to cities. Their dockless model allows LimeBike to serve the entire region and scale a flexible fleet to meet the needs and demand of the region. LimeBike is currently in markets such as South Bend, Indiana; Aurora, Colorado; and Greensboro, North Carolina.

LimeBike believes that what sets them apart is:

- No funding required to operate and expand their services;
- Simple, affordable pricing;
- Well-funded, stable American company;
- Nation-leading dockless technology; and
- Their focus on safety, equity, and collaboration.

Bike share programs can transform cities into more desirable places for both residents and visitors due to the associated health, environmental, mobility, transportation, social, and safety benefits. Other bike share programs have positively contributed to the improved outlook, increased physical activity, and improvement in sociability of their communities. By going station-less, cities are able to allocate the funds that would go into a traditional station-based bike sharing program into bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects instead.



LimeBike users in Seattle, WA.
Image Credit: LimeBike

Employee SPOTLIGHT

BEN ROHR
LAND USE PLANNER



We want to highlight the diverse collection of individuals who work at Region 1 Planning Council with our employee spotlight series. During this series, we will interview a new employee for each publication to hear a little about the people who make up our team. This issue employee spotlight features Ben Rohr.

When did you join the R1PC team? November 28th, 2016

What is your education and background? Bachelor of Science in Geography, University of Wisconsin- Whitewater, & Master of Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin -Milwaukee, 2016. I have had three very diverse internships that I credit with preparing me for my current career: a GIS mapping internship with the City of Janesville, Wisconsin, a long-range planning internship with Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and a municipal planning internship with the City of West Allis, Wisconsin.

What is your job in 25 words or less? I help coordinate and contribute to comprehensive community land use, environmental, public health, transportation, and economic development planning on a variety of geographic scales.

What skills do you need as Land Use Planner? The most important skill to have in this role is being able to have a conversation with anyone who walks through the door, whether that be an elected official, community leader, technical expert, or member of the general public. It is also critical to be organized, but also flexible.

What aspect of your role do you enjoy the most? The wide variety of topics, tasks, and people that I deal with on a weekly basis.

What has been your favorite project at R1PC? The Boone County Comprehensive Plan.

What is most rewarding about your job? To see well-thought-out ideas go from planning documents to implementation.

What is your favorite part about working for R1PC? The free-thinking culture to pursue your interests, integrate new ideas, and better the community at-large.

When you are not working, what do you enjoy doing in your free time? I golf almost every weekend of the warm weather months, but also love attending local events and festivals.

What are some fun facts about you? My parents gave me the initials B.E.A.R., but I am the biggest Packers fan you will meet.

Tretara Flowers Joins the R1PC Team!

Tretara Flowers has joined R1PC as a Navigator for the Partnerships and Strategies Focused Deterrence Program. In this role, she will work as part of a multi-disciplinary team in the community, coordinating case plans and resources to ensure participants (high risk/high need violent offenders) are connected to the services should they accept the help offered to them.

Tretara is a Rockford native who holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Healthcare Management, and a Master of Business Administration degree. Prior to joining R1PC, Tretara worked as an Education Instructor and a Career Specialist, where she developed skillsets for working with individuals with real-life barriers. Tretara is proactive in the community, developing an aftercare program for women recently released from jail or prison.

Tretara will act in the advocacy/mentoring capacity for her clients (the participants), and as a support person for law enforcement, parole, probation, and community service providers who are part of the client's team. Tretara's understanding of the needs of those involved in the criminal justice system will go a long way in encouraging those who accept the offer of help. In addition, she is a team player and will be a great asset and extension of our organization and our partner agencies.





We're Hiring

Metropolitian Planner

As a Metropolitan Planner within the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) division of R1PC, the successful candidate will administer the federally required transportation planning process and provide transportation planning products to the MPO member organizations and coordinate with Federal, State, and local agencies as well as the public as well as produce planning work tasks typical of a metropolitan planning organization.

The successful candidate will investigate, analyze, document, and manage ongoing transportation planning efforts. The successful candidate must possess strong writing skills, prepare recommendations, and perform research, planning and technical analysis for projects.

Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a bachelor's degree in urban planning, transportation planning, geography, economics, or a related field is required. This is an entry-level professional position.

Grant Writer

As a Grant Writer for R1PC, the successful candidate will assist in procuring funding for the R1PC and its partner organizations through responses to grant announcements and Request for Proposals.

The grant writer will at times submit reports to funders, serve as liaison to participating organizations, work with researchers to gather data, and prepare required forms and reports for grant compliance, as well as participate on data analysis project teams to support the analyzing, aggregating and reporting on information for RPC program partners.

The successful candidate must possess strong writing skills, prepare recommendations, and perform research, planning and technical analysis for projects. Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree in urban planning, business administration, public administration, or a related field is required and one to three years of community development administrative experience is preferred.

Internship Opportunities

R1PC is currently offering internships for qualified students eager to earn hands-on experience in the various aspects of regional planning and research for a government organization. Ideal candidates will possess a professional work ethic and be enthusiastic to gain new knowledge. Internship opportunities include:

Communications Intern to assist marketing and communications efforts of the agency.

Data Management Intern to assist with improving how R1PC creates, organizes, maintains, documents, and shares planning and research data.

Planning Intern to assist with ongoing land use, environmental, and transportation planning, as well as economic development and community development efforts.

For the full job descriptions, please visit <http://r1planning.org/employment-opportunities>.

TO APPLY:

Please submit cover letter, resume and three professional references by applying online at www.rockfordil.gov.

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