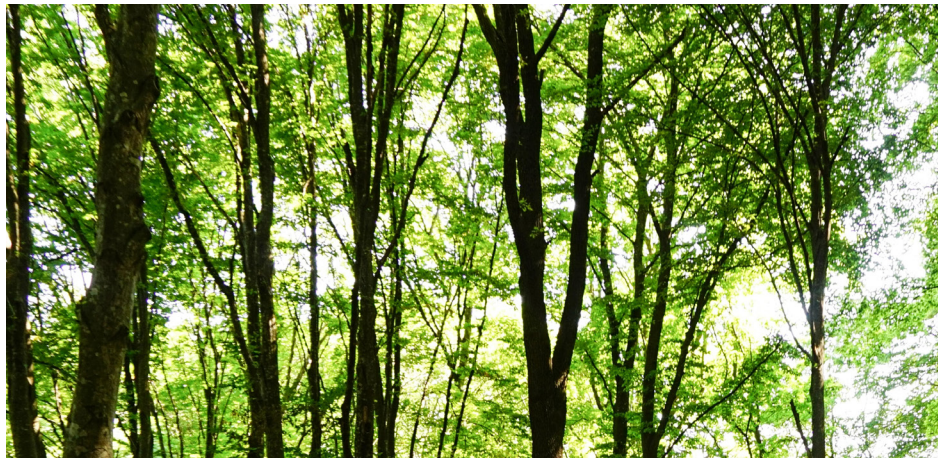


2021 Greenways:

A Greenways Plan for
Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties



Greenways:

A Green Infrastructure Plan for Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties

Final Report
April 2021

This document has been prepared by the Region 1 Planning Council in collaboration with its member agencies, partnership organizations, and local stakeholders.

This report was prepared in cooperation with the following:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration
Illinois Department of Transportation

The contents, views, policies, and conclusions expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the above agencies.



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Region 1 Planning Council

Region 1 Planning Council (RPC) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the Rockford Region, coordinating transportation planning and programming. By Federal Law, urbanized areas (over 50,000 designated by the U.S. Census Bureau) are required to have an organization that plans and coordinates decisions regarding the area's transportation systems. RPC is empowered and governed by a Cooperative Agreement that has been adopted by the Cities of Rockford, Belvidere, Loves Park, Village of Machesney Park, the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD), the Counties of Boone and Winnebago and the State of Illinois acting through the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

During the past several decades, there has been a growing awareness of the need to have a more thorough discussion and understanding of the relationship between the transportation planning process, the impacts of highway programming and construction, and environmental protection. The knowledge and understanding between the complexities of the natural environment and the built environment is a continuous process. The connection between these two regional planning issues has developed new sets of best practices, and many new innovative design standards have been developed as a result of new ways of thinking.

History has clearly demonstrated that the quality of life and the sustainability of human settlements is dependent on the stewardship of natural resources. In response to this issue, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are developing strategies to include conservation in the area's overall transportation planning process and the development process of the area's long-range transportation plan (LRTP).

Executive Summary

The 2021 Greenways Plan and Map was led by MPO staff members under the direction and supervision of the Greenways Working Group, RPC Environmental Committee, and the MPO Technical and Policy Committees. The resulting recommendations have been developed to achieve the region's vision for greenways. The community strongly urges leaders to preserve and promote the natural assets and guide future planning initiatives and investments in the region's green infrastructure network.

Allowing residents access to an interconnected system of greenways, trails, on and off-street bike facilities, parks and preserves, rivers, streams and lakes, will make the region more attractive to visitors and residents alike. These intrinsically valuable resources provide opportunities for bird watchers, cyclists, kayakers, equestrians, cross-country skiers, and all other outdoor enthusiasts. Some greenway lands are public, private, or a combination of the two. The region's greenways connect forests, parks, open spaces, water resources, and even communities. They also offer lifelong learning opportunities for residents by

enhancing recreational, cultural, and historic assets. Greenways and shared-use paths can enhance local property values and increase the attractiveness of the communities they are located in.

Equally important are the increased chances for local businesses to capitalize on the economic and tourism development potential that greenways and share-use paths can foster. Investment in green space can conserve, manage, protect, and even restore our natural landscapes and sensitive ecosystems through increased public awareness and public-private partnership development.

Natural corridor protection and riverbank stabilization can manage stormwater capture and naturally filter run-off water before it returns to the region's waterways and aquifers, thereby improving water quality, reducing erosion, and diminishing the severity and frequency of flood events. After the initial investments are made, the ecological benefits greenways provide to the region are free of charge, long lasting, and easy to maintain.

This greenways plan is also a tool for land conservation organizations to protect property through purchase, donation, or grant funds. This plan can be utilized by conservation and recreation organizations, land owners, public agencies, private sector companies, and the dedicated community members who support the 2021 Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago County Greenways Plan and Map.

Main Purpose and Key Objectives

The purpose of the 2021 Greenways Plan and Map is to promote a regional greenway network that protects natural and cultural resources in a manner which supports equal access to green space; provides alternative forms of transportation and recreational benefits; enhances environmental and scenic qualities; and stimulates sustainable, equitable economic development.

This plan and map will serve as a comprehensive regional planning tool that will help leverage and secure additional funds for government agencies, nonprofits, and others involved in transportation and land use planning, sustainability initiatives, natural areas preservation, and recreation.

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Section 1: Introduction

A Region of Four Rivers

The Greater Rockford Region encompasses the tri-county area of Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. As this area is extremely rich in natural habitats and species diversity, the need for natural resource conservation exists. The Rockford Region is at the confluence of four major river systems in Northern Illinois and includes several important cold-water streams. Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties have a long history of joint planning for natural resource protection. Region 1 Planning Council (RPC) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for regionally coordinated transportation planning. The planning jurisdiction of the MPO is known as the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) and consists of the urbanized areas of Boone and Winnebago Counties and the northeastern of Ogle County. The study area for this plan covers the entirety of all three counties. The study area includes three Natural Divisions of Illinois and three Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA). Natural Divisions are an important tool for recognizing biological variation across Illinois and organizing regional needs, objectives, and strategies of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan. COA's are priority areas for conserving Illinois' Species in Greatest Need of Conservation (SGNC).

The Rockford Region lies at the boundary of all three Natural Divisions: the Northeastern Morainal Division, the Rock River Hill Country Division, and the Grand Prairie Division. The Rockford Metropolitan Area is included in the Sugar-Pecatonica Rivers COA, the Kishwaukee River COA, and the Rock River COA. The four rivers, which form the framework for the natural resource

plans for the area, are the Sugar, Pecatonica, Kishwaukee (North, South and Main Branches), and the largest and most central, the Rock River. These are all highly valued natural and recreational resources, and the Sugar and Kishwaukee Rivers are biologically significant streams with rich fish and mussel populations. Kinnikinnick, Beaver, Coon, Raccoon, Mosquito, Piscasaw, and Kilbuck Creeks are tributaries to the four rivers, and provide high quality habitat for many species of wildlife in greatest need of conservation, including healthy populations of mussels and cold-water species like Mottled Sculpin. Beaver Creek, a tributary of the Kishwaukee River, is prized as a Biologically Significant Class "A" Stream, denoting the highest order of biodiversity.

RPC has been a leader in greenways planning for the region, updating the Boone and Winnebago Greenways Map for the last 2015 plan. The Greenways Plan and Map is now in its fifth iteration, starting with the first edition in 1997, and the last update in 2015. The 2015 Greenways Map was the first to have an accompanying written plan, which has been updated in this most recent iteration. This document has incorporated the environmental preservation and conservation strategies outlined in the 2015 Boone and Winnebago County Greenways Plan, as well as provided additional recommendations.

Efforts over the past few decades to acquire land for parks, forest preserves, and conservation areas in the region have resulted in land being preserved along the four rivers for public recreation, active transportation, and wildlife protection. The Rockford (RPD) and Belvidere Park Districts (BPD) own several parks along the Rock and Kishwaukee Rivers, which provide an important habitat for wildlife. These two organizations, along with the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County (FPWC), Byron Forest Preserve District (BFPD), Natural Land Institute (NLI), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) own thousands of acres of important wildlife habitat in the region.

The Rock River is a major corridor for migratory waterfowl and neo-tropical birds, while the east-west flowing Pecatonica and Kishwaukee Rivers provide vital stop-over habitat for migrating birds. The extensive forests and wetlands in the Pecatonica River valley have been recognized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, and IDNR as important habitat for migratory birds. Additionally, groundwater is the sole source of drinking water for the region, and provides base flow to the rivers, creeks, and wetlands. A Regional Groundwater Protection Committee has been established by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to carry out joint planning efforts in Winnebago and Boone Counties to protect groundwater. RPC



Rock River, Rockford, IL

Source: Aaron Frey

supports the efforts of this organization and will continue working together in the future.

There are many designated Illinois Nature Preserves within the Region, permanently protecting exceptional plant and animal communities and other unique features. Additionally, the numerous preserves and community parks owned by key conservation and public agencies in the region offer residents and visitors robust recreational opportunities.

The Rockford Region is made up of many unique natural resources that provide a range of ecosystem benefits and services, making it difficult to put an exact dollar value on them. Therefore, it is also important to note the cultural and intrinsic value they provide, and the need to protect these natural resources for future generations to enjoy.

Greenways Planning Initiatives

2021 Greenways Plan

The Greenways Plan is an interconnected, region-wide network of linear open spaces that provide many benefits to northern Illinois: environmental, recreational, economic, aesthetic, and transportation via shared-use paths. Thus, the regional greenways network is a critical component of the “green” corridor infrastructure.

To protect the region’s rich natural heritage, a group of partner agencies and community organizations coordinated again to create *Greenways 2021: A Greenways Plan for Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties* (“Greenways Plan”). The Greenways Working Group was comprised of a representative from each of the major environmental planning and advocacy groups in our region, as well as citizens with environmental and planning backgrounds. Over the course of the last six months, the Greenways Working Group officially met 3 times via Zoom and at the RPC offices, located at 127 North Wyman Street in downtown Rockford. Additionally, RPC staff gave presentations to the Environmental, Policy, and Technical Committees in order to inform others of the greenways planning process and what the final product would look like. These presentations involved sending the draft plan and map ahead of time, with a brief presentation on important items to discuss. These presentations allowed members of key agencies in Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties the opportunity to include their feedback. Other useful information came in the form of property additions or changes in property ownership that we were able to update in Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Additionally, these meetings allowed for the correct alignment of new or proposed trails.

Now in its fifth iteration, the Greenways Plan has laid the foundation for natural areas protection, balanced growth, and expanded transportation choices. The plan has led to the successful receipt of many grants within the region; from acquiring and restoring prime natural habitat, to connecting and adding shared-use path mileage. Additionally, the plan has close linkages to broader community planning initiatives, such as promoting smart growth by protecting the region’s rich natural resources

while still encouraging the investment and development in existing communities through adaptive reuse of buildings and in-fill development.

The development of this plan provided several opportunities for local and state organizations, along with private organizations and individuals, to participate in the planning effort and have discussions on the relationships between environmental resources and growth management. The planning process provides a basis for agencies involved with transportation, water quality, stormwater and floodwater management, parklands, forest preserves, and other environmental and conservation programs to address planning coordination. Throughout the development effort, the interagency coordination between RPC and the environmental community remained strong.

Planning Process

The 2021 Greenways Plan began with data collection and analysis in September 2020. This data collection process involved collecting updated demographic, economic, and land use trends. The new data was reviewed and added to the 2015 Greenways Plan. The MPO convened the Greenways Working Group in October of 2020. The working group provided important feedback on the goals and objectives, map design, and overall feedback on the draft plan. The Greenways Plan and Map draft was released for public and RPC committee review from January to February, 2021. The MPO revised the documents based on feedback collected during this period, and the plan was formally adopted in Spring 2021.

History of Greenways Planning

The vision for regional greenways plans throughout Illinois was first conceived during the Governor’s Workshop on Greenways and Trails held in Springfield in May 1995, launched by then Governor Edgar and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The workshop led to the creation of a program designed to “encourage and facilitate comprehensive, cooperative, and coordinated planning to protect high-priority greenways and, where appropriate, provide public access by developing trails... protecting greenways and developing trails requires cooperation and coordination amongst several jurisdictions.”ⁱ

The IDNR created a grant program to provide financial assistance for the creation of regional greenways plans. Conditions for successful grant approval included:

- An active and organized coalition of agencies and organizations involved in providing and using greenways and trails.
- Letters or resolutions of endorsement for the IDNR-assisted plan from a majority of the local units of governments in the planning area.

Funded plans were required to:

- Explicitly consider bike trail projects;
- Identify priority greenway and trail projects;
- Include an action plan identifying sequential activities and responsible parties; and
- Consider potential linkages to state sites and trails, greenway and trail initiatives of statewide significance, and priority greenways and trails in neighboring communities, counties, and metro areas.

A group of local agency staff and community citizens were convened in 1996 to discuss developing a greenways plan for the Rockford Region. Participants considered: “Does the region need a greenways plan? Who would facilitate the plan? How would this plan be created? Once it was created, how would it be shared with the region?” The answer was a resounding yes, the region should have a greenways plan. The group successfully received funding from the IDNR to develop a greenways map and plan document and began a collaborative effort to identify existing trails and open space and identify future linkages to the system.

The purpose of the plan was to:

- Create a vision of a regional greenway network and provide a framework for coordinated greenway and trail preservation and development;
- Assist implementing and funding agencies in allocating resources in support of the plan;
- Initiate a continuing forum for discussion and resolution of greenway issues among governmental jurisdictions and the private sector;
- Provide a basis for coordinating transportation, water quality, storm and flood water, and other programs with existing and proposed greenways to advance greenway preservation and reduce conflicts with other development activities; and
- Increase the level of understanding regarding the importance and value of greenways and encourage stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

After an extensive public engagement process, the finalized map was published in December 1997.

A second edition of the map was produced in 2004 with help from a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, funding from the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for printing, and contributions from the participating agencies. The second edition incorporated updated additions to the network and new inclusions in mapping criteria.

The third revision of the Greenways Plan was completed in 2011. Primary development of the plan was brought under the responsibility of the MPO with assistance from the region’s resource agencies in order to better integrate transportation and environmental planning initiatives. The MPO received special

funding from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to:

- Update the map;
- Develop the Greenways Plan as an environmental mitigation tool;
- Promote healthy communities;
- Link transportation, the built environment and public health outcomes; and
- Encourage and expand active transportation options.

Additionally, the 2011 edition was the first time the map was developed in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), making the data shown on the map available to the partner agencies to visualize and analyze digitally so as to better understand the interrelated relationships, patterns, and trends of the green infrastructure network. The initial GIS work and data from Winnebago County Geographic Information Systems (WinGIS) was provided by a consultant in Chicago who originally designed the map. The reverse side of the 2011 Boone and Winnebago County Greenways Map was completed by Winnebago County Forest Preserve staff members, now named the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County.

In 2015, the Greenways Map was updated again. This was the first map to have an accompanying plan included. The plan had its own landing page on WinGIS’s website, with links to a downloadable PDF version.



RPC Environmental Committee

Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of the 2021 Greenways Plan and Map is to promote a regional greenway network that protects natural and cultural resources in a manner which supports equal access to green space; provides alternative forms of transportation and recreational benefits; enhances environmental and scenic qualities; and stimulates sustainable, equitable economic development.

This plan and map will serve as a comprehensive regional planning tool that will help leverage and secure additional funds for government agencies, nonprofits, and others involved in transportation and land use planning, sustainability initiatives, natural areas preservation, and recreation.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Protect the natural and cultural resources in the region for all.

Objective 1.1: Perform continued natural resource inventory updates on a regular and planned basis.

Objective 1.2: Help coordinate land acquisition plans among conservation and land management agencies in an effort to expand corridor connectivity in a manner that increases equitable access to greenspace in underserved populations.

Objective 1.3: Promote and support habitat restoration and invasive species management in the greenways corridors.

Objective 1.4: Protect streambanks and riparian lands in order to prevent erosion, preserve agricultural topsoil fertility, prevent surface and ground water issues, and increase waterway connectivity.

Objective 1.5: Create a cultural resources inventory by coordinating with local historic preservation and indigenous groups to prioritize protection and conservation, including land acknowledgement best practices where applicable.

Goal 2: Provide recreational benefits and safe, convenient, and comfortable alternative transportation options.

Objective 2.1: Increase connectivity of existing trail systems and shared-use path networks through the maintenance of updated inventories and regional collaboration, with the aim to specifically create more linkages between underserved communities and workplaces, grocery stores, places of worship, and other amenities and resources.

Objective 2.2: Coordinate bicycle and pedestrian planning at all levels of government in an effort to reduce motor and pedestrian conflicts while increasing public safety and equal access to parks and other natural areas.

Objective 2.3: Connect transit opportunities to greenway trails and paths to support a multi-modal transportation network that decreases reliance on personal vehicles, reduces congestion, and improves air quality.

Objective 2.4: Invest in pedestrian facilities and infrastructure (i.e. sidewalks) to reduce gaps in the greenway network, maintain continuity, and promote comfortable ease of access.

Objective 2.5: Encourage wayfinding and educational signage along paths and trails to assist in the navigation and understanding of the region's natural ecosystems and greenways.

Goal 3: Enhance the environmental and scenic qualities of the greenways in a manner relevant to the community.

Objective 3.1: Foster a more resilient and connected community through the preservation of scenic landscapes designated by the community.

Objective 3.2: Enhance the ecosystem service function of existing parks, recreation areas, and trails to increase the resiliency of the region.

Objective 3.3: Promote the use of green infrastructure practices in transportation rights-of-way.

Objective 3.4: Increase community partnership in the greenways planning process, co-working with communities to develop greenway visions that reflect the character and needs of their neighborhood and aligns with regional sustainability goals.

Goal 4: Stimulate equitable economic development.

Objective 4.1: Help agencies efficiently allocate resources for the development of natural areas and trails.

Objective 4.2: Continue to provide a forum for discussion among governmental jurisdictions and the private sector for the planning and development of a greenways system, including the integration of greenways into planning and ordinances.

Objective 4.3: Provide a strategic framework for the creation of an interconnected greenways system that contributes to balancing natural areas with land use development, transportation infrastructure, and environmental stressors due to climate change.

Objective 4.4: Promote greenways and trails as a hub for regional eco-tourism and provide incentives for outdoor recreational business development.

Goal 5: Increase education and awareness regarding the importance and value of greenways and encourage the stewardship of natural cultural resources.

Objective 5.1: Use the greenways map as an educational tool for schools and educational programs to increase local knowledge of and love for natural spaces.

Objective 5.2: Partner with local tourism bureaus and community organizations to increase awareness of the greenways and their benefits for both visitors and residents, as well as implement programs, events, and activities that encourage greenway use.

Objective 5.3: Obtain funding to perform an analysis of who visits the region's parks, trails, and forest preserves.

Section 2: Demographic and Economic Characteristics

Understanding a region's demographic characteristics, population, and housing trends is important to greenways planning. Using projected trends allows planners and policy makers to know where the population and infrastructure currently is, and where it is most likely to occur in the future. Greenways planning efforts assist in furthering natural resource protection and preservation while simultaneously ensuring new development occurs in a sustainable and efficient manner.

Population

Table 2-1 shows the population growth for the three-county region from 2010 to 2018 as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau (USCB).

Between 2010 and 2018, the region's population decreased by 2.5 percent. Ogle County saw the largest population loss at 4.2 percent. Boone County was the only county in the region to experience population growth over the eight-year period, increasing just 0.07 percent. According to the Decennial Census, Boone County had experienced a population increase of 113 percent between 1970 and 2010, with much of the growth having occurred after 1990. As a result, Boone County was ranked as the fifth fastest growing county in Illinois during this time frame. However, in more recent years there has been a decline in growth rates. In fact, according to the USCB's American Community Survey (ACS) and Population Estimates, the Boone County population declined by 0.1 percent from 2018 to 2019. In contrast, Winnebago County's population growth, while steady, increased by only 20 percent during the 1970 to 2010 timeframe. Recently, Winnebago County experienced a 1.3 percent decline in population from 2018 to 2019. While Ogle saw the largest declines in 2015 and 2018, from 2018 to 2019 their population decreased by only 0.6 percent. The region also decreased by 1.1 percent during this time.

According to the Center for Illinois Politics, Illinois is one of four states projected to have a negative population growth between the 2010 Decennial Census and the 2020 Decennial Census. The last time Illinois saw an increase in statewide population was in 2013 when the population reached almost 12.9 million people. Since 2014, the population has dropped every year and is currently projected to be around 12.65 million, showing a loss of nearly 250,000 or 1.8 percent over the last seven years. Some reasons stated for Illinoisans leaving include high taxes, corruption, and climate.ⁱ

The 2010 Census data shows that just under 75 percent of the region's population lives within an incorporated municipality. Winnebago County is home to 73 percent of the region's population. The City of Rockford, with 147,881 residents

(almost 40 percent of the region's total population) is the largest community within the region. The City of Belvidere has 25,319 residents, closely trailed by both the City of Loves Park (24,043) and the Village of Machesney Park (22,906) in size. Unincorporated totals consist of adding together populations of every town, village, and city in each county, and then subtracting that number from the county's total population. The Chief Executive Office for the county of Los Angeles describes unincorporated areas as "... those communities and areas that are outside the jurisdictional boundaries of incorporated cities."ⁱⁱ

Table 2-2 provides a detailed breakdown of the 2018 population totals from the U.S. Census Bureau and Data USA by municipality and unincorporated areas of the county.



Main Street in Downtown Rockford, IL

Table 2-1. Population Data by County 2010-2018

Population	2010	2015	2018	Change 2010-2018
Winnebago County	293,972	290,439	286,174	-7,798
% Change	-	-1.2%	-1.5%	-2.7%
Boone County	53,567	53,851	53,606	39
% Change	-	0.5%	-0.5%	0.07%
Ogle County	53,578	52,397	51,328	-2,250
% Change	-	-2.2%	-2.0%	-4.2%
Regional Total	401,117	396,687	391,108	-10,009
% Change	-	-1.1%	-1.4%	-2.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-2. Population by Jurisdiction 2018

Jurisdiction	Population	% of Total
Rockford	147,881	37.81%
Unincorporated Winnebago County	68,177	17.43%
Belvidere	25,319	6.47%
Loves Park	24,043	6.15%
Machesney Park	22,906	5.86%
Unincorporated Boone County	20,385	5.21%
Unincorporated Ogle County	16,498	4.22%
Rochelle	14,289	3.65%
Roscoe	10,575	2.70%
Poplar Grove	5,154	1.32%
Pecatonica	4,211	1.08%
Oregon	3,683	0.94%
Byron	3,608	0.92%
Winnebago	3,425	0.88%
Cherry Valley	2,895	0.74%
Mount Morris	2,841	0.73%
Davis Junction	2,508	0.64%
Polo	2,168	0.55%
Forreston	1,651	0.42%
Capron	1,483	0.38%
Durand	1,379	0.35%
Hillcrest	1,265	0.32%
Stillman Valley	1,091	0.28%
Timberlane	1,044	0.27%
New Milford	682	0.17%
Creston	665	0.17%
Leaf River	548	0.14%
Monroe Center	402	0.10%
Caledonia	221	0.06%
Adeline	111	0.03%
Total	391,108	99.99%
Winnebago County	286,174	73.17%
Boone County	53,606	13.71%
Ogle County	51,328	13.12%
Total	391,108	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age, Race, and Disability

The age distribution of a population is an important factor in planning for recreational greenways and open spaces. Activity needs and interests change as people advance through different life stages. For example, children enjoy playgrounds and ball fields, while older adults may be more interested in passive recreational activities and low-impact exercise. Mobility and accessibility can also be barriers to particular groups. Identifying future population trends, such as age, can help the region invest in improving recreational opportunities and accessibility to particular areas and locations. Table 2-3 shows the age distribution for the region from 2010 and 2018¹. For every county, as well as the regional

¹ Since the 2010 USCB ACS data did not include population numbers, just percentages, RPC decided to only include percentages for both years as to limit

total, the two youngest age cohorts (19 and under, and 20 to 39) decreased in population over the eight-year period, while the two oldest age cohorts (40 to 69, and 70 and over) increased. In Ogle County, the 20-39 age cohort increased very slightly. All four median ages have also increased.

The majority of residents (13.3 percent) in the region are White, as of 2018. White Alone saw a decrease between 2010 and 2018 in all three counties – dropping a total of 7 percent across the region. The only other race or ethnic group to see a decline is Black or African American alone for Boone County, with a decrease of 13.1 percent. Race and Ethnicity data is detailed in Table 2-7.

The U.S. Census Bureau records 51,770 individuals in the region had a disability in 2018. Table 2-4 provides the number of individuals with disabilities in each county in the region in 2015 and 2018. Although Ogle County has a smaller total population in 2015 and 2018 compared to Boone County, Ogle County has a higher portion of individuals with a disability. However, Ogle County is the only county to experience a decrease in the number of individuals with a disability between the two years. It is important to consider all groups when planning greenways to support inclusivity and accessibility of natural areas.

Race

All other races combined is defined as the following races combined: American Indian and Alaska Native Alone, Asian Alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone, Some Other Race Alone, and Two or More Races.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

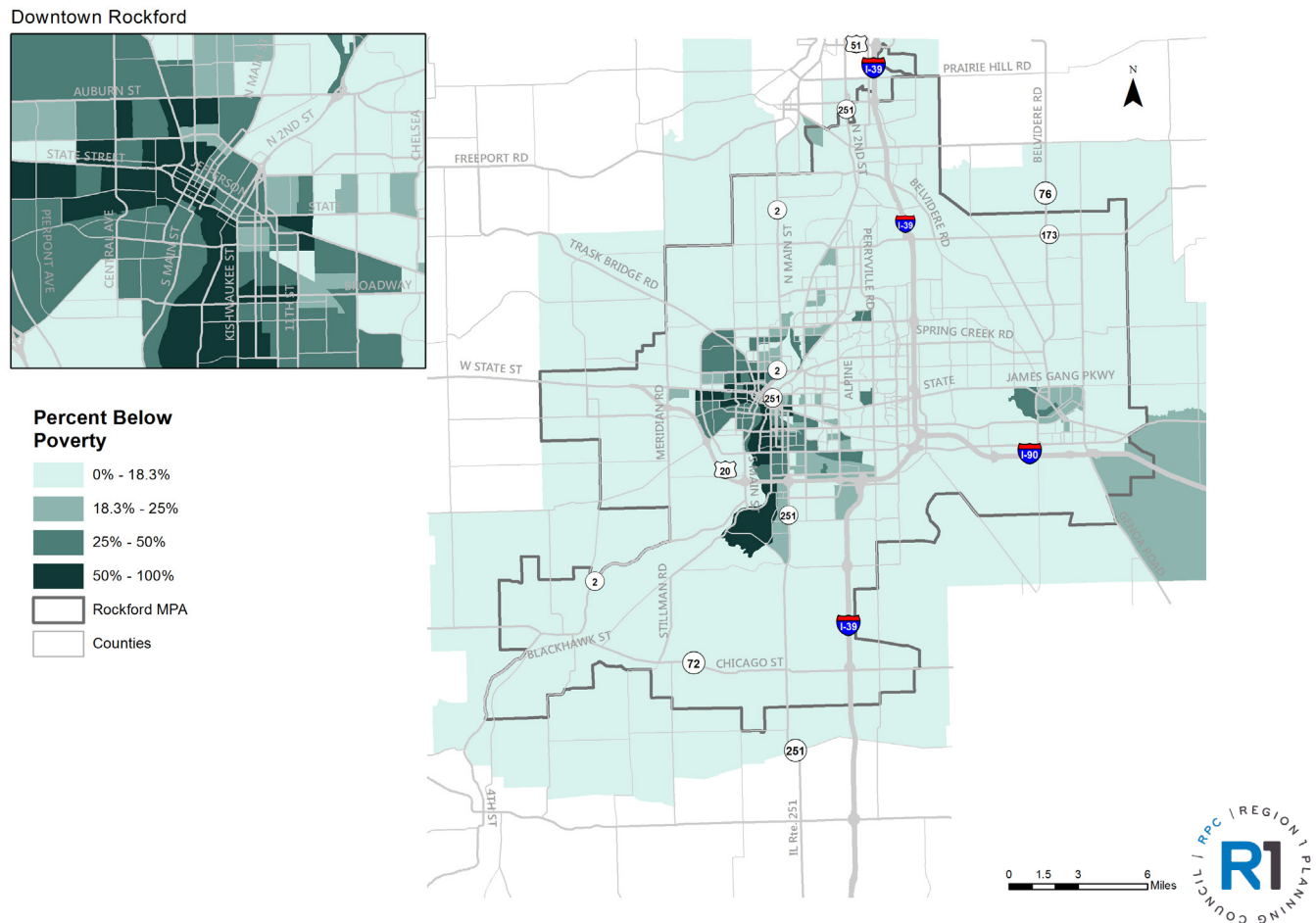
Poverty

The USCB defines poverty as a family's or individual's threshold, or need, being higher than their income. This official definition uses pre-tax money income and does not take capital gains or losses, noncash benefits, or tax credits into consideration.ⁱⁱⁱ

Since 2015, overall poverty has decreased by 7.4 percent in the three-county region. Winnebago County is the only county to see a decline in every single category over the three-year time frame, with their impoverished population decreasing by 8.2 percent. Boone County is the only county to have the population below poverty level increase, by 0.03 percent. Ogle County has the highest decrease in population 25 years and over below poverty level at 10.5 percent. Additionally, Boone County, Ogle County, and the regional total saw increases in population below poverty level for the two highest educational statuses - Some college, Associate's degree, and Bachelor's degree or higher - but decreases for the two lowest ones – Less than high school graduate and High school graduate (includes equivalency). As more people in the U.S. attain college degrees, competition for jobs post-college will increase.

the margin of error when calculating population numbers from the percentages, and the total populations that are the sum of those population numbers. However, there is still a ±0.1-0.6 percent margin of error for each USCB age category. To simplify the data table, RPC combined some of those age categories. For example, the 19 and under interval is made up of USCB ACS data from four intervals: under 5 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, and 15-19 years.

Figure 2-1. Poverty Levels in Rockford, IL (2018)



Employment

Employment tends to influence population and housing growth within a region as well. A steady increase in employment is expected to contribute to population growth; a decrease in employment often slows population growth and housing developments. Employable populations, as well as labor force participation and employment/population ratios within the region between 2010 and 2018 are displayed in Table 2-6.

Both Winnebago and Ogle Counties experienced a decrease in workers over 16 years old as well as total population over 16 years from 2010 to 2018. Contrastingly, Boone County saw an increase in both numbers, and the region's number of workers over 16 years grew slightly while their population over 16 years declined. Labor force participation rate also decreased for every county, with Ogle County being the highest, as they experienced the largest decrease in workers. While the region saw an overall decline in labor force participation, the employment to population ratio actually increased slightly due to growth in Winnebago and Boone Counties.

Households

Trends in the number of households provide an important indicator for various planning elements in the region. An increase in the number of households influences the conversion of greenfields

and rural land into residential developments and could result in a need for additional public services and infrastructure.

Table 2-5 provides a detailed breakdown of household trends from 2010, 2015, and 2018 for the region according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Overall, the number of household units in the region increased by 0.7 percent during this time. In fact, the number of households in the region grew at a positive rate while the population for the same time period declined. According to The Urban Institute, this could be due to changes in household composition, signifying a growth in smaller households and a resulting increase in demand for smaller units. Factors such as age, race, and income also influence incoming and outgoing populations. However, these trends are not in line with national trends, which show an increase in household units as well as the number of persons per household.^{iv} Boone County experienced the highest rate of household growth, more than double Ogle County's rate and over six times Winnebago County's during this eight-year time period. According to the Decennial Census, Boone County also saw an increase of 136 percent in household units between 1970 and 2010.

Table 2-3. Age Distribution Population Data 2018

Age	Boone County % of Total	Ogle County % of Total	Winnebago County % of Total	Regional Total % of Total
19 and Under	28.8%	25.0%	25.9%	26.6%
20 to 39	23.2%	22.2%	24.5%	23.3%
40 to 69	37.6%	40.5%	38.1%	38.7%
70 and Over	10.3%	12.2%	11.3%	11.3%
All Ages	99.9%	99.9%	99.8%	99.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-4. Population with Disability Data 2015-2018

Population with Disability	Number (2015)	Number (2018)	Number (Change 2015-2018)	Percent (Change 2015-2018)
Winnebago County	37,954	39,535	1,581	4.2%
Boone County	5,202	6,055	853	16.4%
Ogle County	6,194	6,180	-14	-0.2%
Regional Total	49,350	51,770	2,420	4.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-5. Household Data 2010-2018

Households	2010	2015	2018	Change (2010-2018)
Winnebago County	125,301	125,720	125,772	471
Change	-	0.3%	0.04%	0.4%
Boone County	19,581	19,968	20,065	484
Change	-	2.0%	0.5%	2.5%
Ogle County	22,386	22,583	22,660	274
Change	-	0.9%	0.3%	1.2%
Regional Total	167,268	168,271	168,498	1,230
Change	-	0.6%	0.1%	0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-6. Employment Data 2010-2018

Winnebago County: Employment Status	2010	2015	2018	Change 2010-2018 (#)	Change 2010-2018 (%)
Workers 16 Years and Over	130,501	128,708	130,357	-144	-0.1%
Population 16 Years and Over	228,414	228,451	226,507	-1,907	-0.8%
Labor Force Participation Rate	65.1%	64.9%	64.5%	-	-
Employment/Population Ratio	58.5%	57.4%	58.6%	-	-
Boone County: Employment Status	2010	2015	2018	Change 2010-2018 (#)	Change 2010-2018 (%)
Workers 16 Years and Over	23,346	24,419	25,386	2,040	8.7%
Population 16 Years and Over	39,700	41,209	41,526	1,826	4.6%
Labor Force Participation Rate	66.8%	66.4%	66.6%	-	-
Employment/Population Ratio	60.1%	60.0%	62.0%	-	-
Ogle County: Employment Status	2010	2015	2018	Change 2010-2018 (#)	Change 2010-2018 (%)
Workers 16 Years and Over	25,319	24,611	24,505	-814	-3.2%
Population 16 Years and Over	41,920	41,625	41,113	-807	-1.9%
Labor Force Participation Rate	68.1%	65.3%	64.3%	-	-
Employment/Population Ratio	61.9%	60.0%	60.5%	-	-
Regional Total: Employment Status	2010	2015	2018	Change 2010-2018 (#)	Change 2010-2018 (%)
Workers 16 Years and Over	179,166	177,738	180,248	1,082	0.6%
Population 16 Years and Over	310,034	311,285	309,146	-888	-0.3%
Labor Force Participation Rate (Average)	66.7%	65.5%	65.1%	-	-
Employment/Population Ratio (Average)	60.2%	59.1%	60.4%	-	-

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-7. Race and Ethnicity Data 2010-2018

Winnebago County: Race/Ethnic Group	Number (2010)	% of Total (2010)	Number (2018)	% of Total (2018)	Number (Change 2010 - 2018)	% (Change 2010-2018)
Hispanic or Latino	30,455	10.4%	35,640	12.5%	5,185	17.0%
White Alone	216,266	73.6%	199,283	69.6%	-16,983	-7.9%
Black or African American Alone	34,946	11.9%	35,871	12.5%	925	2.6%
All Other Races Combined	12,305	4.1%	15,380	5.4%	3,075	25.0%
All Races	293,972	100.0%	286,174	100.0%	-7,798	-2.7%

Boone County: Race/Ethnic Group	Number (2010)	% of Total (2010)	Number (2018)	% of Total (2018)	Number (Change 2010 - 2018)	% (Change 2010-2018)
Hispanic or Latino	10,407	19.4%	11,459	21.4%	1,052	10.1%
White Alone	40,723	76.0%	39,370	73.4%	-1,353	-3.3%
Black or African American Alone	1,248	2.3%	1,084	2.0%	-164	-13.1%
All Other Races Combined	1,189	2.2%	1,693	3.2%	504	42.4%
All Races	53,567	99.9%	53,606	100.0%	39	0.07%

Ogle County: Race/Ethnic Group	Number (2010)	% of Total (2010)	Number (2018)	% of Total (2018)	Number (Change 2010 - 2018)	% (Change 2010-2018)
Hispanic or Latino	4,502	8.4%	5,108	10.0%	606	13.5%
White Alone	47,791	89.2%	44,681	87.0%	-3,110	-6.5%
Black or African American Alone	267	0.5%	497	1.0%	230	86.1%
All Other Races Combined	1,018	1.9%	1,042	2.0%	24	2.4%
All Races	53,578	100.0%	51,328	100.0%	-2,250	-4.2%

Regional Total: Race/Ethnic Group	Number (2010)	% of Total (2010)	Number (2018)	% of Total (2018)	Number (Change 2010 - 2018)	% (Change 2010-2018)
Hispanic or Latino	45,364	11.3%	52,207	13.3%	6,843	15.1%
White Alone	304,780	76.0%	283,334	72.4%	-21,446	-7.0%
Black or African American Alone	36,461	9.1%	37,452	9.6%	991	2.7%
All Other Races Combined	14,512	3.6%	18,115	4.6%	3,603	24.8%
All Races	401,117	100.0%	391,108	99.9%	-10,009	-2.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-8. Poverty Status Data 2015-2018

Winnebago County: Poverty Status	# (2015)	% of Total (2015)	# (2018)	% of Total (2018)	# (Change 2015-2018)	% (Change 2015-2018)
Below Poverty Level	47,851	16.8%	43,932	15.6%	-3,919	-8.2%
Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined	285,425	100.0%	280,982	100.0%	-4,443	-1.6%
Educational Attainment	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	Number	%
Less Than High School Graduate	6,829	2.4%	5,926	2.1%	-903	-13.2%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	8,854	3.1%	8,139	2.9%	-715	-8.1%
Some College, Associate's Degree	7,093	2.5%	6,318	2.2%	-775	-10.9%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1,889	0.7%	1,845	0.7%	-44	-2.3%
Population 25 Years and Over	24,665	8.6%	22,228	7.9%	-2,437	-9.9%
Boone County: Poverty Status	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	%
Below Poverty Level	5,841	10.9%	5,843	11.0%	2	0.03%
Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined	53,389	100.0%	53,089	100.0%	-300	-0.6%
Educational Attainment	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	#	%
Less Than High School Graduate	1,003	1.9%	814	1.5%	-189	-18.8%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	1,356	2.5%	1,274	2.4%	-82	-6.0%
Some College, Associate's Degree	777	1.5%	778	1.5%	1	0.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	162	0.3%	243	0.5%	81	50%
Population 25 Years and Over	3,298	6.2%	3,109	5.9%	-189	-5.7%
Ogle County: Poverty Status	# (2015)	% of Total (2015)	# (2018)	% of Total (2018)	# (Change 2015-2018)	% (Change 2015-2018)
Below Poverty Level	5,477	10.6%	4,998	9.9%	-479	-8.7%
Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined	51,715	100.0%	50,482	100.0%	-1,233	-2.4%
Educational Attainment	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	#	%
Less Than High School Graduate	604	1.2%	502	1.0%	-102	-16.9%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	1,325	2.6%	1,072	2.1%	-253	-19.1%
Some College, Associate's Degree	934	1.8%	936	1.9%	2	0.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	165	0.3%	201	0.4%	36	21.8%
Population 25 Years and Over	3,028	5.6%	2,711	5.4%	-317	-10.5%
Regional Total: Poverty Status	# (2015)	% of Total (2015)	# (2018)	% of Total (2018)	# (Change 2015-2018)	% (Change 2015-2018)
Below Poverty Level	59,169	15.2%	54,773	14.2%	-4,396	-7.4%
Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined	390,529	100.0%	384,553	100.0%	-5,976	-1.5%
Educational Attainment	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	# Below Poverty Level	% of Total	#	%
Less Than High School Graduate	8,436	2.2%	7,242	1.9%	-1,194	-14.2%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	11,535	3.0%	10,485	2.7%	-1,050	-9.1%
Some College, Associate's Degree	8,804	2.3%	9,032	2.3%	228	2.6%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	2,216	0.6%	2,289	0.6%	73	3.3%
Population 25 Years and Over	30,991	7.9%	28,048	7.3%	-2,943	-9.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Section 3: Local Infrastructure

Transportation Network

A well-connected and robust transportation network is an essential part of regional mobility. While greenways are an important asset to residents and visitors, necessary transportation infrastructure and services must be in place to ensure residents can equitably access the greenway and trail systems.

To ensure this, a well-constructed transportation network that provides connectivity to greenways and natural areas through varying modes of transportation needs to be in place. Additionally, increased connectivity and more diverse transportation systems decrease roadway congestion, reduce travel times, and offer the chance for safe and reliable alternative modes of transport. Greenway networks that are integrated with a multi-modal transportation system can promote environmental conservation, economic development, healthy lifestyles, and social equity. Below are descriptions of the components that contribute to the regional transportation network and its relationship to the region's greenway network.

Roadways

Roadways are the primary means of travel for residents and tourists in the Rockford Region. The Federal Functional Classification splits roadways into three categories: Arterial, Collector, and Local

Arterials provide the highest level of mobility, local roads provide mostly land access, and collectors have a balanced combination of both. Planners can use the classification to identify accessible locations for new greenways.

One of the region's greatest assets is its location within the national highway system. Winnebago County specifically sees the convergence of three major highways: Interstate 90, Interstate 39, and US Route 20. These major roads encourage travel to and from Rockford and between its many park systems. With many current greenways in the three-county region located off arterial roadways, management and operation of these roadways can influence tourism. Guaranteeing continued roadway performance is vital to encouraging the use of greenways and parks that are not currently connected to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Rail

Three Class I railroads operate within the three-county area, including Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, and Union Pacific. In addition to the Class I railroads, the Illinois Railway also operates within the region. In total, there are 130.2 miles of railroad tracks in the MPA, including 7.5 miles of privately-owned tracks.

Although rail lines are most often seen as assets in regard to freight movement, their presence within the region also presents an opportunity for greenway development. Rail consolidation programs work to eliminate abandoned or underused rail lines and encourage redevelopment opportunities. One example of a popular redevelopment project is Rails to Trails, where abandoned rail infrastructure is converted into recreational green spaces. A few local examples of current Rails to Trails include Long Prairie Trail in Boone County and Stone Bridge Trail in Winnebago County.

Rails with Trails is another initiative to acquire and develop new green space. Trails are built next to or within an active rail corridor, yielding more opportunity for greenway creation.¹

Public Transit

Public transit offers an alternative form of transportation to single-occupant, motorized vehicles that promotes social equity and sustainable lifestyles. Creating connections between public transit and greenway and trail systems can ensure all residents, regardless of income or access to a personal vehicle, have the opportunity to access and experience the parks and natural resources in the region.

Currently, Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties are served by four public transit agencies, including Rockford Mass Transit



Stone Bridge Trail in Winnebago County, IL



Greenway Connector Trail

District (RMTD), demand-response service providers Boone County Public Transit (BCPT), Stateline Mass Transit District (SMTD), and Lee-Ogle Transportation Systems (LOTS), as well as a collection of human service agencies filling specific transportation needs for their client-base. RMTD is the only provider offering fixed route public transit service in the study area.

RMTD operates 19 daily fixed-routes (Monday-Saturday), six weeknight routes, and five Sunday routes. Most of RMTD's fixed-route services are provided on a hub-and-spoke radial operation pattern originating from the Downtown Transfer Center in Rockford. General service hours include service to all municipalities during weekdays; service to Rockford, Loves Park, and Machesney Park on Saturdays; and only to certain areas in Rockford on Sundays. Services are not provided on Saturday and Sunday nights. When thinking about encouraging connections within the transportation network, the location of transit stops as well as the infrastructure of areas surrounding transit stops carry great weight. While transit may be available to residents, the perceived safety of getting to and from destinations from transit stops influences whether residents use the service. Greenway trails and paths near transit stops make it easier for transit users to walk or bike to stops.

Trails, Paths, and Greenway Connectors

Greenway corridors support pedestrian and cyclist movement, providing much-needed alternatives to automobile use. Additionally, corridors and off-street bicycle facilities, such as shared use paths and trails, promote the use of active transportation, reduce traffic congestion, lower pollution levels,

and connect existing and future modes of transportation.

Local trails serve the dual purpose of connecting communities to resources and integrating regional pedestrian transit into larger trail systems. This creates opportunities for short, frequent, or necessary trips as well as recreational or regional trips.

Greenways are often accessible by bicycle facilities that connect users to the greenway trail system. Most bicycle facilities can be grouped into two overarching categories: on-street facilities or shared use paths. Shared use paths are the most predominate and widespread type of facility in the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) that is designed for [bicycle use](#). Overall, there are 128 miles of shared use paths located within the MPA. Within Winnebago County there are currently 45.5 miles of existing on-street bicycle facilities. At this time, the portions of Boone and Ogle Counties within the MPA do not have on-street bicycle facilities and the region, as a whole, does not have buffered or separated bike lanes.

Sidewalks support pedestrian travel and, in some instances, can be considered greenway connectors. Sidewalks close gaps between greenway trails and paths to maintain continuity and promote ease of access. Their presence is an important consideration when working towards facilitating movement throughout the region.

Section 4: Land Use

Over the past several decades, there has been increased discussion and understanding about the relationship between the transportation planning process and its impact on land use development and environmental resources. Land use determines the development composition of a region. Therefore, understanding the complexities of the natural environment and the built environment is a critical process when planning for and developing regional greenway networks.

Land use represents the dynamic makeup of the built and natural environment. It is the occupation or use of land or water area for any human activity or any purpose that is defined within a planning document¹. Every home, office, government building, or nature preserve represents a unique part of the overall land use composition.

The role of Region 1 Planning Council (RPC), as it pertains to land use, is to coordinate planning and policies at a regional level to further establish and propose goals and objectives that will ensure long-term sustainable transportation accessibility, effective resource management, and integrated land use development. This is accomplished by providing support for municipal and county land use planning agencies, coordinating planning efforts amongst these agencies and organizations, and advising on policy-making. Development of effective land use profiles, such as greenways, serves to advance policies and provide a deeper understanding of regional collaboration needed to address future development pressures. This will ensure the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural resources across the diverse landscape of Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties.

This portion of the plan contains four sections detailing key factors in understanding the land-use characteristics of the region. The first section details historic regional trends of urban development as well as changes in the urban area of Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. The second section details regional land use patterns for Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. It provides a brief profile on the land coverage and where concentrations of development exist. The third section provides an explanation of the impacts of development at a regional level. Including how it effects land use and natural resources. The fourth and final section describes agriculture and its significance to the region,

including the economic and social impacts. In addition, it provides options for land conservation in relation to agriculture. To ensure consistency across measurable variables, all data presented is at the regional (three-county) level unless otherwise noted.

Historic Urban Growth

Understanding historic trends that have affected urban growth is critical to planning for a regional greenway network. This understanding ensures effective land use delineations, such as conservation areas, and promotes equitable and inclusive mobility plans.

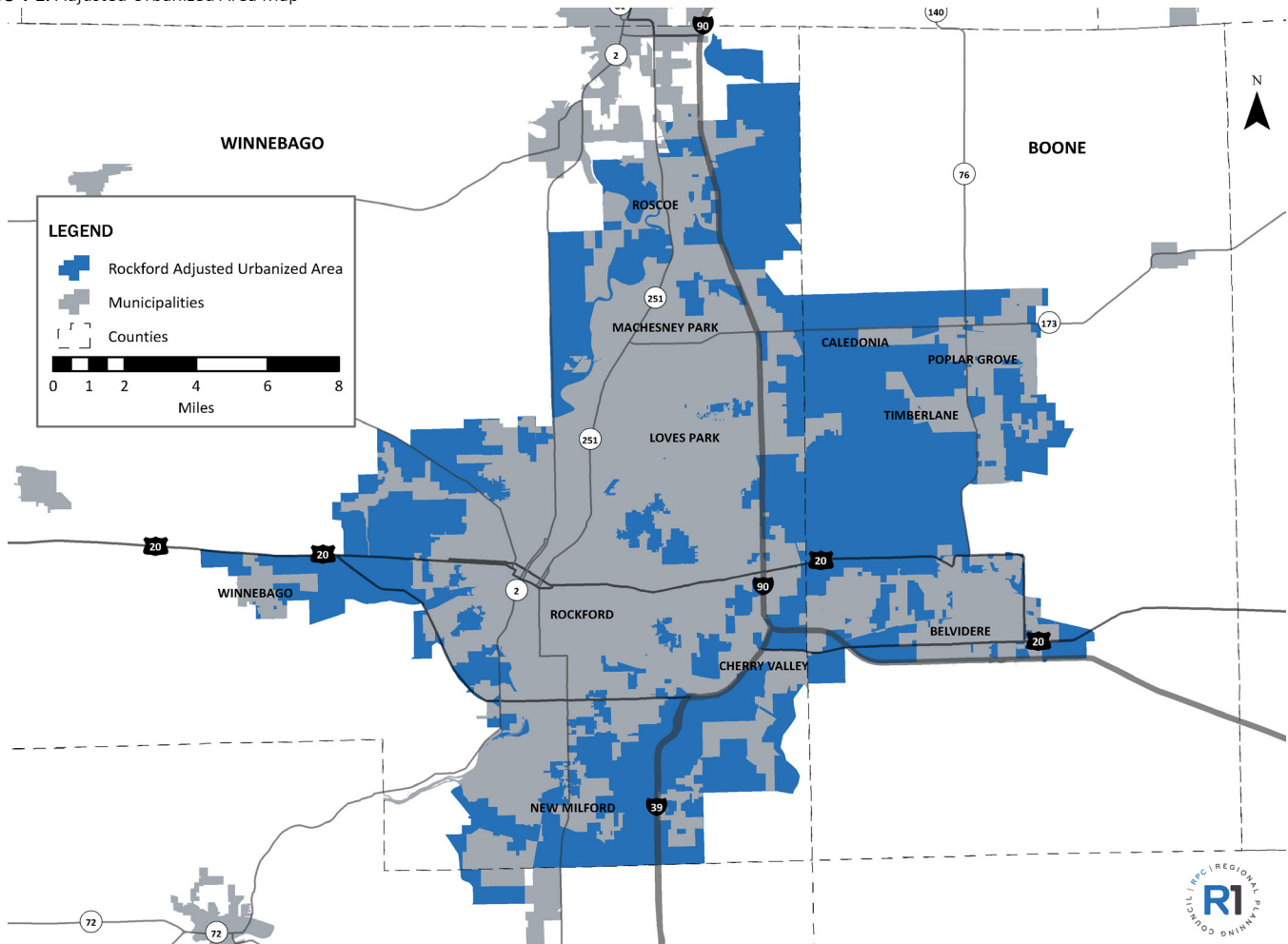
While many interrelated factors have contributed to the region's current development patterns, one of the most notable is residential and commercial growth away from urban centers, a process called urban sprawl.¹ The urban footprint of the MSA has quintupled since 1940, while the population of the urban area has only doubled. This growth trend is not unique to the region. In fact, national trends of sprawling, suburban development follow the development of the Interstate Highway System (IHS). This pattern of sprawl has contributed to concentrated poverty in nine Rockford neighborhoods that have been designated as Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAP). These neighborhoods have greater than 50 percent of residents identifying as non-White and more than three times the MSA's poverty rate, or 35 percent.² These areas historically had less government investment in green infrastructure, leading to increased environmental degradation and loss of habitat, which can contribute to health and social inequities.

The recent growth in the region has occurred mostly along the fringes of municipal boundaries and in unincorporated areas of the surrounding counties. This kind of development contributes to a culture of auto-dependence, disconnects neighborhoods, and strains municipal resources (financial, sanitary and sewer, municipal water, access to broadband internet, and more). In addition, it can be an inefficient use of land resources, making connections between regional greenway networks more difficult financially and physically due to distances between greenways.

According to analyses of USCB data, the region's urbanized area (UA) has grown by more than 13 percent since 2000; in contrast, the region's urbanized population only grew 8 percent. In 2000, the region's UA was comprised of 91,405 acres and grew to 103,753 acres by 2016. Conversely, the region's urban area population was 275,370 in 2000 and by 2016 had grown to 299,399 (see Figure 4-3). Since 2010, the overall region has seen a slight increase in UA size. This is likely due to the economic recession and related prolonged periods of low job growth, coupled with statewide population losses.

Low-density growth can contribute to the degradation of the area's natural resources including land, rivers, wetlands, and natural buffers. This results in increased erosion, river sedimentation,

Figure 4-1. Adjusted Urbanized Area Map



and contributes to the heat island affect due to there being more pavement, asphalt, and concrete and less permeable surfaces.

Regional Land Cover

The region is home to a diverse array of land uses, from urban infrastructure to dense forest. Managing demands of growth and natural resources will remain a critical challenge for planning, programming, and adapting the regional greenway network to ensure the longevity of the region's resources. By making incremental steps today that link transportation, environmental planning, economic strategy, and policy-making, the region can have a more efficient transportation system and competitive economy. Continuing to promote the integration of environmental planning and programming practices will allow the region to better mitigate the possible effects of extreme climate as well as strengthen the region's social, environmental, and economic health. Included below are brief land coverage profiles on the three counties: Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago County.

Boone County

Boone County is the smallest county in the region (280 sq. mi.) and is close in population to Ogle County (see Table 2-1). The largest land cover type in the County is agriculture (approximately 75 percent) and the majority of the urban land is concentrated around the City of Belvidere in the southern portion of the

country. Boone County's largest land types include cultivated crop and developed space. Agricultural lands are found throughout Boone County and agriculture is central to the county's economy. Developed land in Boone County comprises approximately 13 percent of the overall county and is heavily concentrated near Belvidere and along U.S. Business Route 20 moving towards Winnebago County and Rockford.

Ogle County

Ogle County is the largest county in the region (763 sq. mi.) and is the most rural. Ogle County has a population of 51,328 (see Table 2-1). The largest land cover in the County is agriculture (approximately 78 percent) and the majority of the developed land (approximately 9 percent) is concentrated around the cities of Rochelle, Oregon, and Byron, which are situated around the south and central portions of the county. Ogle County's largest land use types are agriculture and developed space.

Winnebago County

Winnebago County is the second largest county in the region (519 sq. mi.) and is the most urbanized. While the largest land cover in the county is agriculture (approximately 52 percent), the majority of southern and eastern portions of Winnebago County is developed land, concentrated around the municipalities of Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, and Cherry Valley.

Accordingly, Winnebago County is home to the region’s largest concentration of population (see Table 2-2). Winnebago County’s predominant land cover types include cultivated crop, developed space, deciduous forest, and hay/pasture.ⁱⁱⁱ Agricultural lands are found all over Winnebago County, but are largely concentrated in the northern and western portions of the county. Deciduous forest is primarily found along the Rock River, Pecatonica River, Sugar River, and Kishwaukee River. Developed land comprises approximately 24 percent of Winnebago County. Land uses surrounding the incorporated municipalities, especially those in the eastern half of the county, are predominantly single-family residential, with concentrated pockets of commercial and industrial development along arterials and in the southern portions of the county.

Urbanized Areas

Urbanized Areas are defined as areas of 50,000 people or more.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Urban Heat Islands

Urban heat islands are cities or built-up areas that experience higher temperatures than outlying areas. Developed infrastructure such as buildings, roads, and parking lots absorb and re-emit the sun’s heat more than natural landscapes such as forests and water bodies. These areas are highly concentrated, thus creating “islands” of higher temperatures relative to external areas. Heat can be deadly, especially for certain populations. This is discussed more in “Health and Wellness” in Section 5.

Source: National Geographic

Consequences of Development

Over the years, the region’s Urbanized Area (UA) has expanded and new patterns of development have manifested in sprawl and radial growth. Dramatic shifts in the loss of natural land has led to less natural space, increase in fragmentation of natural spaces, the degradation of water resources, and decreased ability for nature to respond to change. As land is converted from natural areas to more developed areas, it is fragmented into smaller and more isolated patches of natural space. Unregulated and uncontrolled growth are one of the largest threats to natural space and regional greenway networks. Infill development and adaptive reuse of existing urban structures and underused natural properties can contribute to protecting these natural resources.

Environmental Responsibility

“An underlying principal of conservation is that utilizing natural resources does not, in itself, pose a threat to the environment. It is the manner in which we do it that dictates whether our activities are detrimental or [regenerative].”^{iv}

Agriculture

Agriculture is a defining feature in Illinois and the region. About 75 percent (or 27 million acres) of the land in Illinois is used for cultivation or farming.^v In combination with local employment, farming-related activities such as farm-to-table restaurants, farm tours, and other agri-tourism businesses represent a critical part of the region’s economy and social fabric. Agriculture is the single largest land use in all three counties, and there are various farms, orchards, and other agricultural businesses located throughout the region (see Table 4-1). Regional identification and conservation of crucial agricultural land will contribute to better quality of living and ensure the protection of productive soil and land for future generations.

According to the Illinois Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act (IAACPA) (505 ILCS 5/1), Agricultural Preservation Areas (APAs) are defined as “areas designated within a county where landowners have chosen to create and emphasize the importance of agriculture.” APAs are adopted for an initial ten-year period and can be renewed every eight years. These areas are controlled at the county level and are approved, modified, or terminated by the county board. The minimum size for an APA is 350 contiguous acres, with no maximum acreage. They can also provide protection from nuisance complaints and special benefit assessments (sewer, water, non-farm drainage easements, etc.), which may influence state agencies in site selection for a project. While APAs provide protection for agricultural lands, conservation easements offer better protections against development.

Table 4-1. Total Agricultural Land by County

County (2017)	Total Farm Acreage	Total Cropland Acres	Total Farms
Winnebago	178,633	161,005	736
Boone	113,500	106,043	457
Ogle	354,587	326,755	1,011

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Conservation Easements

Agricultural conservation easements are permanent legal agreements that a landowner places on their property, allowing them to give up development rights while the land remains privately owned. Conservation easements are an effective tool to conserve valuable natural land which might otherwise be subject to development. The landowner retains the right to own and sell the property, but restrictions in the legal agreement, such as

development or subdivision of the land, remain with the property and attached to the land title. Agricultural conservation easements allow landowners to ensure their land will be preserved as farmland or natural areas for future generations, while reflecting the landowner’s individual needs and wishes.

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland is defined by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) as “land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses; cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest lands, but not urbanized land or water.” It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops economically when treated and managed, including water management.^{vi} Much of the farmland in Illinois is considered prime farmland, according to the Farmland Information Center, with approximately 89 percent of the acreage considered prime, or about 19.5 million acres.^{vii}

At the regional level, much of the farmland is protected, either through easements or regulations, from development. Historically, the region’s development patterns have contributed to a loss of farmland as urban and suburban areas grew. While agriculture comprises a relatively small portion of employment (less than 5 percent of the total regional employment), it represents a substantial portion of land for the three counties (see Tables 4-2, 4-3 and 4-4).

Agricultural Conservation Funding Programs

The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a subsection of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), offers grants to fund agricultural and conservation practices that align with their organizational goals. The NRCS’ programs include:^{viii}

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** This program provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, or improved or created wildlife habitat.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** This program helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.
- **Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA):** The AMA program assists agricultural producers with using conservation to manage risk and solve natural resource issues through conservation. NRCS administers the AMA conservation provisions while the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Risk Management Agency implement other provisions under AMA.

Table 4-2. Land Cover in Boone County

Land Cover Type	Cell Count	Area (m^2)	Area (acres)	Percent	Adjusted Area (acres)
Open Water	2,784	2,505,600	619.1	0.32%	594.7
Developed, Open Space	43,774	39,396,600	9,735.1	5.07%	9,351.5
Developed, Low Intensity	50,453	45,407,700	11,220.5	5.85%	10,778.3
Developed, Medium Intensity	11,460	10,314,000	2,548.6	1.33%	2,448.2
Developed, High Intensity	4,229	3,806,100	940.5	0.49%	903.4
Barren Land	914	822,600	203.3	0.11%	195.3
Deciduous Forest	52,262	47,035,800	11,622.8	6.06%	11,164.8
Evergreen Forest	828	745,200	184.1	0.10%	176.9
Shrub/Scrub	1,541	1,386,900	342.7	0.18%	329.2
Herbaceous	7,010	6,309,000	1,559.0	0.81%	1,497.6
Hay/Pasture	39,433	35,489,700	8,769.7	4.57%	8,424.1
Cultivated Crops	642,957	578,661,300	142,990.2	74.53%	137,355.6
Woody Wetlands	3,331	2,997,900	740.8	0.39%	711.6
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	1,726	1,553,400	383.9	0.20%	368.7
Total	862,702	776,431,800.0	191,860.3	100.00%	184,300.0

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Table 4-3. Land Cover in Ogle County

Land Cover Type	Cell Count	Area (m ²)	Area (acres)	Percent	Adjusted Area (acres)
Open Water	20,094	18,084,600	4,468.8	0.77%	3,780.9
Developed, Open Space	114,565	103,108,500	25,478.6	4.42%	21,556.9
Developed, Low Intensity	84,896	76,406,400	18,880.4	3.27%	15,974.3
Developed, Medium Intensity	20,077	18,069,300	4,465.0	0.77%	3,777.7
Developed, High Intensity	10,448	9,403,200	2,323.6	0.40%	1,965.9
Barren Land	4,007	3,606,300	891.1	0.15%	754.0
Deciduous Forest	288,268	259,441,200	64,109.3	11.12%	54,241.3
Evergreen Forest	2,116	1,904,400	470.6	0.08%	398.2
Shrub/Scrub	526	473,400	117.0	0.02%	99.0
Herbaceous	3,006	2,705,400	668.5	0.12%	565.6
Hay/Pasture	163,382	147,043,800	36,335.3	6.30%	30,742.4
Cultivated Crops	1,865,289	1,678,760,100	414,830.3	71.92%	350,977.8
Woody Wetlands	16,126	14,513,400	3,586.3	0.62%	3,034.3
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	700	630,000	155.7	0.03%	131.7
Total	2,593,500	2,334,150,000.0	576,780.5	100.00%	488,000.0

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Table 4-4. Land Cover Winnebago County

Land Cover Type	Cell Count	Area (m ²)	Area (acres)	Percent	Adjusted Area (acres)
Open Water	20,731	18,657,900	4,610	1%	3,947
Developed, Open Space	132,466	119,219,400	29,460	8%	25,219
Developed, Low Intensity	187,855	169,069,500	41,778	11%	35,764
Developed, Medium Intensity	69,730	62,757,000	15,508	4%	13,275
Developed, High Intensity	27,943	25,148,700	6,214	2%	5,320
Barren Land	2,968	2,671,200	660	0%	565
Deciduous Forest	183,807	165,426,300	40,878	11%	34,993
Evergreen Forest	2,954	2,658,600	657	0%	562
Mixed Forest	2,925	2,632,500	651	0%	557
Shrub/Scrub	8,706	2,632,500	651	0%	557
Herbaceous	19,334	7,835,400	1,936	0%	1,657
Hay/Pasture	147,898	133,108,200	32,892	8%	27,930
Cultivated Crops	905,370	814,833,000	201,349	51%	170,978
Woody Wetlands	28,265	25,438,500	6,286	2%	5,338
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	17,065	15,358,500	3,795	1%	3,223
Total	1,758,017	1,582,215,300	390,974	100%	332,000

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Figure 4-2. Regional (3-County) Land Cover Map

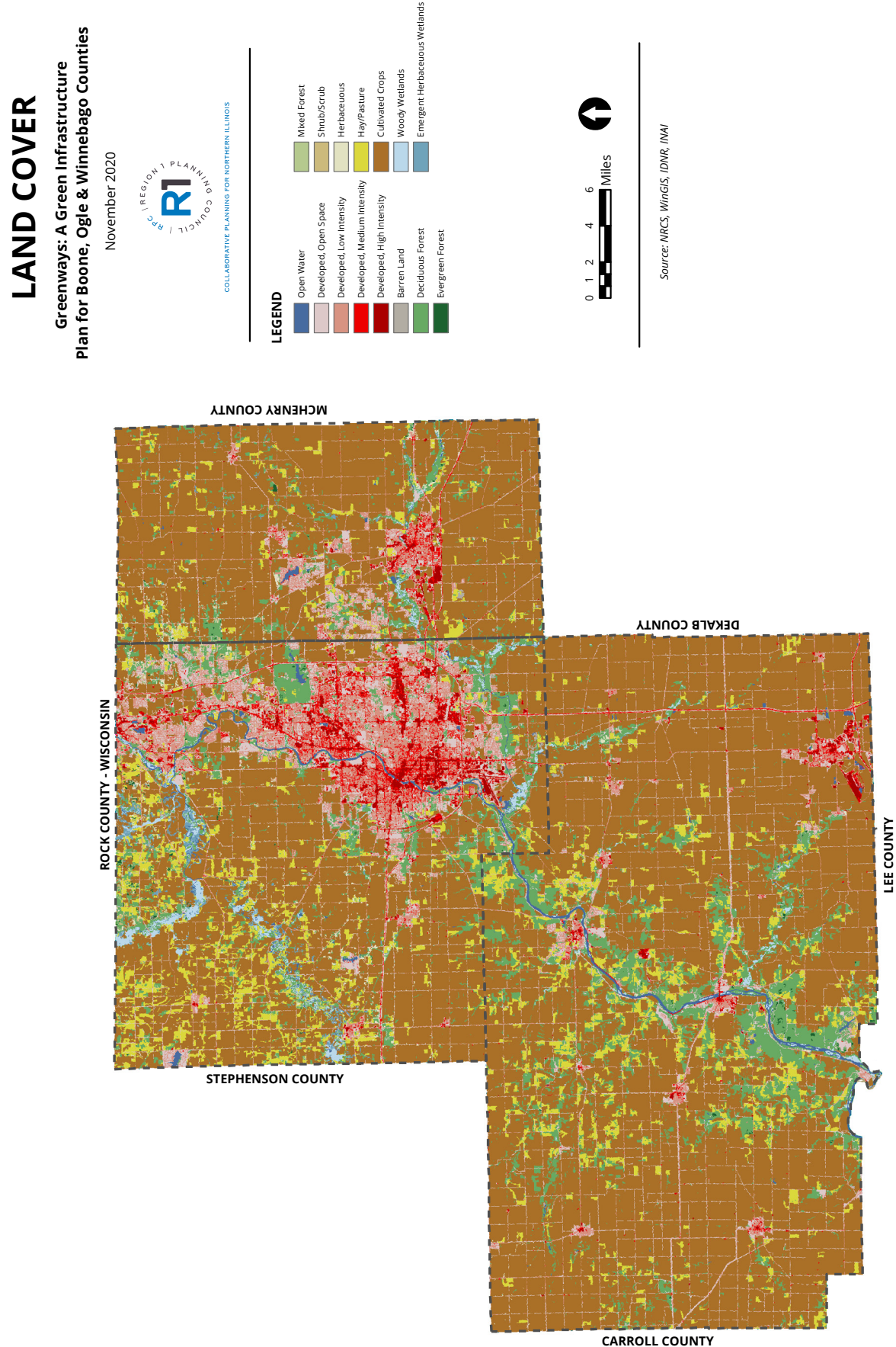


Table 4-5. Existing Land Use Within Boone County

Boone County Land Use	Percentage	Acres
Agricultural Residential	0.10%	184.32
Agricultural Production	83.00%	15,2985.6
Commercial	0.40%	737.28
Extraction	0.50%	921.6
Industrial	0.70%	1,290.24
Institutional	0.70%	1,290.24
Open Space/Recreation	3.00%	5,529.6
Other Infrastructure	4.00%	7,372.8
Residential	6.50%	11,980.8
Vacant	1.00%	1,843.2
Total Land	99.90%	18,4135.68

Source: Boone County (2019)

Table 4-6. Existing Land Use Within Ogle County

Ogle County Land Use	Percentage	Acres
Agriculture and Rural Lands	89.20%	435,692.40
Incorporated Cities/Villages	4.50%	21,873.10
Rural Settlement	1.50%	7,157.90
Residential	1.00%	5,047.90
State Parks/Forest	1.00%	4,943.00
Private Camp/Recreation Area	0.80%	3,738.70
Industrial	0.70%	3,468.80
Private Conservation Land	0.50%	2,338.40
Other Public Park/Open Space	0.40%	1,785.00
Commercial	0.30%	1,597.60
Public/Governmental	0.10%	341.2
Church/Cemetery	0.10%	329.2
Total Land	100.00%	488,313.20

Source: Ogle County Comprehensive Plan (2012)

Table 4-7. Existing Land Use Within Winnebago County

Winnebago County Land Use	Percentage	Acres
Association Owned Prop	0.20%	637.38
Commercial Residential (6+ Units)	0.70%	2,205.08
Commercial Business	1.56%	4,889.14
Commercial Office	0.47%	1,470.41
Condominium (residential)	12.94%	40,629.29
Conservation Stewardship	0.21%	651.57
Educational Property	0.02%	48.89
Government Building	0.00%	7.10
Religious Property	0.01%	30.46
Residential	10.71%	33,605.01
Industrial	2.20%	6,906.11
Locally Assessed Railroad	0.00%	5.48
Vacant	2.14%	6,727.01
Agriculture	68.55%	215,183.11
Social/ Charitable/ Fraternity	0.29%	913.67
Total Land	100.00%	313,909.71

Source: WinGIS Land Record Files

Section 5: The Benefits of Greenways

A Sustainable Ecosystem

Sustainable ecosystems are home to a diverse range of plants and animals, helping to regulate natural processes and resources and assist recovery after disturbances. Each plant or animal species plays a role in the stability of that system. Unfortunately, due to changes in water availability, loss of critical habitat, and the introduction of non-native species, many of the plants and animals once found in the region are at risk of vanishing from the landscape.ⁱ Yet, other species such as deer can at times reach or exceed a region's carrying capacity due to lack of predators and activities such as extensive farming that add an easily accessible, but unnatural food source to an animal's diet.ⁱⁱ To combat these issues, coalitions of organizations, governments, and community members can increase green space and high-quality habitat in their areas through greenways and other natural spaces.

Greenways in Depth

A greenway can broadly be defined as a natural corridor of land which connects existing areas of open space.

According to one of the first experts in the field, Charles E. Little, the full definition of a greenway is:

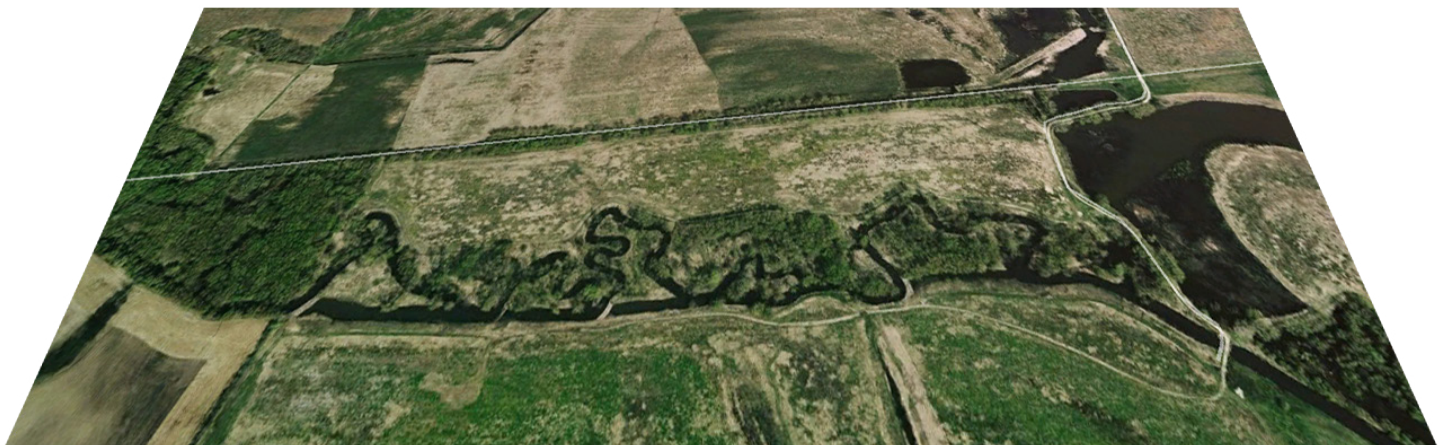
1. "A linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline, or overland along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, a scenic road, or other route."ⁱⁱⁱ

2. "Any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage."ⁱⁱⁱ
3. "An open-space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and with populated areas."ⁱⁱⁱ
4. "Locally, certain strip or linear parks designated as a parkway or greenbelt."ⁱⁱⁱ

Greenways are similar to arteries connecting many vital organs together into one cohesive unit. They are part of a network of green infrastructure, linking together parks, preserves, wetlands, unique habitats, and other environmentally sensitive areas, spanning across urban and rural lands. They provide an opportunity for the natural circulation of plants and animals from one habitat to another and even through or across features that act as unnatural barriers. Greenways are not only planned and managed for their natural resource value but also for the associated benefits and services they provide to people and communities, including the promotion of active transportation and the resulting health benefits.

Greenways vary widely in form and function. Rural greenways may be comprised of wide swathes of marsh and wetlands whereas urban corridors tend to be thin ribbons of natural areas weaving through areas of dense development or abandoned industrial corridors. Some greenways follow river or stream banks while others are along abandoned rail lines, old power corridors, or may consist of something as small as a hedge row in an agricultural field. Greenways are commonly a mixture of

Raccoon Creek Perspective, Winnebago County, IL



both public and private property and can be open to the public or restricted access. The common thread shared by all is the linear connection they provide to the rest of the network, creating a web of interconnected and dependent systems.

Benefits of Greenways

Economic Benefits

Greenways can provide major economic benefits to the neighborhoods, cities, and communities. Nationally, greenways bring in \$83 billion dollars of tourism revenue every year, provide free recreation sites for people of all ages and abilities, increase the value of properties by up to 11 percent,^{iv} and boost mental and physical health.^v Not only can greenways bring in millions of dollars a year to communities,^{vi} but they can also have return on investments as high as 7:1.^{vii} Examples of greenways success include Washington DC's park system, which provided \$231 per acre of tree cover in saved pollution reduction costs, and the City of Philadelphia, which calculated almost \$6 million in savings in stormwater diversion from the wastewater treatment plant.^{viii}

Further, an acre of tree cover can store 40 tons of carbon in the trees and 32 tons of carbon in the soil, removing 1.2 tons per year. Current estimates place the societal cost per ton of carbon at over \$50, meaning one acre of tree cover is worth \$3,600 and an extra \$60 per year just in the reduction of carbon-related societal issues (these include costs related to health or heat impacts).^{ix} Additionally, tree leaves can absorb 95 percent of UV radiation, reducing the instances of skin and eye health problems that cost the US \$1.5 billion per year in healthcare expenses.^x Trees can also reduce temperatures by four to six degrees in neighborhoods, lowering building energy costs by up to 47 percent.^{xi}

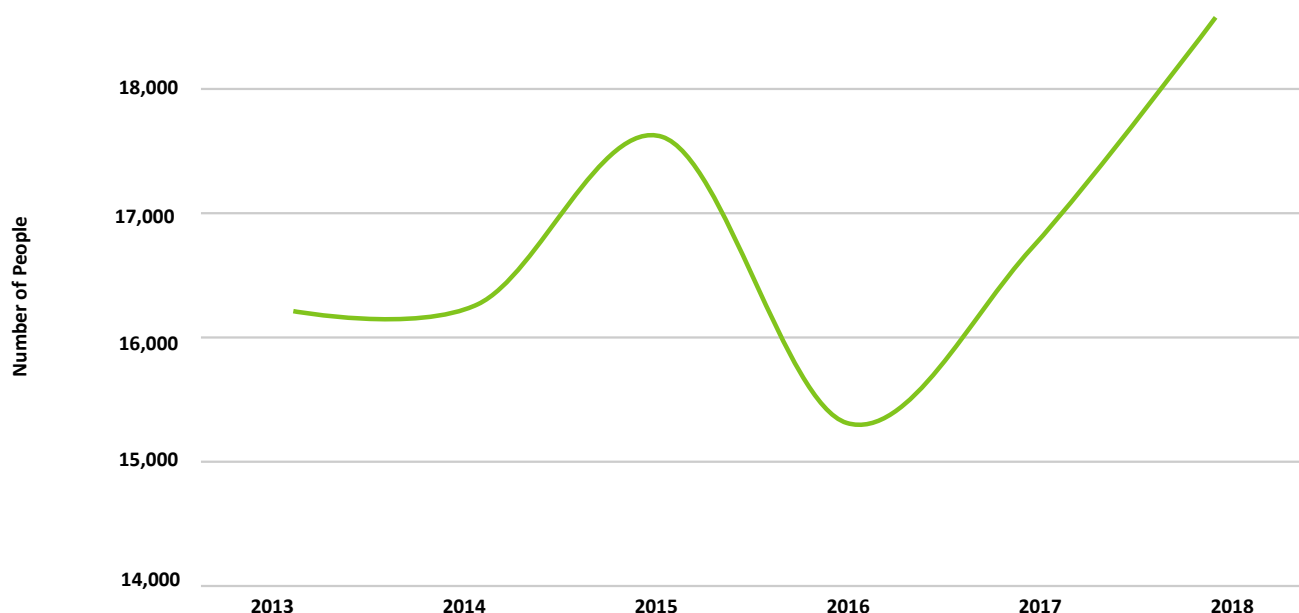
Below are a few more examples of the revenue potential of greenways and trails to local economies:

- In 2014, the Pittsburgh Three Rivers Heritage Trail User Survey found that over 600,000 people visited their trails, generating over \$8 million in revenue in for the city.^{xii}
- Visitors to the Oil Heritage Trails in Pennsylvania spent an average of \$32.93 per trip on local products and local users spent \$3.71, for a total of \$2.22 million between July and October of 2006.^{xiii}
- Non-local visitors to the Cheese County Trails in Wisconsin in 2010 brought approximately \$3 million into the local Monroe County economy.^{xiv}

Employment and Industry Support

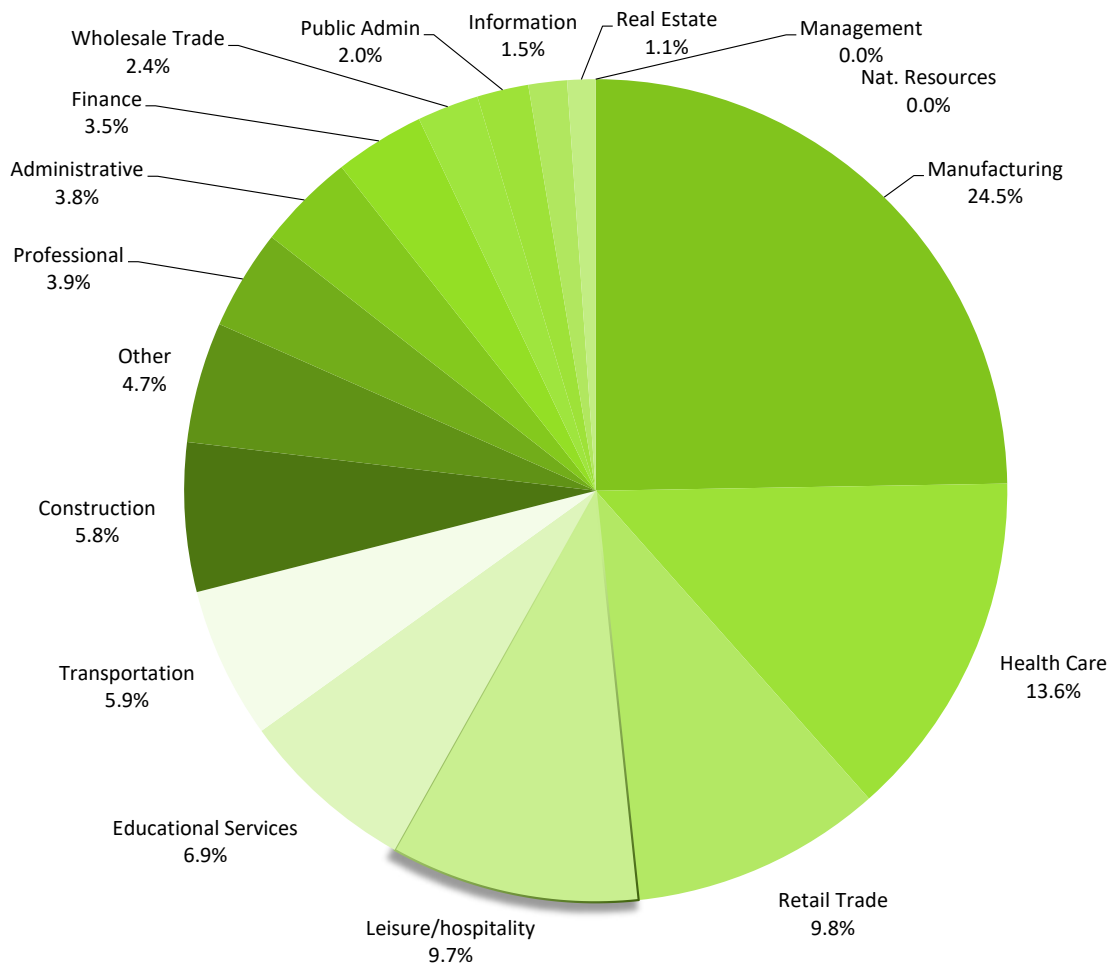
Leisure and hospitality employment, which benefits from natural areas and provides services for outdoor recreation, is an important industry in this region. As shown in Figure 5-1, employment in the leisure and hospitality markets from 2010 to 2020 has increased. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has decreased leisure and hospitality jobs more than any other sector. Jobs created from construction of greenways and the resulting recreation jobs could reverse this trend and bring more stable jobs to the region. For example, one trail that stretches across New York supports over 3,000 direct and indirect jobs.^{xv} Across the US, the leisure and hospitality industry tends to support more people of color and women. These demographics are also those particularly hard-hit by COVID-19,^{xvi} making investing in greenways a crucial way to provide economic opportunities to those most affected.

Figure 5-1. Number of People Employed in Leisure/Hospitality by Year (Boone, Ogle and Winnebago Counties)



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)

Figure 5-2. Employment by Industry for Boone, Ogle and Winnebago Counties



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)

Environmental Benefits

The environmental benefits of greenways and green spaces are significant, and interconnected with the economic and health benefits also mentioned in this section. Not only does increasing green space provide monetary savings from pollution reduction, it also positively impacts wildlife and reduces erosion and the resulting runoff. Several environmental greenway benefits, including urban heat island reduction, air and water pollution, and flooding, are further discussed in the “Health and Wellness” section. Greenway corridors often connect or enhance urban areas, such as the Bauer Memorial Path in Machesney Park, and contribute to urban canopy cover.

Greenways, urban canopies, and natural spaces provide a variety of benefits that local governments would otherwise have to pay to perform – often referred to as ecosystem services. These include:

- Reducing runoff by 1 to 3 percent per 10 percent tree canopy increase. Dense natural areas can reduce runoff by 80 percent.^{xvii}
- Increasing the time runoff takes to reach waterways by up to 3.7 hours, reducing flood potential.^{xviii}

- Increasing groundwater recharge and soil moisture.^{xix}
- Reducing erosion by two-thirds when compared to agricultural land.^{xx}
- Preventing sediment- and nutrient-dense water from reaching major drinking water sources.^{xxi}

Greenways can also have a positive impact on species diversity in urban areas. As urban and cleared agricultural areas expand, they break wildlife habitats into smaller pieces, a process called fragmentation. Fragmentation can impact a species by creating barriers to food and mates, limiting numbers of territorial species and creating more “edge habitat,” a place where it is harder for many species to survive.^{xxii} These challenges can also emerge as a result of poorly-planned greenways. A key benefit of well-planned greenways is their use as “habitat corridors,” which allow movement of species between previously fragmented habitats. Greenways maintain complex native ecosystems and exclusive interior habitat. These functions are crucial to preserve the biodiversity and the protection of wildlife in the region.^{xxiii}

Finally, greenways can also reduce the impacts of climate change by sequestering carbon and nitrogen, among other pollutants. An



Walking trail along the Rock River in Rockford, IL

acre of forested green space in cold climates can store 50-70 tons of carbon and remove 1.2 tons of carbon per year, more than a non-forested piece of land or even forests in warmer climates.^{xxiv,xxv} Additionally, access to green space that can be regularly used for recreation can increase appreciation for nature and promote a desire for natural area conservation and other sustainable behaviors, leading to a more resilient society.^{xxvi}

Health and Wellness

Regional parks and greenways allow numerous opportunities for physical activity through recreation and active transportation. A 2019 study showed people living within a mile of a greenway were twice as likely to get at least 20 minutes per day of exercise,^{xxvii} the threshold generally acknowledged to reduce the risks of obesity, heart disease, and other diseases. However, new greenways in low-income neighborhoods may not increase moderate to vigorous activity significantly if there are safety concerns or the park is poorly maintained. In order to decrease health inequalities and raise overall regional health, greenways must be built, maintained, and made safe.^{xxviii}

When options for physical activity are available, it can improve residents' quality of life and reduce community costs from medical problems. For example, switching just half of short trips (less than 5 miles) from an automobile to biking could save \$8 billion per year in costs associated with air quality and health care in Midwestern urban areas. Encouraging biking can also reduce mortality by over 1,000 deaths per year.^{xxix} Although there were no studies available at the time of the plan publication, preliminary research suggests that COVID-19 has changed how people choose to exercise, with a renewed focus on outdoor activities. Greenways provide a low-cost, safe, and flexible exercise space for those who cannot or do not wish to return to paid or indoor exercise opportunities.

Midwestern urban areas also face increasing extreme heat events and flooding from the effects of climate change, both of which

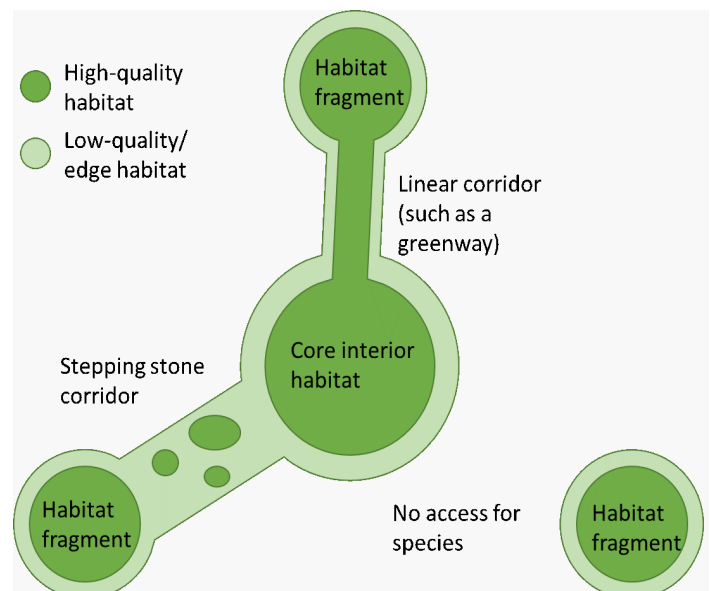
can have an impact on health. The number of days above 90°F is likely to increase by four to seven times in the Midwestern region, from around 10 days to potentially 80 days by mid-century.^{xxx} Temperatures above 90°F can have debilitating health impacts, from permanent disability to increased pulmonary stress and mortality. These changes in heat particularly affect populations who already experience multiple inequities; including children, people of color, the elderly, those with pre-existing conditions, outdoor workers, and people of lower socioeconomic status.^{xxxi} Urban forest cover can help mitigate these climate risks and reduce temperatures in and near green spaces by 5-7°F, a crucial amount for those who don't have access to cooling devices.^{xxxii}

Flooding is also a major health concern. The health impacts of flooding include infection, mold-borne diseases, increased stress, increased mental health issues, interruption in normal medical care and, for long-term or wide-spread floods, overcrowding and communicable diseases.^{xxxiii} Urban forests act as natural buffers against downstream flooding, preventing erosion and reducing the rate of water flow, which protect both homes and people. Rainfall in Illinois is projected to increase five to ten percent overall, with up to a 35 percent increase on the wettest days of the year by mid-century. Decreases in runoff will have positive health benefits for the community.

An increase in tree and plant life helps remove pollutants from the air and water. Urban green spaces are able to filter up to 90 percent of pollutants found in water runoff, many of which are toxic to humans.^{xxxiv} Although trees do contribute to some forms of air pollution through the release of pollen, water, and chemicals, known as Volatile Organic Carbons (VOCs), they remove more harmful pollution from urban areas than they release. Larger trees (greater than 30 inches diameter) remove 60-70 times as much pollution as smaller trees (less than 3 inches diameter) as shown in Figures 5-5 and 5-6. This effect can be worth up to \$300 per tree.

Aside from physical health benefits, the mental health benefits of

Figure 5-3. Habitat Fragmentation Diagram



Source: Figure created by Region 1 Planning Council

natural green spaces are also well-documented. Even short stints in natural areas increases self-esteem and mood, regardless of age or gender.^{xxxv} Access to natural spaces is particularly crucial for children. Outdoor play (especially in nature rather than playgrounds) can increase cognitive function, motor coordination, and improve social interactions.^{xxxvi}

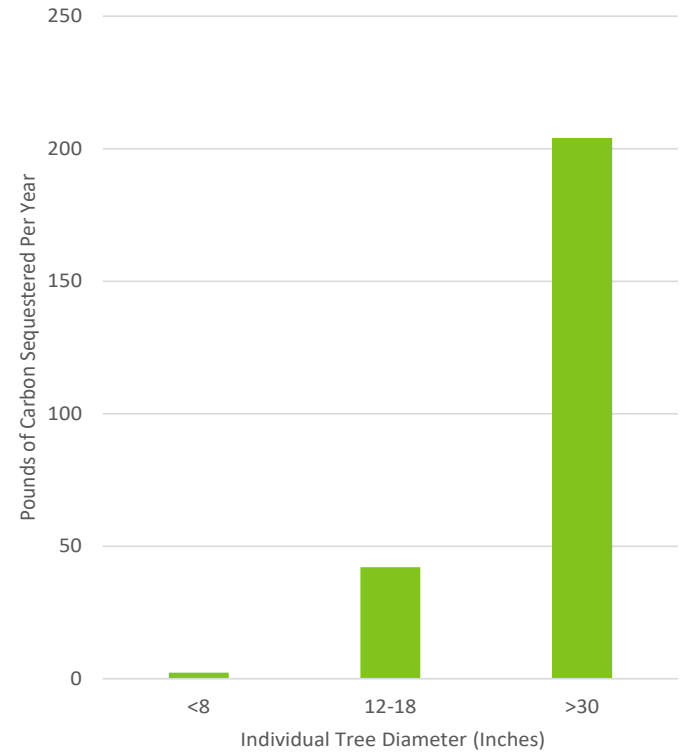
Social Equity

Greenways and green spaces can also help decrease social inequities relating to health, accessibility, environmental protection, and more. As the Rockford Region looks to increase its quality of life and provide new economic opportunity, planners and agencies should continue to consider using greenways as a way to address existing inequitable systems.

Currently, cities in the U.S. have high levels of economic inequality, with Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color also experiencing racially-driven inequality. Across the U.S. and the Rockford Region, past practices and policies have contributed to the disinvestment in communities with Black and Latinx residents and lower socioeconomic status. These policies range from redlining, discriminate zoning policies, and urban renewal policies to white flight, gentrification, and the fragmentation of low-income communities^{xxxvii,xxxviii}. Due to these practices and other systemic issues, the rate of poverty of Black Rockford residents (41.3 percent) is more than twice that of White residents (15.5 percent). Rockford is also in the top third of the most segregated cities in the country, as neighborhoods redlined back in the first half of the 20th century are still segregated and underserved.^{xxxix,xi}

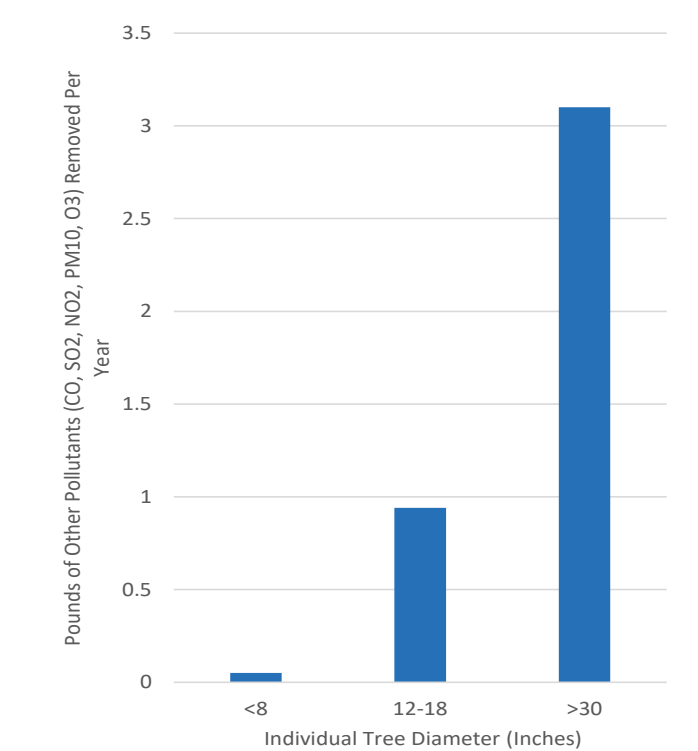
Beyond the negative impact of housing, zoning, and revitalization policies, there are a range of resource and sustainability policies that have had similar disproportionate effects on Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color. This region is part of the homelands of at least seven tribes and is still home to approximately 2,000 Indigenous people. The land was originally colonized in the 1800s in order to perform extractive industries such as mining, which has created long-term impacts for the land and people. Another equity issue in the region is the environmental pollution often concentrated in low-income and often minority communities. Toxic waste sites and other polluting industrial facilities are historically located disproportionately in Black and Latinx neighborhoods, creating hazardous conditions and levels of exposure well above those of the general population. Illinois Solar For All, a local organization that provides affordable solar energy for low income communities, job training opportunities, and education, published a map of local communities disproportionately burdened by environmental issues and designated them as Environmental Justice Communities. The designation is based on the EPA tool “EJ Screen” that reflects levels of pollution, proximity to hazardous sites, sensitivity of the population to pollution due to age or health, and socioeconomic factors. Communities can also submit proposals to be considered environmental justice communities if the data doesn’t accurately reflect their risk. Regional environmental justice communities are located in the downtown and west of Rockford and the downtown of Belvidere. Several communities in northwest Rockford are also self-designated.

Figure 5-4. Amount of Carbon Sequestered by Year According to Individual Tree Size



Source: McPherson, E. Gregory; Nowak, David J.; Rowntree, Rowan A.

Figure 5-5. Amount of Pollutants Sequestered by Year According to Individual Tree Size



Source: McPherson, E. Gregory; Nowak, David J.; Rowntree, Rowan A.

Environmental Justice Communities are designated through similar calculations or self designation. South central Rockford and the central eastern portion of Belvidere are Environmental Justice Communities by calculation and a portion of northwestern Rockford is self designated.

The areas with the most environmental burden are often the neighborhoods with the most people of color, particularly neighborhoods with the highest percentages of Black residents. xli Other studies have also identified that low-income areas within cities have less access to green space and less green space per resident. When these communities have parks, they are sometimes avoided due to fear of violence, racist or discriminatory attacks, or other safety issues. xlii

While increasing equal access to greenways is an important goal, building parks or green space can potentially increase inequality by attracting higher-income residents and expensive developments, resulting in the displacement of existing neighborhoods in a process called gentrification. This frequently occurs when the needs of current residents within the neighborhood are overlooked, such as affordable housing, leading to increased home prices and foreclosures. xliii

Greenways can be part of a larger effort to rebuild cities to be both equitable and livable. Building greenways in disinvested neighborhoods, specifically for the needs of the residents who will use it, can increase the area's quality of life. Likewise, increasing greenspace accessibility to people of all ages, abilities, and races is important to ensuring residents can enjoy the greenways network.

Section 6: Regional Greenways Map

Overview

Greenways connect existing areas of open space to other lands within our region. While a greenway can be considered to be part of an ecological system, it can also be any open spaces or landscaped paths that facilitates pedestrian and bicycle movement and recreation. Although many greenway plans focus on trails networks, this plan considers both trail and natural area networks.

Knowledge of the natural makeup of a region can encourage projects and initiatives that will further sustainability, protect and conserve the natural environment, improve mobility and connectivity, increase opportunity for recreation, and promote the health and wellbeing of individuals. Maps can act as a visual tool when making future growth, land conservation, and land development decisions that complement natural land corridors and preserve significant natural and social resources.

Greenway network maps typically display a region's robust greenways system, which facilitates a better understanding and awareness among local jurisdictions and the general public. These maps can assist an agency, organization, or municipality in efforts to identify ecologically important corridors that have the potential to promote green connections or missing linkages in existing

infrastructure and natural lands. It also serves as a navigational resource for individuals looking to take advantage of the region's open spaces.

The 2021 Greenways Map provides an overview of the greenways within the region and illustrates the basic functionality of the greenway network by highlighting the spatial relationship between trails, transportation infrastructure, water resources, environmentally sensitive areas, and publicly and privately protected lands.

Existing Plans

Prior to the creation of the greenways mapping products, Ogle County's "Greenway and Trails Plan" and "Greenways: A Green Infrastructure Plan for Boone and Winnebago Counties" were reviewed for consideration of map layers and design elements. Additionally, the 2017 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Rockford Metropolitan Area highlights the active transportation inventory for the region, which includes trails, paths, and bikeways in Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. Incorporation of the active transportation network inventory into the 2021 Greenways Plan and Map offers guidance on gaps in the active transportation network and possible connections to existing facilities and green corridors. Furthermore, Prairie State Conservation Coalition's I-View mapping platform informed the display of protected natural lands within region. A more in-depth description of the full list of plans and mapping resources referenced for this plan can be found in Appendix B.

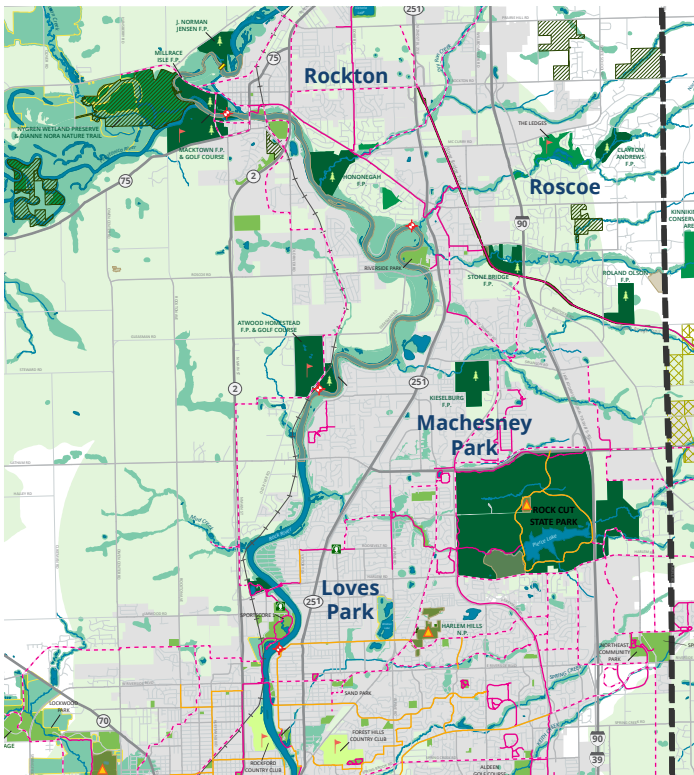
Mapping Process

By engaging stakeholders at the onset of the mapping process, an accurate, up-to-date, and comprehensive planning map was created. Collaboration with both private and public sector agencies has resulted in a final greenways map that the region can use in grant applications, land acquisition, and natural resource planning efforts.

The maps for the 2021 Greenways Plan were created in ArcGIS using spatial data from various sources, such as the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Some of data was updated to reflect the most accurate information available through working group meetings, one-on-one meetings with individual agency staff, partner organizations, and the RPC Environmental Committee.

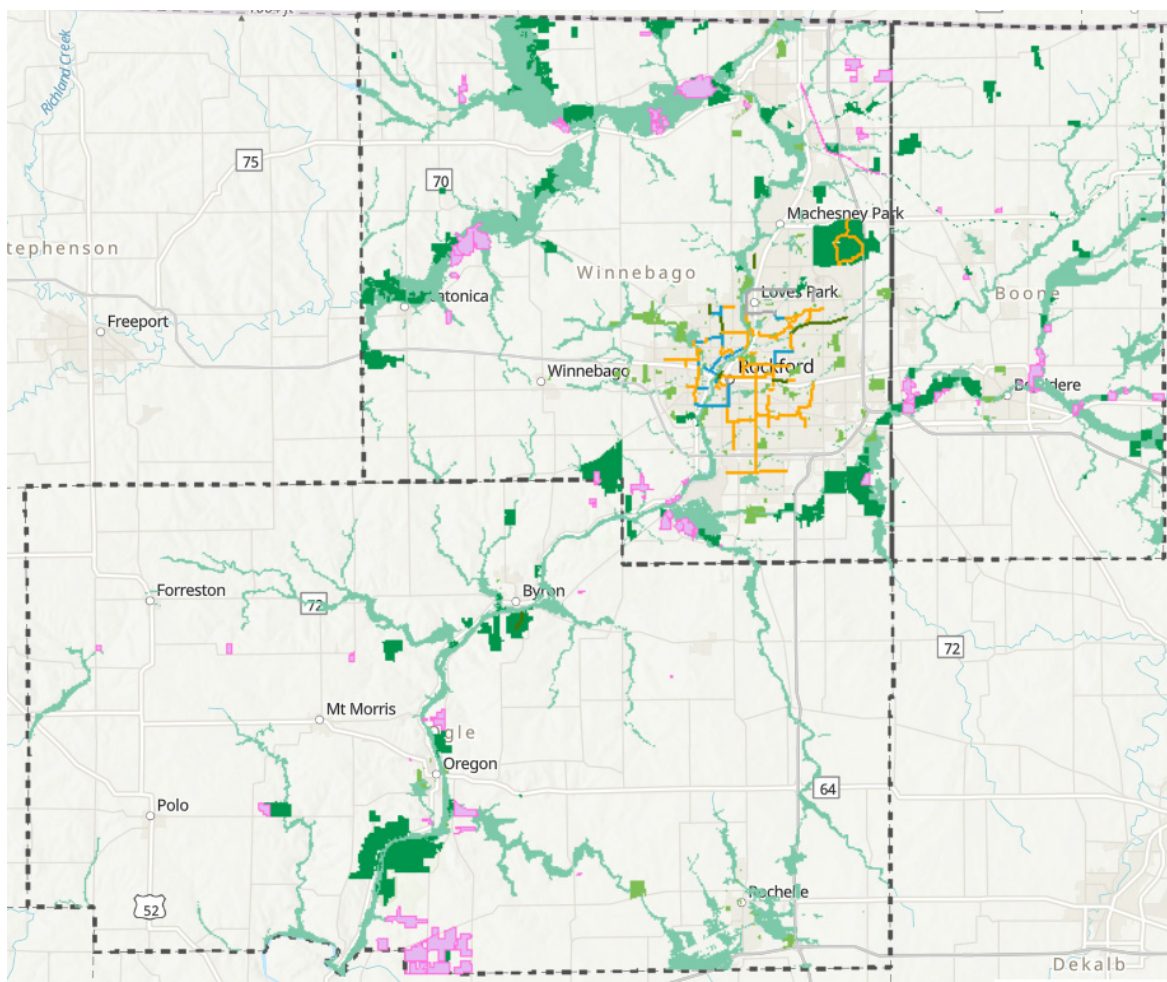
Interactive Greenways Map

As a part of the mapping initiative and in an effort to support planning and improve decision-making in the region, an online interactive greenways map was created to help facilitate spatial understanding of the greenway network elements. The online



Section of 30x40 Regional Greenways Map

Figure 6-1. Screen shot image of RPC's interactive online Greenways Map



interactive map presents geospatial information to the public without the use of specific software. The creation of an online interactive map also shows more detailed content that is difficult on a small-scale static map. The interactive greenways map can be viewed on Region 1 Planning Council's website.

Data

The 2021 Greenways Map includes land identified, owned, or managed by the following organizations:

- Belvidere Park District
- Boone County Agricultural Conservation Easement & Farmland Protection Areas
- Boone County Conservation District
- Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Byron Forest Preserve District
- Ducks Unlimited
- Flagg-Rochelle Community Park District
- Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
- Illinois State Parks
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (INDR)
- Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INCP)
- Natural Land Institute (NLI)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Northwest Illinois Audubon Society
- Openlands
- Parks and Conservation Foundation
- Prairie Preservation Society of Ogle County
- Rockford Park District
- Smeja Family Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District

The following data presented in the 2021 Greenways Map includes:



Privately Protected Lands

- Golf Courses, updated from *Greenways: A Green Infrastructure Plan for Boone and Winnebago Counties (2015)*
- Agricultural Preservation Areas, updated from *Greenways: A Green Infrastructure Plan for Boone and Winnebago Counties (2015)*
- Conservation Easements, sourced from *NRCS and Openlands*
- Privately Owned Lands, sourced from *Prairie State Conservation Coalition*



Major Hydrology

- National Hydrography Dataset, sourced from *NHD (US Geological Survey)*
- Water Bodies, sourced from *NHD (US Geological Survey)*
- Water Areas, sourced from *NHD (US Geological Survey)*
- Flowlines - Removal of Intermittent Streams, sourced from *NHD (US Geological Survey)*



Infrastructure

- Existing and Proposed Paths and Trails, sourced by *RPC as a part of the online bicycle map*
- Roads, sourced from *IDOT*
- Railroads, sourced from *IDOT*
- Fixed transit routes and stops [NOTE: Element only viewable in online interactive version of 2021 Greenways Map], sourced from *Rockford Mass Transit District*



Publicly Protected Lands

- Municipal Parks, sourced from *Prairie State Conservation Coalition*
- State Parks, sourced from *Prairie State Conservation Coalition*
- Publicly Owned Lands, sourced from *Prairie State Conservation Coalition*
- Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Lands, sourced from *INCP*



Critical and Sensitive Areas

- Conservation Opportunity Areas, sourced from *Prairie State Conservation Coalition*
- Illinois Natural Area Inventory, sourced from *Illinois Department of Natural Resources*
- 100-year Floodplain, sourced from *FEMA*
- Winnebago, Boone, and Ogle County Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Habitat, sourced from the *Illinois Department of Natural Resources*
- Wetlands +150ft Buffer, sourced from the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
- Priority Protection Areas, sourced from *public agencies and private organizations within the three-county region*

Map Layers Explained

Critical and Sensitive Areas

The 100-year floodplain of the rivers and tributaries in the area is especially pertinent to regional biodiversity. The wetlands formed on this floodplain, as well as the land adjacent to these river zones, contain some of the most ecologically rich habitats whose protection is crucial to sustaining a thriving community of species and plants. Riparian zones can help reduce erosion, protect against environmental stressors and disturbances, such as flooding, and are key nesting and feeding grounds for endangered or threatened species. Additionally, this layer includes critically threatened and endangered wildlife and habitat for the region.

Priority Protection Areas

Priority Protection Areas (PPAs) provide guidelines for land acquisition and protection of vital local resources. PPAs include areas that need enhanced protection, such as those of high ecological, cultural, or historical importance in the region. PPAs may be large or small, and are likely to fit more than one descriptor below. They were identified by public agencies and private organizations, along with field experts.

The lands in a Priority Protection Area may include:

- Wetlands, floodplains, oak stands, prairies, or steep slopes that overlap with critical or environmentally-sensitive designations, as well as groundwater or surface water recharge sites, riparian corridors, nesting or migratory sites, and areas that reduce wind or water erosion near communities;
- Areas that are community-identified as supporting species or activities important to local Indigenous and other communities;
- Areas that promote exercise or active transport, reduce pollution in the air or water, increase shading or promote equitable use of green spaces, including new or improved spaces in underserved areas; or
- Expansion of land near currently protected areas to enhance stewardship or usability.

Public and Private Natural Lands

Publicly and privately protected lands are areas of relatively undeveloped land that have retained characteristics as provided by nature. Unlike environmentally-sensitive areas, all of the lands under this category are subject to management. While these lands are also recognized for their natural, ecological, and cultural values, their environmental functions may not be as critical in comparison to environmentally-sensitive areas. The lands under this category may be manicured but still provide wildlife sanctuaries, preserve natural resources, support native species, and can be intended for recreational use.

Water Resources

There are two main rivers that flow through the region. The Rock River, formerly known as the Sinnissippi to the Sauk and Fox tribes, is a tributary of the Mississippi River that runs through Winnebago and Ogle Counties. The Kishwaukee River, considered one of the highest quality streams in Illinois, flows through Winnebago and Boone Counties. These major rivers, along with their tributaries and other water bodies, offer freshwater environments that support rich animal and plant life, supply drinking water, and offer scenic views and recreation to the community.

Trails and Paths

Regional trails and paths may cover large areas of land, offer unique opportunities for active transportation, and provide connections to high-quality environmental corridors. On a large scale, trails and paths connect cities, villages, or towns and may act as links between smaller systems and green space. Regional trails offer residents and tourists a place for recreational opportunities, exercise, and non-motorized mobility and commuting options. Regional trails also offer winter recreational options such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, but snowmobiling is often restricted.

Local trails and paths connect larger trail systems and link neighborhoods and communities that may be divided from one another by major roads. These smaller trail systems are visited often by local residents as a place to exercise, walk pets, and reach other areas of the greenways network.

Figure 6-2. Greenway Network

GREENWAY NETWORK

Greenways: A Green Infrastructure
Plan for Boone, Ogle & Winnebago Counties

April 2021

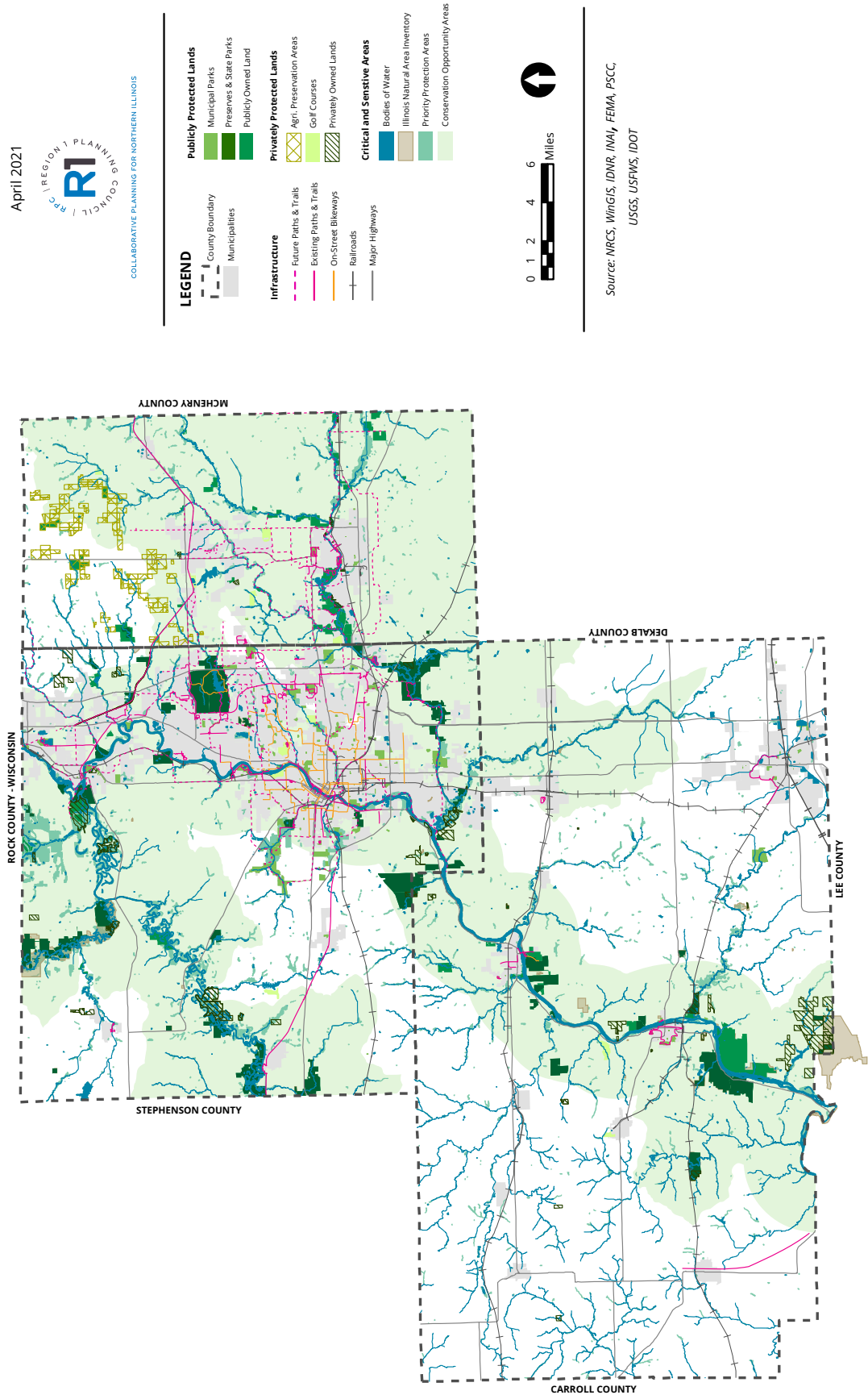


Figure 6-3. Boone County Greenway Network

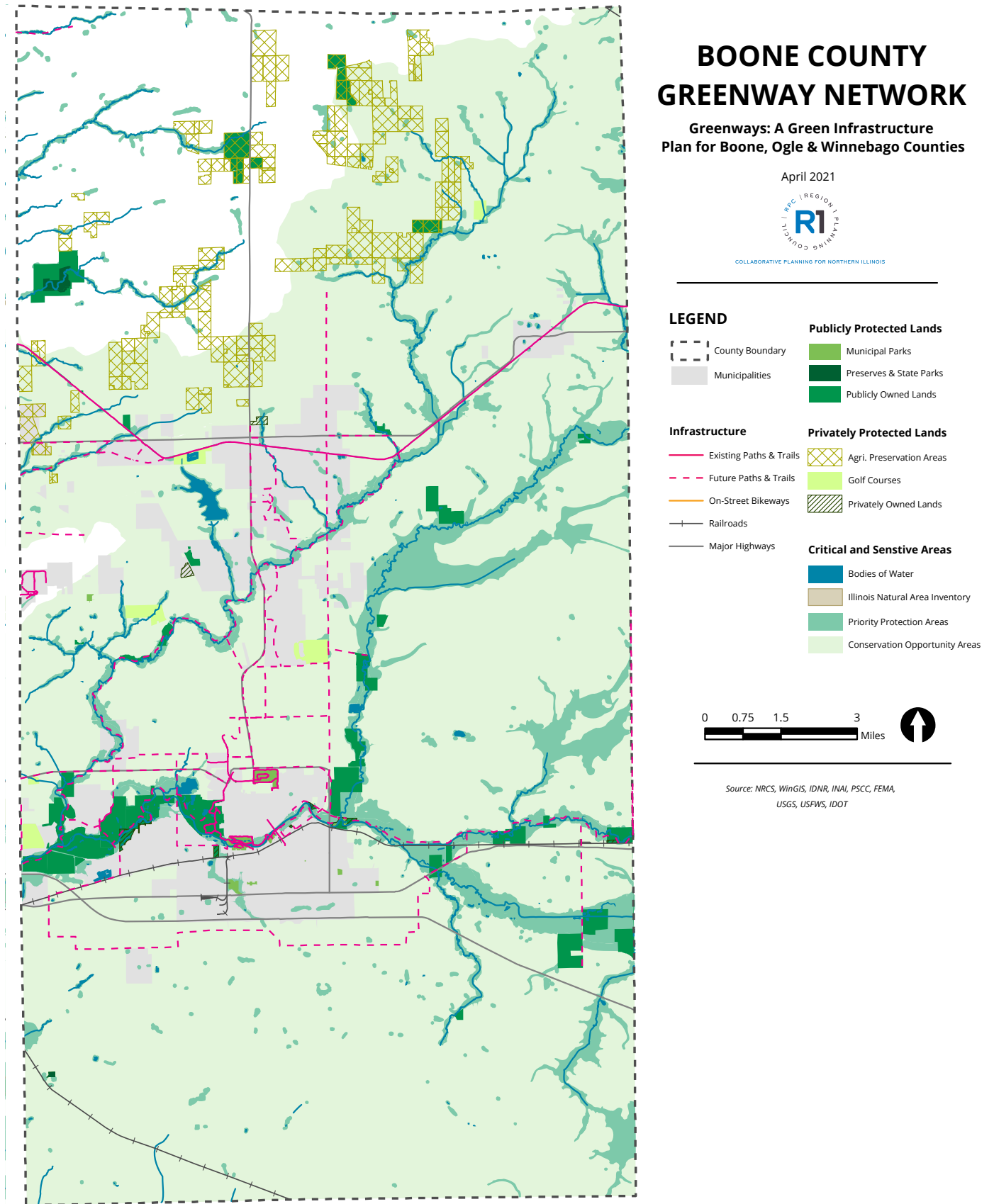


Figure 6-4. Ogle County Greenway Network

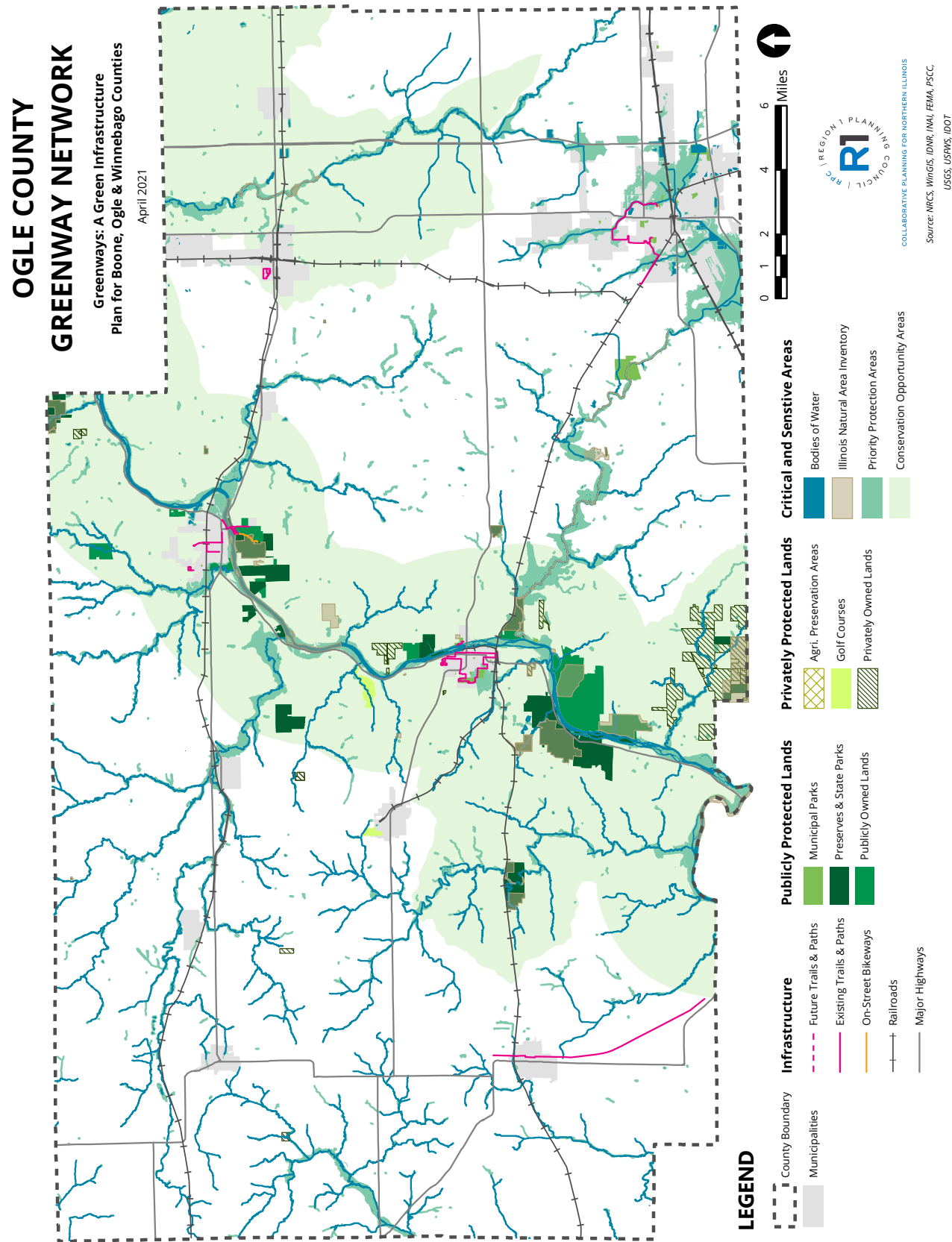
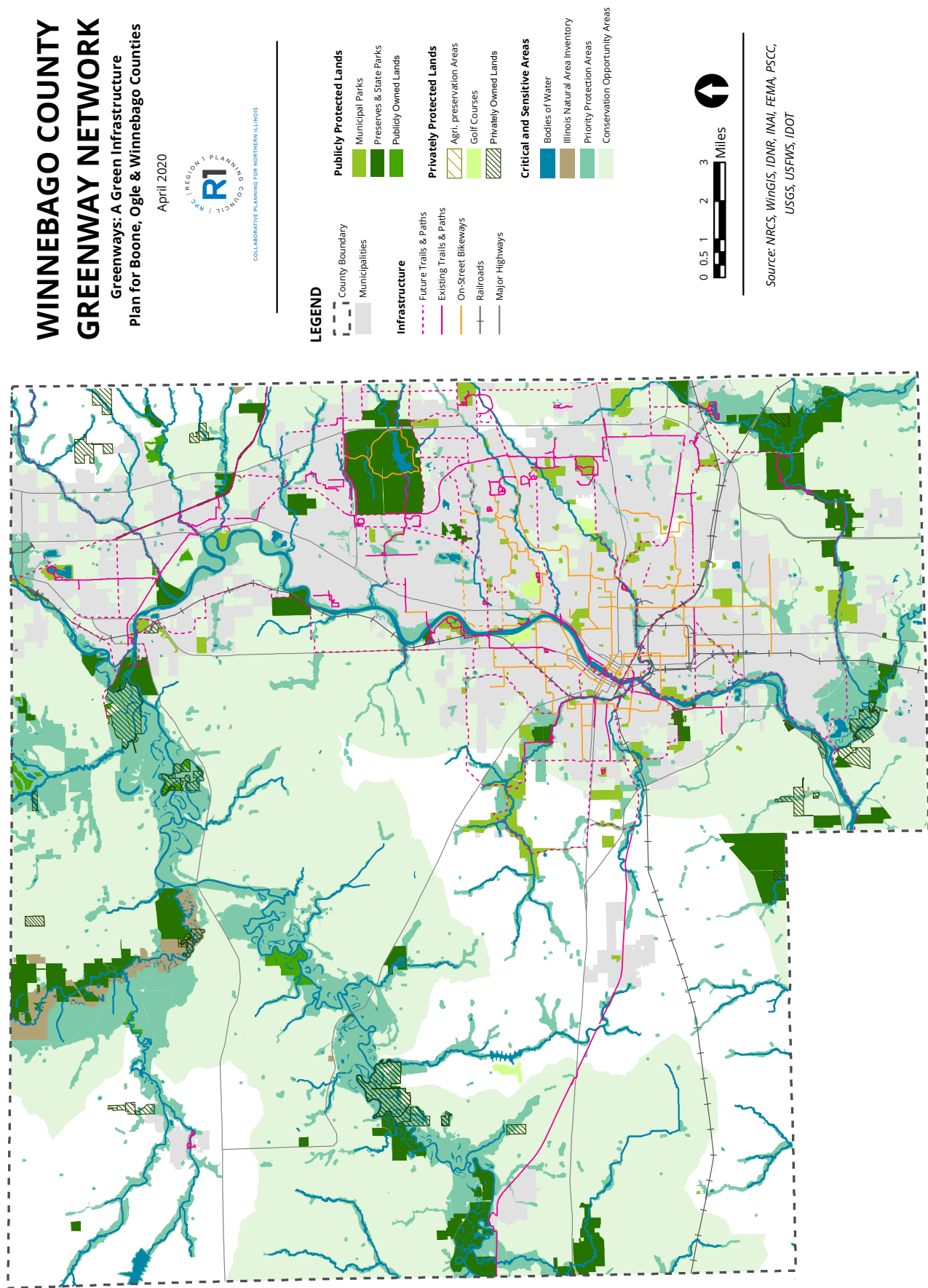


Figure 6-5. Winnebago County Greenway Network



Section 7: Transportation and Environmental Planning

With an increasing understanding of the relationship between the transportation system and natural and built environments, agencies continue to expand their planning efforts to include both transportation and conservation considerations. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) recently updated its long-range transportation plan, titled *2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Rockford Region* (MTP). During the plan's development process, a considerable amount of data and information related to green planning initiatives, environmental land use planning, and strategies for a more sustainable approach to transportation planning objectives were incorporated.

The Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), consisting of the urbanized areas of Winnebago and Boone Counties and the northeastern portion of Ogle County, supports a diverse array of land uses, from urban infrastructure to dense forest and agriculture, as shown in Figure 4-4. Managing future growth and resources will remain a critical challenge for planning, programming, and adapting the transportation infrastructure to ensure the longevity of the region's natural and cultural resources. By making incremental steps today that link transportation and environmental planning and policies, the region will build a more efficient transportation system and equitable economy. Through the integration of environmental planning and programming practices, the region can also mitigate the possible effects of extreme climate, as well as strengthen the area's social, environmental, and economic health.

This section details the approach to integrating transportation and environmental planning by profiling specific federal policy and programs related to both. It also details the connection between transportation and environmental planning, including factors impacted by transportation and land use development. Finally, it highlights bicycle and pedestrian planning – a critical component that links environmental concerns with transportation funding and programs. These linkages are critical to understanding how to plan, program, and implement transportation projects in a manner that mitigates the impact on the region's natural environment.

Linking Transportation and Environmental Planning

The relationship between transportation and the environment represents a process whereby transportation often directly impacts the environment during planning, programming, and implementation. Linking transportation and environmental planning efforts has been spurred by a number of federal funding programs and policy acts. Included below is information related to

those as well as information supporting the MPO's actions.

National Environment Policy Act (NEPA), 1970: NEPA mandates that federal agencies, or those utilizing federal funding, assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to implementation. While NEPA applies solely to federal agencies and funding, many states have versions of it with similar requirements. Effectively, any project that is completed or endorsed by, or utilizes federal funding is required to undergo a thorough environmental review to understand the impacts the project may have on the environment. This requirement mandates the evaluation of impacts on the environment from individual projects – often in the form of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) or Environmental Assessments (EA), the Air Quality Index (AQI), or the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These reports are provided as demonstration that the project's negative effects will not eclipse the benefits.ⁱ

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program, 1992: Originally authorized by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and again under SAFETEA-LU, the CMAQ funding program authorizes funding for States and eligible municipalities who do not meet air quality standards (e.g. Chicago or Los Angeles). The funding is targeted towards transportation projects that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality – ideally, by meeting the Clean Air Act (CAA) requirements and its amendments.ⁱⁱ The Rockford Region is currently an attainment area, meaning the air quality meets NAAQS standards.

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), 2005: Section 6001 of SAFETEA-LU requires that MPOs develop their LRTP to include a different discussion of mitigation efforts than are typically contained in the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) documents. This requirement is a more broad-based planning approach for reviewing the “types of potential mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities” than normally completed by MPOs. The RPC will continue to assist in the planning and preparation of the resource materials that are currently being used by transportation planning agencies responsible for the actual preparation of the NEPA documents.

One of the core planning approaches of SAFETEA-LU stresses that MPOs shift towards a broader involvement with a wide range of agencies, organizations, and the public who might not have been traditionally connected with the transportation planning process or understand the role or functions of the MPO. Beginning in 2013, the MPO reached out to local agencies that did not have a strong connection with its planning efforts. In order to move

to a broader, more environmentally-inclusive approach to the planning process, the following agencies were added to the MPO Technical Committee in 2012: Boone County Conservation District, Winnebago Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, Rockford Park District, Rock River Water Reclamation District, and Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District. RPC has concentrated its efforts in working with MPO Technical Committee members to identify approaches that will cause the least disruption of environmentally-sensitive areas in the region while promoting environmental protection with active transportation strategies.

Included below are example activities that will be considered for mitigating the impacts of transportation projects:

- Wetland replacement;
- Avoiding habitat fragmentation;
- Preservation of habitat for endangered species;
- Replacement of trees and other types of vegetation;
- Identification and creation of mitigation banks near watersheds;
- Planting native vegetation;
- Buffering existing parks, forest preserves and other parkland from high-impact land use development;
- Coordinating with local governments to adopt local land use controls and policies that would avoid creating environmentally fragile areas; and
- Developing landscape plans and other amenities that would restore and enhance the ecological values of the land.

Another possible activity is the creation of an in-lieu fee program where developers and other users who impact certain environmental areas could contribute to a third-party conservation organization that is attempting to restore, acquire, or develop high-value natural areas. This process is also known as “development fees.”

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), 2012: Building on the 2005 SAFETEA-LU legislation, the MAP-21 funding legislation enhanced the incorporation of environmental considerations into the overall transportation process and their inclusion in MTPs. Further, MAP-21 expanded the CMAQ program to include performance-based planning elements, such as establishing measures to assess traffic congestion and on-road mobile source emissions. MAP-21 was designed to ensure the most effective use of federally funding to maximize the benefits of investments.

Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, 2015: Furthering previous federal transportation legislation, the FAST Act enhanced the planning process by adding the consideration of projects and strategies that will improve the resilience and reliability of the transportation system and stormwater mitigation. The additional requirements contributed to a broader planning

process that incorporated environmental considerations into the transportation planning process. Further, it ensured that potential mitigation activities were considered and facilitated if possible. The MPO often assists with environmental resource materials that are used by transportation departments responsible for preparation of NEPA documents.

The MPO acknowledges the benefits of integrating transportation and environmental planning. It is proactive in supporting these through open dialogue with the region’s environmental groups, planning departments at the local and regional level, and non-profit and advocacy groups. Working with these agencies has enabled the MPO to gather the latest data and information available on environmental issues within the region, as well as improve the transportation planning process. These relationships are critical to ensuring that the transportation planning process follows the 3-C (continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive) principles.

In 2017, RPC formed an Environmental Planning Committee. The goal of this committee is to bring together natural resources agencies and environmental advocacy groups to address and contribute to environmental planning throughout the region, specifically the areas of energy conservation and consumption, growth management, air quality, water resources, natural resources, and built infrastructure. MPO staff and representatives from the MPO Technical Committee also participate in the Environmental Planning Committee. The MPO has presented to the Environmental Planning Committee several times on the development of various transportation and environmental planning projects.

In addition to having a continual open dialogue with region’s environmental groups and organizations, the MPO has included environmental considerations into its programming of the region’s sub-allocation of Transportation Alternative (TA) funds. Specifically, environmental and land use considerations are incorporated into the project selection criteria. Projects which can demonstrate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reductions or other air quality benefits and projects that preserve or restore environmentally-sensitive lands or cultural areas receive a higher ranking. This criterion has also been included in the project evaluation criteria for the fiscally-constrained roadway project list of the 2050 MTP.

Planning and Environmental Linkages

Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) represents a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decision-making that:

- Considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process, and
- Uses the information, analysis, and products developed during planning to inform the environmental review process.

State and local agencies can achieve significant benefits by adopting environmental and community values into the

transportation planning process early in planning and carrying these considerations through to project delivery. The benefits can include improved relationships with other local and regional agencies, improved project timelines, cost savings, and improved project designs that better serve the community and decrease inequities while avoiding and minimizing impacts on natural resources.ⁱⁱⁱ

The 2007 planning regulations (23 CFR Part 450) provided authority to State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and MPOs to link planning and NEPA, as do other relevant NEPA implementing procedures (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, 23 CFR Part 771). The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) encourages the full utilization of these provisions. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) views corridor and subarea studies as one technique in helping prepare the highway community to meet the needs of the 21st century transportation system and economy. The use of planning studies to inform NEPA falls within the administration's Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) initiative. PEL represents an approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage and carries them through project development, design, and construction. The goal of PEL is to create a seamless decision-making process that minimizes duplication of effort, promotes environmental stewardship, and reduces delays from planning to project implementation.^{iv}

Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

The Rockford Region offers a developed but fragmented bicycle and pedestrian facilities network. Bicycle facilities and pedestrian planning was initially coordinated by the MPO in 1984, through the development and adoption of the first Regional Bikeway and Pedestrian Plan. Today, Winnebago County has the highest concentration of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. While Boone and Ogle Counties infrastructure networks are not as expansive, they are highly concentrated around the municipalities of Belvidere (Boone County) and Byron, Oregon, and Rochelle (Ogle County) (see Figure 6-2).

In addition to the aforementioned agencies, the region's bicycle and pedestrian networks include facilities managed by the Boone County Conservation District (BCCD), the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and Winnebago County Highway Department (WCHD), among others. These facilities include examples such as: Perryville Path, Willow Creek Trail, Long Prairie Trail, and Stone Bridge Trail.

In 2017, the MPO finalized the current version of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. This plan was developed to promote a safe and efficient transportation network for people that provides a balanced, multi-modal system minimizing costs and impacts to the taxpayer, society, and the environment. The plan also focuses on the development of a region-wide system of on-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities to connect with existing shared-use path facilities and planned public transportation services. In addition, it provides model development regulations and ordinances to promote and encourage bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly growth in the region. While the 2017 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan did include a small portion of Ogle County, it focused on

the Metropolitan Planning Area (consisting of the urbanized areas in Boone and Winnebago Counties, and the northeastern portion of Ogle County). In Ogle County, the most recent iteration of their greenways and trails plan was adopted in 2010. This plan was developed as a long-range, visionary master plan for the green infrastructure of the region. In addition to identifying local resources for open space and recreational trail systems, it emphasizes the unique history and geography of the region and recognizes the relationship between the environment, recreational needs, and economic growth and sustainability.

Regionally, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are largely segmented. This update to the regional greenways plan aims to address some of those gaps. For example, the Rockford MPA has an extensive pedestrian system, but like many other older cities, there are gaps within the network. While sidewalks are often required to be constructed as part of the development process, many developments were built under regulations that did not require sidewalks or where the requirements were waived. One of the most notable examples of lack of sidewalks is the commercial area along East State Street in the City of Rockford. This area is automobile-oriented and does not allow for safe pedestrian movement. An excellent pedestrian system is important for access to transit, education, medical facilities, and green space, especially for populations without access to other types of transit.

The positive results of past planning efforts and policies are evident throughout the MPA. As part of the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3C) planning process, RPC will continue to plan for an integrated transportation network that identifies and mitigates impacts on the region's environmental resources. RPC leads the region in the development of comprehensive planning documents that consider the implications on social, economic, and environmental factors. Moreover, RPC will continue to support an integrated planning process that acknowledges the complex relationship of the transportation planning process, the impacts of transportation facility programming and construction, and environmental resources.



Local Pedestrian and Bike Path

Section 8: A Regional Vision for the Future of Greenways

Greenways Plan and Map Implementation

Implementation is the most complicated and important part of a planning process. In the past, the adoption and implementation of the Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago County Greenways Plan and Map has been successful in building more connected greenways in the region – and the 2021 Greenways Plan and Map will be no different. Through adoption of this plan, following the recommendations outlined, and developing innovative best practices for the unique needs of the community, the region will continue to improve the quality of life, economic opportunity, and environment for all.

Implementation Strategies

Federal, State, and Regional Governments

While local and municipal governments have jurisdiction over local green infrastructure such as greenways, parks, and stormwater management systems, federal and state governments direct regional and state-level environmental targets and funding sources. Committees and councils also provide two-way communication between the various levels of government. The following are ways that federal, state, and regional governmental agencies can engage in greenways planning.

1. Increase federal and state funding for greenways planning, collaboration, development, preservation, and maintenance. Continue to leverage possible grant funds for future planning initiatives, in concert with other organizations and agencies.
2. Coordinate with federal, state, and regional committees and councils to provide information on best practices and to learn about broader initiatives.
3. Collaborate with Region 1 Planning Council (RPC) in providing funding for greenways projects, working on committees, and incorporating best practices into new policy.

Region 1 Planning Council (RPC)

RPC assists various other governments and organizations in the Rockford Region with planning, research, GIS, and sustainability expertise. RPC is committed to the 2021 Greenways Plan and supporting local efforts to implement it. RPC will work on regional greenways planning in the following ways:

1. Collect, analyze and update GIS data to support greenways planning. Information could include natural resources, transit and transportation pathways, or greenspaces.
2. Follow the recommendations of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to use the Planning through Environmental Linkages (PEL) approach to transportation planning decision making.
3. Assist in thorough environmental review processes.¹
4. Provide information, GIS work, mapping products, or other data to regional partners to support in obtaining grants or completing greenways plans.
5. Address greenways planning and development within the RPC Environmental Planning Committee to continue efforts set forth in this plan.

Local and County Governments

Local and county governments improve communities through zoning, education, research, and creating ordinances. Local governments can also build a collaborative environment with residents to create fair policies, address critical problem areas, and reduce environmental and other inequities. The following strategies are crucial to the successful implementation of an equitable Greenways Plan.

1. Introduce and adopt the 2021 Greenways Plan, engage in public dialogue around the ideas, and incorporate relevant objectives into local comprehensive plans and other planning documents. Use the plan as a guideline for sustainable development and land use planning.
2. Educate elected and appointed leaders on greenway benefits and potential challenges to address.
3. Amend local subdivision and zoning codes where necessary to allow for open space conservation projects and the development of safe and accessible pathways for community members to reach greenways, especially in underserved communities. Use zoning and building

codes during the construction of greenways to reverse or prevent inequities, including ensuring that the cost of living does not rise prohibitively. Continue dialogue with community members to ensure greenways are successful.

4. Protect or acquire new property as deemed appropriate in supporting the greenways plan. Prioritize protecting properties that are “environmentally sensitive,” that could be used to increase recreational space, have cultural or historical importance to Indigenous and other groups, or address a community need.ⁱⁱ
5. Collect local data about environmental injustice issues, community needs, and outdoor tourism to share with regional partners.

Private Land Owners

Private land owners engage with the Greenways Plan voluntarily, but can gain environmental and monetary benefit from doing so. Making community members aware of greenways planning and benefits of engaging in the process will increase collaboration and community satisfaction with projects.

Many individual or neighborhood actions can be taken outside of formal partnerships with greenways projects. Below are some suggestions for individuals or small communities. The information can be shared with community leaders, groups, or other interested residents to increase effectiveness.

1. Learn about local ecosystems, habitats, species, and environmental issues of the area through local park programs, educational events, or online. Find out how climate change will impact local areas by using the tools the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) publishes online.
2. Develop an environmental inventory or assessment of a neighborhood. Identify tree types, shrubs, birds, water quality and biodiversity of nearby natural spaces. Learn which species are invasive and the proper techniques for removal. This inventory could be forwarded to local planning agencies for use in future studies or it may benefit a neighborhood directly.
3. When landscaping, choose native trees, shrubs and prairie plants instead of cultivars, non-native plants, or invasive species to prevent biodiversity loss, erosion, or excessive storm water runoff. The internet, knowledge centers at nearby colleges and universities, Master Gardeners, or land conservation organizations can provide opportunities to learn more.
4. Educate yourself on how local land uses impact local outcomes. Agriculture, brownfields, preserves, and urban spaces can all affect how a neighborhood’s natural spaces function and they are easy to spot on programs like Google Earth or the EPA’s maps. If there is a local issue, talk to land conservation orgs, planning agencies, governments, and other property owners to find

solutions.

5. Educate yourself about the history of the local land, including the Indigenous groups who lived and live here.
6. Discover and communicate environmental injustices that are happening in the community, including lack of investment in green infrastructure, inequitable environmental outcomes like flooding, or the placement of environmentally hazardous activities.
7. Individually-owned land can be conserved in perpetuity. There are many different types, length of durations, and level of compensation for conserved land. Individuals still own the land and can limit public access to it, but subsequent owners of the property would be required to preserve the land as regulated by the law.ⁱⁱⁱ

Non-profits and Advocacy Groups

Local non-profits and advocacy groups include groups specifically dedicated to land preservation, such as land trusts and independent natural areas, as well as community groups and other interested organizations. These organizations may have significant land, grant funding, volunteer bases, or community leadership, all of which are vital to successful greenway planning. Even organizations that are not specifically greenway-focused, such as neighborhood groups, may find this document useful in supporting their related goals or in creating partnerships.

1. Collaborate with local governments, developers, planning agencies, Indigenous organizations, environmental organizations, and other groups to protect and restore the region’s flora and fauna and ensure equitable access to resources.
2. Expand educational opportunities for the community by developing more public engagement, workshops, tours, and outdoor recreational programs. Participate in educating municipal commissions, boards, and elected officials.
3. Strengthen existing relationships and start new ones with corporations, educational institutions, hospitals and other local businesses that own pieces of property, capitalizing on shared goals to conserve that land.
4. Continue acquiring new land for conservation and work to connect natural spaces across the region, prioritizing underserved communication.
5. Collect data wherever possible on number of visitors, economic impacts, biodiversity, environmental injustice, ecosystem function of park land and greenways, and other relevant metrics. Share with local and regional partners.

Corporate Land Owners

Renovations and new developments, whether on greenfields, brownfields, or existing sites, have the opportunity to incorporate sustainable development and green infrastructure. Corporations have several ways to be involved in greenway development, including the ones below.

- 1. Actively engage the region’s land trusts and advocacy groups to build partnerships for habitat management and open space preservation.
- 2. Establish a corporate-sponsored grant program to support local conservation and restoration projects. Use these projects to advertise the value of the corporation to the economy and the community.
- 3. Educate and incentivize employees to live healthier lifestyles so that future employees are encouraged to work for the corporation and current employees are healthier and happier.

Linear Corridor Land Owners

Linear corridors are usually privately owned and not used for recreational purposes. They include utility corridors, right-of-way’s along roads, transportation corridors, riparian corridors, and railroads. All offer different types of habitat and are regularly used by local species. Linear corridor owners have a unique part

of greenways development, including the following.

- 1. Partner with local organizations on repurposing linear corridors as recreational or preserved land.
- 2. Outline a plan to clean garbage from linear corridors and maintain them as habitat or wildlife corridors.
- 3. Work with municipal and state governments to improve green landscaping and conservation standards for new roadway and other linear corridor construction projects.
- 4. Expand sidewalk networks while improvement projects are underway, especially in underserved neighborhoods.

Implementation Tools Funding Options

Other funding opportunities include combining general funds across all partners and reducing overlapping costs, increasing or creating surcharges, raising funds through selling local wood products from managed forests, contributing to carbon credits, creating fines for damaging trees, or encouraging local business opportunity districts to self-impose a forestry tax. Table 8-1 details a variety of grant opportunities related to various facets of greenways planning.

Table 8-1. Implementation Tools

Grant Name	Funding Source	Amount	Application Period	Project Type	Eligibility
The Conservation Alliance General Grant Fund	The Conservation Alliance	Up to \$50,000	Winter	Recreational land, securing lasting benefit to specific wild land or waterway, engage with grassroots work. This year, they are focussing on landscapes, indigenous-led projects, projects specifically benefiting BIPOC residents, and those that measurably mitigate climate change.	Nonprofit organizations, wilderness councils, indigenous groups
Catalyst Fund	Network for Landscape Conservation	Varies	Early each year	Landscape-scale projects, extensive collaboration	Nonprofit organization, Indigenous-led partnerships
Doris Duke Conservation	Doris Duke Conservation	Varies	Varies based on program	Four major grant makers supprting everything from energy projects to acquiring land.	Nonprofit organizations
Community Change Grants	National Recreation and Park Association	1500	Early fall	Projects to increase active communities	Organization, schools, Native American Reservations, planning agencies
The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation Grant Program	National Recreation and Park Association	In-kind materials	No deadline	Getting high-quality supplies to plant fruit tree orchards	Low income neighborhood NFPs, schools, Native American communities, government entities
Special Wildlife Funds Grant Program	IDNR	Funding forspecificproject(reimbursement)	First months of every year	One application covers various wildlife grants, available for projects on education, habitat restoration, scientific research, and product development.	Nonprofit organizations, governmental entities, educational institutions, corporations
Green Infrastructure Grant Opportunities	Illinois EPA	Up to \$2 million, likely lower (reimbursement of 75% of total cost, matching allowed)	First months of every year	Green infrastructure projects minimizing stormwater runoff, including bioinfiltration, retention, floodplain reconnection, or wetland creation.	Land trusts, for-profit and non-profit orgs, governments
Patagonia Grassroots Funding	Patagonia	up to 20,000	Mid-year	Grassroots organization doing direct action to protect vital habitat or frontline communities.	Small grassroots organizations

Section 9: Appendices and Attachments

Appendix A: Glossary and Acronyms

Glossary of Terms

3-C

Principles that guide planning work; continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive.

Source: RPC

Accessibility

May refer to the ease of reaching valued destinations, such as jobs, shops, schools, entertainment, and recreation for users regardless of ability or disability. May also refer to other forms of accessibility including language, economic, or social.

Source: Adapted from Federal Highway Association

Blighted Property

A vacant structure or vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground in a predominantly built up neighborhood that is hazardous to people or property

Source: RPC

Carbon Offsets

A carbon offset occurs when an individual company or organization directly or indirectly removes greenhouse gases from the atmosphere or prevents a certain quantity of greenhouse gases from being released.

Source: Merriam Webster Dictionary

Conservation Easement

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and an eligible organization that restricts the activities that may take place on a property in order to protect the land's conservation value.

Source: National Conservation Easement Database

Cultivars

An organism and especially one of an agricultural or horticultural variety or strain originating and persistent under cultivation.

Source: Merriam Webster

Ecosystem Services

Outputs, conditions, or processes of natural systems that directly or indirectly benefit humans or enhance social welfare. Ecosystem service can benefit people in many ways, either directly or as inputs into the production of other goods and services.

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica

Environmental mitigation

Measures designed to reduce or eliminate undesired environmental impacts of a proposed action

Source: USAID

Federal Functional Classification

Classification used by most road authorities to determine the roadway types based on use. The classifications include Arterial (high mobility, restricted access points), Collector (medium mobility, many access points), and Local (low mobility, few access points).

Source: FHWA, IDOT

Gentrification

A process by which a poor area experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses which often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents.

Source: Merriam Webster Dictionary

Greenbelt

Undeveloped or agricultural land that surrounds urban areas to prevent sprawl.

Source: Adapted from the Greenbelt Alliance

Greenfields

A piece of usually semirural property that is undeveloped except for agricultural use, especially one considered as a site for expanding urban development.

Source: American Heritage Dictionary

Green Infrastructure

Strategically planned and managed networks of natural lands, working landscapes, and other open spaces that conserve ecosystem values and function and provide associated benefits to human populations.

Source: The Conservation Fund

Greenway

A corridor of undeveloped land preserved for recreational use or environmental protection.

Source: Merriam Webster Dictionary

Greenway Connector

Transit that allows access to greenways for residents. Could be a walking path, bus route, bike lane, or other.

Source: RPC

In-fill development

[Building or development] that occurs in built-up areas with existing infrastructure

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Land Cover

Similar to land use, land cover defines the natural use of land (e.g. forests, wetlands, impervious surfaces, agriculture, and other land and water types).

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Land Use

Land use is a term used to describe the human use of land. It represents the economic and cultural activities (e.g. agricultural, residential, industrial, mining, and recreational) that are practiced at a given area.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Linear Corridors

A thin patch of land different from the surrounding land. Can include roads, utilities, etc.

Source: Adapted from USDA

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)

The geographic area determined by agreement between the MPO for the area and the Governor, in which transportation planning is carried out.

Source: Data.gov

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

A regional policy body, required in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000, and designated by local officials and the governor of the state to carry out the metropolitan transportation requirements of federal highway and transit legislation.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The official intermodal transportation plan that is developed and adopted through the metropolitan transportation planning process for the metropolitan planning area.

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

The county or counties (or equivalent entities) associated with at least one urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured through commuting ties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Rails to Trails

Turning unused industrial land corridors, often unused railways, into greenways. May also include Rails With Trails, where greenways are built next to industrial corridors that are still in use.

Source: Rails to Trails Conservancy

Regional Mobility

The ability to move people and goods efficiently around an entire region via various, accessible modes of transportation.

Source: Adapted from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Runoff

Runoff occurs when there is more water than the land can absorb. It can contain pollutants or sediments that can pose a threat to habitats or people.

Source: Adapted from National Geographic

Urban Heat Island

A metropolitan area that is a lot warmer than the areas surrounding it.

Source: National Geographic

Urban Tree Canopy

The layer of leaves, branches, and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above.

Source: Center for Watershed Protection

Acronyms

ACS: American Community Survey

AMA: Agricultural Management Assistance Program

APAs: Agricultural Preservation Areas

AQI: Air Quality Index

BCCD: Boone County Conservation District

BCPT: Boone County Public Transit

BFPD: Byron Forest Preserve District

BPD: Belvidere Park District

CAA: Clean Air Act

CMAQ: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program

COA: Conservation Opportunity Areas

CSP: Conservation Stewardship Program

EA: Environmental Assessments

EIS: Environmental Impact Statements

EQIP: Environmental Quality Incentives Program

FAST: Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

FHWA: Federal Highway Administration

FPWC: Forest Preserves of Winnebago County

GHG: Greenhouse Gas

GIS: Geographic Information Systems

IAACPA: Illinois Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act

IDNR: Illinois Department of Natural Resources

IDOA: Illinois Department of Agriculture

IDOT: Illinois Department of Transportation

IEPA: Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

IHS: Interstate Highway System

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

LOTS: Lee-Ogle Transportation Systems

LRTP: Long-Range Transportation Plan

MAP-21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century

MPA: Metropolitan Planning Area

MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization

MSA: Metropolitan Statistical Area

MTP: Metropolitan Transportation Plan

NAAQS: National Ambient Air Quality Standards

NEPA: National Environment Policy Act

NLI: Natural Land Institute

NRCS: National Resources Conservation Service

PEL: Planning and Environmental Linkages

RATS: Rockford Area Transportation Study

R/ECAP: Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty

RMAP: Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning

RMTD: Rockford Mass Transit District

RPC: Region 1 Planning Council

RPD: Rockford Park District

SAFETEA-LU: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

SGNC: Species in Greatest Need of Conservation

SMTD: Stateline Mass Transit District

TA: Transportation Alternative

TEA-21: Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century

UA: Urbanized area

USCB: U.S. Census Bureau

USDA: U.S. Department of Agriculture

VOCs: Volatile Organic Carbons

WCHD: Winnebago County Highway Department

Boone and Winnebago County Greenway Map Layers

Note: there is a potential for scale variation due to formatting of the maps into this document

1A: Municipalities

Outlines the region's urban administrative division having corporate state and powers of self-government of jurisdiction.

2A: Railroads

Highlights the region's major active railroads, some spurs and transfers have been removed.

3A: Regional Roadways

Functionally Classified Roads including local streets, but not alleys or private drives.

4A: Regional Trails – By Type

Differentiates between current and proposed shared-use paths.

5A: Agricultural Preservation Areas

Areas designated within a county where landowners have chosen to create and emphasize the importance of agriculture.

6A: Privately Managed Natural Resources

These properties are privately owned and operated, sometimes they are open to the public, other times an appointment is required, while some locations are sensitive and visitors are prohibited all together.

7A: Publicly Managed Natural Resources

These properties are owned and operated for public use, usually free of charge.

8A: Water Resources/Hydrology

Lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands.

9A: Critical and Sensitive Areas

Includes 100-year floodplain, steep slopes with 150-foot buffer, hydrology with 150-foot buffer, and any areas identified as priority for acquisition.

10A: Digital Elevation Model

3D representation of terrain's surface.

11A: Hillshade

A grayscale 3D representation of the earth's surface with the sun's relative position taken into account for shading the image.

12A: Base Map – All Data

Appendix B: Existing Plan Connections

IDOT: Illinois Long Range Transportation Plan 2019:

The primary purpose of the Illinois Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is to provide strategic direction for the development of the Illinois transportation system. The LRTP vision for transportation in Illinois is to provide innovative, sustainable, and multimodal transportation solutions that support local goals and grow Illinois' economy. One of the goals of the Greenways Plan is to connect longer pathways across the region for active transportation connectivity and outdoor recreation.

IDNR: Illinois Wildlife Plan:

The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) creates guidelines around non-game species and their habitats. The Plan outlines strategic plans for each of seven habitat types and the best conservation strategies for the DNR and partner organizations to use to conserve vulnerable species. The plan is based on efforts to acquire and conserve land in this region through initiatives such as the Greenways Plan. Furthermore, the IWAP provides additional guidance on land acquisition to conserve important habitat.ⁱⁱ

IDNR: Ecosystems Program - Ecosystems Partnerships:

Ecosystem partnership programs cover land across 86% of Illinois and provide long-term coordination for the efforts of stakeholders to conserve land and protect watersheds. The Ecosystems Program covers integrated technical assistance, assessment and monitoring, ecosystem projects, planning, and support grants, and ecosystem interpretation and education. The program has protected and restored thousands of acres of land and provided millions of dollars in funding, including greenways projects.ⁱⁱⁱ

IDNR: Grand Illinois Trails Concept:

The Grand Illinois Trail stretches 500 miles across the State of Illinois, crossing different terrains, towns, and covering one of America's oldest rail-trails. The idea was created in the 1900s and towns across the State enthusiastically supported the building of this green infrastructure. This is an example of one of Illinois' oldest greenways, and both informs and is informed by the Greenways Plan.^{iv}

Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan for the Rockford Metropolitan Area:

The purpose of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is to promote a safe and efficient transportation network for people that provides

a balanced, multi-modal system minimizing costs and impacts to the taxpayer, society, and the environment. The plan addresses the development of a region-wide system of on-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities to connect with existing shared use path facilities, existing and planned public transportation services and provide model development regulations and ordinances to promote and encourage bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly growth in the Rockford MPA. The Greenways Plan aims to increase active transportation, including biking and walking, in the region, connecting people to places they need to access. These two plans work closely to promote safe alternatives to vehicle travel.

Greenways: A Green Infrastructure Plan for Boone and Winnebago Counties:

The planning effort for the 2015 Greenways Plan and Map was led by MPO staff under the direction and supervision of the Greenways Planning Committee, and the MPO Technical Committee and Policy Committee. The resulting recommendations are in response to these groups and the region's vision as a whole. The 2015 Greenways Plan and Map outlines the current greenways conditions and steps for further implementation.^v

Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2050:

Planning for transportation needs is essential to ensuring the Rockford Region has a balanced multi-modal transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people and goods. This plan addresses the transportation system in the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), consisting of the urbanized portions of Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties, providing an innovative and sustainable framework for the region's transportation network over the next twenty to thirty years. The MTP 2050 will inform how greenways are built since they are part of the region's transportation network.^{vi}

Rockford Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):

Throughout this document, strategies and action items center on collaboration within the region and fostering efficient business development, expansion, diversification, job growth, and entrepreneurial enterprises across the region. The end goal of the CEDS document is to make the Northern Illinois Region a world-class, prosperous region with a resilient economic base and a superior quality of life that outperforms peer regions in job growth, capital investment, and innovation. Greenways are part of developing a healthier, more connected region and may boost economic development, bringing more tourists and industries to the region.

Rockford Region Vital Signs: Regional Plan for Sustainable Development:

The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD) puts forth an analysis and framework for promoting a sustainable community in the Rockford Region based upon the core principles of providing more transportation choices, promoting equitable and affordable housing, enhancing economic competitiveness, supporting existing communities, coordinating policies and leveraging investment, and valuing communities and neighborhoods in the Rockford MPA. The Vital Signs Plan is important for designing sustainable, equitable greenways in collaboration with other development plans for the region.

Title VI & Environmental Justice Considerations:

This Title VI and Environmental Justice (EJ) Program reflects the Rockford MPO's commitment to implementing planning processes that are designed to protect against discrimination and to ensure that it provides fairness and consideration of issues impacting disadvantaged residents. It also provides a clear process that a resident may use if the individual believes they have been discriminated against in one of RPC's programs or activities. Finally, the Title VI Program outlines the strategies and tools the MPO utilizes to reach and involve all of its residents, including those who are historically harder to reach. These considerations are vital for greenways planning projects that have the potential to increase equitable access to natural spaces, active transportation opportunities, and regionally connective pathways.

Local, County, and Corridor Boone County

Boone County Comprehensive Plan:

The Boone County Comprehensive Plan establishes a community vision for the future and serves as a guide for development in Boone County over the next ten years. It was created through collaboration with county staff, elected officials, municipalities, and the general public. Developing greenways are part of neighborhood development and land use planning, and Boone County uses and contributes to the Greenways Plan and Map.

Highway 173 Corridor Plan: The Boone County Highway 173 Corridor Plan examines the long-range future of the 12-mile segment of Highway 173 in Boone County. The purpose of this plan is to identify detailed land use, transportation, and design recommendations for the length of the corridor. This plan explores different uses of the highway section that crosses various types of land use, developing recommendations to protect environmental assets in the area informed by greenways planning.

Ogle County

Ogle County: Amendatory Comprehensive Plan (2012 Update):

This comprehensive plan is the center-piece of the community development planning process, stating the county's development goals and outlining public policies for guiding future growth. It establishes an identifiable destination that allows both the governing body and private interests to plan and budget with an idea as to the direction the County may move in the future, and helps to ensure that future growth is not only anticipated, but planned for. The plan functions as a practical guide to coordinate day-to-day decisions so they make sense in the future. Ogle County is using this and the Greenways plan to develop strategies for controlled growth and increasing quality of life with natural spaces.

Ogle County Greenways & Trails Plan:

The Ogle County Greenways & Trails Plan is the long-range master plan for the green infrastructure in the county. The plan serves multiple use and objectives, including (1) identifying the resources and opportunities for open space and recreational trail systems and (2) linking communities with one another and with the natural areas and cultural resource areas via greenways and trail network. It looks to utilize the strengths of the country to balance the environment, recreational needs, economic growth, and sustainability. This plan both informs and draws recommendations from the Greenways Plan.

Ogle County Greenways Map:

The Ogle County Greenways Map is a long-range, visionary master plan for the green infrastructure of the region. It identifies the resources and opportunities for open space and recreational trail systems, linking communities with one another and with natural and cultural resource sites. The plan emphasizes the unique history and geography of the region and recognizes the relationship between the environment, recreational needs, and economic growth and sustainability. This planning process was initiated by Ogle County municipalities, planning and conservation organizations, and by recreational user groups and is a result of region greenways efforts including this Plan.^{vii}

Winnebago County

Winnebago County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan:

The Winnebago County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (MHMP) represents the integration of a community profile, hazard profile, mitigation strategies, and a Risk Priority Analysis profile into one plan. The MHMP is a stakeholder-driven document that a state, tribal, or local government can use to describe risks and vulnerabilities as well as long-term strategies and implementation approaches for reducing loss of life and property from natural disasters. The Greenways Plan can be used in conjunction with the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan to decrease risks from flood and heat and to provide greater community stability.

Winnebago County Natural Resources

Inventory:

The Winnebago County Natural Resources Inventory uses local environmental and resource data to provide a database to local decision-makers to use in planning efforts including greenways. The GIS data in the database includes parks, open spaces, forest preserves, wildlife habitats, wetlands, forested lands, soil classifications, and natural areas on both private and public lands.

viii

Winnebago County: 2030 Land Resource Management Plan:

The 2030 Land Resources Management Plan ensures that change in the county occurs pursuant to the consensus of area stakeholders, such as civic and business leaders, various interest groups, citizens, and the County's municipalities and townships. The plan looks to accommodate an increased population with the proportional economic development, preserve and enhance both the urban and rural characters of the County, and minimize the impact of future development on natural resources, agriculture, and the environment. The Greenways Plan used this resource to provide specific land planning recommendations.

Local

City of Belvidere | Comprehensive Plan:

The city's current comprehensive plan sets out programs and policies, including natural space and greenways plans, that could be of great benefit for community members over a fifty-year timeframe. The plan was developed by city staff through collaboration with those in the community.

City of Loves Park | Comprehensive Plan:

The City of Loves Park Comprehensive Plan acts as the City's official policy guide for future land use, development, and conservation within the community. It considers the needs and concerns of the community in the short term and projects future improvements and developments for the next 10-20 years. The primary purpose of the plan is to advance the welfare of people by creating an increasingly better, sustainable environment composed of three interrelated parts – social, economic, and built environment. This work will include greenways and other natural spaces, as well as collaboration with other local decision-making bodies.

Village of Machesney Park | Comprehensive Plan:

This comprehensive plan sets forth long-range recommendations for the maintenance and enhancement of existing community areas, and for desirable improvements, developments, and redevelopments within the Village and its planning area. This will include natural space and greenways plans.

Village of Poplar Grove | Comprehensive Plan:

The comprehensive plan serves as a guideline to use in making decisions and taking actions that will affect the future of the village. It covers a variety of topics including the village's history,

population and demographics, jurisdictional boundaries, natural resources, transportation infrastructure, community facilities, telecommunications and utilities, housing, and economic development. The Greenways Plans provides recommendations for many of these goals.

City of Rockford | Comprehensive Plan:

The comprehensive plan has been adopted and revised since the 1980s and gives guidelines for the management of land use, transportation, community facilities and services, telecommunications, housing, economic development, neighborhoods, natural resources, historic preservation, community design, public participation, and monitoring implementation. The comprehensive plan guides the development of the community, as well as decisions about infrastructure, priorities, the economy, and the development of natural spaces and greenways. The comprehensive plan therefore both guides and benefits from the Greenways Plan.^{ix}

City of Rockford | Stormwater Master Plan:

The purpose of the Stormwater Master Plan is to develop a comprehensive planning approach to manage storm water quality and quantity throughout Rockford. It helps to mitigate potential damage to property and infrastructure that may occur in the future. Greenways, as outlined in this plan, can provide many cost-effective stormwater management solutions.

City of Rockford | Downtown Rockford Strategic Action Plan:

The overarching goals of this plan are to create a strategic vision to guide policy for the revitalization of Rockford's downtown and align land use, transportation, and urban design implementation strategies so the entire city can benefit from increased growth and development. Growth and development will involve natural spaces and greenways planning and may be guided by the Greenways Plan.

City of Rockford | Envision North Main:

The Envision North Main Street Corridor Plan is the result of a collaborative process that included analyzing the existing conditions and opportunities, developing alternative improvement strategies, refining the preferred strategies, and establishing an implementation action plan. The planning process included a community workshop to brainstorm concepts for the corridor and a public open house to solicit community feedback on alternative strategies. The result is a vision for the corridor that is unique to Rockford, including greenway elements like active transit pathways and natural space.

City of Rockford | Kishwaukee Street Corridor Revitalization Plan:

The Kishwaukee Street Corridor Revitalization Plan was initiated by the City of Rockford to establish a long-term vision for the future of this central artery through the City, linking Downtown Rockford on the north to the Chicago Rockford International Airport on the south. This document was created through collaboration with business-owners along the Kishwaukee Street corridor and describes specific land use changes, economic investment

strategies, and transportation improvements that could help revitalize the area. Related to this plan, the Greenways Plan aims to develop mobility across the city and provide aesthetically-pleasing natural spaces.

IL west of the Rock River. The plan looks at some of the more economically depressed areas in the city and seeks to create a strategy for energizing and revitalizing homes and businesses along the corridor, including with greenways-related best practices.

City of Rockford: Rockford Madison Street | Charrette Summary:

The Madison Street Charrette was initiated to develop an integrated plan and implementation strategy to knit the corridor together. This focus group process leads to a consensus on the three-part organization of the plan: Mobility, Environment, and Place-Based Economic Development. In short, the consensus was that a coherent streetscape was needed to unify the corridor, a design with high environmental performance would both protect and emulate the Rock River, and that the most powerful project driver was the economic redevelopment of the Madison Corridor as a vibrant mixed-use space. The Greenways Plan provides recommendations for best practices in developing similar spaces.

City of Rockford | Rockford Riverwalk Vision Plan:

The Rockford Riverwalk Vision Plan is focused on showing how a continuous pathway along both banks of the River can become a reality. It identifies important issues and opportunities, but stops short of laying out a plan for development; this will be done in the public arena at the project development stages for each increment of the Riverwalk. Its goal is to raise popular support for improving connections along the River rather than define a particular design. As development of the riverwalk continues, the Greenway Plan can inform decisions around mobility, equity, and environmental considerations.

City of Rockford | Rockford's 2020 Plan:

Entering the 21st Century: Rockford's 2020 Plan serves as the city's comprehensive plan and acts as the official policy guide for future land use, development, and conservation within the community. The purpose is to lay the groundwork for creating a community that is a good place to live, work, raise a family, and enjoy life. As Rockford moves forward, the Greenways Plan will draw on relevant policy and provide guidelines for incorporating greenways into development decisions.

City of Rockford | South Main Revitalization Strategy:

The South Main Revitalization Strategy develops a revitalization and implementation strategy for the South Main Street/Illinois Route 2 Corridor. The process sought to build upon programmed and pending improvements to the Corridor, including the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) roadway reconstruction of South Main Street, as well as a number of other studies and initiatives conducted around and within the South Main Corridor. Greenways Plan elements can be incorporated into revitalization strategies such as this one.

City of Rockford | West State Street Corridor Plan:

This plan analyzes a four-mile stretch of State Street in Rockford,

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Appendix D: Public Participation and Comment

Public Participation and Comment

While in-person forms of public participation ceased due to COVID-19, there was still a range of virtual and online opportunities for members of the public to review the updated Greenways Plan and Map.

The Greenways Working Group was convened in the fall of 2020 and consisted of representatives from a variety of public and non-profit organizations, including one community member. The working group met three times throughout the planning process to provide recommendations on the goals, objectives, and proposed updates in the plan. In October 21, 2020, the Greenways Working Group held their first meeting and briefly discussed the plan's goals and objectives. The second working group meeting was held on November 12, 2020 to review the first iterations of the draft maps. The third working group meeting was held on January 19, 2021, during which the updated plan and map was presented and discussed.

Additionally, in November of 2020, RPC launched a public-facing website page with information about the upcoming plan for members of the community to review and learn more.

Press releases about the plan were published in various local news sources and RPC social media on February 5, 2021 to announce the official public comment period from February 5 to March 7, 2021. Public comments can be found on the following pages, and responses can be found in Table D-1. These comments were responded to, reviewed, and if appropriate, incorporated into the final Greenways Plan and Map. The final draft was sent to the Technical and Policy Committees for adoption on April 22, 2021 and April 30, 2021, respectively.

Timeline

10/21/2020

- First working group meeting

11/12/2020

- Second working group meeting

1/10/2021

- Website launch

1/19/2021

- Third working group meeting

2/05/2021

- Public comment period begins, website briefly taken down for editing

3/07/2021

- Public comment period ends, website re-launched

3/23/2021

- RPC finishes incorporating public comments into final document

4/22/2021

- Final draft sent to Technical Committee

4/30/2021

- Final draft sent to Policy Committee for adoption

Table D-1. Public Comment Record

Name	Organization	Topic	Comment	Comment Response
Dan Kane	Boone County	Trails and Paths	Update path alignment along picksaw creek. Make sure it follows the road and aligns with new TAP submission.	Greenways map was updated to reflect the correct road alignment along Picasaw Creek.
Dan Kane	Boone County	Trails and Paths	Replace link to Grand Illinois Trail with https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/recreation/greenwaysandtrails/Pages/GrandIllinoisTrail.aspx	The link has been updated on page 55, citation iv for Section 9.
Dan Kane	Boone County Conservation District	Publicly and Privately Owned Land	<p>I have some additional input to share about site listed in Boone County as being both publicly owned and privately owned according to the legend color/cross-hatching identifiers. The following sites are owned by the BCCD and are therefore publicly owned. I think there is some confusion in that these sites are also encumbered by conservation easement agreements held by Openlands. These sites include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballard Farm Conservation Area • Ipsen Road Conservation Area • Funderburg South Conservation Area • Rainbow Gardens Conservation Area • Kishwaukee Valley Conservation Area (note it is not Kishwaukee Bend Conservation Area) • Silberhorn Conservation Area • East County Line Conservation Area • The southern 40-acre parcel of Funderburg North Conservation Area • Luckey Woods Conservation Area 	The following sites were removed from the privately owned designation and assigned the status of 'publicly owned'. This designation change is reflected in the static and interactive map layers.
			<p>I am not certain about some of the Agricultural Area sites. Several show a medium green background behind the cross-hatch? Are these properties also involved in some type of conservation easement other than the Ag Area designation? Everything else looks correct in the Boone County side of the map. Did the Belvidere Park District ever provide review comments?</p>	
Dan Kane	Boone County Conservation District	Outside Resources	I would advise adding a link to any United State Geological Survey real-time water guage sites so potential paddlers can pre-check water levels to help assess whether or not to get on the water at that time. Here is the link to the Belvidere gage: https://waterdata.usgs.gov/il/nwis/uv?site_no=05438500	Thank you for being a part of the Greenways Plan process. Your comment has been noted as a part of the public comment record.
Josh Franks	NRCS	Priority Protection Areas	Regarding Priority Protection Areas: Our wetland easement program is specific to areas greater than 51% hydric soils and 20 acres or more with the majority being cropland. The CRP program targets cropland as well and floodplains, steep lands are prioritized but other areas are eligible. I push our pollinator/monarch program with our smaller producers/organic folks since those pair well together. The majority of our programs are open to anyone that qualifies. Most all resource concerns are eligible. We do have landscape initiatives and there may be some funds specific to the driftless region which brings in the whole Pec watershed to Rockton but that is not known at this time for funding opportunities.	<p>Added three additional programs to the Agricultural Conservation Program Funding section; “· Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): Eligible farmers can receive technical and financial assistance to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their land, encouraging cost-effective environmental enhancement.</p> <p>· Wetland Reserve Easements: Through four easement strategies of different time limits and legal parameters, applicants can work with the NRCS to turn private land, including farms, into wetland easements.</p> <p>· Working Lands for Monarch Butterflies: The NRCS also offers a program for working lands to obtain financial and technical support for the creation of habitat suitable for the iconic monarch butterfly.”</p>

Name	Organization	Topic	Comment	Comment Response
Michael Smith	Studio GWA/ Working Group	Mobility Connections	Add transit stops and bus routes to interactive map. Look into adding a zoning later that identify commercial districts. Possible add grocery, retail points.	RMTD bus stops and fixed-routes were added to the Greenways Interactive Map.
Mike Groves	Winnebago Forest Preserves	Priority Protection Areas	I found a Land Advisory Committee document that outline specific criteria and questions with a rating system for how we go about determining if land is suitable to be purchased by the Forest Preserve. We are mainly looking at anything that is designated "Priority Acquisition" on the Greenways Map. That was the light green colored areas on the old Greenways Map. Ability to come up with funds and or grants to purchase these properties and ability to maintain them is going to be our biggest hurdle moving forward. I scanned a few pages out of the document highlighting our criteria and attached them to this email.	Thank you for being a part of the Greenways Plan process. Your comment has been noted as a part of the public comment record.
Dennis Anthony	Winnebago County SWCD	Land Use	I have a question about the data on page 24, where it shows the cultivated cropland for Winnebago County at only being 8% and the woody wetlands at 52%, not sure if the "cell count" column is correct, but the remaining columns got flipped?	Updated numbers using a corrected formula.
Dennis Anthony	Winnebago County SWCD	Regional Greenways Map: Data	Page 34 – Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District should be added	Added the Winnebago County Soil and Water District to list of organizations on page 34.
Dennis Anthony	Winnebago County SWCD	Privately Owned Lands	WCSWCD Conservation Easement #1 needs to be changed to privately owned.	WCSWCD Conservation Easement #1 was removed from the publicly owned lands layer and added to the privately owned lands layer. This change is reflected in all mapping products.
Tim Bragg	Rockford Park District	Municipal Parks	<p>If you don't have a list of all RPD sites, let me know. I know labeling all of the sites might present a challenge (labels overlapping due to sites in close proximity). If there's a need to prioritize; I would say the boulevards, circles and triangles could go without labels if the exhibits are getting a bit busy. These are maintained/mowed by the Park District, but are right-of-way owned by the City of Rockford.</p> <p>The other thing I would say is having labels for arterials and collector streets to give orientation for the map/exhibit user. I don't think it will be possible to get down to the local street level in terms of labels.</p> <p>I am attaching a list of park sites/facilities our Adm Assistant assembled recently for a co-worker.</p>	Labels were added for relevant arterials and collector streets to give orientation for the map/exhibit user.
Joni Denker	Rockford Park District	Parks	The only thing I noticed on the map is that there are several parks that are not included on the map, such as Sand Park. I didn't get a chance to go through for a list of parks not annotated.	MPO staff acquired an updated shapefile of Rockford Park District facilities. New facilities, boulevards, triangles, and circles were added to all mapping products.
Justin Krohn	Boone County	Trails and Paths	Add the following "Proposed Trail" designation to: 1. Along BUS20 from Winnebago/Boone County line to N. Appleton Rd in Belvidere 2. Along Squaw Prairie Rd from Belvidere North High School to Poplar Grove Rd.	The Paths and Trails Layer was edited to reflect the proposed trail designations. These edits were incorporated into all mapping products.
Greenways Working Group	N/A	Outside Resources	Add widget or link to i-View platform and other organization sites.	Two widgets were added to the Greenways Interactive Map. These widgets supplied a link to RPC's Greenways Story Map and Prairie State Coalition's i-View Mapping Platform.
Arleta Juliano	N/A	Trails and Paths	Thank you. I was able to view the map and was happy to see that a path on Harlem rd, back side of Rock Cut, is in the plan. We live in that area and have seen how dangerous the road is for bikers and hikers going to the back entrance of the park. There has been at least one biker killed on the road in recent history and we constantly have to be on alert while driving along that stretch. Do you have any idea if constructing a path between Perryville and the back park entrance is in the near future?	We do not have any knowledge of a future project involving constructing a path between Perryville and the back park entrance at this time.
Zachary Grycan	Natural Land Institute	Protected Lands	Good afternoon, I just tried sending you an updated shapefile for NLI protected lands that contains the Lin-McGeachie Woods Preserve shape, is there still time to edit that? Wouldn't have thought much about it but the preserve will be open to the public. Message was blocked a couple of times when I tried emailing an attachment, is there still time to add the shape?	The updated shapefile was recieved and added to the interactive and static Greenways map layers.

Sydney Turner

From: Dan Kane
Sent: Wednesday, February 3, 2021 1:36 PM
To: Justin Krohn; Julia Halsted; Sydney Turner
Cc: Kevin Catlin; Isamari Mandujano
Subject: RE: Greenways Plan Underway

Great contribution to the regional greenway plan Justin!

This is for Shelby:

When I clicked on the link to the Grand Illinois Trail the link to me to the IDNR website and was not a direct link to the Grand Illinois Trail component. Here is the link that will take users to the GIT component: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/recreation/greenwaysandtrails/Pages/GrandIllinoisTrail.aspx>

Also, due to risk management and insurance liability, the conservation & recreation agencies along the Kishwaukee River do not list the river as a “water trail.” Doing so implies there is management occurring and none of the agencies (that I am aware of) are conducting management activities on this naturally flowing, wild river. So we have no designation for a water trail on the Kishwaukee River. There are paddle craft put-in/take-out sites (canoe/kayak launches), but we do not identify the river as a trail. And, I would advise adding a link to any United State Geological Survey real-time water guage sites so potential paddlers can pre-check water levels to help assess whether or not to get on the water at that time. Here is the link to the Belvidere gage: https://waterdata.usgs.gov/il/nwis/uv?site_no=05438500

Dan

Daniel J. Kane, LPG
Executive Director
Boone County Conservation District

From: Justin Krohn
Sent: Wednesday, February 3, 2021 12:11 PM
To: The Team at Region 1 Planning Council; Sydney Turner
Cc: Kevin Catlin; Isamari Mandujano; Dan Kane
Subject: RE: Greenways Plan Underway

Based on public comments, elected officials, County Comprehensive Plan document and research; please forward the following recommendations onto the greenways plan route update group – add the following “Proposed Trail” designation to:

1. Along BUS20 from Winnebago/Boone County line to N. Appleton Rd in Belvidere
2. Along Squaw Prairie Rd from Belvidere North High School to Poplar Grove Rd.

Thank you,

Justin D. Krohn, P.E.
Boone County Engineer

Shelby Best

From: Tim Bragg
Sent: Wednesday, February 3, 2021 9:12 AM
To: Shelby Best
Cc: Alexandra Rosander
Subject: RE: Greenways Working Group - January Meeting

Shelby:

I am attaching a list of park sites/facilities our Adm Assistant assembled recently for a co-worker. I hope this will be of use to you and Alex.

I had emailed Sarah about the Park search matter yesterday-hopefully she won't think RPD is being aggressive in getting that matter addressed!

From: Shelby Best
Sent: Wednesday, February 3, 2021 8:11 AM
To: Tim Bragg
Cc: Joni Denker; Tom Lind; Alexandra Rosander
Subject: RE: Greenways Working Group - January Meeting

Thanks, Tim.

We collected the RPD sites from Prairie State Conservation Coalition's [iView data](#), but I am cc'ing Alex here so she can follow up with you on getting an updated list from your team directly.

Also, I saw Joni's note about WinGIS. I've passed that along and they said it should be fixed today.

Shelby Best
Environmental & Sustainability Specialist

From: Tim Bragg
Sent: Tuesday, February 2, 2021 2:56 PM
To: Shelby Best
Cc: Joni Denker; Tom Lind
Subject: FW: Greenways Working Group - January Meeting

Shelby:

See the first part of Joni's email. If you don't have a list of all RPD sites, let me know. I know labeling all of the sites might present a challenge (labels overlapping due to sites in close proximity). If there's a need to prioritize; I would say the boulevards, circles and triangles could go without labels if the exhibits are getting a bit busy. These are maintained/mowed by the Park District, but are right-of-way owned by the City of Rockford.

The other thing I would say is having labels for arterials and collector streets to give orientation for the map/exhibit user. I don't think it will be possible to get down to the local street level in terms of labels.

Thanks-I will await the opportunity to see the draft document.

Tim B.

From: Joni Denker
Sent: Tuesday, February 2, 2021 8:12 AM
To: Tim Bragg; Tom Lind
Subject: RE: Greenways Working Group - January Meeting

Hi Tim,
Sorry for my late reply. I was out sick several days last week. The only thing I noticed on the map is that there are several parks that are not included on the map, such as Sand Park. I didn't get a chance to go through for a list of parks not annotated.

A side note, is there a reason the park search map on WinGIS isn't working? It seems like it hasn't been working in some time.

Best,

Joni Denker
Conservation Supervisor
Rockford Park District

From: Tim Bragg
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:05 AM
To: Joni Denker; Tom Lind
Subject: FW: Greenways Working Group - January Meeting

Joni/Tom:

In addition to the proposed draft maps; this version of the Greenways plan will also have an interactive map-here's the link below. Tom-do you think the interactive map would be the better tool to show the natural surface trails at Atwood and Searls?

From: Shelby Best
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 9:33 AM
To: Chris Baer; Dan Kane; Dennis Anthony; Harry Adams; John Nelson; Josh Franks; Josh Sage; Kerry Leigh; Mark Miller; Mark Pentecost; Michael Smith; Mike Groves; Tim Bragg; Tina Dawson Scott; Sydney Turner; Alexandra Rosander
Subject: Greenways Working Group - January Meeting

Good morning,

You can download the maps we will be reviewing during today's meeting here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/t/MhmBHgyBPkunkava>

Here is the latest interactive map draft:

<https://wingis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=14e89dd5b8ff4c1a9beb0acf8c08c11d>

Thank you,
Shelby

Shelby Best

Environmental & Sustainability Specialist

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Shelby Best

From: Franks, Josh - NRCS, Rockford, IL
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 12:41 PM
To: Shelby Best
Cc: Alexandra Rosander
Subject: RE: Greenways Priority Protection Areas Follow Up

Good afternoon,

[REDACTED] Our wetland easement program is specific to areas greater than 51% hydric soils and 20 acres or more with the majority being cropland. The CRP program targets cropland as well and floodplains, steep lands are prioritized but other areas are eligible. I push our pollinator/monarch program with our smaller producers/organic folks since those pair well together. The majority of our programs are open to anyone that qualifies. Most all resource concerns are eligible. We do have landscape initiatives and there may be some funds specific to the driftless region which brings in the whole Pec watershed to Rockton but that is not known at this time for funding opportunities.

I hope this helps.

Josh

From: Shelby Best
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:42 AM
To: Franks, Josh - NRCS, Rockford, IL
Cc: Alexandra Rosander
Subject: Greenways Priority Protection Areas Follow Up

Hi Josh,

[REDACTED] I wanted to follow up on our conversation yesterday about the Greenway's Plan priority protection and acquisition areas. Are you able to provide some more specific details on what the NRCS policy is in regards to identifying land for protection and if you currently have specific areas already identified?

Thank you,
Shelby

Shelby Best
Environmental & Sustainability Specialist

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Shelby Best

From: Zach Grycan
Sent: Wednesday, March 3, 2021 5:10 PM
To: Shelby Best
Subject: Greenways Plan

Shelby,

Good afternoon, I just tried sending you an updated shapefile for NLI protected lands that contains the Lin-McGeachie Woods Preserve shape, is there still time to edit that? Wouldn't have thought much about it but the preserve will be open to the public. Message was blocked a couple of times when I tried emailing an attachment, is there still time to add the shape?

Thanks,

--

Zachary Grycan | *Director of Stewardship*



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Mission:

The Natural Land Institute is a non-profit land conservation organization whose mission is to create an enduring legacy of natural land in northern Illinois for people, plants, and animals. Since 1958, the Natural Land Institute has helped to preserve and restore more than 17,300 acres of natural land in northern Illinois.

Shelby Best

From: Dan Kane
Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 2:34 PM
To: Shelby Best
Subject: RE: Greenways Draft Plan & Map for Public Comment

Good Afternoon Shelby,

I have some additional input to share about site listed in Boone County as being both publicly owned and privately owned according to the legend color/cross-hatching identifiers. The following sites are owned by the BCCD and are therefore publicly owned. I think there is some confusion in that these sites are also encumbered by conservation easement agreements held by Openlands. These sites include:

- Ballard Farm Conservation Area
- Ipsen Road Conservation Area
- Funderburg South Conservation Area
- Rainbow Gardens Conservation Area
- Kishwaukee Valley Conservation Area (note it is not Kishwaukee Bend Conservation Area)
- Silberhorn Conservation Area
- East County Line Conservation Area
- The southern 40-acre parcel of Funderburg North Conservation Area
- Luckey Woods Conservation Area

I am not certain about some of the Agricultural Area sites. Several show a medium green background behind the cross-hatch? Are these properties also involved in some type of conservation easement other than the Ag Area designation?

Everything else looks correct in the Boone County side of the map. Did the Belvidere Park District ever provide review comments?

Dan

Daniel J. Kane, LPG
Executive Director

From: Shelby Best
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2021 2:25 PM
To: Jason Snudden; Beth Baranski; Brent Anderson; Charles Freeman; Charlie Oliver; Chuck Martin; Cindy Skrukud; Cliff Runyard; Colin Belle; Guif, Daniel; Dan Kane; Dennis Anthony; Dulka, Anthony; Gordon Geddes; Greg Maurice; White, Gregory; Jeff Levato; Joanna Colletti; Justin Krohn; Kerry Leigh; Laura Marcasciano; Michelle Gibson; Miller, Nadine; Neill Sachs; Ryan Kerch; Sarah Berg; Scott Kuykendall; Sean Von Bergen; Russell Caveny
Subject: Greenways Draft Plan & Map for Public Comment

The 2021 Greenways Plan & Map drafts can be found here: <http://r1planning.org/greenways-plan>. We are accepting public comments through March 7th.

Shelby Best
Environmental & Sustainability Specialist

From: Kari Kampen
Sent: Thursday, February 11, 2021 1:03 PM
To: Michelle Gibson; Jason Snudden
Subject: Jan 2019 GW report

Hello
See attached. Look at Feb 21 tab.

Shelby Best

From: Dennis Anthony
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 11:30 AM
To: Shelby Best
Subject: RE: Greenways plan comment

Page 34 – Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District should be added

Dennis

From: Dennis Anthony
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 11:27 AM
To: Shelby Best
Subject: Greenways plan comment

Shelby,

I have a question about the data on page 24, where it shows the cultivated cropland for Winnebago County at only being 8% and the woody wetlands at 52%, not sure if the “cell count” column is correct, but the remaining columns got flipped?

Thanks,

Dennis Anthony

Executive Director

Winnebago County SWCD