

Amy Salamon

From: R1 Planning Council <info@r1planning.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2025 10:26 AM
To: Amy Salamon
Subject: [Test] R1 January Newsletter - How R1 Impacted the Northern IL Region

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2024 Year in Review

366 Days of Progress in Northern Illinois

Last year was significant for R1. It allowed the organization to flex its strengths – planning, advocacy, and grants – while introducing endeavors that meet changing regional needs. Here are some brief highlights of what R1 accomplished in 2024.



Clockwise from top left: Volunteers plant native plant plugs at Ken Rock Park in June to create a bioretention basin that will prevent pollutants from entering the Spring/Rock Creek watershed; Senator Tammy Duckworth spoke at R1 in April while in northern Illinois to explore high-tech industry projects; The annual Boone Winnebago County Trustee auction broke participation records, but more importantly, reduced the number of blighted properties in the region.

Biggest auction yet! The Land Bank administered Trustee Program auctions for Boone and Winnebago Counties, with 280 registered bidders and resulting in 170 property sales worth \$1 million.

Capitol Connections. R1 hosted a meeting in April with Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and local government to discuss federal support for a waste-to-energy development in southeast Winnebago County. Representative Darin LaHood (R-IL) briefed local government leaders about his efforts to advance economic development during an October meeting.

Watershed protection. R1 gathered community volunteers to create a bioretention basin at Ken Rock Park in Rockford as part of a US EPA grant to mitigate water pollution. Volunteers will construct a bioswale in the Park-Er-Woods subdivision in spring 2025.

Mental health support. R1 awarded \$51.7 million for mental health services. Funding will be distributed to 41 programs for up to three years on behalf of the Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board.

Clean energy jobs. With partners The Workforce Connection, Goodwill, Zion West Enterprise, the Awaken Foundation, and Rock Valley College, R1 received \$5 million over three years to train disadvantaged residents for good-paying clean energy careers and grow clean energy businesses. This program is through the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA).

Electric grid upgrades. R1 is providing ComEd with public outreach support for a \$50 million US Department of Energy grant won by ComEd to modernize the electric grid. Through the GRIP grant, ComEd will improve grid resiliency, expand electric vehicle charging and battery storage, and make other clean energy investments.

Home consultations. R1 began helping residents set housing goals, receive resources, and understand the financial, legal, and social aspects of home ownership. This is made possible through a housing counseling program certified by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Trio of plans. R1 compiled updates to the five-year federally-required regional transportation and economic development plans, set to be approved in 2025. It also wrote the region's first-ever Climate Action Plan for Boone and Winnebago Counties, also to be approved in early 2025.

2nd COG Luncheon Previews 2025 Legislative Priorities



Six lawmakers with one purpose: make northern Illinois the best region it can be.

Northern Illinois Council of Governments (NorthCOG) hosted its second annual Legislative Luncheon in December at Hoffman House in Rockford. The panel of six northern Illinois state lawmakers answered questions from an audience of 250 local government, business, and nonprofit leaders on how they will tackle local governmental priorities in Springfield in 2025. Panelists included (*above, l to r*) Sen. Dave Syverson, Rep. Dave Vella, Rep. Joe Sosnowski, Sen. Andrew Chesney, Rep. Maurice West, and Rep. John Cabello.

Thank you to Fehr Graham, ComEd, Northwest Bank, Comcast, Project First Rate, and Dickerson & Nieman Realtors for sponsoring the event.

NorthCOG is a membership association of elected and appointed leaders from Northern Illinois municipalities, counties, school, park and water districts. NorthCOG's mission is to develop and represent unity among local governmental bodies for shared legislative priorities. To watch a brief video detailing NorthCOG's benefits and successes, visit <https://youtu.be/duiM72tiXxU?si=WZ25Ro8gH6g3gNDT>.

CEJA Funding Provides Training for Solar, Construction, Advanced Manufacturing Careers

START TRAINING FOR A CLEAN ENERGY CAREER!

WHY YOU SHOULD ENROLL:

- ✓ Get paid to train!
- ✓ Childcare, transportation, and other assistance available during training period
- ✓ Clean energy jobs are growing
- ✓ Choose your path: solar, advanced manufacturing, weatherization



CONTACT GOODWILL FOR MORE INFORMATION

 779-256-2607

 programs@goodwillni.org

The CEJA workforce programs are funded by the [Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity](#) through the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act.

Students are now being trained in each of the employment tracks offered through Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) funding: weatherization and clean energy construction, solar panel installation, and CNC manufacturing. A new cohort is expected to begin every three months.

Help spread the word so more individuals can take advantage of this career training! Share within your networks or invite a CEJA partner to your organization to present on the variety of workforce opportunities available. Employers interested in hiring program graduates are also needed.

The CEJA initiative, led in northern Illinois by The Workforce Connection and Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois and supported by R1, will establish a clean energy workforce in the Rockford region. It's free training for eligible individuals!

Contact Amy Salamon at asalamon@r1planning for more information.

EDA Reauthorization Means Ongoing Economic Support



U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) was reauthorized by Congress in December 2024 for the first time in 20 years. Bipartisan support will allow the agency, which is within the US Department of Commerce, to continue supplying resources for communities across the country to expand economic opportunity, invest in innovation, and recover from disasters.

[What does this mean for northern Illinois?](#) The EDA provides federal grants for road, water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure that is essential for economic development. Above all, reauthorization assures that the EDA will continue providing support for resilient economic development. It also modernizes the EDA so that it can keep pace with rapidly changing economic landscape of the 21st century. That means it will now be easier for small communities to get EDA assistance; distress criteria will more accurately reflect national conditions; and new resources will be available for disaster assistance, broadband deployment, renewable energy, and technological innovation.

This will allow R1 to take full advantage of its relationship with the EDA to lead regional economic planning and unlock funding for the good of the region. The EDA designated R1 as an Economic Development District (EDD) in 2022, covering Winnebago, Boone, and McHenry Counties. As the EDD, part of R1's responsibilities are to maintain a five-year regional economic development roadmap called the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) for regional prosperity. EDA funding is an important aspect to putting that roadmap in action.

Employee Spotlight

Davis Quarles

Economic Development Planner



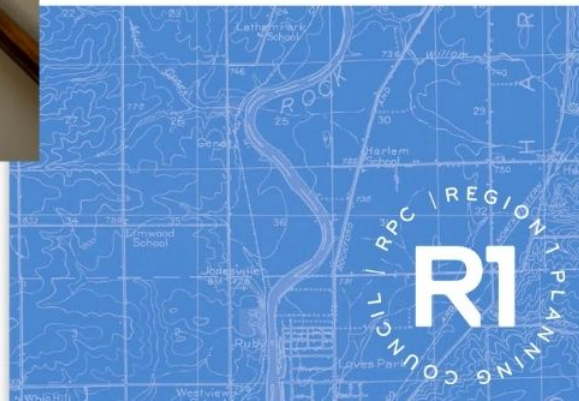
Davis Quarles joins R1 as an Economic Development Planner. He is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University, with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a minor in Economics. He interned at the McLean County Chamber of Commerce as an Advocacy Intern, conducting outreach and data analysis to address progress in workforce development and housing, transportation and infrastructure, and education. On the economic development team, Davis will be instrumental in grant writing, data analysis, and CEDS development.



Marilla Smith

Research Analyst

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Marilla Smith joins R1 as a Research Analyst. She has a master's degree in Environmental Science and Sustainability and a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science, both from Loyola University Chicago. Much of her professional experience has been with renewable energy research (particularly solar), most recently with the Solar and Storage Industries Institute. She will be joining the Sustainability team, initially working on GRIP grant implementation and the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory.

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