



January 2026

2025 Highlights

The Impact One Year Makes



Clockwise, from top left: Land Bank property, Keith Creek park design, CEJA instruction for solar panel, R1-built data bike for recreational trail mapping, WCCMHB data dashboard, Midtown neighborhood, Rockford recreational path, Northern Illinois Land Bank service area, CEJA training graduates. Photos and graphics all courtesy of R1.

The past year was full of activity within R1's core expertise. Below is a recap of major initiatives completed in 2025, either led by R1 or completed alongside our partners.

Data Dashboard – R1's data expertise took center stage in 2025. The data team built interactive dashboards for economic development, health, and WCCMHB-funded programs. The result? Complex, localized data made easily understandable and available, complete with visuals. These resources allow R1's partners to make informed decisions to accomplish their goals.

Land Bank Expansion – The Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority (NILBA) expanded its reach to Lake County, now serving six counties across the region. It also received an additional \$2 million in state funding, which reinforces NILBA's value as a neighborhood revitalization and stabilization tool.

Neighborhood Investment – Through R1's Livable Communities Initiative (LCI), the Keith Creek neighborhood completed a revitalization plan focused on flood reduction, with park construction beginning in 2026. Midtown neighborhood was selected as the program's second awardee and is now developing its own community-driven plan. LCI aims to make these neighborhoods vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable.

State of the Trails – This endeavor to map recreational paths and trails was largely carried out in 2025. The project will support better trail maintenance, improve connectivity, and encourage more residents to use the region's recreational paths and trails.

Clean Energy Expansion – Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) activity was in full swing training workers for careers in solar, energy-efficient construction, and CNC machining. This activity is funded through a grant from the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity to the Workforce Connection, with R1 and local job-training providers as partners. Additionally, R1 helped Studio GWA receive a separate CEJA grant to install a hydropower turbine on the Rock River to pilot clean energy generation in downtown Rockford.



Click on the survey title to participate



[Food & Transportation Access Study](#)

This brief survey is collecting your firsthand experiences with how accessible and available healthy food is in your community.

Bipartisan Leaders Discuss the Region's Pressing Issues



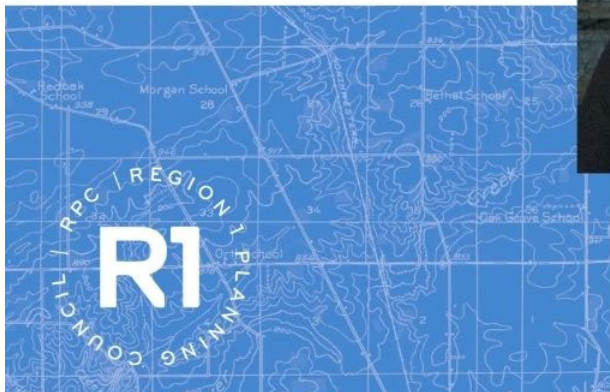
The 3rd Annual Northern Illinois Council of Governments luncheon brought the region together to discuss important issues like education, youth violence, and housing. Legislators serving on the discussion panel included state senators **Li Arellano, Jr. (R)**, **Andrew Chesney (R)**, **Steve Stadelman (D)**, **Dave Syverson (R)**, and state representatives **John Cabello (R)**, **Joe Sosnowski (R)**, **Dave Vella (D)**, and **Maurice West II (D)**. The event was moderated by Rockford mayor **Tom McNamara**, with **Martasha Brown** representing Midland State Bank as the presenting sponsor.

Employee
Spotlight

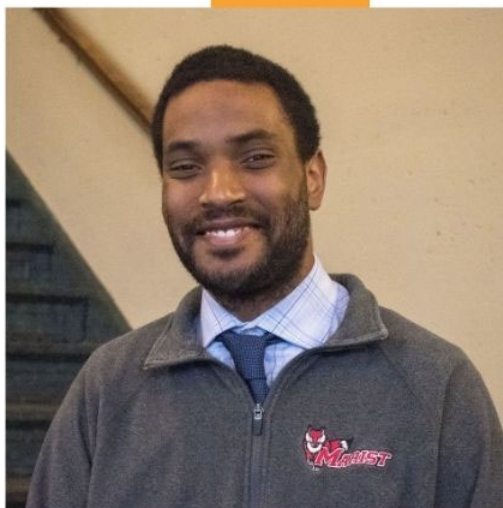
Grace Nance

Economic Development Project Specialist

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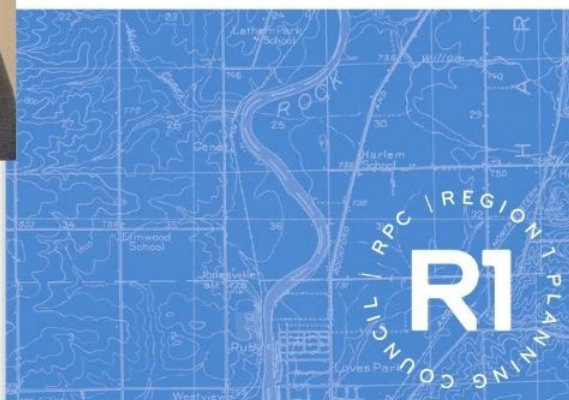
Grace Nance joins R1 as an Economic Development Project Specialist. She has a bachelor's degree in Public Policy and Political Science from the University of Illinois-Springfield and a master's in Public Administration with a concentration in community and economic development from the University of Illinois-Springfield. She worked most recently for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) as a policy analyst and is skilled in strategic planning, macroeconomic analysis, grant development, and reporting. At R1, she will be involved with economic development grant management and long-term projects.



Caleb Davis

Economic Development Planner

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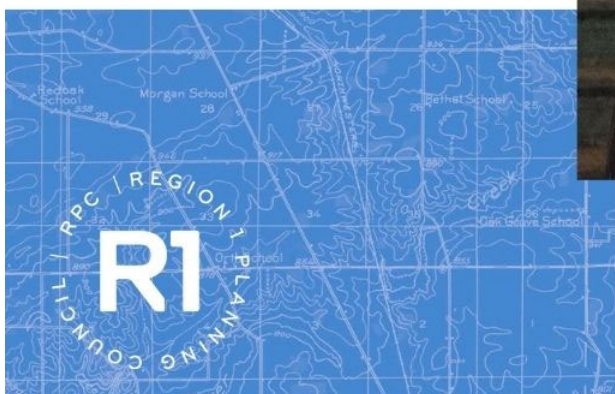


Caleb Davis joins R1 as an Economic Development Planner. He has a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Maris University. At school, he gained experience in community outreach and strategic planning. He relocated to northern Illinois from the Hudson Valley, NY. Caleb is part of the Economic Development team, working on an Illinois Jobs Training and Economic Development grant.

Lizette Gomez

Planning Intern

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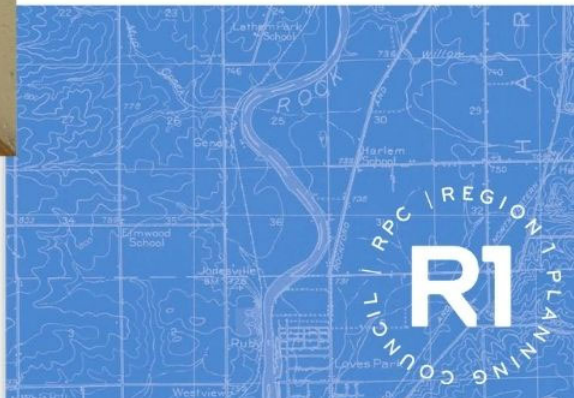


Lizette Gomez joins R1 as a Planning Intern. She has a bachelor's degree in Urban Planning with a minor in Sustainability from Arizona State University. While at ASU, she worked on a research project examining the impact of historic racial covenant laws on homeownership patterns in Black communities in South Phoenix. At R1, she will be working on LCI, Safe Streets 4 All, and other planning projects.



Netty Palomar

Receptionist



Netty Palomar joins R1 as a Receptionist. She has client-focused experience from her previous work with income tax preparation and is bilingual in English and Spanish. At R1, you will see her friendly face greeting you when visiting the office.

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