



## Climate Resiliency Forum

Tuesday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM  
Region 1 Planning Council

### AGENDA

1) **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:03pm.

2) **Roll Call**

**Members Present:**

**Staff Present:** Sydney Turner, Gabrielle Gamily, Austin Powell, Emily Guske, Lauren Kleve, Eric Tison

3) **Public Comment**

a) No comment

4) **Action Items**

a) **Approval of the Meeting Minutes of January 24, 2023**

i) Motion by Illinois Realtors, Seconded by City of Rockford Public Works, Minutes Approved

b) **Approval of the Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2023**

i) Motion by Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District, Seconded by Rockford Park District, Minutes Approved

c) **Approval of Meeting Minutes of May 30, 2023**

i) Motion by Severson Dells, Seconded by City of Rockford Public Works, Minutes Approved

d) **Election of Chairs**

i) Neely Erickson has been appointed Chair for the Climate Resiliency Forum

ii) Tim Bragg has been appointed as Co-Chair for the Climate Resiliency Forum

5) **Presentation: Natural and Working Lands**

a) R1 Staff gave a presentation with the ongoing efforts related to Natural and Working Lands

i) R1 staff defined natural and working lands, outlining a map of the land cover throughout Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties.

- Currently, only 11% of land is considered developed in the 3-County Area
- Between 2001 to 2009, there was an 11% increase in development across the region.



- ii) R1 Staff highlighted planning efforts for Natural and Working Lands.
  - The Greenways Plan was used as an example for coordinating green ways, trail preservation and development.
- iii) Time was provided for the public to ask questions
  - Illinois Realtors raised a question on what exactly caused that 11% increase in development throughout the Region. R1 Staff highlighted that this could not be delineated based upon how the data was collected.
  - Sustain Rockford asked about how zoning determines the classification of a natural of working land. R1 Staff specified that those classifications may differ due to a local or county government's planning efforts.
  - Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District referred to the Winnebago County 2030 Plan and the need to check on approved zoning practices.

#### 6) **SWOT Analysis Activity: Natural and Working Lands**

- a) R1 Staff gave a presentation on what is a SWOT analysis as well as how it will be applied in the activity.
- b) Time was given to stakeholders to identify *strengths* within the Region. This session included questions from R1 Staff to guide stakeholder answers.
  - Stakeholders shared their answers (examples include):
    1. City of Rockford's use of a FEMA program to improve open green space
    2. Both Boone and Winnebago Counties possess scores on soil quality and site assessments.
    3. The possession of 44 forest preserves within the Region
    4. A large amount of productive farm land within Winnebago and Boone Counties
    5. Rockford Park District acquisition of donated land.
    6. Effective outreach surrounding the use of public lands and learning about conservation.
    7. During the pandemic, the Rockford Park District saw a considerable increase in using public parks or spaces.
    8. 815 Outside has been an effective partnership to get members of the public outside on hikes, conservation, and educational efforts.
    9. Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District partnering with organizations to work with farmers on conservation & sustainability efforts.
    10. Natural Land Institute's work on land conservation, restoration, and managing conservation easements.



- c) Time was given to stakeholders to identify *weaknesses* within the Region. This session included questions from R1 Staff to guide stakeholder answers.
- Stakeholders shared their answers (examples include):
    1. Lack of education from members of the public on discussions around zoning efforts in the Region.
    2. Lack of 30 by 30 initiatives within the Region.
    3. Considering the transition away from fossil fuels and how cropland will be affected in the future.
    4. Addressing time lags between updates in data for the management of natural and working lands.
    5. Lack of funding in school systems to expose school children to open space and a lack of capacity to host every child.
    6. The disappearance of a lot of wetland habitat due to development.
    7. Lack of staff and funding to manage areas.
- d) Time was given to stakeholders to identify *opportunities* within the Region. This session included question from R1 Staff to guide stakeholder answers.
- Stakeholders shared their answers (examples include):
    1. Increase investment in environmental education programs throughout the region.
    2. Increase outreach efforts to connect the public to natural areas.
    3. Increase interest and use of the Conservation Reserve Program, Pollinators Program, etc.
    4. Increase participation in No Mow May
    5. Increased flexibility in zoning policies to allow more spaces for pollinating, etc.
    6. Increase implementation of rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales
    7. Increasing implementation of Conservation at Home efforts.
    8. Increasing reforestation efforts across the region.
    9. Consideration of a local incentive program for increasing carbon recapture efforts.
    10. Educating elected officials on the benefits on improving density in housing and infill.
- e) Time was given to stakeholders to identify *threats* within the Region. This session included questions from R1 Staff to guide stakeholder answers.
- Stakeholders shared their answers (examples include):
    1. Lack of knowledge on what the future holds for the demand on crops in the region and how the transition away from fossil fuels or meat consumption will affect farmers in the region.
    2. The running out of Covid funding in a few years and how that might affect existing programs.



3. Addressing misinformation on climate change and how natural and working lands have changed over time.
4. Addressing shifting ranges in plant-hardiness zones throughout the region.
5. Changes in law on protections afforded under the Clean Water Act
6. Political Politicization affecting long-term changes to zoning and planning.
7. As climate change affects crops, there will be more herbicide uses, increasing the risk of runoff and water quality issues.
8. Addressing tick-borne illnesses as temperatures increase in the region.
9. The rise of extreme weather events will threaten biodiversity and ecosystem stability.

7) **Staff Reports**

- a) R1 Staff gave an update on the upcoming SWOT activities and to RSVP on [r1planning.org](http://r1planning.org) before attending.

8) **Agency Reports**

- a) RMTD will have an update of 8 hybrid buses implemented into the fixed-route fleet beginning in a couple months
- b) Sustain Rockford is planning a solar expo in February of 2024 as well as planning to increase the amount of compost bins available to the public.
- c) Eliminate Racism 815 is hosting a picnic on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August.
- d) Winnebago County Health Department is working with R1 on a water assessment study for small water systems.
- e) City of Rockford Public Works has acquired a property that is set to be turned into open space. Keith Creek efforts are still ongoing as well as Neighborhood Clean-up Initiatives
- f) Illinois Realtors highlighted the collection of a \$5000 grant in order to host a sustainability outreach program for partners.
- g) Rockford Park District is working on attaining a special use permit for a wildlife refuge area in Cherry Valley.

9) **Other Business**

- a) No other business

10) **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 5:24pm

Meeting minutes prepared by: ATP  
Minutes approved by action of the Forum: \_\_\_\_\_