

2.7 PLANNING ISSUES – OPEN SPACE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Objectives:

1. To preserve and protect Kane County open space and green infrastructure as the cornerstone of natural resource protection and community well-being.
2. To continue the efforts in protecting the environment and restoring the unique and fragile environments associated with the geography of Kane County.
3. To enhance and expand Kane County's green infrastructure network by providing functional connections between water resources, natural areas, forest preserves, cultural and historic sites, and communities as part of the region's Green Infrastructure Vision.
4. To foster public awareness, education, and support of environmental and open space management.
5. To continue enhancing the County's visual identity and community character by preserving natural areas, landscapes, scenic vistas, and rustic roads and their historic, cultural and archaeological resources.
6. To support coordinated implementation of the Kane County Forest Preserve Master Plan, township, park district and other open space plans as a guide to the orderly and consistent preservation of the County's natural resources.
7. To provide a variety of open space opportunities and recreational activities in proportion to the needs of a rapidly expanding population of the next three decades.

Chapter Focus

Open space is the armature of the 2040 Plan, as it was for the 2020 and 2030 Plan, providing the framework that complements all other land uses. The open space armature is a tapestry of undeveloped public and private lands, with the Fox River and its tributaries as its backbone. Open space can be acquired and preserved a number of ways through public and private efforts, including forest preserve, townships, and park district acquisitions as well as the through the development approval process and dedication of conservation easements. The open space armature and the greenway systems are the foundation for an expanded green infrastructure network as we look out to the year 2040. The green infrastructure network extends in and through developed areas, linking habitats and improving water and environmental quality.

This chapter examines:

- Continuing the Green Legacy
- Open Space Assets
- Open Space Armature and Greenways – the 2040 Green Infrastructure Network
- Planning for Open Space and Green Infrastructure

Continuing the Green Legacy

Open space is the counterpart of the built environment. Open space often contains natural resources that are too valuable to lose. Protection of these resources ensures a continuity of nature for future generations. Along with environmental protection, open space provides “breathing room”, environmental protection, recreation opportunities, visual beauty, spiritual enrichment, educational opportunities, and other benefits.

Located at the western edge of the metropolitan region, Kane County has experienced and continues to experience pressure on land for conversion from agricultural land and open space. Since 1970, open land in the Chicago region has been consumed at an alarming rate. From 1970 to 1990, the metropolitan region’s population grew 4.1%, yet the land area devoted to residential use expanded an estimated 46%. In the last 20 years, from 1990 to 2010, the metropolitan region’s population grew an additional 15.5%, and the consumption of land for residential use has continued at an equally unsustainable pace. Responding to this alarming rate of open land consumption and recognizing the need for strong open space policies, the Chicago metropolitan region has proactively preserved or created, as of 2010, approximately 300,000 acres of open space including County forest preserves, township parks, municipal parks, private conservation easements, private nature preserves, and state and federal holdings.¹

Kane County’s greenway preservation program is part of a long standing tradition in the metropolitan area that includes Chicago’s lakefront park system, the boulevard system, and forest preserve acquisition along the Chicago, Des Plaines, Du Page and Fox Rivers. The region is proud of carrying forward the Daniel Burnham legacy in his *1909 Plan of Chicago*. Burnham envisioned the creation of a large interconnected open space system extending from Lake Michigan westward. A 1956 follow-up plan co-authored by Daniel Burnham, Jr., recorded the accomplishments of the 1909 plan and sounded a call to continue its vision. The 1956 Burnham Plan recognized Kane County for its efforts in establishing a Forest Preserve District and in acquiring open space. Kane County began open space conservation in 1926 with the acquisition of Johnson’s Mount Forest Preserve. This was followed in 1928 by the acquisition of Bliss Woods, Elburn, and Tyler Creek Forest Preserves.

“Like winds and sunsets,
wild things were taken
for granted until
progress began to do
away with them.”
-Aldo Leopold

¹ Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. 2010. GO TO 2040 Plan.

Open space protection and the greenway network have strong roots in Kane County policy dating back to the 1967 Five Point General Development Policy. The 1976 Comprehensive Plan called for a countywide greenway system to protect natural areas. The 1982 Comprehensive Land Use Plan continued the greenway system and stressed the need to preserve remaining natural areas, to provide connections between open spaces, and to ensure a full range of recreational opportunities. The 2020 Land Resource Management Plan introduced a bold, comprehensive approach to open space preservation. The 2030 Land Resource Management Plan aggressively promoted and further implemented the countywide greenway planning tradition. A goal of the 2030 Plan was that 50% of the land area in Kane County will be in agricultural and open space uses in spite of the unprecedented population growth and community development.

Continuing our green legacy into 2040, ***Kane County commits to aggressively promote an open space armature and greenway system, sometimes referred to as the green infrastructure network. Kane County reaffirms the commitment to open space and farmland preservation with the general goal that by 2040 at least 50% of the land in Kane County should still be in farmland and open space uses.*** The 2040 Plan reflects a strong partnership with CMAP and supports a regional strategy of expanding the green infrastructure network by reducing land consumption and thereby helping to protect green infrastructure. Kane County endorses CMAP's key recommendations for expanding and improving parks and open space:

- Provide more parks in developed areas to increase park accessibility
- Preserve the most important natural areas in the region
- Provide functional connections between parks and preserves, using the green infrastructure network as a design concept²

As the County and municipalities continue to face growth pressures, the preservation and expansion of open space, particularly along the Fox River and its tributaries, and promoting compact, mixed-use development to reduce land consumption will be key to achieving livable, sustainable, and healthy communities.

Open Space Assets

Kane County's greatest open space asset is the Fox River. The major natural feature of the region, the Fox River is a significant greenway or linkage within the green infrastructure network consisting of wildlife and aquatic habitat, as well as a recreational resource. The Fox River has served as a magnet for development and recreation since early settlement. The appearance of the riverfront has improved greatly since the time when heavy industries and junkyards were located along its shoreline. The municipalities have recognized the Fox River as an open space and community amenity by acquiring riverfront acreage and designing riverwalks to link housing, parks, shops, offices, and restaurants in their

² Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. 2010. GO TO 2040 Plan.

downtowns. Such development beautifies downtown centers as well as revitalizes the economy. Parkland along the river is a prime spot for picnicking and recreation, including bicycling and walking along the Fox River Trail. In some communities riverfront amenities also include boating and canoeing. A scenic driving route was established along the Fox in 1980. This route, designated as the Fox River Road established on parts of both Routes 31 and 25, accentuates the natural beauty of the Fox River Valley.

(Following two paragraphs to be updated with the availability of Forest Preserve - Vision Maps and Natural Resources Master Plan update. *FP has not provided update.*) The Kane County Forest Preserve District holds the largest portion of public open space in the County, presently over 19,000 acres. District owned Forest Preserves, open space, and natural areas serve four primary purposes: preserve natural resources, provide recreation and education resources, structure the form of urban development, and restore natural areas. Since 1999, Kane County has passed four open space referendums totaling \$260 million, which includes the most recent passage of a \$30 million referendum in 2010. The majority of Forest Preserve holdings are comprised of mixed grasslands (old farm fields, wetlands, turfgrass, hayfields), woodlands, and agricultural land. The Forest Preserve has restored over 1,137 acres of preserve land to native prairie grasses. Recognizing the importance of preserving and protecting the natural heritage of Kane County, eight areas within Forest Preserve holdings have been designated Illinois State Nature Preserve acreage: Bliss, Burlington, Freeman Kame, Helm Woods, Johnson’s Mound, Nelson Lake Marsh, LeRoy Oakes-Horlock prairie, and Underwood.

A 1993 Forest Preserve inventory determined only 736 acres of the County’s total 334,031 acres contain the undisturbed, original flora of the region. The remainder of the County has been disturbed through agriculture, urbanization, or other activities, which have permitted the invasion of non-native vegetation. Therefore, the District places its highest land acquisition priorities on land that contains natural features, especially land supporting mature forest/prairie or wetland and endangered/threatened species.

The Kane County bicycle/pedestrian trail system is comprised of a regional system of over 130 miles and a local system of over 180 miles (Figure 51). Established by the Kane County Forest Preserve, local municipalities and park districts, Kane County’s combined trail system of over 300 miles is one of the most extensive systems in the Midwest. Kane County’s four main regional trails are: the Fox River Trail, the Great Western Trail, the Virgil Gilman Trail, and branches of the Illinois Prairie Path. These four

Figure 51

A **regional trail system** is typically more than three miles in length and crosses into more than one municipal jurisdiction. A regional trail typically links bicyclists to destinations via long, street-separated trails that can be used for both community and recreational rides.

A **local trail system** is typically a smaller trail used for local recreation or destination, it is less than than three miles, serving one community or a single neighborhood.

trails account for approximately 85 miles of off-road paths. The most prominent trail is the Fox River Trail, a 35 mile greenway connecting the counties of Kane, Kendall, and McHenry and comprised of County forest preserves, local parks, rail-trail conversion, local streets and sidewalks. The trail, used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and jogging is an excellent alternative commuter route or recreational trail that connects charming downtowns of historic river towns while also offering exceptional natural scenery. The Great Western Trail, mainly a recreational trail, is a 17 mile trail constructed on an abandoned railway. This popular trail, extending from Sycamore in DeKalb County east to the City of St. Charles and connecting to the Fox River Trail, offers hikers and bikers the opportunity to pass through woodlands, prairie, farmland, small streams, wetland, urban areas, and the County's agricultural villages. The Virgil Gilman Trail is an 11.2 mile trail constructed by the Fox Valley Park District and the Kane County Forest Preserve District on two abandoned railways. Its western terminus is in the Village of Sugar Grove and connects at its eastern terminus to the Fox River Trail in Aurora. The trail offers a variety of urban and rural landscapes to enjoy. The Illinois Prairie Path (IPP) was one of the first shared-use trails in the nation, constructed on the former Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin Railway. The IPP links many municipal parks and County forest preserves. Because of its long uninterrupted route, it is used as a commuter route for non-motorized travel.

Other significant open space acquisition efforts in Kane County include open space protection programs by Dundee Township and Campton Township. In 1996, Dundee Township residents voted to establish an Open Space Plan and sell more than \$18 million in bonds to fund the acquisition of open space. The township purchased 862 acres of open space on eight sites, comprised of wetlands, dry hill prairie, forest, fen and farmland. Purchase of open space was geographically distributed to provide township residents with nearby passive recreational opportunities. With grant money from Open Land Trust (State of Illinois) and restoration work on behalf of volunteer site stewards, including high school students, Dundee township open space has been transformed. A former gravel mine, the old Meadowdale Racetrack, farmland, remnant prairies, woodlands, and wetlands and other open areas are being restored to their former ecosystems of prairie, marsh, oak and hickory woodlands, and are now home to many rare native plants, birds, and animals. The Township added parking lots, trails and interpretive signage to encourage public use. Key objectives of the Dundee Township open space program are to enhance groundwater supplies by infiltrating the maximum amount of rainfall on each site, to improve habitat by planting native species, and to encourage passive recreational use and public appreciation of native Illinois flora and fauna.

In Campton Township, the citizens approved two referenda for open space preservation, \$18.7 million in 2001 and \$26 million in 2005. To prioritize potential open space acquisitions, the township created an *Open Space Plan*. The objective of the plan is to acquire open land for passive and active recreation purposes and to protect farmland, historic landmarks, scenic roadways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife, and geologically significant features. Campton Township has preserved over 1,000 acres, providing the

community with space for baseball, softball, tennis, basketball, soccer, hiking, equestrian trails, bird watching, and nature photography. These efforts have preserved important environmental and historically significant features, such as the headwaters of Blackberry Creek, and the Corron Farm, a 442 acre farmstead that has been farmed by the Corron family for five generations and is listed on the Kane County Historic Register. The township has restored a number of purchased lands formerly in agricultural use to their former native prairie and wetland habitats, improving the health of local watersheds. To encourage children and adults to explore nature and become involved in conservation our resources for the next generation, the township hosts an annual Prairie Fest, at the historic Corron Farm.

The countywide open space system cannot be preserved solely by government. Private individuals or nonprofit organizations such as The Conservation Foundation may place conservation easements on a piece of land so that its natural features are permanently preserved. Through this legal technique the property owner retains ownership while waiving some of his/her development rights. Conservation easements can protect natural areas that function as greenways and habitat corridors, and other sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, ridgelines, slopes, and viewsheds.

Open Space Armature and Greenways – the 2040 Green Infrastructure Network

The Kane County open space system is the armature of the 2040 Plan – a combination of large and small green spaces with the Fox River and its tributaries as the backbone. A network of greenways connects the larger and smaller green spaces with the Fox River and its tributaries. Greenways are linear corridors that protect and manage natural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and enhance the aesthetics of the built environment.

The County’s open space armature and greenway system is part of a larger system/concept - a countywide green infrastructure network. The green infrastructure network is an interconnected system of natural areas and open spaces – woodlands, wetlands, trails, and parks - that is protected and managed for the ecological values and functions they provide to people and wildlife, supports native species, sustains air and water resources, and contributes to the health and quality of life for people and

Figure 52

Green Infrastructure is not a new concept. In the 1860s landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted included systems of open space in the plans he created for cities and towns across the United States. These systems preserved floodplains and riverbanks and protected water quality while providing recreational and scenic opportunities for residents and established connections between larger pieces of open space. A century and a half later the value of creating and protecting green infrastructure remains.

“A connected system of parks and parkways is manifestly far more complete and useful than a series of isolated parks.”

-John Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. 1903

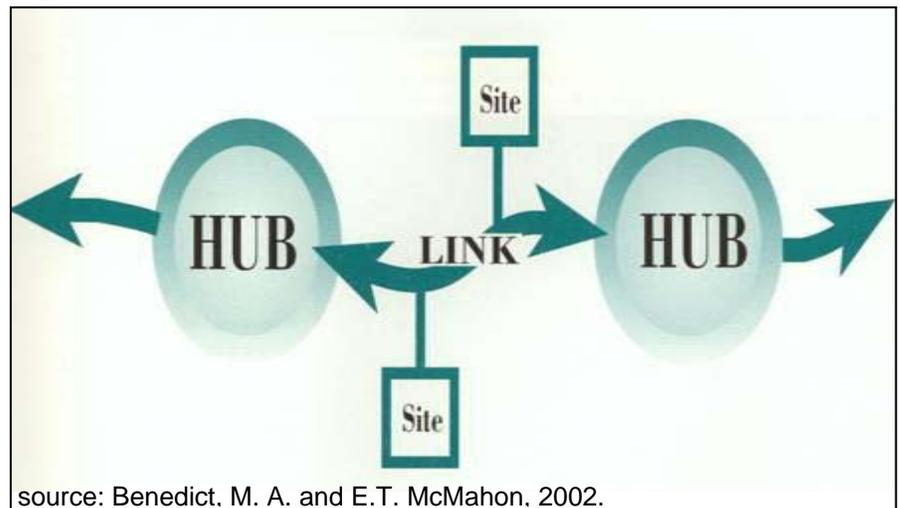
communities (Figure 52). Just as our society depends on gray infrastructure, such as our roads, pipes, wires and other manmade structures to support transportation, water, and energy systems; we depend on green infrastructure as “our natural life sustaining system” or “the ecological framework needed for environmental, social, and economic sustainability” In addition, just as the networks of gray infrastructure are planned, built and maintained to serve our communities, planning for our green infrastructure network needs to follow a “strategic approach and framework for conservation that can advance the sustainable use of land while providing an interconnected system of green spaces that benefit people, wildlife, and the economy. This approach is intended to help provide design, planning, acquisition, and other decision-making guidance for community-based sustainable development”³

Green infrastructure is composed of conserved natural areas and features, public and private conservation lands, working lands of conservation value, and other protected open spaces. Specifically, in Kane County, the green infrastructure network is composed of forest preserves, township open space, municipal open space, regional and local trails, recreational parks, working lands, including farms, waterways, green infrastructure applications of stormwater management, and conservation easements, non inclusively. Land ownership within the green infrastructure network varies and includes both private and public entities, and includes the Forest Preserve District, park districts, the County, townships, municipalities, home owners associations and other public and private bodies/entities.

The green infrastructure network consists of hubs, links and sites:

Hubs, large or small, are an “anchor for green infrastructure networks and provide space for native plants and animal communities, as well as an origin or destination for wildlife, [people], and ecological processes moving to or through it’ . Hubs of open space also provide scenic views, promoting a sense of place and community identity. The Forest Preserve District, Dundee and Campton Township, and Illinois State Nature Preserves properties are examples of hubs.

Figure 53



³ Benedict, Mark A. and Edward T, McMahon, 2002. Green Infrastructure: Smart Conservation for the 21st Century. Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse Monograph Series. The Conservation Fund.

Links, also known as linkages, corridors, and greenways, connect the hubs and tie the system together, enabling the green infrastructure network to function. Links help maintain the County’s biodiversity and water quality, provide flood and stormwater control, and serve as the foundation for smarter growth and development. Along with environmental protection, links provide bicycle and pedestrian trail access between homes, shopping, schools, parks, and commuter rail and transit stations. When managed wisely, links or greenways along waterways are effective filter strips that trap sediment and pollutants that damage water quality. The vegetation in links or greenways also helps remove pollutants from the air, reduces noise, and moderates summer heats and winds. Links and greenways provide space for streams and wetlands to function naturally and accommodate stormwater flows. Links include stream corridors and trails, such as the County’s regional trail system.

Sites are smaller areas of green space that contribute important ecological and social values, but may not be attached to the network formed by the hubs and links. Sites are many and scattered, and may include community parks, recreation areas, and cultural sites^{3a} (Figure 53).

The connectivity of the green infrastructure network, through the concept of hubs, links, and sites, helps direct and coordinate acquisition, restoration, and management efforts. Implementation and enhancement of a green infrastructure network can be accomplished through coordinated green infrastructure initiatives at the regional, countywide, and local planning level. Kane County’s open space and green infrastructure is a key component in the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan, originally adopted in 1992 and updated in 2009, is a long-range multi-jurisdictional plan for the seven-county region. “The plan envisions a [regional] network of continuous greenway and trail corridors, linked across jurisdictions, providing scenic beauty, natural habitat, and recreational and transportation opportunities for our communities.” The 2009 updated plan has been adopted by the CMAP Board and the MPO Policy Committee. The Plan identified priority linkages to enhance the regional trail system. The priority linkages identified for Kane County includes additional east-west connections to the Fox River trail and increased access to the Blackberry and Virgil Gilman Trail, Mill Creek, the Great Western Trail, and the Illinois Prairie Path⁴. More recently, Chicago Wilderness, representing more than 250 organizations that work together to restore local nature and improve quality of life in the region by protecting lands and waters, has updated the Green Infrastructure Vision, which can be found in the 2010-2012 Strategic Framework report. The GIV “is informed by green infrastructure principles being used throughout the country to begin to place green infrastructure on an equal footing with

“Connecting the trees, parks, and other urban green infrastructure at site and neighborhood scales to the surrounding waterways and other regional green infrastructure networks may well become the next great frontier in planning and government services.”
-American Planning Association

⁴ Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. 2009 Update. Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.

traditional gray infrastructure”. The GIV is a graphic, placed based implementation strategy for the *Biodiversity Recovery Plan*.⁵

Implementation of a green infrastructure network can be accomplished at different scales. The County recognizes four scales of green infrastructure as they are referred in the GIV.

- REGIONAL, by working with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and other regional partners such as Chicago Wilderness and Openlands.
- COMMUNITY, by incorporating principles of biodiversity conservation and sustainability into local land use plans and ordinances;
- NEIGHBORHOOD, by promoting the preservation of natural spaces, people-friendly design and access to nature in developing communities;
- SITE, by promoting the application of green infrastructure at the site or parcel scale through decentralized stormwater management practices, such as green roofs, tree plantings, rain gardens, and permeable pavement that capture and infiltrate rain where it falls reducing stormwater runoff and improving the health of surrounding waterways⁶.

Figure 54

Benefits of a green infrastructure network are numerous and serve as foundation for a healthy, livable, and sustainable Kane County.

- Preserves habitats and supports biodiversity for plants and wildlife
- Conserves natural ecosystem functions like water supply, flood storage, air and water purification, maintains soil health and waterways
- Improves public health by allowing and encouraging active, healthy lifestyles
- Provides a healthy environment and aesthetic beauty that enhances quality of life
- Provides economic benefits; such as, increases the local tax base and enhances surrounding property values, prevents flood damages; protects large and small farms, increases tourism, increases recreation related businesses, and increases retail and service occupations along greenways.
- Reduce erosion of topsoil, helping to sustain local farms.

Open space and Green Infrastructure Planning

In order to enhance and expand the County’s open space armature and greenways - the green infrastructure network, the County recognizes the importance of regional and local partnerships to accomplish open space goals as watersheds and many hubs, linkages, and

⁵ Chicago Wilderness.2010. Green Infrastructure Vision 2010-12, Strategic Framework.

⁶ Chicago Wilderness.2010. Green Infrastructure Vision 2010-12, Strategic Framework.

sites overlap multiple jurisdictions. The overall goal of a green infrastructure network is to expand communities' abilities to incorporate natural resource information and conservation strategies into their land use planning, zoning, and land development practices and by doing so achieving the County's goal of at least 50% of farmland and open space uses by 2040.

Building on the successes of the County's aggressive approach to open space and green infrastructure planning, as we plan for the year 2040, the County needs to advance its approach to conservation planning by continuing to incorporate open space and green infrastructure into the planning and development process so our natural resources are protected from destruction or pollution while making them an integral and functional part of urban development⁷. As highlighted above, the benefits of a green infrastructure network are numerous and will serve as a foundation for a healthy, livable, and sustainable Kane County.

A successful green infrastructure network requires a strategic planning approach and framework for conservation that includes the following principles:

- Green infrastructure should be the framework for conservation and development.
- Design and plan green infrastructure *before* development.
- Linkage is key
- Green infrastructure functions across multiple jurisdictions and at different scales.
- Green infrastructure is grounded in sound science and land use planning theories and practices.
- Green infrastructure is a critical public investment.
- Green infrastructure involves diverse stakeholders

Kane County has the opportunity to collaborate with municipalities, townships, forest preserve, park districts, CMAP, and other local partners using this strategic planning approach to prepare a countywide Green Infrastructure Network map and plan. This map and plan can then be used to help prioritize future open space acquisitions, guide the preservation of open space with future development, identify additional linkages that can serve as wildlife corridors and expand opportunities for alternative modes of transportation. The plan will identify specific policies and implementation tools for expanding and improving the green infrastructure network as well as ensuring its protection with updated land use and conservation ordinances. Kane County will seek opportunities to coordinate with the Kane County Forest Preserve District, townships, municipalities and park districts to strategically provide public access, education and resource protection for the green infrastructure network.

The Kane County Forest Preserve District uses the "proposed open space" land use designation as shown on the County's future land use map as a guide for making decisions on future open space acquisitions. Current acquisition strategies include expanding existing existing Forest Preserve's and increasing the number of links or linkages between Forest

⁷ American Planning Association. 2011. Rebuilding America: APA National Infrastructure Investment Task Force Report.

Preserve properties. A countywide green infrastructure network map and plan would help direct the forest preserve towards natural areas most in need of preservation, opportunities for restoration, and key linkages needed. *Every 5 years the District updates the Forest Preserve District Master Plan. [Summary of the 2012-2017 Forest Preserve Master Plan to be included here. Need update from Forest Preserve.]*

Through planning projects and policies and development regulations, municipalities have made significant efforts to preserve additional open space, enhance greenways, and incorporate natural resources into new developments. Below are a few highlights:

Concerned about protecting and maintaining their natural resources, in 2010, the Village of Campton Hills prepared and adopted a Green Infrastructure Map with the help of a SWAT (Sustainable Watershed Action Team) grant, funded through Chicago Wilderness. The Map covers the village's mile and a half planning jurisdiction, and was prepared with GIS analysis using existing natural resource maps, including streams, wetlands, watersheds, floodplains, existing public and private open space, aquifer and fen recharge areas, etc. The map will be used to inform policies in the village's comprehensive plan update as well as a tool to help the village make wise development decisions with water recharge as a major component.⁸

The City of Elgin initiated a community wide urban forestry program, The Fit Forest, in 2009, initially funded through federal reinvestment grants (ARRA), to "improve the [city's] community forest and natural resources through sustainable management using state-of-the-art and comprehensive urban forest management tools and strategies". An Urban Forestry Master Plan will address this goal and will cover community outreach and education, tree risk reduction, invasive species readiness, street and park tree planting, urban wood waste utilization, and ecosystem analysis and restoration. The City of Elgin is educating its residents on the health benefits of trees which they highlight as: reducing air pollution, protecting water quality, reducing stormwater management costs, reducing noise, helping conserve energy costs, and increasing the value of property within Elgin.⁹

"According to the U.S. Forest Service Research, unlike other City assets, as a tree grows older it also grows in value. On average, trees return \$3 to \$7 in annual benefits for every dollar invested in their care."
-City of Elgin Fit Forest *Program, 2011.*

In order to create a more livable and sustainable community, the Village of Algonquin has committed to preserving the integrity of its natural resources and to providing long-term ecological management, by adopting conservation design standards and procedures. In 2008, the Village adopted Conservation Design

⁸ Green Infrastructure in the Village of Campton Hills. 2010. Prepared by Trotter and Associates, Inc. Adopted 2011.

⁹ City of Elgin, Community Forestry Program. The Fit Forest. www.cityofelgin.org. Accessed 2011.

Standards and Procedures that encourages infill development and redevelopment and requires developers and consultants to work with the natural landscape of the land by developing around them rather than destroying them and recreating them elsewhere. These new development regulations would apply to proposed developments or redevelopment of one acre or larger in size that contain or abut sensitive nature resource areas, such as those designated in the McHenry County Natural Area Inventory or streams, rivers, and lakes designated as Advanced Identification (ADID) high quality habitats. Developers can voluntarily apply as a conservation development and can receive density bonuses if they offer a superior layout and quality of design that incorporates environmentally sensitive design features that exceed the minimum requirements of the ordinance.¹⁰

In 2007, the City of Aurora, adopted the River Edge Park Master Plan, a plan for a regional park located in the city's historic downtown business district. The Fox River greenway, referred to in the Plan as the "river's edge" is a 170 mile stretch that will receive a dramatic makeover, resulting in both built and natural environment improvements that complement each other and will bring a more sustainable future for the city's downtown. A new civic space with a riverfront boardwalk and performance venue will be complimented by environmental enhancements along the Fox River greenway, including remediation of contaminated soil, invasive species removal, stabilized river banks, and restored native habitats.¹¹

Inherent in the value of open space and green infrastructure is the positive impact on Kane County's goals for healthy people, healthy living, and healthy communities. By continuing to aggressively pursue a more connected and enhanced green infrastructure network with our regional and local partners, Kane County will further improve the overall goal for healthy people, healthy living, and healthy communities.

¹⁰ City of Algonquin. Conservation Design...

¹¹ City of Aurora. River Edge Park Master Plan. <http://www.aurora-il.org>. Accessed 2011.

Policies:

1. Implement proposed open space as identified in the 2040 Map for its environmental, livability, educational and economic benefits.
2. Protect and enhance open space and green infrastructure using the goals of the Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision Strategic Framework, CMAP GO TO 2040 Plan, and the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.
3. Coordinate with Forest Preserve District, townships, municipalities and park districts to strategically provide public access, education and resource protection for the green infrastructure network.
4. Encourage the coordinated implementation of the Forest Preserve District Master Plan and Natural Resource Master Plan, township, park district and other open space plans.
5. Incorporate conservation and sustainability criteria in development controls and County ordinances to protect natural, scenic, historic, archaeological and environmental areas when making land use and development decisions.
6. Implement County and local bicycle and pedestrian plans to encourage walking and biking.
7. Explore innovative opportunities to collaborate on the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure.
8. Encourage the increased use of non-acquisition techniques such as conservation easements, tax adjustments, and dedication as alternative methods for implementing local, County and regional open space plans.
9. Continue to partner with multiple jurisdictions in order to update and implement watershed-based plans in Kane County.

