



**BLACKHAWK HILLS
REGIONAL COUNCIL**

2016-2017

**Annual
Report**



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Board of Directors

Carroll County Reps

- Darrell Stitzel, County Board
- Ed Juracek, SWCD*
- John Huggins, Area Representative

Lee County Reps

- Tim Deem, County Board
- Aaron Wolf & Jeremy Zapf, SWCD
- Janice McCoy, Area Representative

Stephenson County Reps

- Sam Newton, County Board
- Seth Wenzel, SWCD
- Dennis Groezinger, Area Representative

Staff

- Daniel J. Payette, Executive Director
- Julie M. Jacobs, Office Manager
- Andrew Shaw, GIS Mapping & E-Zone Specialist

Jo Daviess County Reps

- Ron Smith, County Board
- William Tonne, SWCD
- Marvin Schultz, Area Representative**

Ogle County Reps

- Ron Colson, County Board
- Marcia Heuer, SWCD
- Michael Reibel, Area Representative

Whiteside County Reps

- John Espinoza, County Board
- Vacant, SWCD
- Glen Kuhlemier, Area Representative***

Key

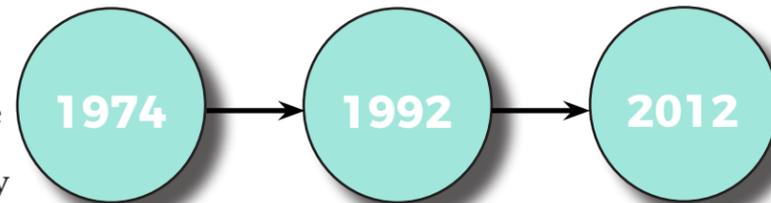
- * = President
- ** = Vice President
- *** = Secretary/Treasurer

About Us

Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) is a non-profit regional planning organization based in Rock Falls, IL, which serves Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside counties. BHRC provides services to various constituencies, with emphasis on community and economic development and natural resources conservation. The Council is sponsored by local county boards and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and is overseen by an 18-member council, consisting of 3 representatives from each of the 6 counties. Our region includes 3,777 square miles of territory.

History

BHRC began as Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development District (RC&D) in 1974, when it was authorized by the United States Secretary of Agriculture. Shortly thereafter, the district obtained 501(c)(3) status. In 1992, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated an Economic Development District within BHRC&D's territory, to be maintained by Blackhawk Hills. In 2012, with the support of county boards and soil and water conservation districts, Blackhawk Hills was recognized as a non-profit regional planning organization, reflecting BHRC's involvement in and commitment to regional planning projects and initiatives.



Focus Areas



Freight Study

Along with public and private sector partners (ECIA, TCEDA, etc.), BHRC is supporting the ongoing eight-county freight study of four Illinois counties (Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Carroll, and Whiteside) and four counties in Iowa. Staffers have completed 32 in-person interviews with businesses located in Illinois and promoted an online form geared toward additional private sector participation. At the study's end in 2018, we will provide our consultant's findings to transportation agencies, local governments, and area businesses. The information will help these entities prioritize infrastructure investments that support multiple modes of freight movement, which are so critical to our region's development.



Trails Study

On March 15, 2017, BHRC held the kick-off meeting for its ongoing trails study at the Freeport Chamber of Commerce. At the meeting, we provided an overview of the project and the region's major land-based trails. The study will establish data on trail use by walkers, joggers, and bicyclists. Specific trails included in the area of study are the Jane Addams Trail (Stephenson County), Galena River Trail (Jo Daviess County), Great River Trail (Carroll/Whiteside counties), and Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail (Whiteside County). We will also collect information about the economic impacts of trail use from trail user intercept surveys, create a consolidated map of the region's trails, and inventory amenities and features available for public use.



Enterprise Zone

BHRC is working with founding members of the new Lee County-Ogle County Enterprise Zone to support robust local application of the revitalization tool. The E-Zone program is a leading incentive program in Illinois, a partnership of state and local resources that promotes business growth and economic development (via property tax abatements, sales tax exemptions on certain building materials, and other incentives). Staff will handle specific functions, including zone administration and old/new zone transition assistance.

Energy Efficiency

BHRC submitted for energy efficiency incentives ranging from between \$427.40 to \$32,200 on behalf of a number of entities, including the Bertolet Memorial Library (Leaf River), River Bend Schools (Fulton), Eastland Schools (Lanark), the Coloma Township Park District (Rock Falls), and Stephenson County.



The CEDS & EDD

BHRC creates and maintains the six-county region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Economic Development District (EDD). Support of both the CEDS and EDD made multi-million dollar US EDA public works grants for the City of Rochelle and Savanna possible.

Technical Assistance & Mapping

BHRC partnered with the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC) in developing and submitting an application for brownfields assessment funding. The grant, if won by SWWRPC, would support abandoned lead/zinc mine research and analysis in Jo Daviess County. Furthermore, in support of redevelopment and environmental projects, staff supplied letters of support for Dixon and Sterling US EPA brownfield grant applications. BHRC has also provided application development assistance on an EDA local technical assistance grant for Freeport and Stephenson County. Finally, we are nearing the end of an effort to update the current Mount Morris comprehensive plan with a new document, called *MM2035*.

Entrepreneurship, Networking, & Education

The local Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program is in its fourth year. BHRC continues to serve as fiscal sponsor for CEO. Recently, we were invited to assist several Sauk Valley area leaders with the student-gearred Making Opportunities Real for Everyone program by providing project development help. BHRC continues to sponsor separate, regular roundtables for county board chairs and county administrators, zoning administrators, and GIS and IT officials. We also sponsor and support environmental education through the Envirothon and Conservation Days. Both involve participants from multiple school districts.

Annual Meeting/Awards

BHRC held its 2016 Annual Meeting & Spring Summit at Galena's Turner Hall. Daryl Watson, author, educator, and local historian, spoke about events and historic preservation efforts that shaped Galena over time. Laura Carstens, Planning Services Manager for the City of Dubuque, spoke on Dubuque's past decline and present resurgence. At the event, the City of Lanark was presented with the Carson DeJarnatt Economic Development Award. The Volunteer of the Year award was given to Diane Bausman.



Financials

FY 2016-2017 | Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as of May 19, 2017

