

Lee County

Greenways and Trails Plan

The Purpose of this Plan

The Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan focuses on two important issues:

The desirability to establish a vision of resident's wants, in order to determine what would benefit the county now, as well as what might be possible 10, 20, or more years into the future.

The need to develop a strategy detailing the priorities and possible courses of action to achieve that vision.

Conservation, economic development, and transportation planning at local and state levels is an ongoing process. Taken together, the visionary planning and the strategic planning approaches defined above are our best assurance of benefiting from critical opportunities as they arise. The Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan has been conceived as the frontline tool for:

- identifying our natural and recreational resources
- defining opportunities and priorities
- recommending courses of action

It has been designed to be useful to greenspace, environmental, and recreational organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions from local communities to county, regional, and state. With the assistance of this map we can link our resources to planned greenways and trails in neighboring counties. We can expect planning officials to promote and secure funding for local plans and projects that will provide better environment, ensure access to recreation for residents and visitors, and help preserve a high quality of life throughout our region.

How will this Plan support these objectives?

The Plan envisions systems of greenspace that will preserve critical features of our natural heritage. It proposes shared-use trails on existing roads as well as extensions of dedicated off-road recreational paths, linking communities with one another and with natural and cultural resource sites throughout the county. This initiative of citizens and cooperating local agencies takes as its premise the idea that improvement of open space "infrastructure" and recreational access will, over time, provide lasting and increasingly important benefits to residents and visitors alike. The objectives and benefits of greenways and trails planning include:

Providing a framework for coordinated greenway and trail conservation and development.

Assistance to implementing and funding agencies to allocate resources in support of plan priorities.

Initiating a forum for discussion and resolution of greenway issues among government jurisdictions and private sector interests.

Providing a basis for coordinating transportation, recreation, water quality, storm and flood water, wildlife, and related programs, which will advance conservation of greenways and reduce conflict with other development activities.

Increasing the understanding and appreciation of Lee County's natural and cultural resources and encouraging stewardship.

The Need for Action

The desire and intention of residents to preserve the rural character of the county is underscored by the 2000 Lee County Comprehensive Plan. It set forth the following guidelines:

Preserve environmental corridor features including waterways, flood plains, wetlands, woodlands, steep slopes, wildlife habitats, and scenic vistas through the adoption and implementation of environmental protection zoning and subdivision ordinance standards.

Ensure that residents of all ages and abilities in the County have adequate access to a diverse range of park and recreational facilities.

Promote recreational and cultural opportunities (for tourists) in the County.

Provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles between neighborhoods, park and recreational facilities, schools, service and employment centers.



The restored H. I. Lincoln Building, Franklin Grove, built with native limestone in 1860, serves as a gift shop and as national headquarters of the Lincoln Highway Association.

Encourage the development of multi-use trails within the County, as well as connect them to other trails in the region.

What is a Greenway?

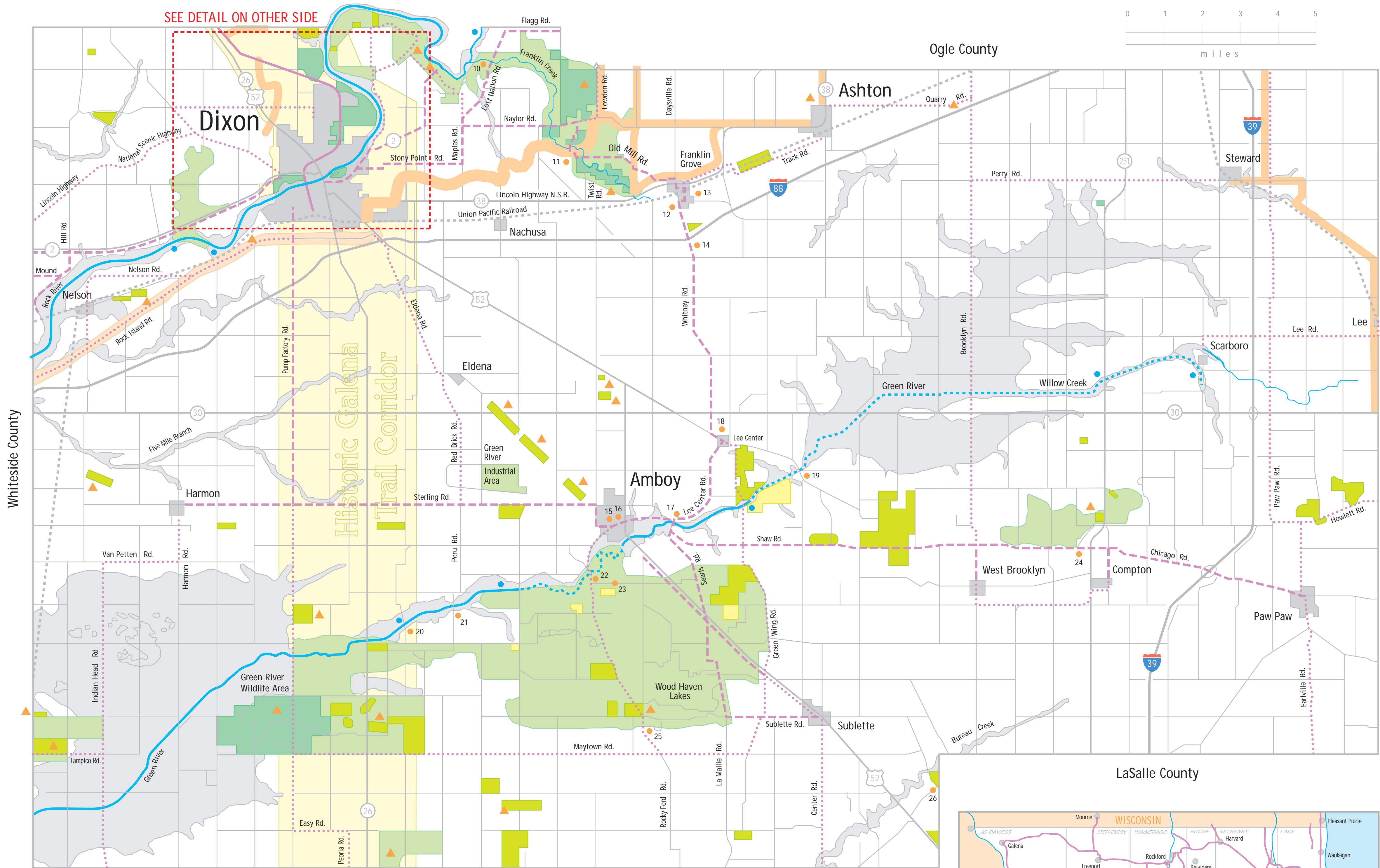
A greenway is any linear open space established along either a natural corridor such as a stream valley, or overlaid along a man-made corridor such as a converted railroad right-of-way, canal, scenic road or parkway. Like arteries linking vital organs, greenways connect parks, nature preserves, wetlands, streams, cultural and historic sites with each other and with populated areas.

Some, though not all, greenways are trails that allow visitors into and through nature. However, any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage is a greenway.

Greenways may be as wide as a watershed or as narrow as a trail. Some are publicly owned. Some are established on private land by easements, or other methods that protect valuable natural areas and cultural/historic sites, or allow public access along trails. Some are managed to preserve ecological diversity, while others are purely recreational.

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Whiteside County

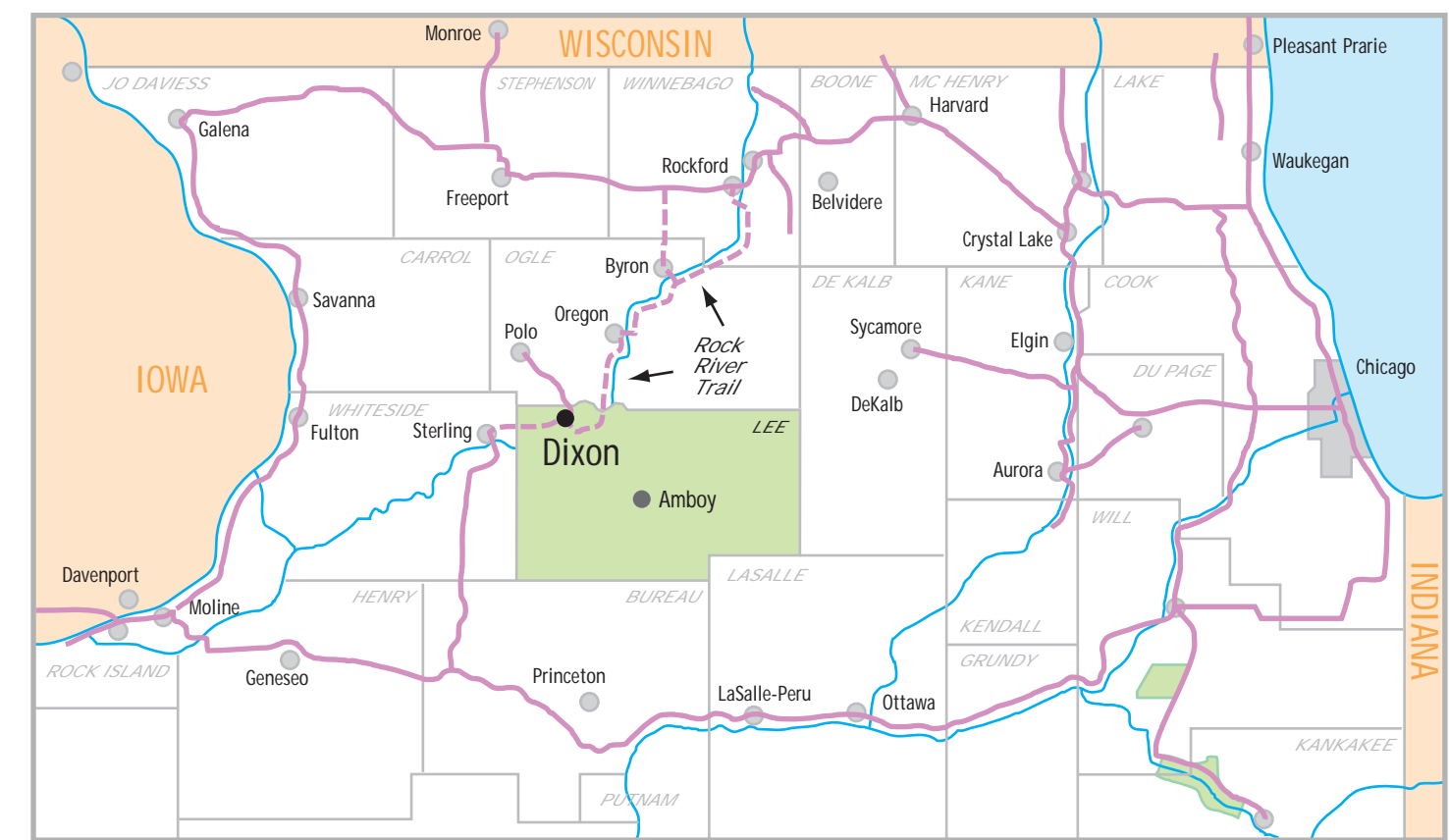


Historic Attractions

- LaSalle/Mack trading post site, early 1800's
- Franklin Creek Grist Mill and Learning Center, 1847 reconstruction
- Chaplin Creek Historic Village, restored buildings of the 1835-1895 era
- H. I. Lincoln Building, 1860, national headquarters of the Lincoln Highway Association
- Col. Nathan Whitney house and site of Whitney Nursery, 1856
- Illinois Central Rail Road Amboy Depot (museum), 1876
- First Carson Pirie store site, 1855
- Early settlement of Binghampton; site of Palmer's & Dexter's saw mill, ca. 1840
- Early settler homes, ca. 1837
- River crossing of early settler/Indian trail; site of Dewey's saw mill and town of Inlet; Inlet cemetery
- Galena Trail corduroy road toll crossing site, ca. 1830's
- Site of Howe's grist mill, ca. 1840
- Site of Perkins' saw mill, ca. 1840
- Mormon Cemetery and early settlement site
- Malugin's Grove settlement and site of inn on historic Chicago-Galena road, 1834
- Sandy Hill Catholic Church and cemetery, 1840/1853
- Ovid settlement on intersection of historic trails, 1836

Legend

- Flood plains
- Roads, etc.
- Snowmobile Corridor
- Potential Snowmobile Trail
- Public Greenspace
- Potential Greenspace
- Private Greenspace
- Recreational Areas (private and commercial campgrounds, religious, etc.)
- Existing Trail
- Potential Recreational Trail
- Secondary Trail (potential)
- Rail Roads
- River & Streams
- Potential Canoe Trail
- Canoe Site
- Historic Site
- Illinois Natural Area Inventory Site



Grand Illinois Trail System

Two Types of Trails

Dedicated Trails are designed and built off-road for the exclusive use of pedestrians, bicyclists, cross-country skiers, skaters, people in wheelchairs, equestrians, or motorized use such as snowmobilers. Surface treatment and width may vary, depending on the usage of a specific trail or segment. Permitted usage is established by the organizations and public agencies involved in the acquisition, development, and maintenance of each trail. Although more than one type of non-motorized use is allowed on most trails, typically the use by motorized recreational vehicles is segregated by location and/or by season.

Shared-Use Trails are low-volume streets or rural roads designated to be shared by existing vehicular traffic with proposed bicycle and pedestrian use. Generally shared-use trails will require at least some signage and perhaps paint striping to identify the routes and to alert motorists. Where the right-of-way is of sufficient width and suitable configuration, some shared-use roadways may accommodate other uses such as equestrians or snowmobiling within the right-of-way, although not on the pavement. State law and local ordinances govern which uses may be allowed on roads and streets.

Portions of routes that originate as shared-use roadway trails could in the future be replaced by construction of dedicated off-road trails, either within the public right-of-way or on parallel easements. The limitations on such conversions include existing development and land uses, drainage ditches and stream crossings, and vehicular traffic patterns.

Lee County's Unique History & Geography

The location of our county on many important travel routes into the Old Northwest Territory figures prominently in the development of the Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan. Some were ancient Indian trails that became crowded with lead miners and early settlers in the years following the Black Hawk War. The pattern of rudimentary roads, indicated on the original Federal Land Survey in the early 1840's, is reflected in the present-day road map of the county. Historic routes are the roads that angle across the open prairie spaces, now filled with working farms. Their destinations near and far include the original river fords and ferries that grew to become the centers of commerce and population in northern Illinois. The geography of Lee County's streams, great swamps, and the dissected terrain of a glacial moraine that spans the county dictated that many early roads would remain in spite of efforts to impose the survey grid on subsequent development.

Inspection of key roads that align with the old trail routes indicates that a greater number of scenic views, historic buildings, and cultural sites occur along these roads linking the earliest settlements. Consequently, this plan recommends that wherever possible the proposed shared-use trails coincide with historic roads. These trails offer the greatest interest for recreational use by residents and visitors alike.

Foremost among them are:

- The Galena Trail between Peoria and Galena, crossing the Rock River at Dixon
- The Chicago-to-Galena route through Paw Paw and Inlet to the ferry at Dixon
- The route between the shallows of the Illinois River at Peru, crossing the Rocky Ford on the Green River en route to Dixon
- The Green Wing route from LaMoille to Inlet crossing, through Lee Center and Franklin Grove, passing north toward Daysville and Rockford.

Similarly, most greenspace opportunities lie along the slanting, parallel pattern of the original river corridors, swamp lands, and the high, rolling moraine with its glacial features and sand deposits. The unique qualities of the recommended combined greenways and trails plans are that:

- historic patterns are preserved and exploited

continued
Lee County
Greenways
and
Trails
Plan

trails do not conform solely to east-west trending greenway and railway corridors; instead they follow historic precedent by cutting across the grain geographically to link communities, public sites, and scenic destinations located in the natural corridors.

A prominent exception will be the Rock River Trail. It will follow the greenway on the Rock River in order to provide Lee County with a connection to the Grand Illinois Trail.

The Top Priorities

Prioritizing development is the key to winning broad local support for implementation of individual projects. It is essential to attract state, federal, and private funding. This plan gives highest priority to 14 proposed greenways or trails, four of which are integral components of the Rock River Trail that will link Lee County to the Grand Illinois Trail system (G77). A total of 38 are shown on the map and described in more detail in the written report that accompanies the Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan:

- 1- Complete the Franklin Creek Greenway, linking Franklin Creek Natural Area / Nachusa Grasslands with the Rock River



Lincoln the Soldier statue marks the site of a fort and of Dixon's Ferry on the Galena Trail, historic resources within the Dixon Park District riverfront parks, now a link in existing and proposed regional bicycle/pedestrian trails.



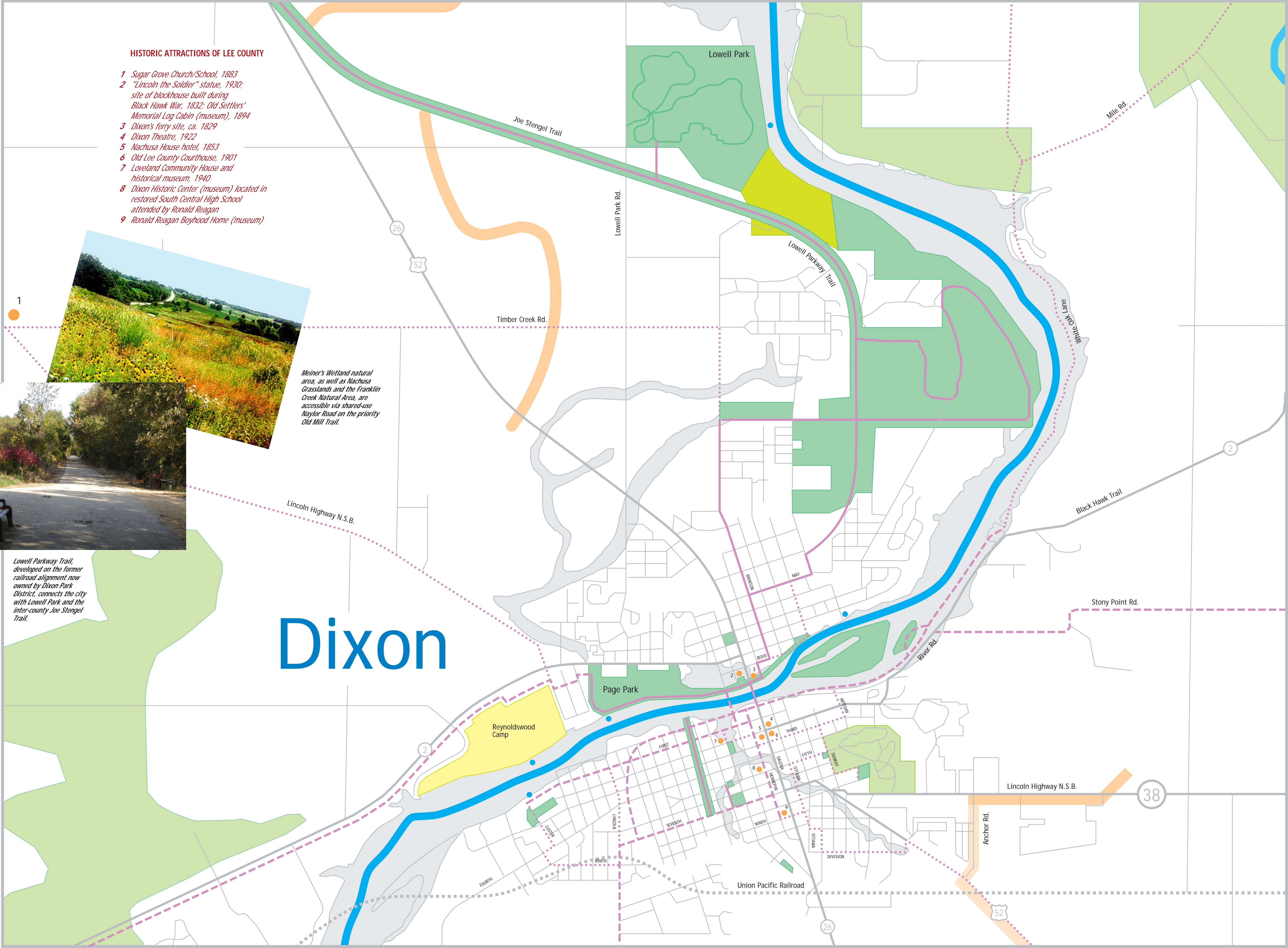
Lowell Parkway Trail, developed on the former railroad alignment now owned by Dixon Park District, connects the city with Lowell Park and the inter-county Joe Stengel Trail.



Meiner's Wetland natural area, as well as Nachusa Grasslands and the Franklin Creek Natural Area, are accessible via shared-use Naylor Road on the priority Old Mill Trail.

HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS OF LEE COUNTY

- 1 Sugar Grove Church/School, 1883
- 2 "Lincoln the Soldier" statue, 1930; site of blockhouse built during Black Hawk War, 1832; Old Settlers' Memorial Log Cabin (museum), 1894
- 3 Dixon's ferry site, ca. 1829
- 4 Dixon Theatre, 1922
- 5 Nachusa House hotel, 1853
- 6 Old Lee County Courthouse, 1901
- 7 Loveland Community House and historical museum, 1940
- 8 Dixon Historic Center (museum) located in restored South Central High School attended by Ronald Reagan
- 9 Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home (museum)



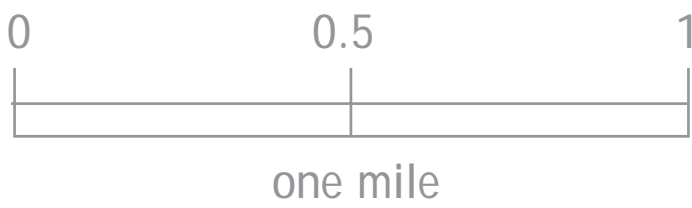
Legend

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- Rail Roads

- River & Streams
- Potential Canoe Trail
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- Historic Site



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DESIGN: DE GOEDE + OTHERS INC

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Greenways and Trails Plan

Lee County, Illinois

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June 2002

**For the
Lee County Greenways and Trails
Work Group**

This plan was developed with funding from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Additional program support was provided by Blackhawk Hills RC&D / EDD, Dixon Park District, City of Dixon, Green River Coalition, Jellystone Park and Resort, Rock River Valley Bicycle Club, Green River Cyclery, Lee County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Village of Ashton.

Contents

Introduction	1
Objectives and Uses of the Plan	
Greenways & Trails Planning History	
How the Lee County Plan Developed	
The Need for Action	
 Greenways and Trails	 5
Types of Greenways	
Types of Recreational Trails	
Benefits & Uses	
Other Greenway Plans Reviewed	
 Development of the Plan	 9
Greenways and Trails Resources & Opportunities	
Lee County's Unique History and Geography	
The Plan Vision	
 Plan Implementation	 16
Greenway Priorities	
Trail Priorities	
Action Recommendations	
Strategies and Funding	
 Appendices & Maps	
A. Inventory of Lands and Resources	
B. Participants in Lee Greenways & Trails Planning	
C. Conservation Easements and Nature Preserves	
D. Potential Public Funding Sources	
E. Potential Private Funding Sources	
F. Economic Benefits of Greenways	
G. Bibliography and Suggested Readings / On-Line Resources	
H. Lee County Greenways & Trails Plans	

Introduction

Objectives and Uses of the Plan

The *Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan* presents a vision of systems of greenspace and of both shared-use on-road and dedicated off-road trails, linking communities with one another and with natural and cultural resource sites. The plan respects and emphasizes the unique history and geography of the region. This initiative by citizens of Lee County has taken as its premise the concept that development over time of an open space "infrastructure" and improved recreational access will provide lasting and increasingly important benefits to residents and visitors alike.

Specifically, this plan serves to:

- Provide a framework for coordinated greenway and trail conservation and development.
- Assist implementing and funding agencies to allocate resources in support of plan priorities.
- Initiate a forum for discussion and resolution of greenway issues among government jurisdictions and private sector interests.
- Provide a basis for coordinating transportation, recreation, water quality, storm and flood water, wildlife, and related programs to advance conservation or restoration of greenways and reduce conflict with other development activities.
- Increase the understanding and appreciation of Lee County's natural and cultural resources and encourage stewardship.

The History of Greenways & Trails Planning

Although the greenways can trace their roots to the shaded and scenic "pleasure drives" of the late 19th century, and the birth of recreational trails linking natural areas and population centers dates back to the inception of the Appalachian Trail in the 1920s, the present Greenways & Trails movement bears a striking resemblance to "Better Roads." The Better Roads movement swept Illinois with the advent of automobiles in the 1910s and 20s and precipitated the statewide network of improved highways as well as planning and improvement at the county level. It can be said that both movements arose out of the desire by the public for improved routes for the purpose of recreation and transportation. Both were initiated everywhere by local leadership, not by centralized state leadership. Both started with pressure to improve routes of local interest and grew to envision a network linking routes one to another, providing access across county and state lines.

The term "greenway" was first used by planner Benton MacKaye in his 1921 proposal for the Appalachian Trail, probably the longest and best known of its kind. In the same year, The Friends of the Native Landscape published the results of their survey of the unique ecological and geological resources of Illinois, proposing a state park system. Among the recommended sites was an extensive linear park encompassing the Rock River Valley from Dixon to the bluffs north of Oregon. In *Proposed Park Areas in the State of Illinois*, FONL chairman Jens Jensen of Highland Park advocated preserving land from

development on several biologically significant Illinois river valleys.

After the state had acquired land for a number of the proposed parks, in 1938 the Illinois State Plan Commission published the *Illinois Park, Parkway and Recreational Area Plan*. The report noted that the intention of the state law in establishing the park system was to connect the state parks with one another by a system of scenic parkways. Such a linkage would be similar to the boulevards linking the great parks of Chicago or the Forest Preserve system of Cook County. Recognizing that such an extensive parkway system throughout the state was not feasible, the report went on to name a limited number that it thought would be highly feasible. Among them were the Illinois & Michigan Canal corridor, including the Hennepin Feeder to Rock Falls, and the Rock River. Parkway were defined as "extended strips of land, developed in a natural manner and devoted principally to recreational use. . . They may lie along a water course or canal, and may feature trails, roadways, and boating."

In 1993, with a growing number of greenways and trails in existence or in the planning stages, citizen representatives attending the first Conservation Congress in Springfield gave broad support to a resolution proposing a greenways and trails planning process to be carried out at each county or metropolitan level. The role of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources would be only to facilitate active, self-sustaining local programs.. The intention was that cumulative local planning would result in a grassroots master plan for the entire state. The resolution recognized that it would never be feasible for the state to undertake acquisition and management of such an extensive network, but that local efforts could carry such plans through to fruition by organizing various partnerships between public agencies, private organizations, and landowners. Governor Edgar and IDNR launched the planning process at a Governor's Workshop on Greenways and Trails in 1995. Presently, in northwestern Illinois regional plans have been completed in the Quad Cities area, Whiteside County, Freeport/Stephenson County, and metro Rockford/Boone-Winnebago Counties. Ogle County will soon follow suit.

How the Lee County Plan Developed

At an organizational meeting October 29, 1999 in Dixon hosted by mayor James Burke, at which a representative of IDNR explained the state support for greenways and trails planning, Blackhawk Hills RC&D offered to provide organizational and administrative services for the proposed Lee County plan. There followed a series of meetings attended by mayors, county and park district officials, representatives of conservation, recreation and trail user groups, and other interested residents forming a "work group." This group met on 12/14/99, 1/3/00, 3/2/00, and 4/13/00 at the Amboy Community Building. Dan O'Connell of Amboy was elected chairman. The meetings resulted in general consensus to proceed with developing a greenways and trails plan for Lee County and to apply to IDNR for financial assistance, with additional funds and in-kind services to be provided by 10 local agencies and groups.

On July 7, 2000, Blackhawk Hills filed an application for IDNR program assistance of \$20,000. Following confirmation that IDNR would provide the requested funds, the Greenways and Trails Work Group met again and in September selected the consultant. The project was launched in May, 2001. The projected budget, including the costs of consultant fees, production and printing of the plan, amounted to \$29,170.



HOWELL TRAIL - DIXON, ILLINOIS

Dixon's historic greenway: The system of continuous parks, pathways, scenic drives, and fishing sites on both sides of the Rock River is one of the oldest and best examples of an urban greenway in Illinois—or anywhere in the entire nation. The farsighted development converted old mill properties, eroded riverbanks, sloughs, and ash dumps to a system of continuous linear parks. The riverfront beautification was conceived by landscape planner O. C. Simonds and the Dixon Park Board in 1915. Improvements were designed and built over the following quarter century and have survived floods, ice, and automobile encroachments. The photograph above is from an historic 1930's picture postcard.

Throughout the planning process, the consultant met periodically with Dave Dornbusch of Blackhawk Hills and with a steering committee comprised of individuals who had participated in the organizational and public meetings. The process included an inventory of resources, preparation of a base map, establishment of greenways and trails criteria, development of trail alternatives, hosting of public open houses, prioritizing of proposed trail routes, and approval of the final plan. Open house presentations of the preliminary planning were held at public facilities in four locations throughout the county: Amboy on 9/13/01; Paw Paw on 9/19/01; Ashton on 9/27/01; and Dixon on 10/11/01.

The Need for Action

For several decades there has been growing public interest in linear forms of recreation and the desire to protect our natural heritage. At the same time, there are increasing development pressures. Without planning and recognition of the importance of habitat protection, storm water management, water quality, and recreational opportunities, development may inadvertently lead to further fragmentation and degradation of ecosystems.

The *2000 Lee County Comprehensive Plan* underscored the intention of residents to "preserve the rural character" of the county but provided only general objectives to achieve this goal:

Preserve environmental corridor features including waterways, flood plains, wetlands, woodlands, steep slopes, wildlife habitats, and scenic vistas through the adoption and implementation of environmental protection zoning and subdivision ordinance standards.

. . . Ensure that all residents of the County, of all ages and abilities, have adequate access to a diverse range of park and recreational facilities.

. . . Promote recreational and cultural opportunities (for tourists) in the County.

. . . Provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians, bicyclists and autos between neighborhoods, park and recreational facilities, schools, service centers, and employment centers.

. . . Encourage the development of multi-use trails within the County and connecting to other trails in the region.

Without a vision of what residents want—and of what might be—and without a concrete plan defining the priorities and possible courses of action, opportunities may be missed to incorporate greenways and trails into future public and private development plans. The Lee County Greenways and Trails Plan is intended to be the critical tool to first define and then preserve the county's natural resources and recreational opportunities and integrate them into future economic development and transportation planning. This plan will be useful to greenspace, environmental, and recreational agencies and jurisdictions at all levels, from local communities to county, regional, and state. It will assist in linking Lee County to planned greenways and trails in neighboring counties. It is also expected to be used by conservation and recreational groups and by planning officials to promote and secure funding for local plans and projects that provide better environment, ensure access to recreation for residents and visitors, and preserve a high quality of life throughout our region.

Greenways and Trails

Types of Greenways

As defined by Charles Little in the influential work, *Greenways for America*, a greenway is a linear open space established along either a natural corridor such as a stream valley or overland along a man-made corridor such as a converted railroad right-of-way, canal, scenic road or parkway. Like arteries linking vital organs, greenways connect parks, nature preserves, wetlands, streams, cultural and historic sites with each other and with populated areas.

Some—though not all—greenways are trails that allow humans passage into and through the natural world. However, any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage is a greenway.

Greenways may be as wide as a watershed or as narrow as a trail. Some are publicly owned. Some are established on private land by easements or other methods that protect valuable natural areas and cultural/historic sites or allow public access along trails. Some are managed to preserve ecological diversity, while others are purely recreational. Following are the five general types described by Little, with examples from Lee County:

1. Urban riverside (or lakeside) greenways, usually created as part of a redevelopment program along neglected and run-down waterfronts.

Example: Dixon's riverfront (a series of strip or linear parks)

2. Recreational greenways, featuring paths and trails of various kinds, sometimes of long distance.

Examples: Lowell Parkway and Joe Stengel Trails on the former ICRR right-of-way; the Rock River Canoe Trail

3. Ecologically significant natural corridors, usually along rivers and streams and sometimes ridgelines, to provide for wildlife migration and species interchange, nature study, and hiking.

Examples: Franklin Creek Natural Area; the system of sandy or wet lands lying atop the moraine in the south part of Lee County

4. Scenic and historic routes, usually along a road, highway or steeam, preferably with some pedestrian access along the route or places to alight from the car.

Examples: Lincoln Highway National Scenic Highway; Black Hawk Trail (Ill. Scenic Rt. 2); Rockyford Road

5. Comprehensive greenway systems or networks, usually based on natural landforms such as valleys and ridges but sometimes simply an opportunistic assemblage of greenways and open spaces creating an alternative municipal or regional green infrastructure.

Example: Green River with associated lowlands, moraine and forest lands

Types of Recreational Trails

All the existing and potential trails in the Plan fall into one of the following two broad categories:

Dedicated Trails are designed and built off-road for the exclusive use of pedestrians, bicyclists, cross-country skiers, skaters, people in wheelchairs, equestrians, or motorized use such as snowmobilers. Surface treatment and width may vary, depending on the uses allowed on any specific trail or segment. Uses allowed on each dedicated trail are established by the organizations and public agencies involved in the acquisition, development, and maintenance of the trail. Although more than one type of non-motorized use is allowed on most trails, typically uses by motorized recreational vehicles is segregated by location and/or by season.

Shared-Use Trails are low-volume streets or rural roads designated to be shared by existing vehicular traffic with proposed pedestrian and bicycle use for recreation or transportation. Generally they require at least some signage and perhaps paint striping to identify the routes and to alert motorists. Where the right-of-way is of sufficient width and suitable configuration, some shared-use roadways may accommodate other uses such as equestrians or snowmobiling within portions of the right-of-way, although not on the pavement. State law and local ordinances govern which uses will be allowed on roads and streets.

Portions of routes that originate as shared-use roadway trails could in the future be replaced by construction of a dedicated off-road trail, either within the public right-of-way or on easements. Conversions from shared-use to dedicated trail routes would be limited by existing development and land uses, by drainage ditches and stream crossings, and by vehicular traffic patterns.

Benefits and Uses

Greenways can provide many opportunities in Lee County. They may:

- preserve sensitive land resources, with multiple resulting benefits.
- preserve or restore natural ecosystems, expanding habitat for plants and animals.
- provide corridors or "bridges" between natural areas for movement of animals and plants.
- provide buffer zones between incompatible development patterns, reducing noise, visual and environmental impacts.
- act as filter zones to stop sediments and pollutants that degrade water quality.
- enable waterways, wetlands and flood plains to collect excess storm water caused by new development, protecting private property from flooding.
- allow access to archaeological and historic sites, including land and water routes, abandoned rail lines, Native American and early settlement villages.

- serve as outdoor classrooms for education in the fields of natural and environmental sciences and management.
- offer non-discriminatory access to open space—especially for the elderly, the disabled, and the socially disadvantaged.
- increase nearby property values.
- enhance quality of life values and community image, and support commercial recreation enterprises and tourist activities.
- reduce costs of land maintenance by utilizing sustainable natural means.
- impart an understanding of the regional landscape and respect for the environment; build a sense of place and regional identity by emphasizing the inter-relatedness of all parts of the region and de-emphasizing the importance of man-made boundaries.

In addition, trails and trail systems will:

- provide low cost and convenient recreation while increasing spending for recreation locally.
- establish energy-efficient and safe means of connecting people and places—home, school, work, shopping, parks and recreational facilities.

Other Greenway Plans Reviewed

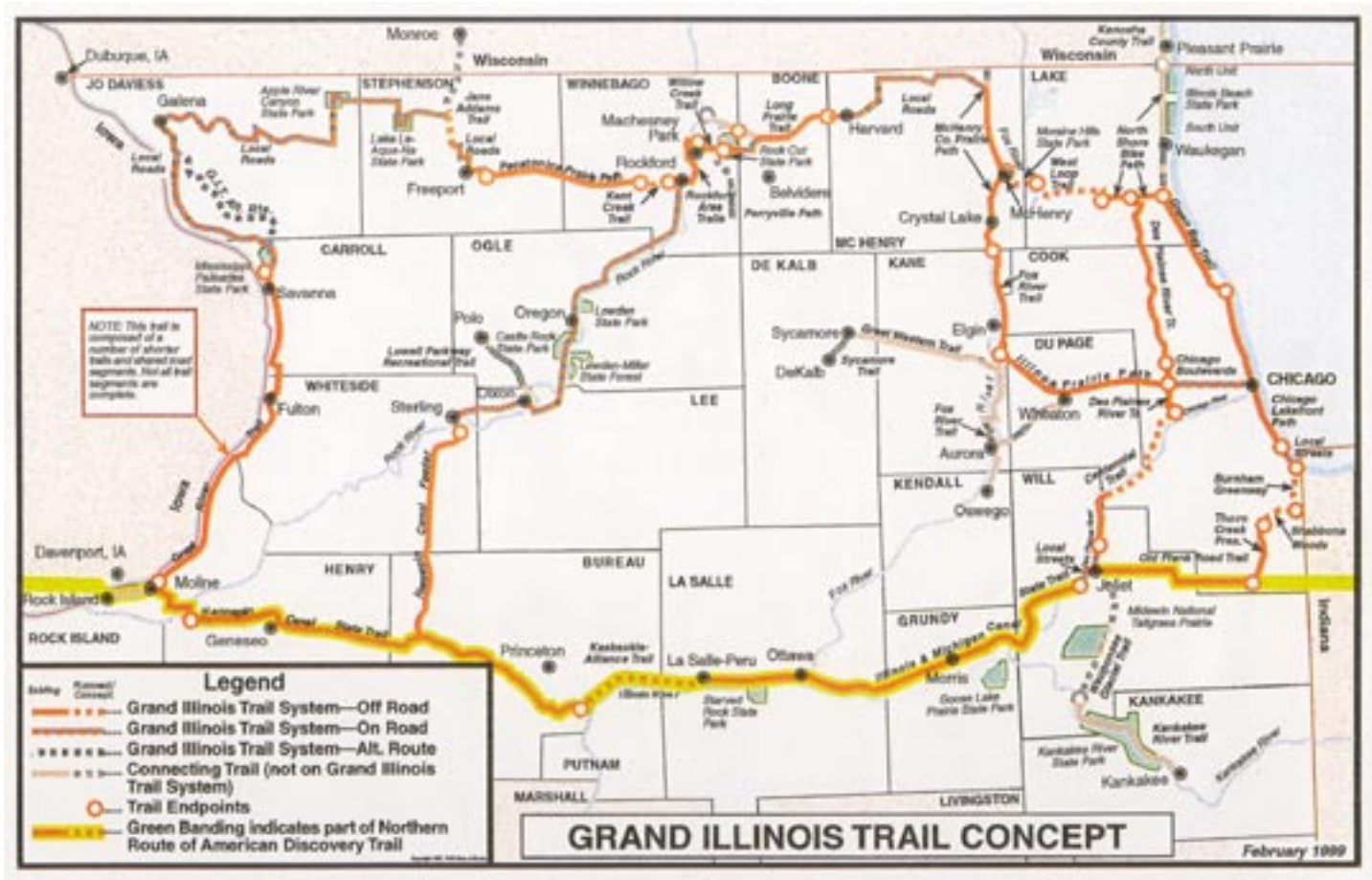
Regional plans have been completed recently in several neighboring counties with funding support from the same IDNR Greenways & Trails program. These plans were reviewed to determine their purpose and for opportunities to align Lee County's proposed trails and greenways across their common borders.

The *Whiteside County Greenway and Trail Plan* (1999) began "the process of looking at areas that should be considered for preservation as the cities and villages continue to grow, as well as laying out a plan for creating trail systems within the communities and attempting to link the towns together via shared use roadway trails." An important connection to Lee County is at 23rd Street east of Sterling, which meets Mound Hill Road. This route is a likely link to the Hennepin Feeder Canal via a proposed Riverfront Trail in Sterling between the Upper Dam and Oppold Marina. Equally important is the proposed dedicated trail on Ill. Rt. 2 east of Sterling, which could also serve as a primary link in the Rock River Trail loop. In southeast Whiteside, a third connection is Hahnman Road, which joins Tampico Road in Lee County. This route is significant for linking Tampico with Dixon—two Ronald Reagan sites—as well as with other communities in Lee County.

The *Greenways and Trails Plan for Stephenson County and City of Freeport* ((2000) established "a framework for continued public policy making." The intention was to have the plan adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plans of both jurisdictions. The plan proposes a regional trail from Freeport to Baileyville, continuing on the old ICRR bed through Ogle County to Dixon. It also features a Kellogg (Galena) Historic Trail Corridor.

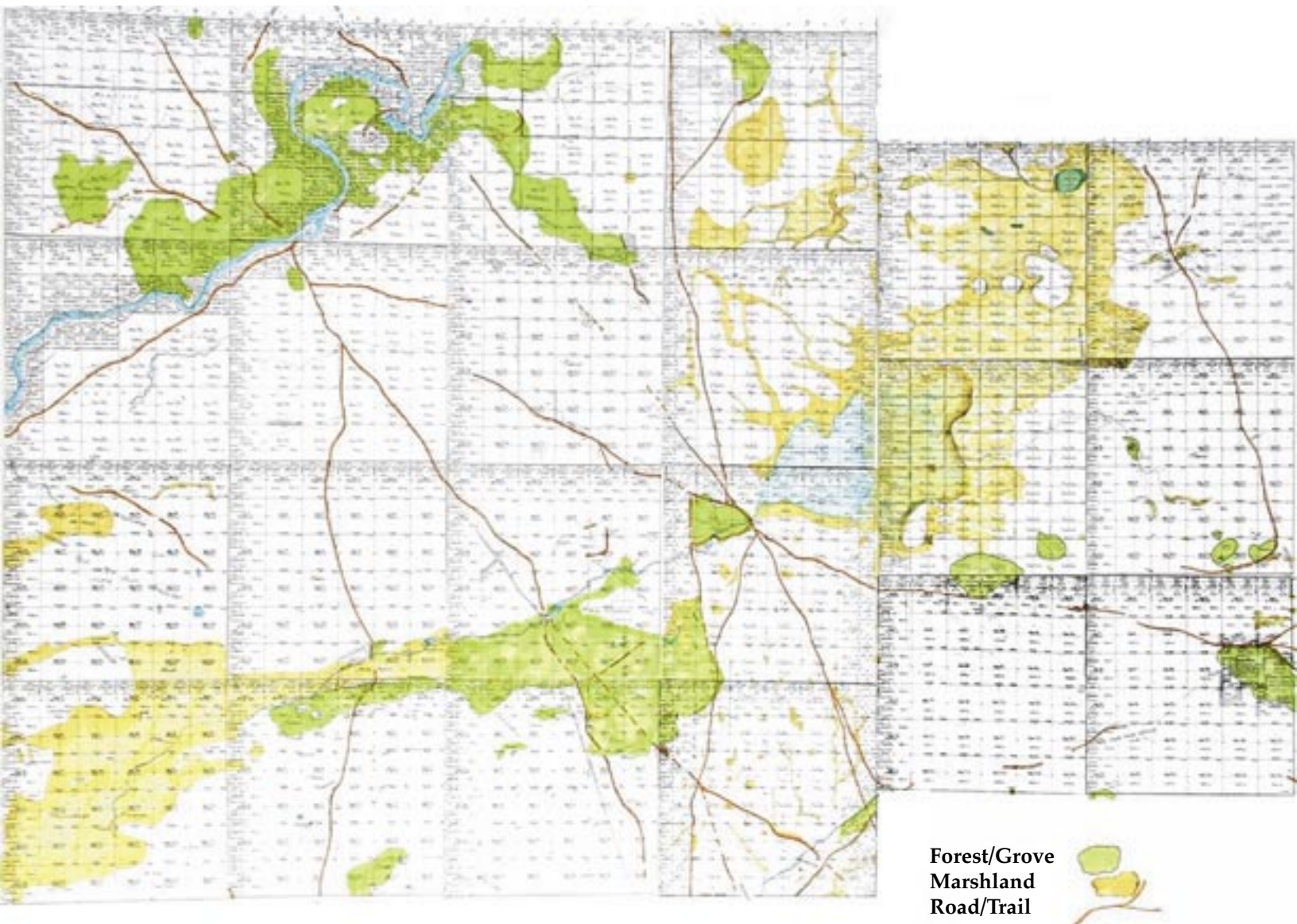
The *Boone & Winnebago Regional Greenway Plan* (1997) "serves to . . . create a vision of a regional greenway network and provide a framework for coordinated greenway and trail preservation and development." It delineates proposed recreation paths on two sides of the Rock River, both Kishwaukee Road and Ill. Rt. 2, from Rockford to the Ogle County line. Either route could serve as the primary connection for the Rock River loop of the Grand Illinois Trail through Ogle to Dixon and the Hennepin Feeder Canal at Rock Falls.

As a result of the preceding planning, Lee County now has three opportunities to connect to the Grand Illinois Trail: 1) west following the Rock River from Dixon to Sterling-Rock Falls, (2) north and east from Dixon along the Rock River corridor through Ogle to Rockford, and (3) north on the Joe Stengel Trail through Ogle to Freeport. It will be up to Ogle County to continue the planning for two of these important links.



The Grand Illinois Trail map (1997) illustrates the importance of completing the Rock River Trail loop segment through Dixon and Lee County. The Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail and most components of the greater, 480-mile GIT loop between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River are already in place as of 2002.

Pre-settlement Federal Land Survey of Lee County (ca. 1840)



Plan Development

Greenways and Trails Resources & Opportunities

An inventory of Lee County's natural and cultural resources, including existing and planned trails and recreational sites accessible to the public, identified the places named in *Appendix A* as well as numerous unnamed sites and sensitive areas located on private property, many of which are shown on the plan only.

A large number of sites with significant public value are to be found on the major streams of the county or within their corridors: the Rock River, Green River, Franklin Creek, and Bureau Creek. This is a pattern that is characteristic of the prairie states, where diverse habitats for wildlife, natural woodlands, flood plains, recreational opportunities associated with wetlands and streams and with varied topography, and preferred residential and population centers are typically found in stream corridors, while intensive crop farming is located on the deeper soils, flatter and more open lands between stream corridors. The linear nature of stream corridors, the attractive biological diversity, scenic qualities, limits to development imposed by steep slopes and flood plains, and the proximity to many residents combine to make these corridors the obvious locations for greenspace. In some cases they may also be the logical route for trails linking sites and communities.

A second pattern is the result of the development of railroads in the 19th century, which favored some early settlements and created many more towns and villages at regular intervals along their routes. In Lee County, communities that owe their existence largely to railroads include Harmon, Nelson, Amboy, Walton, Nachusa, West Brooklyn, Compton, Steward and Lee. The rail right-of-ways themselves functioned as conservatories of native prairie vegetation. As a result, railways are natural greenways, and when abandoned with their roadbeds and bridges intact they become logical trail routes continuing to link the historic railroad towns. Although there have been and still are numerous opportunities in Lee County to recycle abandoned railroads as greenways and trails, only the Illinois Central route from Dixon north to Lowell Park and the county line have been preserved as dedicated trails. Elsewhere in the county, several stretches of historic rail corridor are managed as greenway prairie remnants.

A third pattern is the grid of roads and streets that has evolved since settlement. The hard surfacing in the past century first of state roads and then county roads along the most frequently used travel routes between communities has created numerous routes favorable to shared use by bicyclists for both recreation and transportation. Many of the roads offer excellent access to the enjoyment of mile after mile of pristine "rural character" with little vehicular traffic. Signing and maintaining selected roads as bicycle routes would be a service to both the cyclists and the drivers sharing the roads. But it is unlikely that any roadways will be marked as bicycle routes by the county highway department until the state alters its stance that liability may be inferred by signing of roads for any use other than motorized transportation.

Lee County's Unique History & Geography

The location of Lee County on the most important transportation routes at the time of settlement in the 1830s and '40s—some were ancient Indian trails—figures prominently in the development of the *Greenways and Trails Plan*. An analysis of the pattern of rudimentary roads marked on the original federal survey in the early 1840s indicates

that many of the old routes are reflected in present roads across the open prairie between towns and river crossings, near and distant. Geography in the form of river fords, extensive impassable swamps, and an intervening glacial moraine dissected by seasonal drainage ways insured that many of the original roads remained in spite of the efforts to impose the grid of the survey on later development.

Further inspection of the roads that align with the original routes through Lee County indicates that a disproportionate number of historic buildings and cultural sites occur along these roads linking the earliest settlements. As a result, it is recommended that wherever possible the major shared-use trails coincide with historic trails, as being of greater interest for residents and visitors alike. Foremost among these are the Galena Trail between Peoria and Galena, crossing the Rock River at Dixon; the Chicago to Galena route through Paw Paw and Inlet to the ferry at Dixon; the route between the shallows of the Illinois River at Peru across the Rocky Ford on the Green River to Dixon; and the Green Wing route from LaMoille to Inlet crossing, through Lee Center and Franklin Grove north toward Daysville and Rockford.

Analysis of greenway resources likewise indicated, as expected, that most greenspace opportunities lie on the distinct, parallel patterns of the original geography of river corridors, swamp lands, and high, rolling moraine with its glacial features and sand deposits. The unique qualities of the recommended combined *Greenways and Trails Plan* are that 1) historic patterns are preserved and exploited, and 2) trails do not conform solely to east-west greenspace corridors and abandoned railways but travel primarily across the geographic grain—between communities, public sites, and scenic destinations located in successive natural corridors.

The Plan Vision

In what manner does the plan propose to help prevent fragmentation and degradation of environmental corridors and to enhance trail systems, access to recreation, and tourism opportunities?

Greenway systems: Natural areas identified in the inventory are for the most part entirely separate areas. Only at Nachusa Grasslands, which is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy, and the adjacent Franklin Creek State Natural Area, preserved by local citizens with the assistance of the Natural Land Institute, are there ongoing efforts to create continuous and compact greenspace. The proposed county greenway plan seeks to unite most of the natural sites under the umbrellas of several extensive greenspace systems. Each is an area that contain a significant number of environmentally sensitive sites, natural area restorations and conservation areas, degraded remnants of the pre-settlement savanna woodlands that occurred on well drained uplands adjacent to major streams, and the floodways and 100-year flood plain of the Rock and Green Rivers, Franklin and Bureau Creeks, and several other smaller streams. The majority of this greenway system is now and should remain in private ownership and management.

G.I.T. bike/ped links: A principal component of the county trail system is the Rock River Loop of the Grand Illinois Trail. This primary route is a segment of the loop trail between the Hennepin Canal State Park terminating at Rock Falls with the Rock River Crossing to the Sterling area trails and the Rockford area trail system on the north leg of the Grand Illinois Trail. Top priorities include: 1) development of an off-road trail along State Rt. 2 from the Whiteside County line to Sauk Valley Community College and

the Dixon trail system at Page Drive; 2) linking to the Lowell Parkway Trail and the Joe Stengel Trail north to Polo in Ogle County, continuing from there to Forreston and Baileyville at the Stephenson County Line; 3) development of a trail across the Rock River to the proposed riverfront park, continuing on the bed of an abandoned Union Pacific spur along River Road; and 4) following roads north and east on existing roads to the Ogle County line.

Centers of population: The other shared-use trails have been chosen with an eye to linking communities in Lee County with one another and with communities in neighboring counties, wherever possible on historic road routes. Along the trail routes are community parks where trail users can find shelter, water, and public toilets. The shared-use routes are classified by level of priority, to be described in the next section of this report.

Other important components of the plan are the snowmobile routes, equestrian trails, proposed canoe trails, and an interpretive trail.

Snowmobile routes: The existing snowmobile route starts behind the Shell Station on State Rt. 38 east of Dixon and continues on open fields by arrangement with the land owners to the state snowmobile trails area north of Franklin Creek. From there it follows Twist Road north and Naylor Road east to Carthage Road and Chana Road, along which it links to the extensive Tri-County Snowmobile Trail System. A proposed snowmobile route would travel west from the Shell Station via Anchor Road, Bloody Gulch Road, and Rock Island Road corridors to Rock Falls. This route is used informally now by Whiteside County snowmobilers to access the Franklin Creek area and Tri-County System.

Equestrian use: The state snowmobile area and an adjacent cross country ski area north of Franklin Creek serve double duty as popular equestrian trail areas in summer. Lee County equestrians also use a network of private farmland south of Amboy where they have permission to ride. Equestrian trails are available at Dixon Park District's 400-acre Meadows Park and at Green River State Wildlife Area, April 15 - October 31.

Lengthy segments of the abandoned Illinois Central Railroad bed between Amboy and Sublette, now in private ownership, are maintained as trails and used by equestrians. However, the trestles have been removed and stream crossings now interrupt the continuity of the route. In other stretches of the historic rail right-of-way, the embankment has been regraded and is now in use as cropland. Local recreationists believe that in the long run there is potential for bridging the streams and pursuing easements on land now in farming to create a valuable greenway and recreational trail route between the two communities.

ATV programs: The City of Amboy has signaled support for limited access of motorized recreational vehicles by designating certain streets for ATV (four-wheeler) use. In July 2002 the city council approved an ordinance allowing travel of ATVs under certain restraints on several city streets, the only such ordinance in Lee County. The intent is "to regulate and promote the safety for persons and property in and connected with the use, operation and equipment of all-terrain vehicles" and to provide one or more ingress and egress points. from the city. The signed ATV routes include perimeter streets as well as Main Street, which links City Park and the central business district. However, ATVs are not permitted to operate in the CBD nor are allowed in public playground or recreation areas without permission. Main Street and Josiah Avenue on

the west side of town are also prioritized, shared-use routes for non-motorized use on the Lee County Greenways and Trails Plan map. By state law, motorized recreational vehicles such as ATVs and snowmobiles, which are not equipped for road travel, are not permitted to use public roads beyond city limits. Bicycles are allowed to use roads unless expressly prohibited; however, under current interpretation of state law, public roads are unlikely to be signed or designated as shared-use bike routes due to the possible burden of liability for the local jurisdiction. In June and July 2002, residents of Binghampton and Lee Center Road circulated a petition and obtained 52 signatures of persons opposing the use of Lee Center Road as a shared-use, multi-use trail. The petition asked the Lee County Road and Bridge Committee and/or the Lee County Board to refuse any request by the Lee County Greenways and Trails Committee to establish Lee Center Road as such. Basically, the opposition is to allowing motorized recreational vehicles on the route. Reasons given noise, safety of residents, and risk of damage and liability for residents from motorized vehicles operating off the side of the road. The petition also gives as a reason that travel on the roadway with no shoulders (its present condition) would be hazardous for non-motorized recreational users including walkers and bicyclists, too. The road and the right-of-way are relatively narrow and shoulders are not paved. Vehicular traffic is perceived to be heavy, although on the Illinois Official Bicycle Map, IDOT generally rates Lee Center Road as "most suitable for bicycling" based on traffic, safety, and road conditions. The IDOT map "advises caution" on a portion of Lee Center Road from the intersection with Shaw Road west about a quarter of a mile. Traffic may be the greatest on the 1.25 miles between Binghampton and Amboy, and the "caution" stretch is a no-passing zone, resulting in some backing up of moving vehicles.

Canoe trails: While the map denotes numerous canoe access points on both the Rock and Green Rivers, some of which offer public parking, the only proposed canoe trails are two stretches of the Green River that provide convenient launch and take-out locations. The total length of canoe trails would be about 17 miles. Low water may limit passage or force portages. It is important to note that nearly the full length of the Green River between access points on county roads and an Amboy park is in private ownership. Navigation of navigable streams allows passage only and does not permit trespassing on the adjacent lands. Use of waterways for canoe, kayak, raft and inner tube float trips is contingent upon the continuing good will of land owners. Protocol requires that canoeists and kayakers respect property and not litter or degrade the stream corridor. Especially, do not cut any fences, which are meant to keep cattle in, not canoeists out.

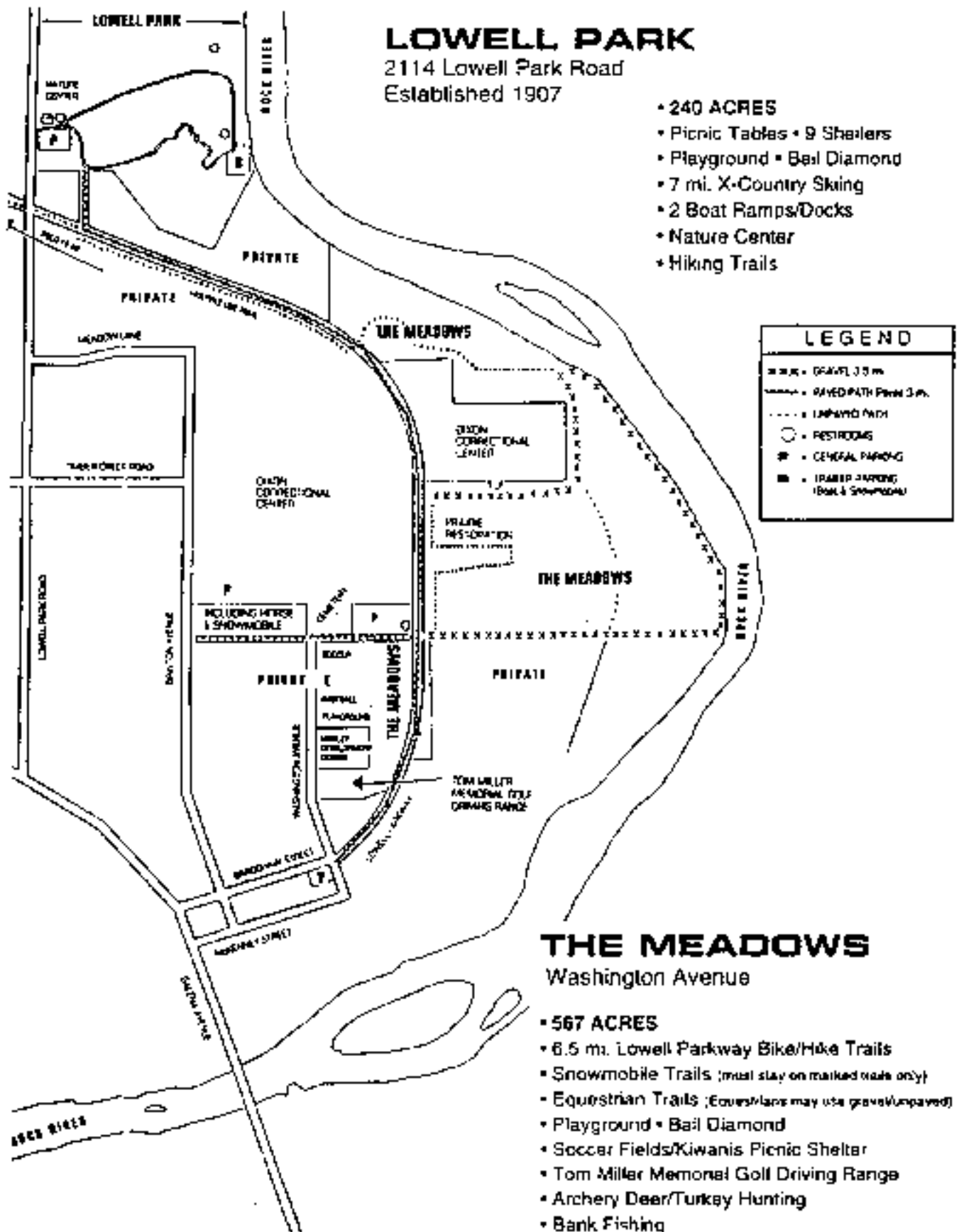
The canoe trail on the Rock River is generally thought to end at Grand Detour on the Lee County line; however, canoes may put in there or at White Oaks and continue downstream to Lowell Park and to Dixon. On this stretch of the Rock River they are likely to encounter the wakes and chop caused by power boats and jet skis throughout the summer.

An information system with signs, route maps, and hazard warnings, covering all put in and take out points on the Rock River, will be needed. U.S. Coast Guard standard sign markings and colors may be adapted for canoe trail signing.

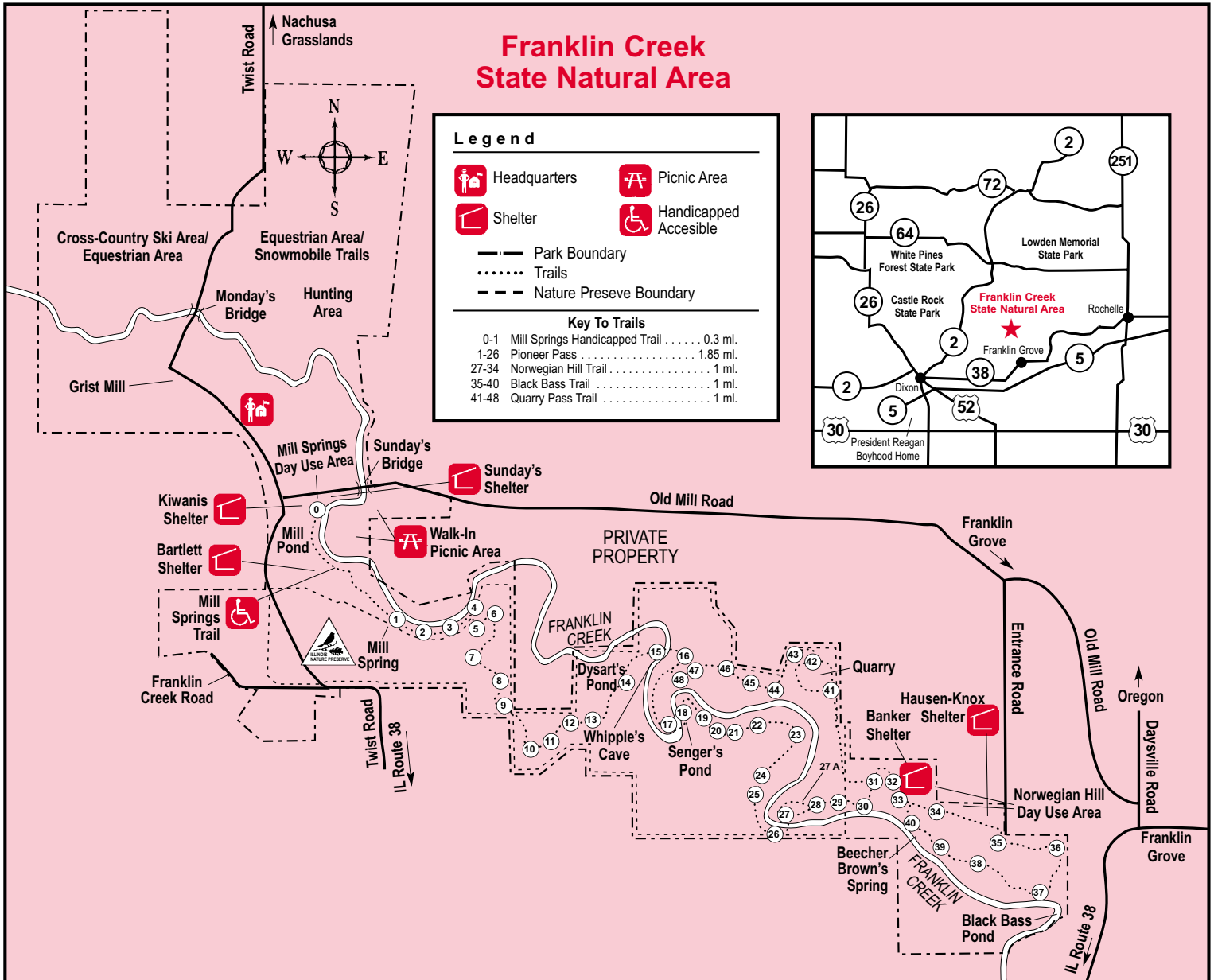
Interpretive trails exist at Franklin Creek Natural Area in the vicinity of the Grist mill and at Nachusa Grasslands. The latter offers interpretation of the restored prairie at that location. The new trail at Franklin Creek, on the other hand, provides a more general interpretation of the transition from farm cropland to old field, of natural succession, as well as of wetlands and a typical tall grass prairie restoration.

After first priority greenways and trails have been protected and developed and are accommodating public use, it will be time to develop and implement an interpretive plan. The role of interpretation should be to help explain the significance of the resource to others. An accurate and engaging interpretation of the landscape and history of the county and the contemporary lifestyles and economic activities of Lee County residents will improve public acceptance of conservation and trails strategies. Interpretive tools may include kiosks, self-guided tours, signage, and brochures. Interpretive themes will tie in with Historic Galena Trail Corridor, Lincoln Highway National Scenic Byway, Ronald Reagan Trail, and other local. Among the potential themes are agriculture, immigration and innovation, early settlement, native Americans, natural sciences (botany, birding, geography), and energy (water, wind and other power generation facilities). These give trail and greenway users of all ages a choice of topics from which to choose in a variety of formats.

Existing trails and use areas: Dixon Park District



Existing trails and use areas: Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Plan Implementation

Prioritizing is essential to provide a solid foundation for development of a long-range Greenways and Trails Plan. Time and money are always in limited supply. Decisions must be made in advance as to what the relative importance of projects will be at each stage of development. This helps consolidate regional support for each project in its logical sequence and avoids competition between local projects for the limited resources. Some local projects, while very important in the overall plan, may have less regional significance and little chance of attracting public funding if they are approached piecemeal before the major links have been put in place.

As with any visionary, long-range plan, new components and projects may be added over time; priorities must be reviewed and updated periodically.

Greenway Priorities

- Franklin Creek Greenway—from Nachusa Grasslands to Rock River
- Palmyra Greenway—from Sunnydale Acres Subdivision to Rock River

Trail Priorities

Top Priority (Components of the Rock River Trail Loop of the Grand Illinois Trail)

- Sauk Valley Trail segment—shared use via Plum Creek bridge, local streets and Reynoldswood Rd. from Page Park Trail to State Rt. 2; off-road via Rt. 2 corridor to SVCC and Mound Hill Rd.; shared use via Mound Hill Rd to Whiteside County line, there meeting 23rd St. leading to Sterling's priority Riverfront Trail
- Completion of Dixon's new Peoria Avenue Bridge with shared pedestrian and bicycle access lanes on both sides of the bridge
- South Riverfront Trail via Union Pacific rail bed from 7th St. in Dixon to White Oak Lane
- Rock River Trail—shared use via Stoney Point, Maples, Lost Nation and Flag Roads from South Riverfront Trail to Ogle County line, leading to Oregon, Byron, Rockford and Grand Illinois Trail

Top Priority (Primary Trail Links Between Communities and Sites)

- Old Mill Trail—shared use via Naylor, Twist, and Old Mill Roads from Rock River Trail to Franklin Creek Natural Area and Franklin Grove on Lincoln Highways N.S.B.
- Whitney Trail—shared use via Whitney and Inlet Roads to Lee Center
- Lee Center Trail—shared use via Lee Center Road and city streets from Lee Center to Binghampton and Amboy (bicycles only)
- Pump Factory Trail—shared use via Dixon streets, Pump Factory and Sterling Roads from Dixon to Amboy and Harmon
- Chicago Trail—shared use via Shaw and Chicago Roads from Binghampton to Paw Paw
- Brooklyn Leg—shared-use via Brooklyn Rd. from West Brooklyn to Shaw Rd.
- Compton Leg—shared-use via Compton Rd. from Compton to Shaw Rd.
- Sublette Trail—shared use via Searls, LaMoille, and Sublette Roads from Shaw Rd. to Woodhaven Lakes and Sublette

2nd Priority (Secondary Trail Links Between Communities and Sites)

- Lincoln Highway National Scenic Byway—shared use via Palmyra Rd. from Sauk Valley Trail at Dixon to Prairieville and Emerald Hill Golf Center at Whiteside County line, leading to Sterling
- Rock Island Trail—shared use via Bloody Gulch and Rock Island Roads from Chicago Ave./Rt. 52 to Whiteside County line, and via Nelson Rd. to Woodland Shores and Nelson
- Grand Detour Trail—shared use via White Oak Lane, Mile and Grand Detour Roads from the north end of South Riverfront Trail to the Rock River Bridge at Grand Detour and to Lost Nation Rd. (The smaller loop on Bend Rd to White Oaks may be added at the same time or later)
- Pump Factory Trail extension—shared use via Pump Factory, Easy and Peoria Roads, along the Galena Trail Corridor to Bureau County Line and Ohio
- Rocky Ford Trail—shared use via Rocky Ford Rd. from Amboy to Maytown Rd.
- Maytown Trail—shared use via Maytown and Green Wing Roads from Sublette Rd. to Pump Factory Rd. at Green River Wildlife Area
- Ashton Trail—shared use via Track Road from Ashton to Franklin Grove
- Ashton-Steward Trail—shared use via Quarry, Brooklyn, and Perry Roads from Ashton to Steward
- Lee Trail—shared use via Lee and Steward Roads from Lee to Steward
- Paw Paw Trail—shared use via Paw Paw and Perry Roads from Paw Paw to Steward

3rd Priority (Spurs & Links to Sites / Proposed Links to Outside Communities)

- Sugar Grove Trail—shared use via Sugar Grove and Timber Creek Roads from Lincoln Highway N.S.B. to Sugar Grove site returning to N. Brinton St.
- Indian Head Trail—shared use via Harmon, Van Petten and Indian Head Roads from Harmon to the Bureau County line, leading to Walnut
- Tampico Trail—shared use via Tampico Rd. from Indian Head Rd. to the Whiteside Co. line, joining the shared use route to Tampico
- Eldena Trail—shared use via Rt. 52, Eldena, Brick, and Peru Roads from Dixon to Sterling Road, passing through Green River Industrial Park.
- Green Wing Trail—shared use on Green Wing Rd. from Inlet Rd. to Sublette Rd.
- Lowden Trail—shared use via Naylor and Lowden Roads from Old Mill Trail to Nachusa Grasslands and Ogle County line, leading to Rock River Trail
- Paw Paw Trail—shared use via Paw Paw Rd. from Perry Rd. to Gurler Rd. at the Ogle County line, leading to Rochelle-Creston
- Brooklyn Trail—shared use via Brooklyn Rd. from Shaw Rd. to Ogle County line, leading to Flagg
- Earlville Trail—shared use on Earlville Rd. from Paw Paw to LaSalle County line, leading to Earlville and Ottawa
- Chana Trail—shared use via Lincoln Highway N.S.B. from Ashton to Ogle County Line, leading to Chana
- Center Trail—shared use via Center Rd. from Sublette to Bureau County Line, leading to LaMoille
- Shabbona Grove Trail—shared use via Howlett Rd. from Paw Paw Rd. east to County Line Rd., leading to Shabbona Lakes State Recreation Area in DeKalb County

Action Recommendations

Implementation of a visionary plan requires the development of strategies that will continue to involve agencies, private and non-profit organizations, and trail user groups. A summary of preliminary steps includes the following actions:

- 1) The adoption of the *Lee County Greenways and Trails Plan* by the County as an addendum or amendment to the *Comprehensive Plan*.
- 2) Inclusion of the principles of greenway and trail planning and of specific priorities into local comprehensive and land use plans by communities, park districts, and townships.
 - a) Review zoning to ensure that ordinances support local and county-wide efforts to prepare and implement greenway conservation plans.
 - b) Review subdivision ordinances to ensure that they:
 - allow and encourage "Conservation" or "Open Space" design, employment of conservation easements, filtration and infiltration of storm water by use of shallow stormwater wetlands, grassed swales and filter strips, infiltration basins and trenches, reduction of impervious surfaces, and similar Best Management practices;
 - promote preservation of natural resources, encourage restoration and appropriate management of native vegetation for rural character, habitat, water quality, and erosion control; and
 - promote development of dedicated trails and trail links within new subdivisions.
- 3) Formation of partnerships between private landowners, public agencies, appointed commissions, volunteer service clubs, and user groups to initiate and execute priority projects.
 - a) Complete all top priority segments of the Rock River Trail linking Lee County with the Grand Illinois Trail, both up river to Ogle County and down river to Whiteside County.
 - b) Further development of the Franklin Creek Greenway completing the link between Franklin Creek Natural Area/Nachusa Grasslands and the Rock River.
 - c) Definition and development of the Palmyra Greenway with connection to the Rock River.
 - d) Definition and development of a conservation plan for the Palestine Grove area south of the Green River and Amboy.
 - e) Maintenance of the existing "Floral Trail" greenway plantings within the public right-of-way on the county Lowell Park Road north of Dixon and on Ill. Rt. 2 Black Hawk Trail east of Dixon, as well as similar beautification initiatives along township, county, or state roads that may exist or be implemented in the future.
- 4) Cooperate with the Lee County engineer and the Road and Bridge Committee to develop the top priority shared-use roadway trails linking communities and prepare a signage plan for eventual implementation on these routes and other shared-use trails that follow.

- 5) Within three to five years, schedule a review and update of the plan. Bring together all participants in the county to evaluate successes and failures. Modify the plan and develop new strategies as necessary.

Strategies and Funding

Outright acquisition by a public agency or private entity is only one of many options for preservation of greenways—with or without trails. An individual property may be protected by a conservation easement, lease, management agreement, or by dedication as an Illinois Nature Preserve, to name several techniques. Public and private funding approaches for greenways, their advantages and disadvantages, are summarized in the Tables below. More detailed descriptions of Nature Preserves and conservation easements, how they work and how they may benefit the landowner and the environment, appear in Appendix C.

In some instances, stewardship by the owner of the property may be the only option for the short run.

Restoration of native vegetation—diverse wetland, prairie, forest and savanna seeding and plantings—on sensitive lands and to create natural areas for conservation, research, USDA programs, buffers, and residential appeal has mushroomed in Lee County in the past decade. As the total remaining natural areas that can be preserved continues to shrink, ecological restoration of open lands by private and non-profit landowners is becoming the major conservation method for future greenways. One innovative technique known as "conservation development" is resulting in the preservation of additional green space in many parts of the U.S. Northern Illinois has been a leader in adopting conservation development. It requires a modified subdivision ordinance allowing more units on smaller lots, a type of "clustering" that sets aside 50% or more of the subdivision as dedicated conservation space. Allowance of greater density is an incentive and an economic necessity to fund the restoration of native vegetation, as well as trails, on the green space. The greenway is to be permanently maintained under covenant by the residents of the subdivision for their recreational use and for natural on-site stormwater management. A county-wide conservation development ordinance would benefit both economic and greenway development in Lee, as it will in neighboring counties.

Unless property is already owned and managed by a public agency, utility company, or non-profit organization, the funding strategy for an off-road trail involves both the acquisition of the land or an easement on the land *and* the development of the facility. In addition to IDOT and IDNR funding programs that support acquisition or development of bike paths, boat access, snowmobile and equestrian trails by local agencies, both public agencies and private organizations have various techniques available to them to fund trail development. Public and private funding sources are listed in Appendices D and E.

A successful strategy will require both initial preservation and ongoing management or maintenance. Greenway preservation often involves partnerships between government, private owners, and non-profit land trusts organized specifically to assist in acquiring or preserving natural areas for their ecological, educational, recreational, and aesthetic values. Similarly, trail development may involve both public and private initiative, but long-term maintenance of a public trail typically will require the commitment of local public funding.

Appendix A: Inventory of Lands and Resources

Most of the following sites are indicated on the *Lee County Greenways and Trails Plan Map*. Many of them are identified by map Legend only, not by name.

CONSERVATION AREAS

Augustana College Prairie
Richardson Wildlife Foundation
Nachusa Grasslands

ILLINOIS NATURAL AREA INVENTORY SITES

Dixon Southwest Geological Area
Nachusa Grasslands (Schafer Prairie)
Foley Sand Prairie (County Line Prairie)
Temperance Hill Cemetery and Prairie Preserve
Kaecker Farm Site Sand Prairie
Compton Geological Area
Ashton East Geological Area
Amboy North Railroad Prairie
Amboy Central Railroad Prairie
Amboy South Railroad Prairie
Walnut Railroad Prairie
Franklin Creek State Natural Area
Green River State Wildlife Area
East Grove
Sandy Hill Slough
Marion Township Site
Swickheimer/Scully Site
Longanecker Farm
Amboy Site
Grand Detour Yellow Birch Site
Rock River Yellow Birch Stand
Ryan Wetland and Sand Prairie

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES

Franklin Creek
Temperance Hill Cemetery Prairie
Foley Sand Prairie
Bartlett Woods

PARKS

Dixon: The Meadows, Lowell, John Dixon, Howell, Page, Haymarket & Vaile Parks
Amboy: City Park, Shapiro Park, Conway Park
Franklin Grove: Atlasta Park
Sublette: Centennial Park
Ashton: Griffith Park
Paw Paw: Center Park

Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan

PRIVATE RECREATION AREAS

O'Connell's Yogi Bear Jellystone Camping Resort
Green River Oaks Camping Resort
Mendota Hills Camping Resort
Pineview Campground
Woodhaven Lakes
Reynoldswood Christian Camp & Retreat Center
Rock River Bible Camp
Camp Joy
Emerald Hill Golf and Learning Center
Lost Nation Golf Course
Mendota Hills Driving Range
Miller Driving Range
Ogee Golf Course
Shady Oaks Golf Course
Rogers Hunting Club
Green River Saddle Club

RECREATION PATHS

Joe Stengel Trail
Lowell Parkway Recreational Trail
Meadows Snowpath

Appendix B: Participants in Lee Greenways & Trails Planning

The Greenways and Trails Committee gratefully acknowledges the interest and direct involvement of many organizations and individuals in the planning process.

Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD

Dixon Park District

Robert D. Arne, Mayor of Steward

Ellen Baker, Franklin Grove

Bill Bontz, Amboy

Jim Burke, Mayor of Dixon

Barry & Dixie Doughty, Sublette

B. J. Fenwick, Amboy

Ray J. Forney, Mayor of Ashton

Richard Frye, Dixon

John Gehant, Mayor of West Brooklyn

Hank Gerdes, Amboy

Steve Hefel, Illinois Association of Snowmobile Clubs

Gregory Hodges, Illinois Association of Snowmobile Clubs

Jim Jones, Lee County Board Chairman

Ray Jones, Ashton

Sue Kleiman, Nachusa Grasslands

Valery Leffelman, Mayor of Sublette

Ted Lilja, Amboy

Brenda Merriman, Lee Co. Resource Conservationist

Jeffrey Moorehead, President of Harmon

Jared Nicholson, Mayor of Paw Paw

Diane Nicholson, Lee County Tourism Council

David Nuttall, Mayor of Nelson

Dan O'Connell, Jr., Amboy

Russ Renner, Lee Co. Highway Engineer

Ambrose Reuter, Dixon Township

Hazel Reuter, Green River Coalition

Linda Russell, Mills & Petrie Gymnasium, Ashton

Sandy Schlorff, Paw Paw Community Bldg.

Don Snodgrass, U. of I. Extension

Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan

Leroy Stambaugh, Mayor of Amboy

Elmer Stauffer, Franklin Creek Natural Area

Daniel Stephenitch, Sublette Township

Donald Swope, President of Compton

Ann C. Taylor, Amboy Township

Dr. Wayne Temple, Illinois State Archives

Appendix C: Conservation Easements and Nature Preserves

A **conservation easement** is a legal agreement a property owner makes to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on his or her property.

To understand the concept, think of owning land as holding a bundle of rights. A landowner may sell or give away the whole bundle or just one or two of those rights. These may include, for example, the right to construct buildings on the land, to subdivide, to restrict access, or to harvest timber. To give away certain rights while retaining others, a property owner grants an easement to an appropriate third party.

Conservation easements are one of the primary tools in the creation of a greenway because public funding for land acquisition is scarce. Easements work because they provide potential benefits to both the land owner and the public, because they are negotiated with the land owner, because the easement does not entail a management expense to the State, and the easement property remains on the tax rolls. However, the real estate taxes may be reduced if the property is encumbered and provides a public benefit. Public benefit certification is determined by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in accordance with criteria established by law.

Any property with significant conservation or historic preservation values can be protected by an easement. This includes trails, forests, wetlands, farms, endangered species habitat, beaches, scenic areas, historic sites, and more.

Landowners who grant conservation easements make their own choice about whether to open their property to the public. Some convey certain public access rights, such as allowing fishing or hiking in specified locations or permitting guided tours. Others do not.

An easement can be written so that it lasts forever (a perpetual easement) or for a specified number of years (a term easement). Only gifts of perpetual easements can qualify a donor for income and estate tax benefits. An easement runs with the land; that is, the original owner and all subsequent owners are bound by the restrictions that the easement spells out.

The donation of a perpetual conservation easement is a tax-deductible charitable gift, provided it is donated to a qualified organization or public agency exclusively for conservation purposes and remains undeveloped. The amount of the deduction is based upon the appraised fair market value of the easement.

In recent years there has been a dramatic growth in *land trusts*, not-for-profit organizations set up specifically to acquire and maintain environmentally important lands. Easements are an important method of "acquisition" for land trusts. One of the oldest land trusts in Illinois is The Natural Land Institute, Rockford. NLI has played a role in preserving high quality natural areas at Franklin Creek.

Very high-quality natural land in private, corporate, or public ownership may qualify to become a dedicated **Illinois Nature preserve**. This is a legal process where-by the landowner voluntarily restricts future uses of the land in perpetuity for the purpose of preserving the land in its natural state and to perpetuate natural conditions. The owner retains custody but gives up the right to develop the land or make changes that

Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan

negatively affect the natural qualities. It does not require the owner to take any measures to protect the dedicated property against the action of nature or of third parties.

Dedication is the strongest protection that can be given to land in Illinois. It even protects an area from the threat of condemnation. The permanent protection continues through future conveyances of the land. The process is administered by a state agency, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Springfield.

Appendix D: Potential Public Funding Sources

Local Funding

- *Park District or City Parks.* Direct funding; technical support; future maintenance
- *City Council or County Commissioners.* Direct funding; local matching dollars for a state or federal grant; regulatory measures such as greenway setback or requirement to provide open space and trail easements
- *Mayor's Office.* Direct funding; political support
- *Public Works Department or Flood Control Agency.* Direct funding of planning, land acquisition, and built improvements where there is a flood control benefit; technical advice
- *Wastewater Agency.* Trail right-of-way along sewer easement; improvements and acquisition of wetland where water quality benefit is possible; technical advice
- *Economic Development/Tourism Office.* Funding of plans and brochures; technical data on users and economic benefits
- *School District.* Direct funding of land if joint use for schools

Dept. of Natural Resources Grant Programs (email: Grants@DNRmail.State.IL.US)

- *Bicycle Path.* Direct funding for bike or multi-use trails and amenities on trails, such as shelters and restrooms dnr.state.il.us/ocd/newbike
- *Boat Access Area Development.* Direct funding of boat and canoe access facilities dnr.state.il.us/ocd/newboat
- *Open Space Lands Acquisition & Development (OSLAD).* Federal funds administered by the state for acquisition of public space for parks or natural areas or for development of park amenities in public use areas
- *C-2000.* Direct funding of local agency, nonprofit, and private landowner conservation projects, research and education, such as easements, restoration, stream bank stabilization, and sustainable agriculture
- *Snowmobile Trail Establishment (STEF).* Direct funding from registration fees for trail development and corridor acquisition projects.
- *Local Government Snowmobile.* Reimbursement for trail development and linear right-of-way acquisition costs of counties, municipalities, park districts, conservation and forest preserve districts
- *Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Recreation Trails.* Direct aid to local agencies, non-profits or individuals to develop, operate and acquire land for OHV parks and trails open to the public and to restore areas damaged by unauthorized OHV use
- *Land and Water Conservation Fund.* Matching federal dollars for acquisition, development, or rehabilitation of neighborhood, community, or regional parks and facilities for outdoor recreation

Other State Funding & Cost-Share Programs

- *Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP).* 80% federal funding administered by IDOT for a range of transportation-related projects including:
 1. provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles
 2. acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites
 3. scenic or historic highway programs
 4. landscaping and other scenic beautification
 5. historic preservation
 6. rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities including historic railroad facilities and canals
 7. preservation of abandoned railway corridors including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian and bicycle trails
 8. control and removal of outdoor advertising

Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan

- *Illinois Scenic Byways Program*. IDOT may award allotted National Scenic Byway funds for construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities along designated highways
- *Federal-Aid Highway Program*. Bicycle transportation, pedestrian walkways, rest areas, and parking facilities as part of highway beautification administered by IDOT
- *Forest Land Enhancement Program*. Federal cost-share assistance provided by state foresters to address watershed-based resource objectives such as sustainable forestry management, habitat enhancement, and water quality improvement
- *Urban & Community Forestry*. Technical assistance through IDNR for establishing reforestation programs—including tree surveys and education
- *Forest Legacy Program*. Purchase of development rights or outright purchase to preserve environmentally-sensitive forest lands
- *Mine Reclamation*. Technical assistance with use of reclaimed mine lands as greenway habitat or recreation land
- *Heritage Corridor*. Direct funds from Dept. of Commerce and Community Affairs to projects within designated corridors, including the Lincoln Highway N.S.B.
- *Tourism Attraction Grant*. DCCA program that funds tourism site development
- *Agricultural Loan Program*. Low-interest loans to farmers who may need assistance with improvements to conserve soil and water resources

U.S. Department of the Interior

- *National Park Service*. Technical assistance to national, state, and local entities through Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program; funding of the national landmarks program; federal acquisitions from the Land and Water Conservation Fund; the urban park and recreation recovery program for rehabilitation of existing recreation areas and facilities
- *Fish and Wildlife Service*. Technical help and funding of studies on conservation and management of fish and wildlife resources; sport fish restoration program; restoration or management of wildlife populations and provision for public use; Partners for Wildlife matching grants through IDNR to restore wetlands on private land to provide habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife
- *Bureau of Reclamation*. Funding for small single or multi-purpose flood control, fish and wildlife, and recreation development projects

U.S. Department of Agriculture

- *Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)*. Payments to convert farmland to habitat
- *Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)*. Reimburses part of restoration costs for permanent easements or 30-year easements with restoration agreements
- *Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Program*. Helps landowners improve habitat
- *Natural Resources Conservation Service*. Direct funding of rural erosion control projects; provision of specialized plant species for revegetation; river basin surveys and planning in partnership with state and local agencies
- *Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)*. Assistance to plan, develop, obtain funding, and carry out programs in rural conservation/economic development

Other Federal Funding and Assistance*

- *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*. Flood plain management services assists planning, developing regulations, and determining areas that should be preserved for open space; provides advisory services and technical support
- *Rock River Ecosystem Program*. Model USACE initiative expected to provide direct funding for watershed restoration activities
- *Department of Energy*. Clean-up of contaminated industrial and dump sites
- *Environmental Quality Incentives Program*. EPA funding to help farmers and ranchers protect soil, water, and air and improve wildlife habitat including wetlands

Appendix E: Potential Private Funding Sources

Foundation Grant Programs

- An example: *World Wildlife Fund's Innovation Grant Program* provides grants of \$5,000 to \$7,500 to local and regional nonprofit organizations or their public agency partners to help communities solve problems caused by unmanaged growth, including wildlife, wetlands, and habitat protection solutions.

Company Grant Programs

- *American Greenways DuPont Awards Program*, administered by the Conservation Fund, provides \$500 to \$2,500 to local projects that serve as a catalyst for greenway planning and development.
- *Recreational Equipment Inc.* Through the National Rivers Coalition, American Rivers, Inc., REI awards seed grants of \$200 to \$2,000 to state and local conservation groups for projects that enhance river protection.

Individual Donors and Memberships

- Funding derived from individual fund-raising campaigns or through membership drives originated by nonprofit organizations that solicit members is a sound way to raise money and support for projects because membership building may also help build grass-roots support and political clout. Because of time demands in cultivating and managing membership rosters, this may not be appropriate for smaller efforts.
- Large gifts of \$500 or more from individual donors may be essential to the success of some projects. The key to convincing large donors to contribute is to have a board members who themselves are donors and are committed to seeking large gifts.
- Memberships and small donations can be pursued through direct mail appeals and local media campaigns. Another approach is to offer potential donors the opportunity to "buy" specific items in the greenway, such as trail footage or trees, for set amounts.

Planned Giving, Life-Income Gifts, and Bequests

- These take various forms ranging from a simple bequest of money in a will to complex life-estates in land and securities. *Planned giving* refers to a strategy for giving that addresses gifts while the donor is alive and after he or she dies. For mutual benefit, it usually takes into account tax and investment considerations. One approach is the use of such techniques to protect important private land. For example, a property owner grants a future interest in his or her property to a greenway nonprofit or land trust. The donor keeps a life estate (life tenancy), the right to use and occupy the land during his or her lifetime, subject to agreements to not further develop the property or otherwise compromise its open-space values. For this there will be tax benefits. After the donor dies, the property passes to the grantee.

Service Clubs

- One of the most powerful techniques is to enlist an established local service club to adopt the project before fundraising kicks off. Later, club members may support the project by helping to build structures, maintain a trail, and raise operating funds with annual pancake breakfasts.

Special Events and Fundraisers

- Auctions, benefit dinners, and other special events can raise significant sums in larger communities or within special interest communities. Ducks Unlimited is a good example of an organization that has had success with such dinners. Typically benefits require a long period of planning, dedicated volunteer workers, and sometimes several annual repetitions before they begin to turn a profit.

Appendix F: Economic Benefits of Greenways

<u>Real-property values</u>	Many studies demonstrate that parks, greenways, and trails increase nearby residential and business property values. In turn, increased property values can increase tax revenues and offset loss of property tax base on greenway lands.
<u>Consumer spending</u>	Spending by local residents on greenway-related activities helps support recreation-oriented businesses and employment, as well as other businesses that are patronized by greenway and trail users.
<u>Commercial uses</u>	Greenways often provide business opportunities, location, and resources for commercial activities such as recreation equipment rentals and sales, lessons, and other related businesses.
<u>Tourism</u>	Greenways are often major tourist attractions, which generate expenditures on lodging, food, and recreation-oriented services. Greenways also help improve the overall appeal of a community to prospective tourists and new residents.
<u>Agency expenditures</u>	The agency responsible for managing a river, trail, or greenway can help support local businesses by purchasing supplies and services. Jobs created by the managing agency may also help increase the local employment base by an amount equivalent to other uses of the lands.
<u>Corporate relocation</u>	Evidence shows that the quality of life of a community is an increasingly important factor in corporate relocation decisions. Greenways are often cited as important contributors to quality of life. (In fact, from the earliest days of settlement the natural charm of the Rock River corridor has been cited as a reason for business people and businesses to locate here.)
<u>Public cost reduction</u>	The conservation of rivers, trails, and greenways can help local governments and other public agencies avoid costs resulting from flooding and other natural hazards to more intensive development of the same lands.
<u>Intrinsic values</u>	While greenways have many economic benefits, it is important to remember the intrinsic environmental and recreation value of preserving rivers, trails and other open space corridors.

Adapted from *Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors*, National Park Service, 1990.

Appendix G: Bibliography and Suggested Readings

Publications

- Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan*
Natural Land Institute, Rockford. 1997
- Ecology of Greenways*
Daniel Smith and Paul Hellmund, editors. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. 1993
- Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors*
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 1990
- Financial and Technical Assistance for Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Projects*
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 1990
- Grand Illinois Trail Plan*
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield. 1997
- Greenways: A Guide to Planning, Design, and Development*
Loring LaB. Schwarz, editor, Charles A. Flink and Robert M. Searns. The Conservation Fund. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 1993
- Greenways and Trails Plan for Stephenson County and City of Freeport*
Thomas Graceffa and Associates, Inc. 2000
- Greenways for America*
Charles E. Little. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 1990
- Illinois Park, Parkway and Recreational Area Plan*
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- Illinois State Trails Plan*
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- Lee County Comprehensive Plan*
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- The Lower Rock River Basin, An Inventory of the Region's Resources*
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- The Natural Resources of Illinois; Introduction and Guide*
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- The New Exploration, A Philosophy of Regional Planning*
Benton MacKaye. The Appalachian Trail Conference, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and The University of Illinois Press, Urbana. Reprinted.
- The Rock River Country, An Inventory of the Region's Resources*
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield. 1996
- Strategic Plan for the Ecological Resources of Illinois*
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield. 1996
- Tools and Strategies: Protecting the Landscape and Shaping Growth: The Open Space Imperative #3.* Regional Plan Association, New York. 1990
- Trails for the Twenty-First Century; Planning, Design, and Management Manual for Multi-Use Trails.* Charles A. Flink, Kristine Olka, and Robert M. Searns. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Island Press, Washington, D.C. Second Edition, 2001
- Whiteside County Regional Greenway and Trail Plan*
Sauk Valley Concepts, division of Wendler Engineering & Surveying. 1999

On-Line Resources

Implementing Trail-Based Economic Development Programs

Handbook containing case studies and a how-to-guide, developed by Economics Research Associates, Washington, D.C., as a companion to *Iowa Trails 2000*. **www.dot.state.ia.us**

Trails and Greenways for Livable Communities

Promotes trails and greenways to help manage development and control sprawl, by providing transportation options such as bike commuting and walking environments. Links and resources. **www.trailsandgreenways.org**

Preserving Historic and Cultural Resources

Tells how trails and greenways can provide access to and help preserve history and culture by connecting people to the past. **www.trailsandgreenways.org**

Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways

Summarizes greenways and trails impacts on quality of life, property values, and the environment. Links and resources. **www.trailsandgreenways.org**

Fact Sheet: Top 10 Ways to Work with the Opposition

Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse. **www.trailsandgreenways.org**

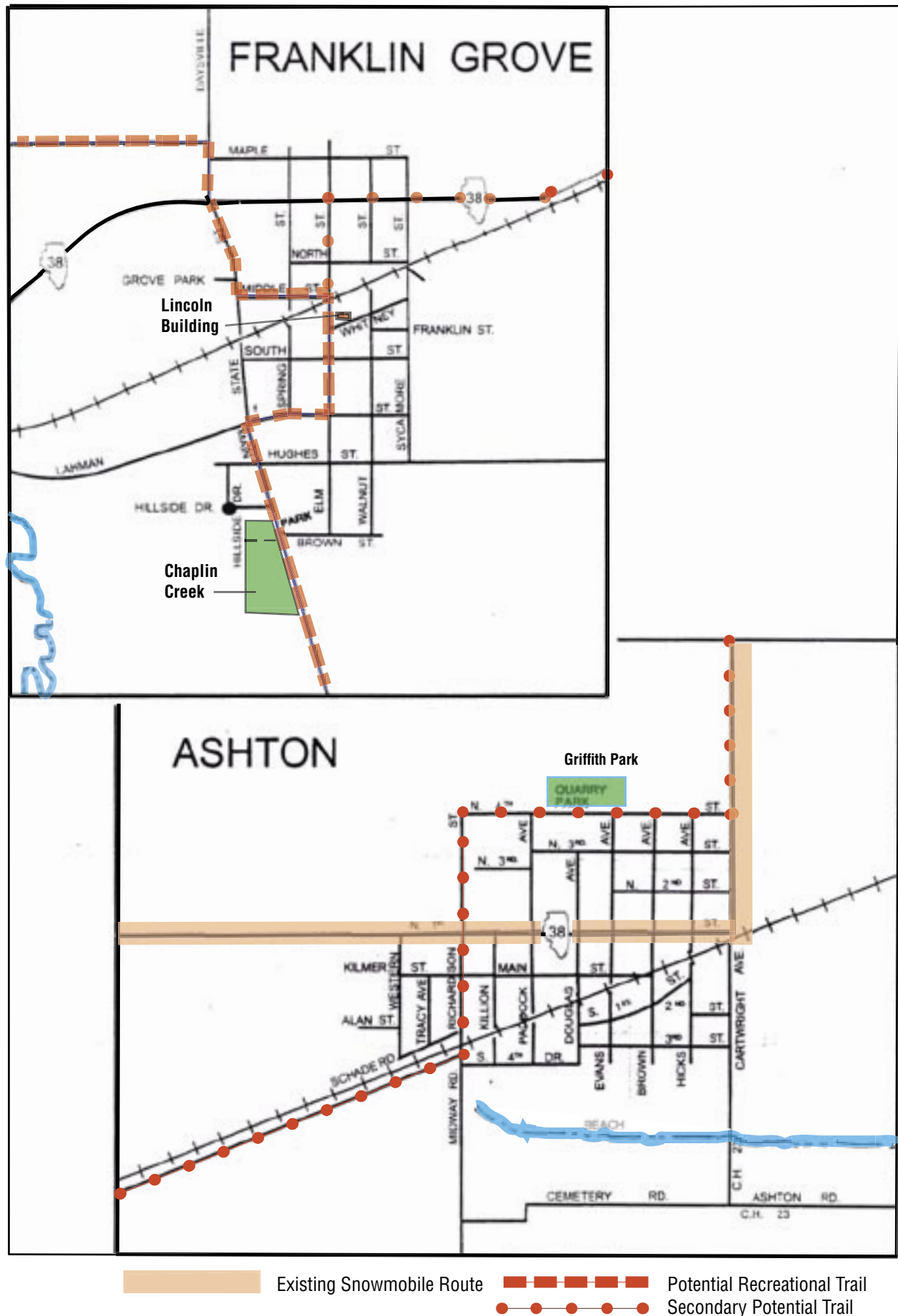
Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program: Guidelines and Procedures

Current manual for local agencies and not-for-profit partners seeking 80/20 funding for transportation-related enhancement projects in specific categories. Officials' names/phone numbers. **www.dot.state.il.us/opp/iltep**

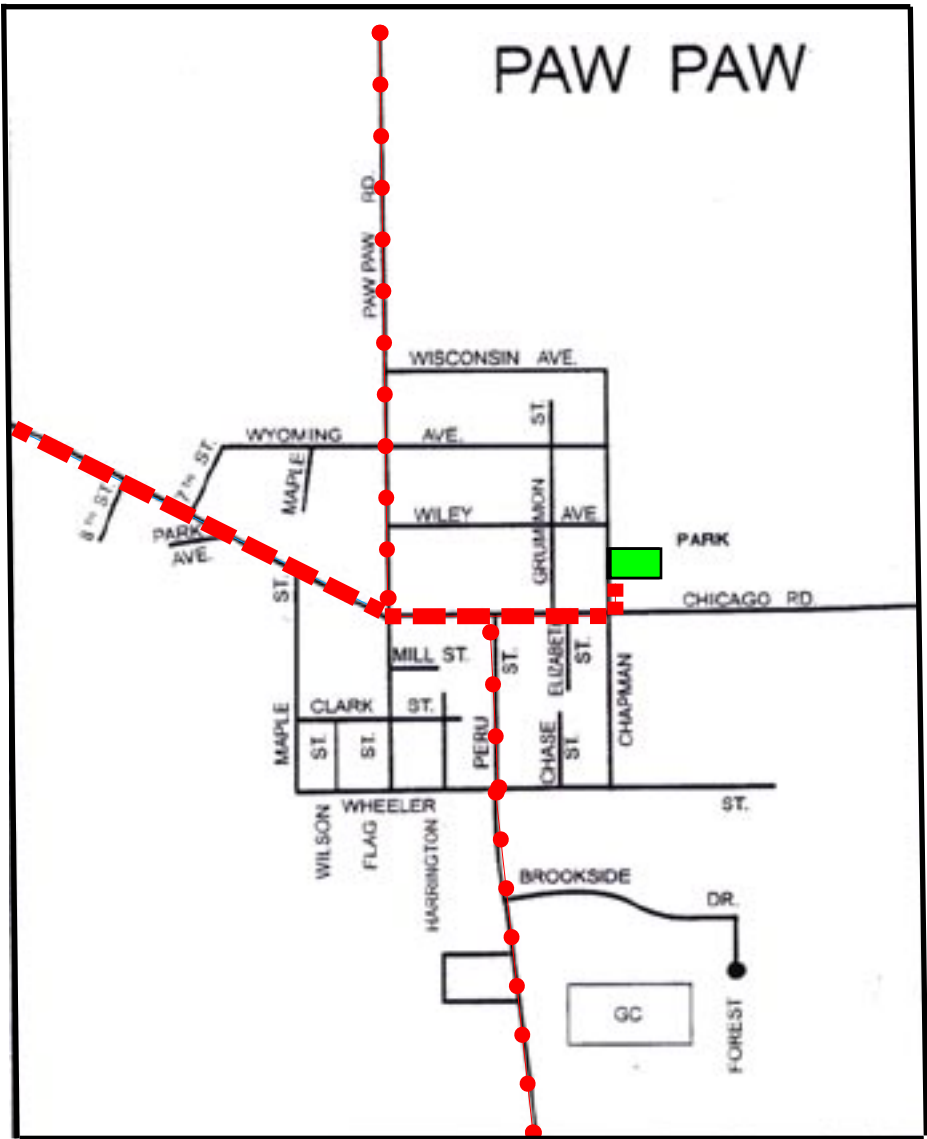
Appendix H: Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan Maps



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Appendix H: Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan Maps



- ■ ■ ■ ■ Potential Recreational Trail
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