

KANKAKEE COUNTY GREENWAYS AND TRAILS PLAN



**County of Kankakee
Regional Planning Commission**

189 E. Court Street
Kankakee, IL 60901
815-937-2940

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KANKAKEE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF

Michael VanMill	Executive Director
Delbert Skimerhorn, Sr.	Project Manager / Planner / Cartographer
Christian Schock III	Planning Assistant
Michelle Sadler	Secretary / Receptionist

BOURBONNAIS TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT STAFF

Mark Heinicke	Director of Parks & Planning
---------------	------------------------------

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION STAFF

Rich Howell	Resource Conservationist
-------------	--------------------------

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Mark Heinicke

Bourbonnais Township Park District
459 N. Kennedy Drive
Bourbonnais, IL 60914
815-933-9905

Kankakee County Soil & Water Conservation
685 Larry Power Road
Bourbonnais, IL 60914
815-937-3282

Dave Mogle

Kankakee Valley Park District
801 W. Station Street
Kankakee, IL 60901
815-939-1311

Ken Allers

Kankakee River Valley Forest Preserve
150 N. Schuyler Avenue #1008
Kankakee, IL 60901
815-939-1563

Francis Ciaccio

Limestone Township Park District
2566 Bluff Drive
Kankakee, IL 60901
815-932-22865

Paul Bradley

Kankakee River State Park
Route 102
Bourbonnais, IL 60914
815-933-1383

Paul Shore

Village of Bourbonnais
700 Main Street NW
Bourbonnais, IL 60914
815-937-3570

Bruce Adams

Village of Bradley
147 S. Michigan Avenue
Bradley, IL 60914
815-932-4417

Mayor Rex Peterson

Village of Momence
123 W. River
Momence, IL 60954
815-472-4955

Steve Engleking

Momence Conservation District
123 W. River
Momence, IL 60954
815-472-2430

Bill Mansfield

Village of Manteno Park Board
269 N. Main Street
Manteno, IL 60950
815-468-8224

Mayor Norm Grimsley

Village of Aroma Park
P.O. Box 117
Aroma Park, IL 60910
815-937-1240

Rich Howell

James Moody

MACEDC
P.O. Box 495
Momence, IL 60954
815-472-2323

Al Thompson

Momence Park District
P.O. Box 665
Momence, IL 60954
815-472-2670

Stephen Linneman

Tern of the Wheel
404 W. Broadway Street
Bradley, IL 60915
815-933-9152

Rose Covington

Pembroke Township Supervisor
P.O. Box A
Hopkins Park, IL 60944
815-944-8871

Ed Dombrowski

Short Milling Co.
P.O. Box 866
Kankakee, IL 60901
815-937-2633

Mayor Russell Hilgert

Village of Grant Park
P.O. Box 446
Grant Park, IL 60940
815-465-6531

Ron Moline

Architect
8 Heritage Plaza
Bourbonnais, IL 60914
815-939-1900

Leonard Wisniewski

Architect
RR#1 Box 5
Martinton, IL 60951
815-428-7556

REGIONAL CONTACTS

Lori Heringa

Northeastern IL Planning Commission
222 S. Riverside Plaza #1800
Chicago, IL 60606
312-454-0400

Claudia Emken

The Nature Conservancy
416 Main Street #112
Peoria, IL 61602
309-673-6689

Tyson Warner

Will County Land Use Dept.
501 Ella Avenue
Joliet, IL 60433
815-727-8430

Elaine Chandler

Lake Co. IN Parks & Recreation
2293 N. Main Street
Crown Point, IN 46307
219-947-1958

Larry Pachol

Grundy County
1320 Union Street
Morris, IL 60450
815-941-3228

Randy Neufeld

Chicagoland Bicycle Foundation
417 S. Dearborn Street, Suite 1000
Chicago, IL 60605
312-427-3325

IDOT

700 E. Norris Drive
Ottawa, IL 61350
815-434-6131

Tim Good

Forest Preserve District of Will County
22606 S. Cherry Hill Road
P.O. Box 1069
Joliet, IL 60434-1069
815-727-8700

Ders Anderson

Openlands Project
25 E. Washington Street, Suite 1650
Chicago, IL 60602
312-427-4256 ext. 237

Jeryl Leach

Newton Co. IN Park Board
P.O. Box 500
Morocco, IN 47963
219-285-2008

Richard Westfall

IDNR
524 S. Second Street, Room 315
Springfield, IL 62701-1787
217-782-7481

Brian Reilly

Illinois Nature Preserve Commission
30071 S. State Route 53, P.O. Box 88
Wilmington, IL 60481
815-423-6370

Lou Paukovitz

CITIZEN STEERING COMMITTEE

Cecile Enright

711 N. River Drive
Kankakee, IL 60901

Maureen Caron

1646 E 6000 N Road
Bourbonnais, IL 60914

Chuck Smead

Kankakee Community College
Box 888
Kankakee, IL 60901

Rylan Gagnon

211 S. Wabash Avenue
Bradley, IL 60915

Kathy Dell

1605 W. Court Street
Kankakee, IL 60901

Gene Novak

5967 N 15000 E Road
Grant Park, IL 60940

Loretto Cowhig

716 S. Chicago Street
Kankakee, IL 60901

Marie Cardosi

2065 S. Hieland Road
Aroma Park, IL 60910

Tom Bunosky

1000 S. Schuyler Avenue
Kankakee, IL 60901

Mark Steffen

605 S. Fifth Avenue
Kankakee, IL 60901

Phillip Zonkel

750 Bethel Drive Apt.#1
Bourbonnais, IL 60914

Tom Curl

5469 K South Rt 45&52
Chebanse, IL 60922

Barb McCue

323 S. Michigan Avenue
Bradley, IL 60915

Steve Arnold

11300 Georgetown
Bourbonnais, IL 60914

Harold Johnson

16081 E 5000 N Road
Momence, IL 60954

Joan McGinnis

417 N. Michigan Avenue
Bradley, IL 60915

John Senders

193 S. Laurel
Kankakee, IL 60901

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

THANK YOU

The planning process is a consensual one and an effort was made to contact every individual that would be interested or helpful in the process of creating a trail system and improving environmental and transportation connections. The staff of the Kankakee County Regional Planning Commission would like to thank all of the people that participated in the development of this plan. Without your help and continuous support this document would not be possible. We take great pride with our public involvement program and feel that we have done our best to obtain the opinions of every citizen willing to come forward. Again we thank you.



Example of an existing greenway, Briarcliff Estates, Bourbonnais, IL

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

In 1995, a study performed by the American Lives, Inc. for the real estate industry showed that 77.7% of all home buyers rated natural open space as either essential or very important when selecting a home site. The importance of natural open space as a preferred amenity, however, is relatively new. The same study conducted in 1980 found that home buyers preferred such amenities as tennis courts, swimming pools, and golf courses. At that time, natural open space did not even make the top ten items preferred.

The State of Illinois, in response to this change in home buyers' opinions, instituted the Metro Greenways Grant. In 1998, Kankakee County Planning Department applied and was awarded \$25,000 to produce a county-wide greenways and trail plan. Unlike golf courses, tennis courts, and swimming pools, open space can cost the taxpayers of The County nothing to implement successfully. Not only is the idea of greenways an important incentive to attract home buyers, a successfully implemented greenway plan will improve the environmental, recreational, and aesthetic aspects of the County.

MISSION STATEMENT

This county-wide Greenways and Trails Plan responds to current needs and opportunities and promotes a vision for the future of greenways, trails, and outdoor recreation in Kankakee County. The following is an extensive mission statement that incorporates the desires and expectations of the public.

“Greenways and recreational trails should provide the people of Kankakee County with opportunities to enjoy physical and social activities....they should provide opportunities to experience the natural, cultural and scenic amenities of the greenway and/or trails corridor....they should reflect landscapes typical of the County’s different regions.... they should be accessible to the County’s citizens....they should provide a pleasurable, non polluting alternative to automobile travel for short trips....they should be an economic asset to communities along the trail....and they should contribute to the quality of life in the County.

These greenways and trails should be developed through partnerships among, state, federal, regional, and local units of government, constituent organizations and trails users....they should link communities and their parks and extend from cities into the countryside....they should connect the County’s diverse regions with trails in neighboring county’s and states’ trails....and they should evolve into a network throughout the length and width of the County, easily accessible to all County residents for their use and enjoyment.”

GOAL STATEMENT

The main goal of the Kankakee County Greenways and Trails Plan is to provide environmental, aesthetic, and recreational enhancements to the County by creating a comprehensive trail and natural corridor plan that is based on the principles of continuity and minimal public economic impact while maximizing public accessibility, efficiency, and safety through roadway enhancements and trail improvements, and new signage. This goal is accomplished by building a cooperative coalition between developers, transportation officials, planners, environmentalists, park officials, municipalities, and civic leaders. New regulations on development are formulated and recommended for all jurisdictions based upon a cooperative planning process that involves all interested and affected parties. Implementing a county-wide greenways plan will address some urban sprawl concerns by providing home owners in the area with quality recreation before the area is completely developed. The intent of this plan is to encourage and foster partnerships and intergovernmental cooperation between municipalities, developers and public and private interests.



Rock Creek multi-use bridge, Kankakee River State Park Bike Trail

METHODOLOGY

A coalition of citizens, civic leaders, commissions, park boards and municipal entities have expressed interest in creating a county-wide open space and trail plan. This Plan includes the preservation of possible future transportation corridors, the preservation of natural greenways, the improvement of park facilities, emphasizes regional cooperation on recreational and environmental issues, and recommends the development of a trail system for recreational and non-vehicular transportation uses.

The time line for completion of this Plan is approximately one year with extensive public involvement process spanning the entire latter three-fourths of the process. Implementation of the adopted Plan is critical to the success of this Plan and will take several additional years. This Plan is long range in nature, looking as far ahead as 20 years into the future, and is a framework for action but is not meant to be a blueprint for actual construction. Periodically, this Plan should be updated to account for completed projects, growth, and unforeseen circumstances that arise after the adoption of this Plan.

The Plan document is divided into three phases. Phase one involves the collection and examination of current park facilities and amenities in the County. Phase two encompasses research of current corridors, the feasibility of possible new corridors, examination of the missing connections of the current trail system, examination of environmental assets, and under served populations. Phase three is an examination of regional components and connections and the tools needed to implement the Plan.

Plan Outline

The Plan is divided into seven (7) main sections:

Section I: includes the introduction. List of contributing parties, mission statement and the main goal of the Plan.

Section II: is an analysis of population growth patterns in the County. This Section examines growth patterns and formulates the basis for why this planning effort is needed.

Section III: researches the principles of greenways, the characteristics of greenways, and cites examples of other greenway projects nationwide and their effects on their respective areas.

Section IV: is an inventory of the existing corridors, environmental assets and parks currently serving the County. This section also examines the condition of the existing roadways in the County for trail usage and existing municipal and County regulations on development.

Section V: is the “meat” of the plan. It details the proposed natural greenways, trails, roadways and roadway improvements, and park facilities. It also includes suggested changes to the County subdivision regulations and a model ordinance for municipalities.

Section VI: is the implementation section and details the performance criteria ranking system. This Section discusses implementation techniques, design standards for the trail, and outlines potential funding sources and the cost of construction.

Section VII: is the Appendix and contains a list of public meetings, a time line and an annotated bibliography.