



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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www.dnr.illinois.gov

JB Pritzker, Governor
Colleen Callahan, Director

MINUTES

Illinois Route 53 Expansion Land Alternative Use Task Force

Monday, March 14, 2022

4:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Dan Lewis, Advisor at the IL Department of Natural Resources and the point-person for administrative support for this Task Force, began the meeting shortly after 4:00 PM by taking the roll for the task force members. All but Co-Chair Senator Melinda Bush and Lake County Board Member Marah Altenburg were present. Both members were able to join a few minutes after the meeting began.

Co-Chair State Representative Chris Bos initially ran the meeting and began by asking if there were edits to the January meeting minutes. Dan Lewis said that he heard from Long Grove Mayor Bill Jacob regarding a parcel that IDOT has indicated was state-owned but that Mayor Jacob knew to be owned by the Village. Dan suggested the Task Force approve of the minutes with the addition of a memo about the parcel in question from Mayor Jacob. All were in favor of this and a motion to approve of the minutes with the additional memo passed unanimously.

At this point Senator Bush was able to join the meeting after experiencing technical difficulties and Representative Bos gave the floor and control of today's meeting over to her.

Senator Bush then gave the floor to Openlands Senior Counsel Stacy Meyers, who spoke briefly about their GIS map tool before giving the floor to Openlands Regional Planning Manager Matthew Santagata ([GIS map here](#)). Matthew walked the Task Force through the various layers on the map and their meaning. He and Stacy discussed how this tool will be beneficial to the Task Force as we consider uses for the land, connectivity to other parks and trails, and future development.

Senator Bush then gave the floor to Midwest Sustainability Group Executive Director Barbara Klipp, who gave a presentation about the environmental implications of this project and why environmental organizations believe that the land should be used for a greenway/trail (**presentation is attached**). Barbara also shared a supplemental fact & resource sheet and a vision statement from the environmental community (**both are attached**). Barbara not only discussed the environmental opportunities and potential of the corridor but also the potential positive economic impacts a greenway would have on the county and municipalities.

There were no questions after either presentation. Senator Bush thanked Stacy and Barbara for their detailed presentations and said that we were out of time and will have to push our conversation about committees to the next meeting. Senator Bush explained that presentations about ecotourism and transportation/mobility would be beneficial and should be given at the next meeting.

After no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes by Dan Lewis, IDNR
dan.p.lewis@illinois.gov

Environmental Community Presentation

Route 53 Task Force
March 14, 2022



This Presentation is from the Green Corridor Coalition

Who We Are:

- Friends of Indian Creek Wetlands
- Lake County Audubon Society
- Midwest Sustainability Group
- Openlands
- The Sierra Club
- Concerned Citizens

<https://www.facebook.com/GreenCorridorCoalition>



Photos of nature were taken in the Rt
53 corridor and impact zone.

Most are from our photo contest
of the corridor last fall.



Photo credit: David Jacobson

No prerequisite
knowledge
necessary



Photo credit: Michael Schmitt

Supplemental Fact & Resource Sheet:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DKEPTm1oc459lsciSpB95AeJHBCXN9SKHNgkXlrUrS8/edit?usp=sharing>

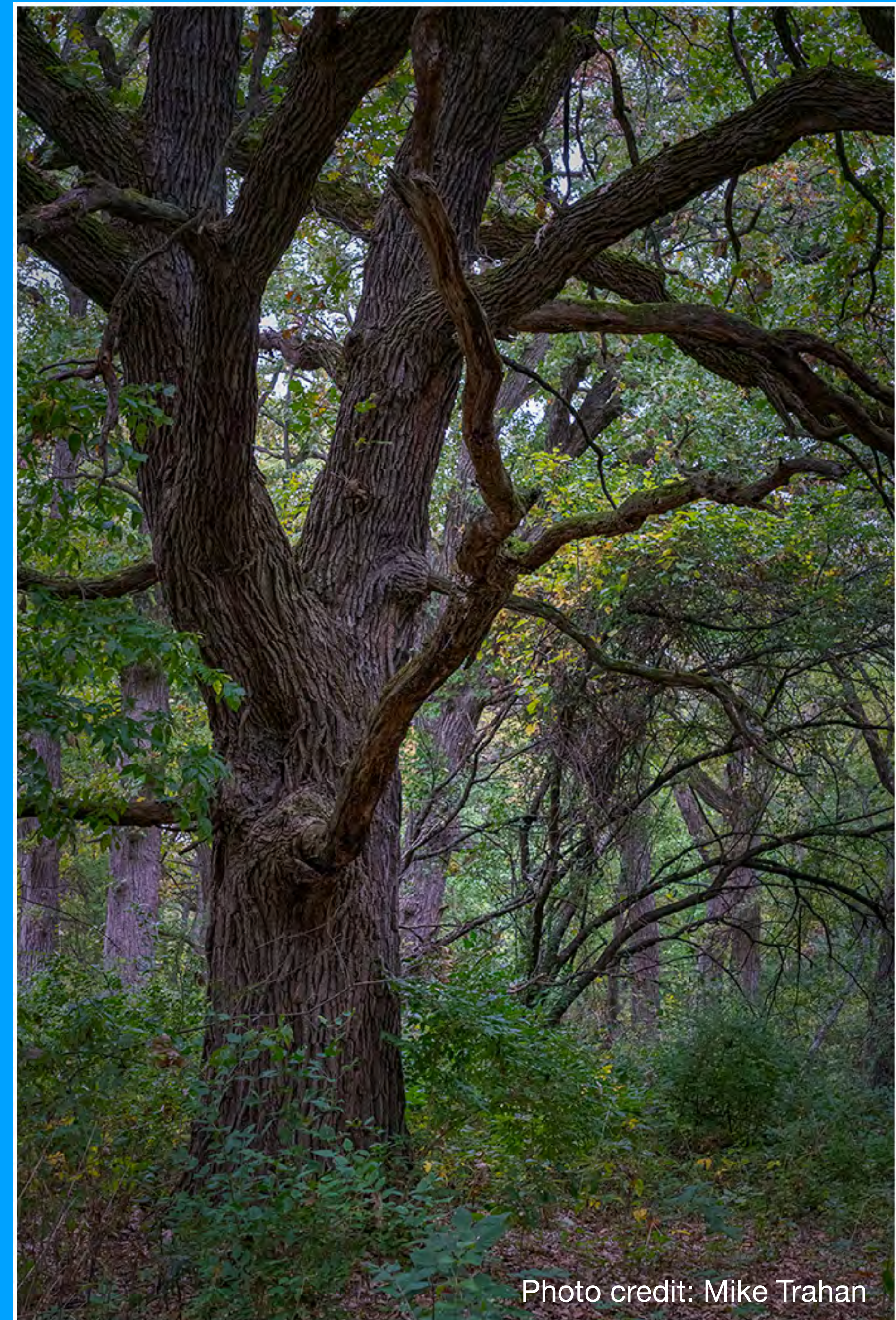


Photo credit: Mike Trahan

7th Generation Principle

“

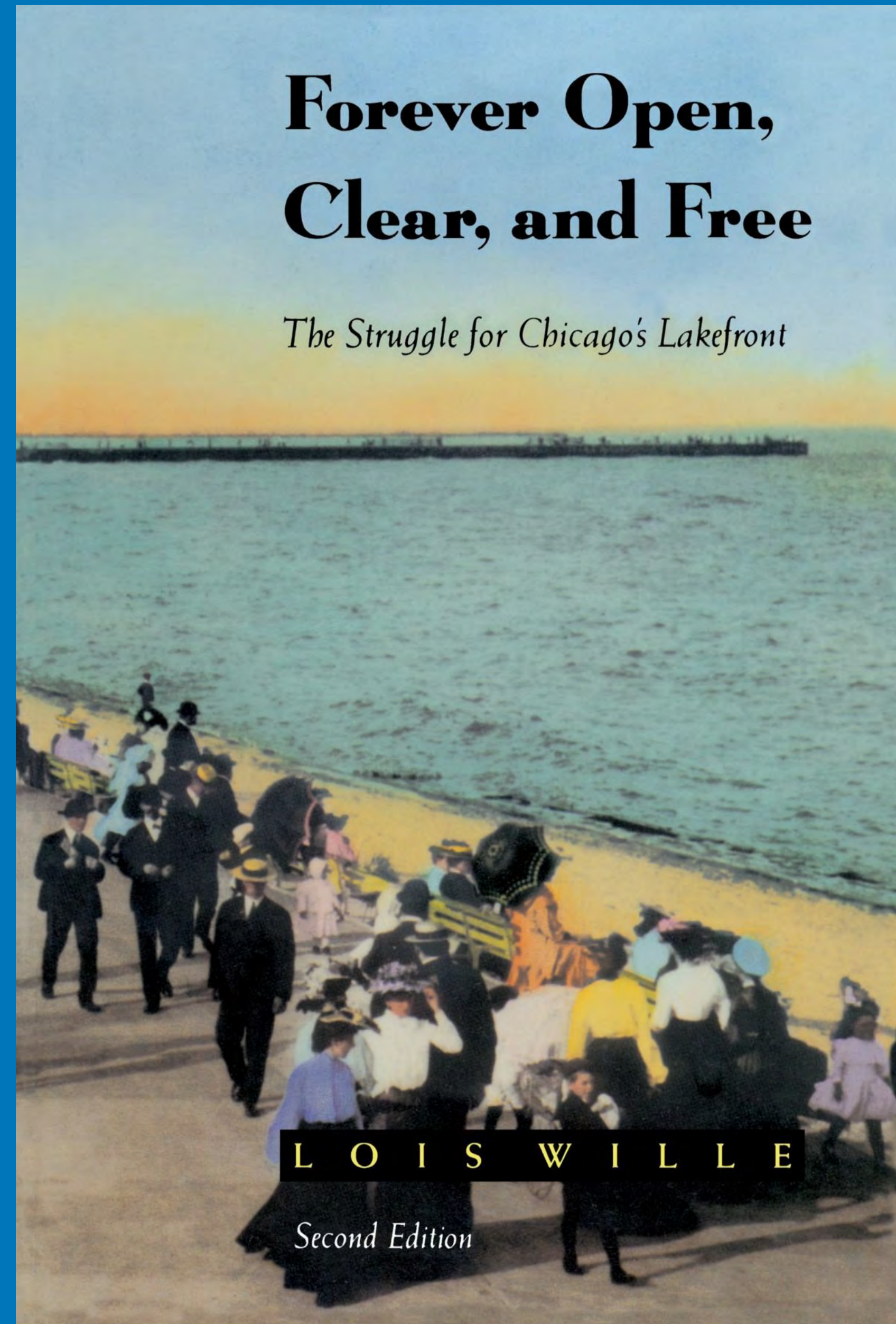
**"IN OUR EVERY
DELIBERATION, WE MUST
CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF
OUR DECISIONS ON THE NEXT
SEVEN GENERATIONS."**

THE GREAT LAW OF THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY



“Open, Clear and Free”

Chicago, 1836



Our Vision

Photo credit: Linda Kruzic



Photo credit: Kaavya Vassa



Photo Credit: Chicago Tribune







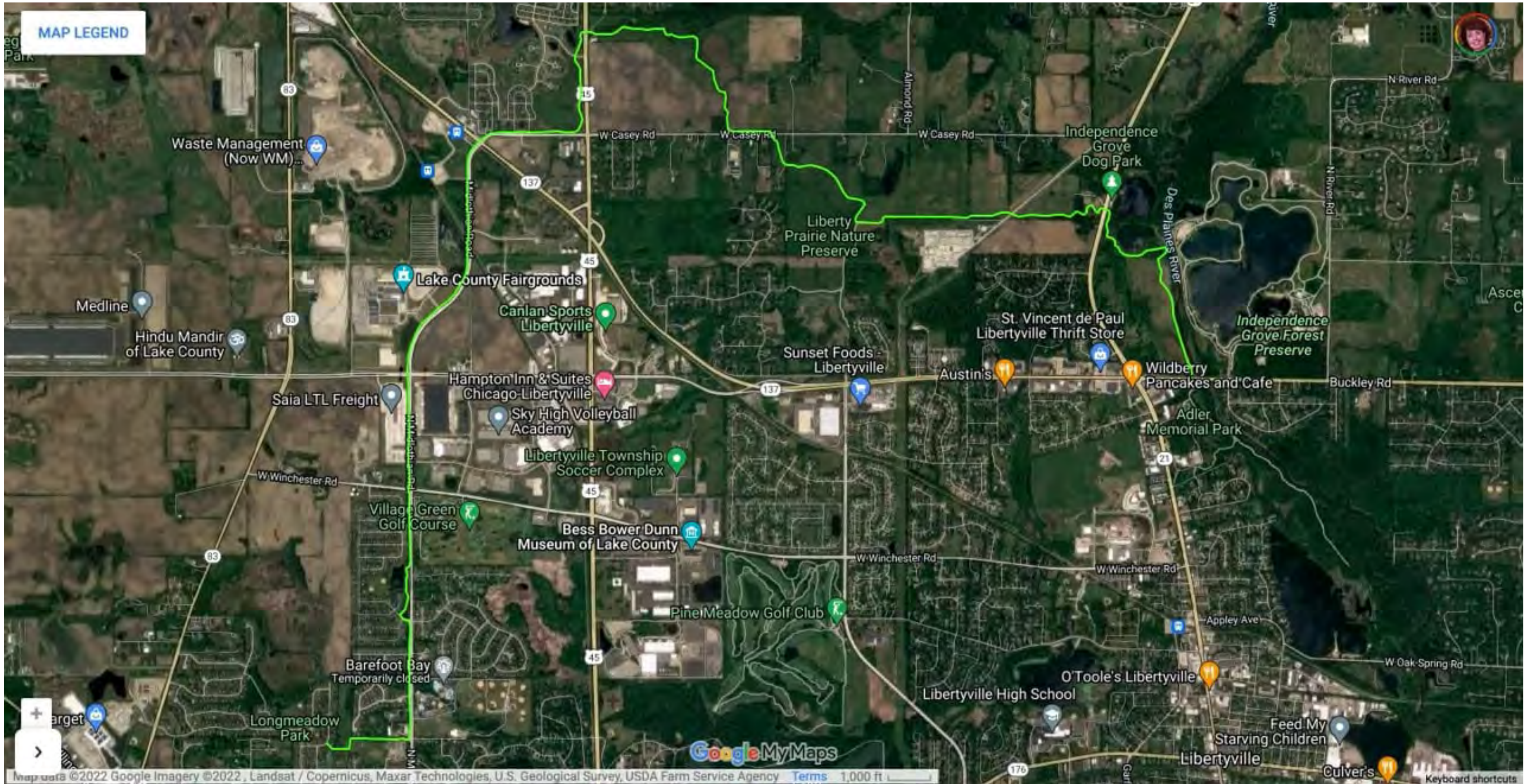




Photo Credit: Barbara Klipp



MAP LEGEND





Why should you care?

A protected, scenic corridor and trail will add economic value in 3 ways”

- 1. Wealth Generation**
- 2. Economic Development**
- 3. Avoided Costs**



Photo credit: Mike Trahan

Wealth Generation:

- Increased property values and earnings from open space related activities
 - Trails add real estate value to communities.
 - Homes in neighborhoods with high Walk Scores sell for \$4,000 to \$34,000 more than the average home.
 - The National Real Estate Association has endorsed trails and greenways for enhancing real estate values for communities.
- Earnings from jobs created from open space related activities



Lake County Bicycle Club

Economic Development

**THE
OUTDOOR
RECREATION
ECONOMY
GENERATES:**

\$887 BILLION

IN CONSUMER SPENDING ANNUALLY



7.6 MILLION

AMERICAN JOBS



\$65.3 BILLION

IN FEDERAL TAX REVENUE



\$59.2 BILLION

IN STATE AND LOCAL TAX REVENUE



Eco Tourism, Economic Development from protected open space and trails and the complimentary development that this will bring:

Trails increase tax revenues in the communities in which they are located.

Trails revitalize depressed areas, creating a demand for space in what were once vacant buildings.

In 2011, Illinois residents and non-residents spent \$3.8 BILLION on wildlife associated recreation.



Photo credit: Cheryl Keegan

The costs of land acquisition for trails, trail construction and maintenance are far outweighed by the economic benefits generated by trails.

Trails make communities more attractive places to live. **When considering where to move, homebuyers rank walking and biking paths as one of the most important features of a new community.**



Photo credit: LCFPD

The average combined
yearly attendance at
Chain O Lakes State
Park and Illinois Beach
State Park pre-
Covid(2016-2019)
approached 1.9 million
attendees per year.



Photo credit: Michael Schmitt

The way we work, shop and travel is changing and evolving rapidly and the pandemic has accelerated some of these changes.

Modern and forward-thinking economic and community development principals, whether it's Smart Growth or Triple Bottom Line, all agree that protecting valuable open space, such as we have in this corridor, is critically important.

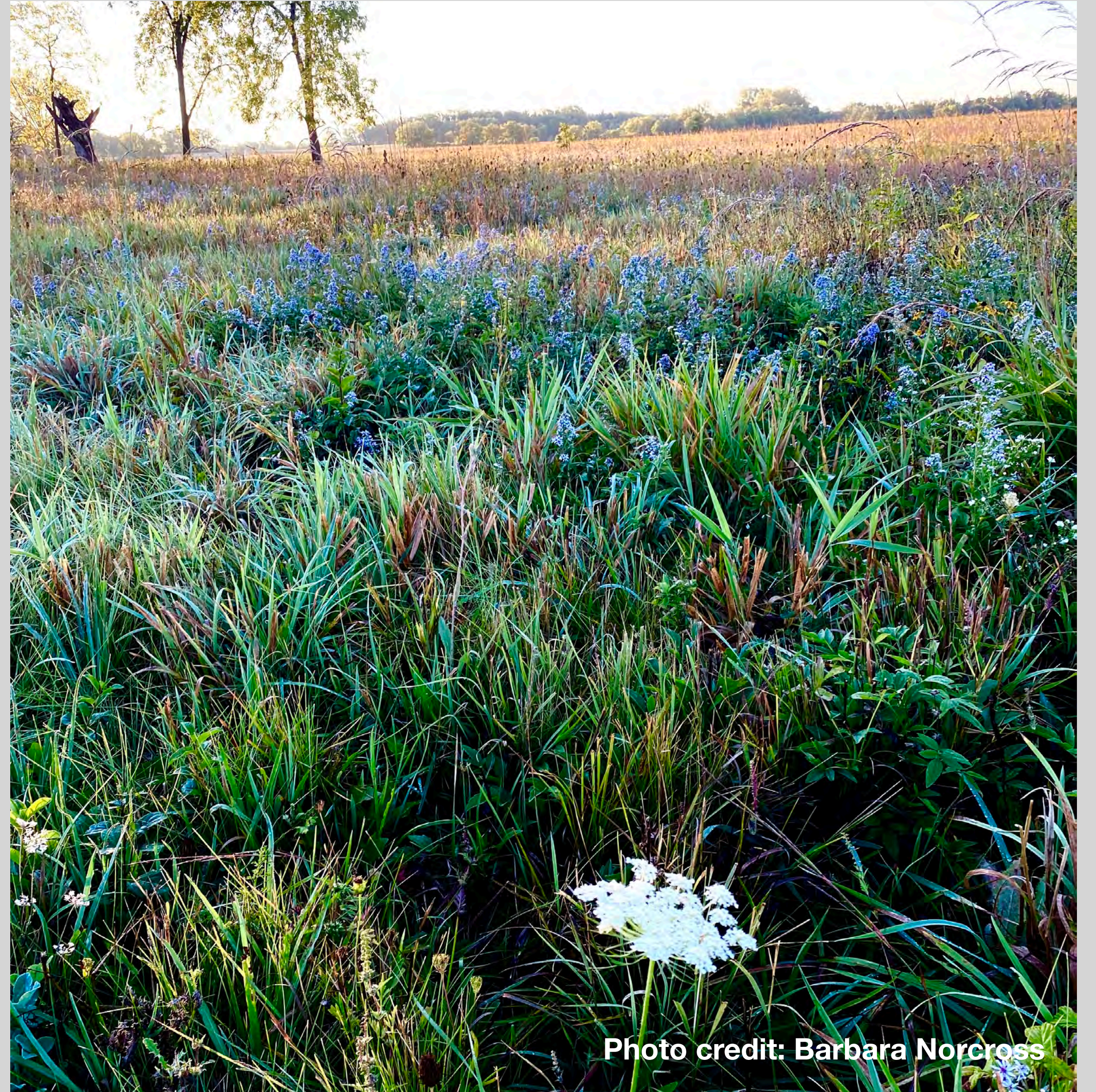


Photo credit: Barbara Norcross

Businesses and the talent they wish to attract all prioritize access to open space amenities in their decision making regarding where to locate.

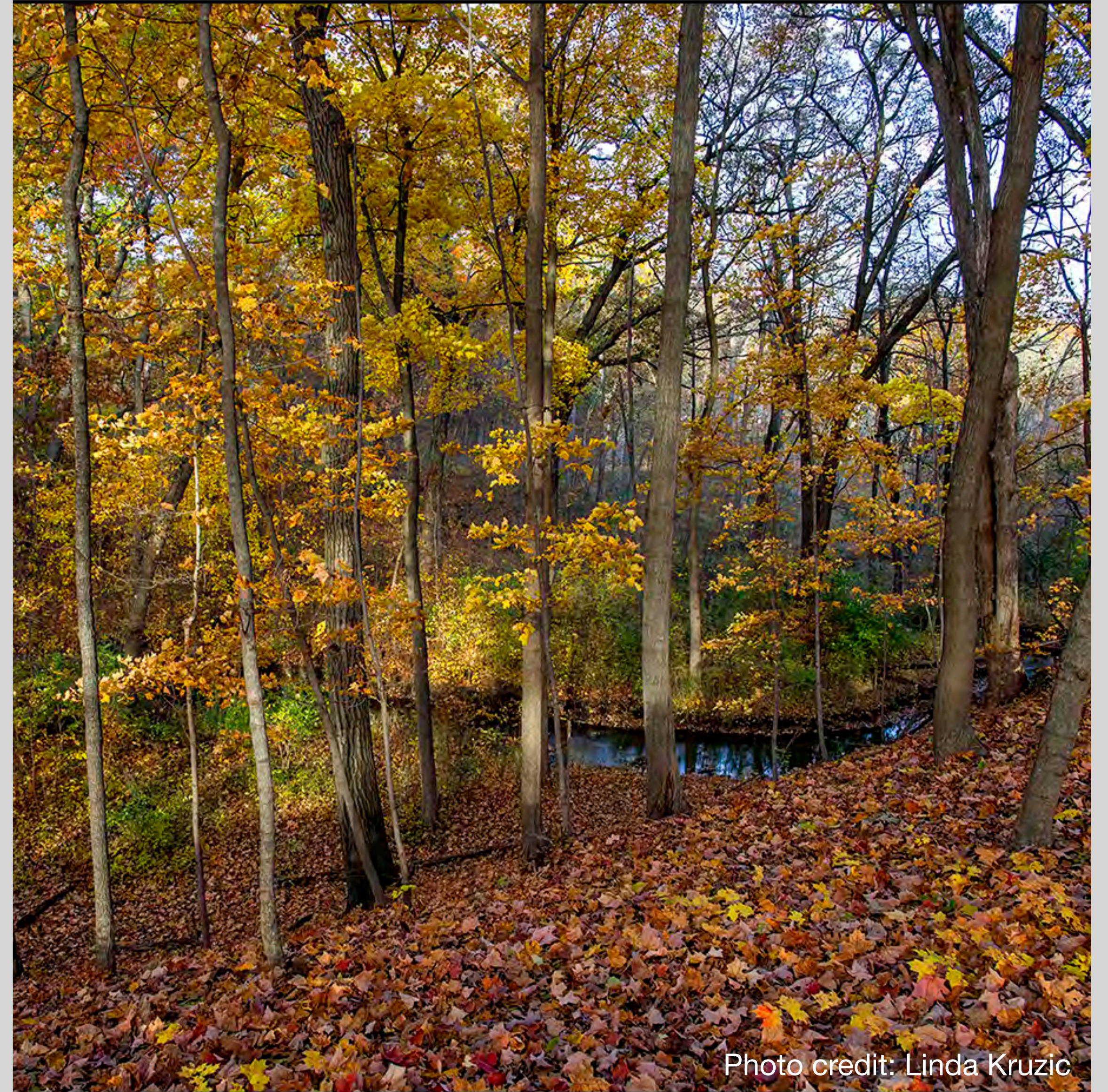


Photo credit: Linda Kruzic

Avoided Costs

Ecosystem Services Valuations: Protection SAVES US MONEY by:

- Storing Stormwater
- Cleaning water
- Pollution avoidance and load removal
- Climate protection via Carbon sequestration & storage
- Healthcare and Productivity Costs



Ecosystem Services
Valuations for Lake
County's Forest
Preserves total more
than \$6 BILLION
in costs savings to
taxpayers.



Photo credit: Barbara Klipp

Flooding Protection

- According to the EPA, **1 acre of wetlands can hold between 1 and 1.5 MILLION gallons of stormwater.**
- Not only does protected open space (especially wetlands and prairies) absorb and hold water, developed lands generate **MORE** stormwater runoff.



Photo credit: Kaavya Vassa

Climate Protection

- Wetlands, Prairies and Forests such as we have in the corridor provide carbon sequestration and storage
- Wetlands are more valuable per acre than tropical rain forests in terms of climate protection
- Nearly 80% of LC voters think we are not doing enough on climate change

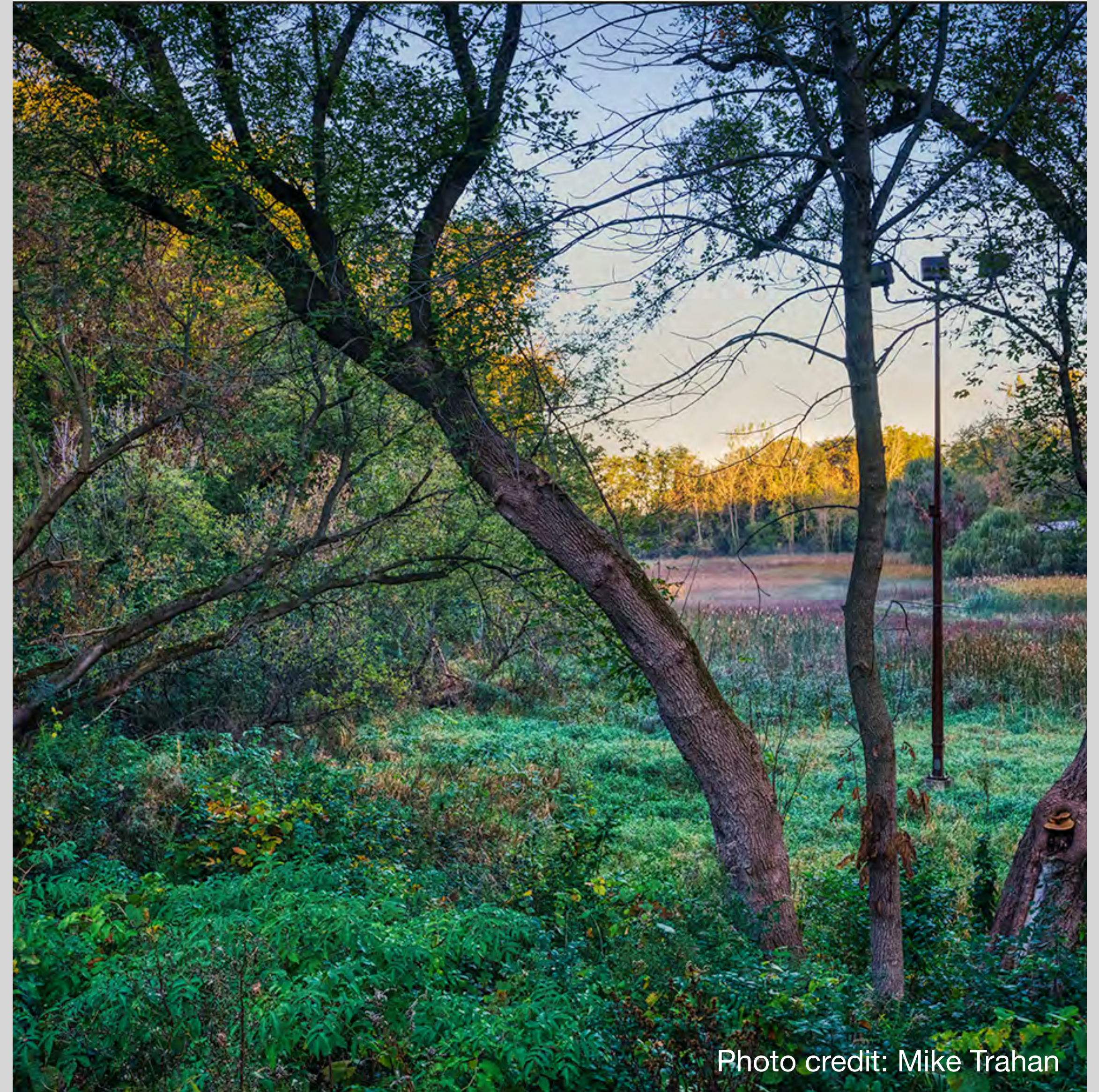


Photo credit: Mike Trahan

Clean Water

- Wetlands and prairies replenish and recharge our water
- Wetlands also provide pollution and sediment removal from the water
- Without protected open space, residents, businesses, and industry would be forced to pay much more for alternative groundwater filtration or water treatment methods
- 95% of LC voters care about clean water



Pollution Avoidance and Load Removal

- By not developing, we avoid pollution
- Wetlands, prairies and forests also provide pollution load removal from our water, land and air



Photo credit: Ella Kozlowski

Reduced Healthcare and Productivity Costs:

- For every 1 dollar spent on trails, there is a 3 dollar savings in healthcare costs.
- **Direct medical savings.** Costs saved on the treatment of physical or mental illnesses or medical conditions caused or exacerbated by physical inactivity
- **Indirect medical savings.** Costs saved on adverse health conditions and poor quality of life resulting from physical inactivity
- **Direct workers' compensation savings.** The amount employers save in compensation costs due to physically active employees having fewer accidents at work
- **Indirect workers compensation savings.** The amount employers save in reduced administrative costs due to their physically active employees submitting fewer compensation claims
- **Lost productivity savings.** The amount saved due to less employee absenteeism (employees not coming to work because they are sick) and presenteeism (employees coming to work sick or tired, making them less productive)



Photo credit: Active Transportation Alliance

Trails are transportation!

- Trails provide transportation options and cut fuel expenses, offering reliable means of transportation for short distance trips. Nearly half of all car trips are less than 3 miles and more than a quarter are 1 mile or less.
- Active transportation (walking or biking) is healthier, better for the planet and getting people out of cars reduces congestion.



Photo credit: Active Transportation Alliance

Our Amazing Wetlands!

Although wetlands cover only about 5% of the land surface in the lower 48 states, they are home to 31% of plant species.

More than 1/3 of threatened and endangered species live only in wetlands and an additional 20% use or inhabit wetlands at some time in their life.

As many as 1/2 of all North American bird species nest or feed in wetlands.



Mostly due to human activity, wetlands have been destroyed or degraded at alarming rates, with approximately 35% of the world's wetlands lost between 1970 and 2015 and 64% of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900.

There is more animal diversity in the wetlands compared to any other biome in the world.

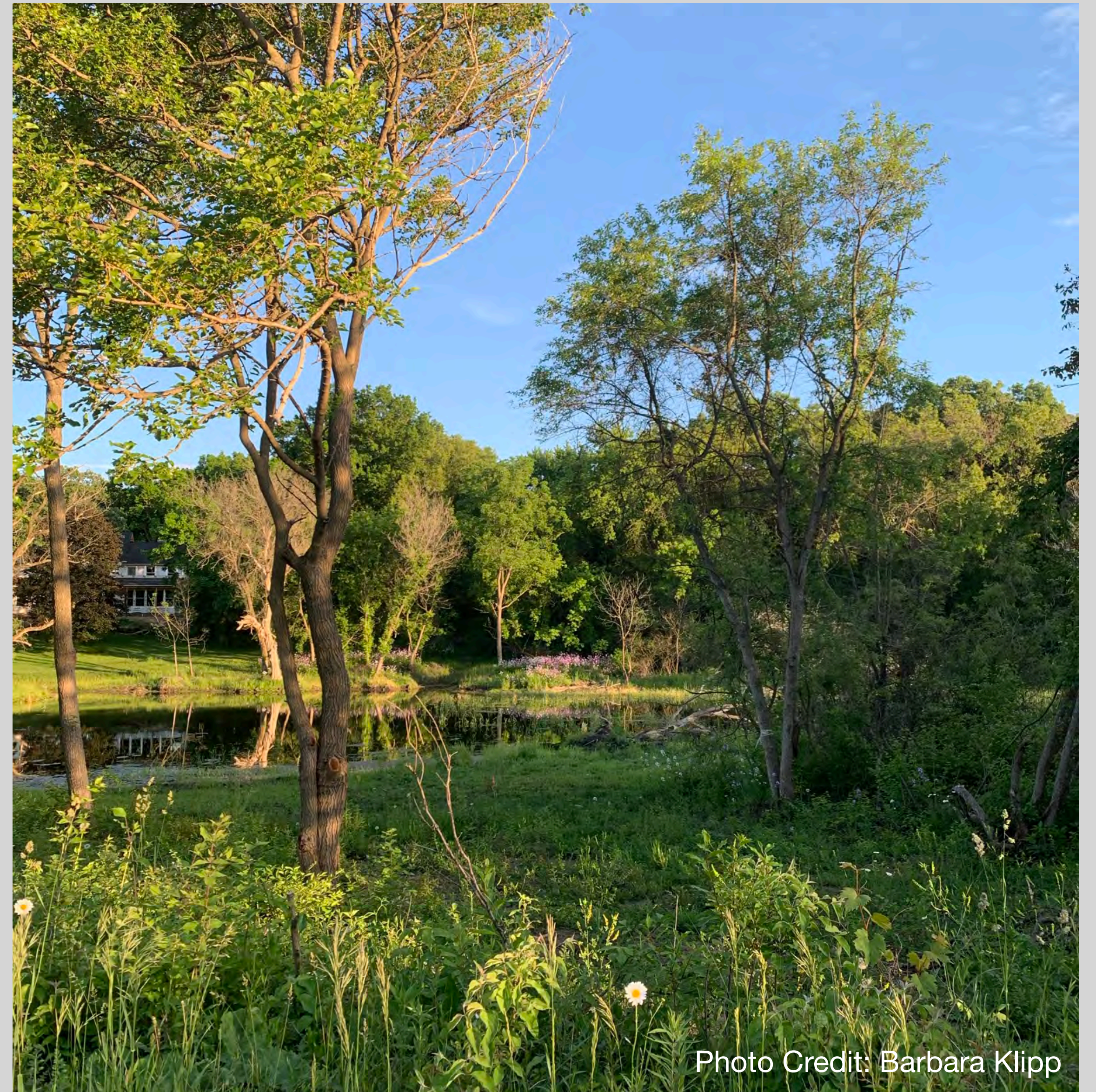


Photo Credit: Barbara Klipp

Lake County Has:

More threatened and endangered species and more biodiversity than any other county in Illinois



Photo credit: Anika Bhargava

We also have an opportunity to preserve agricultural land and local food production in the corridor.





Photo credit: Jenny & Nick Michaud



Photo credit: Jenny & Nick Michaud



Photo credit: Jenny & Nick Michaud



Photo credit: Jenny & Nick Michaud



Photo credit: Michael Schmitt



Photo Credit: Nancy Hill



Photo credit: Cheryl Keegan



Photo credit: Jenny & Nick Michaud



The corridor represents one of the most scenic landscapes remaining in Lake County, and we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fully unleash its value as an iconic nature trail and conservation area, where residents of our communities can treasure the atmosphere that makes central Lake County such an appealing place to live.

To achieve this vision, we propose designating the corridor as a Greenway where the majority, but not necessarily all, of the land would be designated for public recreation, natural stewardship, and flood-protection; while at the same time harnessing the potential for economic development that capitalizes on the popularity of open space.

The linear configuration of this corridor, combined with the fact that much of the property is already in public custody, makes it a natural destination for a nature trail, where local residents can walk, jog, bike – or just escape into an transformative world next door.

Along that journey, they would explore a virtual tapestry of visual jewels, from the deep emeralds of woods and meadows, to the golden tint of sunrise rippling across wetlands and creeks. It's a space that can be solemn enough for alone time, and joyful enough for a family picnic.

The 12 miles of new trail would also broaden access to existing recreational amenities by connecting to the Des Plaines River Trail, other trail systems and local forest preserves.

And perhaps the most beautiful part is that this vision requires only that we recognize that these lands will yield their greatest value if we simply honor them in their natural state. The less we do to alter them, the more they will pay dividends for our communities as a recreational amenity; as a conduit for businesses that cater to outdoor activities; and as a barrier to costly floods.

We may have preserved these properties for a different purpose. But over time, especially as so much of the County's natural environment has dwindled away, this corridor has only grown in value precisely because it was never paved over. That makes it a precious commodity that we can't afford to squander. Residents want to be near places like this. In fact, Lake County's own economic development plan affirms this idea, stating that the area's natural resources are an instrumental part of its growth strategy.

We believe that by allowing these lands to thrive naturally, our communities can grow for the better with them.

Facts, Resources and Studies from Environmental presentation to the Rt. 53 Task Force



**Benefits of Trails and protected open spaces
Ecosystem Services:**

<https://www.lcfpd.org/conservation/greenstrategy/>

| Core Areas | Acres | % County Land | Ecosystem Services Values |
|--|--------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Core woodland/forest | 8,056 | 2.7% | \$ 26,625,080 |
| Core prairies, grasslands and savannas | 12,668 | 4.2% | \$ 207,856,544 |
| Core wetlands | 21,796 | 7.2% | \$ 591,674,216 |
| Core lakes and streams | 26,589 | 8.8% | \$ 996,542,374 |
| Functional connections | | | |
| Woodland/forest corridors | 17,387 | 5.8% | \$ 57,464,035 |
| Prairie/grassland/savanna corridors | 22,599 | 7.5% | \$ 987,187,320 |
| Wetland corridors | 18,514 | 6.1% | \$ 711,900,328 |
| Restoration building blocks | | | |
| Woodland sites | 32,343 | 10.7% | \$ 106,893,615 |
| Woodland/forest restoration | 25,033 | 8.3% | \$ 82,734,065 |
| Prairie/grassland/savanna restoration | 91,078 | 30.2% | \$ 1,494,407,824 |
| Wetland sites | 952 | 0.3% | \$ 25,842,992 |
| Wetland complexes | 58,745 | 19.5% | \$ 159,551,420 |
| Undeveloped freshwater systems | 52,899 | 17.6% | \$ 598,076,094 |

Figure 29. Area estimates according to the Lake County Green Infrastructure Model and Strategy

(valuations for Lake County)

| ECOSYSTEM SERVICE | ALL NUMBERS IN \$2014/ACRE/YEAR | LANDSCAPE TYPE | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| | | WOODLANDS / FOREST | PRAIRIE / GRASSLAND / SAVANNA | WETLANDS | NATURAL FLOODPLAINS | LAKES |
| Water Flow Regulation/ Flood control | Selected | \$1,603 | \$16,000 | \$22,000 | \$6,500 | \$37,000 |
| | Median | \$1,415 | \$16,000 | \$4,900 | \$3,700 | \$43,000 |
| Water Purification | Selected | \$1,300 | \$57 | \$4,350 | \$2,500 | \$0 |
| | Median | \$1,060 | \$57 | \$3,429 | \$2,500 | \$0 |
| Groundwater Recharge | Selected | \$269 | \$269 | \$660 | \$4,806 | \$566 |
| | Median | \$269 | \$269 | \$2,479 | \$4,806 | \$566 |
| Carbon Storage | Selected | USED SPATIALLY EXPLICIT DATA FROM NBCD + gSSURGO | | | | |
| | Median | \$133 | \$82 | \$136 | | \$0 |

Figure 34. Ecosystem service valuation estimates used on the maps.

- LCDOT known usage data numbers for the McClory, North shore and Skokie River Trail Systems show that there was a total recreational value of \$36.6M/year for trail use on these trails. Per mile estimates = \$832K/mile/year. Extrapolating this data, The DesPlaines River Trail would provide \$26M/year in total recreation value and the Millennium Trail, when completed, would generate \$28M/year in total recreation value. For all regional trails in Lake County, the estimated recreational value is almost \$92M/year.
- Avoided runoff per acre of protected open space is 36,000 gallons per acre per year or 17% less
- Balmford et al. (2002) found that, if the values of ecological services are considered, the benefits from conserving natural land gives a return on investment of at least 100 to 1
- Trees:
 - A large tree can reduce 5,400 gallons of stormwater runoff per year.
 - A forest stand can intercept over 200,000 gallons per acre per year
 - Based on 2007 data, Nowak et al. (2013) estimated trees in the 7-county Chicago region removed 18,080 tons of air pollution per year with an associated value of \$157M (in 2007 dollars)
- Chester County, PA Thus, protected open space, on average, avoids \$4,600 per acre of stormwater infrastructure construction costs, \$479 per acre per year of annual operations and maintenance costs, and \$1,870 per acre per year of annual pollutant load reduction costs,
 - [OpenSpaceROE-FINAL-with-chart-edits_20190815.pdf \(netdna-ssl.com\)](#)
 - P. 64
- Given our deepening understanding of the true social costs of carbon, the scientific community's accepted monetary value of carbon sequestration and storage has increased significantly. The accepted value now is \$71 per ton. In other words, if the carbon currently stored in trees on protected open space were released into the air, it would cause damages that would cost millions to mitigate

Reduced Healthcare and Productivity Costs for trails:

- **Direct medical savings.** Costs saved on the treatment of physical or mental illness or medical conditions caused or exacerbated by physical inactivity
- **Indirect medical savings.** Costs saved on adverse health conditions and poor quality of life resulting from physical inactivity
- **Direct workers' compensation savings.** The amount employers save in compensation costs due to physically active employees having fewer accidents at work
- **Indirect workers compensation savings.** The amount employers save in reduced administrative costs due to their physically active employees submitting fewer compensation claims
- **Lost productivity savings.** The amount saved due to less employee absenteeism (employees not coming to work because they are sick) and presenteeism (employees coming to work sick or tired, making them less productive)

Community Benefits:

- In a 2008 survey of Illinois residents, over 97% thought outdoor recreation areas are important for health and fitness and almost 94% thought community recreation areas important for quality of life and promotion of economic development. Over 80% thought more lands should be acquired for open space and/or for outdoor recreation
- Trails have been shown to improve quality of life, promote health, sense of community, and more. When communities invest in trails, they are also building a trail culture. Outdoor recreation opportunities attract new residents, new businesses, and create a sense of pride for the communities that build them.
- Trails bring people together by building a social infrastructure that bonds its citizens by bringing them outdoors. Community events such as races, trail days, and fundraising drives bring even more opportunity for these community bonds to grow.
- Trails provide low or no-cost recreation to families with low costs relative to other recreational services that could be provided by the government.

Wetlands:

- Researchers estimate that restored wetlands can remove excess nitrogen fertilizer from farm runoff at an average cost of one dollar per pound of nitrogen, while traditional water treatment plants provide the same service at a cost of seven to 40 dollars per pound.
- Wetlands can hold pollutants such as heavy metals and phosphorous and can even aid in converting dissolved nitrogen into nitrogen gas. Wetland areas can also break down suspended solids thus playing a vital role in neutralizing harmful bacteria.
-

Conservation as an investment :

- Chicago market Q4 2021
 - Lake County had the highest industrial vacancy rate at 4.4%
- And in Loudoun County, Virginia—the fastest growing county in the Washington, D.C. area—costs to service 1,000 new development units exceeded their tax contribution by as much as \$2.3 million.

- One study found that New Jersey communities would save \$1.3 billion in infrastructure costs over 20 years by avoiding unplanned sprawl development.³ Another predicted that even a modest implementation of higher-density development would save the state of South Carolina \$2.7 billion in infrastructure costs over 20 years.⁴ And a third found that increasing housing density from 1.8 units per acre to 5 units per acre in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area would slash \$3 billion in capital infrastructure costs over 20 years.⁵ Many community leaders expect that the taxes generated by growth will pay for the increased costs of sprawl, but in many instances this is not the case.
- • In the island community of Nantucket, Massachusetts, each housing unit was found to cost taxpayers an average of \$265 a year more than the unit contributed in taxes. “Simply stated, new dwellings do not carry their own weight on the tax rolls,” a town report concluded.⁶
- “Land conservation is often less expensive for local governments than suburban style development,” writes planner Holly L. Thomas. “The old adage that cows do not send their children to school expresses a documented fact—that farms and other types of open land, far from being a drain on local taxes, actually subsidize local government by generating far more in property taxes than they demand in services.”
(https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/cloud.tpl.org/pubs/benefits_EconBenef_Parks_OpenSpaceL.pdf)
- **The Growth Ponzi Scheme, also called the "Municipal Ponzi Scheme,"** is a core Strong Towns insight describing the financial characteristics of post-war North American growth patterns. In the Growth Ponzi Scheme, municipalities receive the modest near-term financial benefits from new development in exchange for the larger long-term financial commitments of providing ongoing service and maintenance. There are three stages to the Growth Ponzi Scheme. They are:
 1. The *illusion of wealth* that comes from new growth.
 2. A period of accelerating community obligations and municipal debt.
 3. Municipal insolvency and decline.

The Growth Ponzi Scheme is not nefarious; there is not a specific individual or group that has created it for their own benefit. It has emerged from a broad cultural consensus about economic growth, development patterns, and debt. The Growth Ponzi Scheme and the "illusion of wealth" are described in chapter three of *Strong Towns: A Bottom-Up Revolution to Rebuild American Prosperity*

Eco Tourism and complimentary development that this will bring:

- A recent study out of West Virginia University about a local rail- trail found that "property values along the trail, are about 170 percent or so median value"
- **The Elroy-Sparta State Trail in Sparta Wisconsin** was one of the nation's first rail trails, and since its opening in the 1960s, several other rail trails have opened in the area. The trail boasts 100,000 to 120,000 users each year, many from out of state. The businesses of Sparta, the self-proclaimed "Bicycling Capital of America", support their town's identity by means such as hotels and campgrounds

that offer free trail passes, restaurants that serve healthy food to bicyclists, tour packages with lodging, bike rental and shuttles, and a variety of stores that serve bicycling needs.

- The **Illinois Prairie Path** spans approximately 61 miles. Today, the trail sees hundreds of thousands of visits a year by individuals who value the corridor for the many opportunities it brings for physical activity, commuting, connecting to nature and economic vitality. “Initially the municipality did not like the idea of trails—they weren’t supportive,” said Erik Spande, an environmental scientist and the village president of Winfield, Illinois, who has served as IPPC Board president since 2013. “What they have found since then is that trails are valued infrastructure that emphasize the ‘triple bottom line’: health and wellness, the environment, and the economy.” He continued, “[The trail] enriches people’s lives, and helps the community; it’s an increasingly valuable [piece of] urban infrastructure. I occasionally get a chance to chat with young people, and they say they can’t imagine their life without the Prairie Path system. We’ve gone from ‘a crazy idea’ to something people want and use every day.”
- In **Dunedin, Florida**, after the abandoned CSX railroad was transformed into the Pinellas Trail, the **downtown went from a 35% storefront vacancy rate to a 100% storefront occupancy with a waiting list for available space.**
- Since the Katy Hiking and Biking Trail opened in Marthasville, a small, quiet town in Missouri, **more than a dozen new businesses have opened and renewed civic pride has led to numerous beautification projects. The western half of the trail generates \$3 million annually in local revenue.**
- It took only one season after the opening of the 35-mile Missouri River State Trail for the trail to positively impact local communities. **After one season, 61 businesses along the trail found the trail positively impacted their businesses. Eleven reported the trail strongly influenced their decision on where to locate and 17 increased their business size since the trail opened.**
- Along the **Baltimore and Annapolis Trail Park in Maryland**, six trail-related stores have opened and two others have re-located next to the trail to attract new customers.
- When Mrs. B’s Historic Lanesboro Inn opened in **Lanesboro, Minnesota** soon before the Root River State trail opened, it was the area’s first bed and breakfast. There are now ten. Fifty to sixty percent of Mrs. B’s guests are trail users. According to Mrs. B’s management, a critical mass of lodging, restaurants and activities are necessary to create a tourist economy around a trail.
- **The Maryland Northern Central Rail Trail, near Baltimore**, has 450,000 annual users and an annual economic impact of \$3,380,000. Almost all visitors live near the trail.
- **The Ghost Town Trail** is a 36-mile multi-use pathway in Pennsylvania between Ebensburg in Cambria County and Saylor Park in Black Lick, Indiana County with an estimated 75,557 annual user visits
- **The Virginia Creeper Trail (VCT)** is a 34-mile long rail trail whose midpoint is the town of Damascus, Virginia, which is known as “Trail Town, USA” because it is located at the intersection of five major trails. A trail survey was conducted between November 1, 2002 and October 31, 2003. During this time period, there were an estimated 130,172 trail users. Local trail users spent just under \$200 annually on items directly related to their use of the VCT, mostly within the local economy.
- “Burke-Gilman was truly an urban trail that involved the entire pro-trail citizenry and the governments of Seattle and King County,” said Harnik. “It was a full-fledged early showdown between pro- and anti-trail people, with the railroad caught in between. The trail eventually expanded to 18.8 miles, with much media coverage, citizen action and local governmental support. Today, the Burke-Gilman, managed jointly by the City of Seattle and King County Parks, is a staple for commuting, recreation and fitness, receiving hundreds of thousands of visits each year.

Triple Bottom Line and Economic Growth:

- “The triple bottom line is a business concept that posits firms should commit to measuring their social and environmental impact—in addition to their financial performance—rather than solely focusing on generating profit, or the standard “bottom line.” It can be broken down into “three Ps”: profit, people, and the planet.”
- <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/what-is-the-triple-bottom-line>
- Quality-of-life factors are most important to firms that prioritize talent attraction and retention.
- Talent attraction: Many business owners are first introduced to places as visitors or tourists; positive recreational experiences can influence both business and talent recruitment.
- The pandemic has changed the way many people work. Many will be working from home at least part time. This makes quality of life in their communities even more important.
- Many factors drive corporate site-location decisions, but quality-of-life factors (e.g., school quality, access to amenities and open space, cultural opportunities) increasingly have become critical ones (see Figure 1). According to Area Development magazine’s annual survey of corporate executives, 76 percent of corporate executives identify quality-of-life factors as “Very important” or “Important” in their site location decisions—up from 55 percent in 2005.
- Owners of small companies ranked recreation/parks/open space as the highest priority in choosing a new location for their business.
- In his book “The Rise of the Creative Class”, **Richard Florida** reports that, contrary to previous thinking that the environment must be sacrificed for economic growth, **environmental quality is now a prerequisite to attracting the “creative class”** that means the advanced technologies of the new economy. **Environmental quality was more important in high-technology workers’ decisions on work location than housing, cost of living, and good schools.**
- According to Reilly and Renski, investments in improving a community’s quality of life can create a virtuous cycle: high-quality places attract workers, which attract employers, which in turn attract more investments and jobs. These factors are particularly important for smaller and more rural communities that lack large markets, talent pools or well-developed identities.
- Firms looking to locate office operations (e.g., headquarters, regional shared-service centers or professional and business services) and which recruit employees regionally, nationally or even internationally, are more likely to prioritize quality-of-life factors in site-location decisions.
- Park and recreation departments support environmental stewardship and promote health and wellness in communities across the United States. Less appreciated, but just as important, are the many contributions that parks make to economic prosperity. Park and recreation agencies employ hundreds of thousands of people, while their operations and capital spending generate significant economic activity. Moreover, local parks shape perceptions of and enhance the quality of life in communities.
- Ultimately, a wide array of factors—the availability of skilled talent, interstate highway access, proximity to key markets, for example—determines site location decisions. Places that possess a high quality of life—including a wealth of recreational amenities—are more likely to attract highly skilled, educated and entrepreneurial workers. The presence of these workers, in turn, attracts companies. By better understanding their role in community place making, park and recreation leaders can make stronger arguments about their agencies’ overall contributions to economic development.
- McGranahan, Wojan and Lambert find that places with landscape (e.g., woods, water), climate (e.g., sunshine) and recreational appeal (e.g., tourist attractions) are more likely to grow through creative and entrepreneurial industries.
- Reilly and Renski also find that research and development (R&D) facilities, technology companies and corporate headquarters are more likely to prioritize quality-of-life and cultural amenities when making site- location decisions. In contrast, manufacturers are more likely to prioritize traditional factors such as wage rates, transportation costs and proximity to markets over quality-of-life factors.

- Corporate executives often include quality-of-life considerations when making site location decisions. A recent notable example is Amazon, which specifically lists quality of life as a key factor in its search for a second headquarters location.
 - “We want to invest in a community where our employees will enjoy living, recreational opportunities, educational opportunities, and an overall high quality of life. Tell us what is unique about your community.” [Amazon HQ2 RFP]
- Interviews with several site-selection consultants reaffirm that talent attraction and retention considerations determine how companies prioritize quality of life. Firms that hire primarily from a local labor force (e.g., manufacturing, distribution, call centers) are less likely to prioritize quality of life; they assume that current residents—the existing potential workforce—are satisfied with the current quality of life in their communities. In contrast, companies looking to locate office operations (e.g., headquarters, technology- driven firms, regional shared-service centers or professional and business services) often recruit regionally, nationally, or even internationally. These companies want their offices and facilities in locales where their future employees want to live.
- Changes in the way we work as a result of the pandemic:
 - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/09/02/after-almost-two-years-of-working-remotely-it-will-be-nearly-impossible-to-demand-people-to-return-to-the-office/?sh=201a07a83f79>
 - <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/whats-next-for-remote-work-an-analysis-of-2000-tasks-800-jobs-and-nine-countries>

Smart Growth:



Smart Growth is supported by the American Planning Association, The US Conference of Mayors, The Natl Assoc of Counties, The Natl Governors Assoc. The Assoc of Metropolitan Planning Orgs, The Natl Assoc of Development Organizations, and US EPA

- “Before increasing the density of a community we like to increase the intensity of nature,” says William Moorish, director of the Design Center for American Urban Landscape at the University of Minnesota. “

- “Austin is not alone in its efforts to protect open space as a way of supporting local economies and guiding growth into more densely settled, multiuse, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. Open space conservation is essential to any smart growth plan. The most successful higher-density neighborhoods—those most attractive to homebuyers—offer easy access to parks, playgrounds, trails, greenways and natural open space. To truly grow smart a community must decide what lands to protect for recreation, community character, the conservation of natural resources, and open space. This decision helps shape growth and define where compact development should occur. Many Americans believe that smart growth communities are more livable than are sprawling suburban neighborhoods. But accumulating evidence also suggests that smarter, denser growth is simply the most economical way for communities to grow.”
- The way we work and travel is changing rapidly.
- Many will work from home at least part time. They will want to be in a beautiful place connected to nature. We have seen that during the pandemic.
- As the nation moves toward a mixed economy based on services, light industry, consumer goods, and new technologies, businesses and their employees are no longer tied to traditional industrial centers. Today, businesses are free to shop for an appealing location, and they clearly prefer communities with a high quality of life, including an abundance of open space.
- Create a network of trails and greenways. To maximize the utility of green spaces, communities must ensure that trails and greenways form a continuous network of pathways for biking, running, or cross-country skiing through a region. Trails and greenways are protected corridors of open space that allow for a multifaceted approach to land conservation and park planning by serving both recreational and conservation functions. Forming an interconnected network of trails and greenways not only ensures stronger corridors for animal migration, but it can also make these valuable resources more accessible to the region’s residents.
- Local governments across the country are also realizing that locally accessible open space can make a community an attractive location for potential employees, raise property values, and stimulate tourism. Plentiful and accessible open space and working lands were factors in Hewlett Packard, Intel, and Hyundai’s decisions to locate in Portland, Oregon. Open space and working lands also require fewer community services than residential or commercial development, which allows localities to save money for other fiscal priorities. Preservation efforts are also driven by the environmental impacts of losing open space and working lands. Forests, wetlands, meadows, and other natural areas provide essential ecosystem services such as filtering runoff, storing carbon emissions, and maintaining wildlife habitat. These and other ecoservices can be damaged as open space is replaced with parking lots, malls, office buildings, driveways, and other structures. When these ecosystem services are sufficiently degraded, communities are often forced to spend large sums of money to construct technologies, such as water treatment plants, that mimic natural functions.
- <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-01/documents/gettosg2.pdf> (p. 52)

Polling:

Gallup 2021 environmental polling:

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1615/environment.aspx>

March of 2021 - Do you think the U.S. government is doing too much, too little or about the right amount in terms of protecting the environment?

Too much 15%

Too little 56%

The right amount 29%

please tell me if you personally worry about this problem a great deal, a fair amount, only a little or not at all. First, how much do you personally worry about:

Climate Change

Great Deal 43%

Fair Amount 22%

Only a Little 18%

Not at All 17%

Pollution of Drinking Water

Great Deal 56%

Fair Amount 24%

Only a Little 12%

Not at All 7%

Extinction of Plant and Animal Species

Great Deal 40%

Fair Amount 30%

Only a Little 20%

Not at All 10%

Urban Sprawl and Loss of Open Space

Great Deal 26%

Fair Amount 28%

Only a Little 29%

Not at All 17%

Loss of Natural Habitat for Wildlife

Great Deal 44%

Fair Amount 33%

Only a Little 17%

Not at All 6%

<https://conservationtools.org/guides/111-national-poll-results>

- Nearly four in ten respondents (37%) identify as Republican, 36% as independent, and 20% as Democratic. A third live in rural areas, 30% in the suburbs, and 17% in urban areas.
- Most (81%) identified themselves as conservationists, including 83% of Republicans, 81% of Democrats, and 80% of independents.
- Seven out of 10 respondents consider themselves “conservationists,”
- eight out of 10 voters (79%) agreed with the statement “we can protect land and water without compromising our economy.”

- Three-quarters (76%) of voters said that issues involving water quality (natural areas, lakes, rivers, or beaches), neighborhood parks, and wildlife habitat are important to them when deciding how to vote.
- Nearly all voters (97%) agree that protecting public lands for future generations is important. Eighty-three percent, including 90% of Clinton voters and 73% of Trump voters, say this is “very important.” Sportspeople are concerned about the future: 85% worry that “outdoor traditions and recreation opportunities are being lost for the next generation,” with 52% “strongly” agreeing. Ninety-two percent say that conservation issues are important in their support for an elected official; 39% say it is the primary factor.
- Overall, 92% believe public lands make positive contributions to the economy; 58% strongly believe this.

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