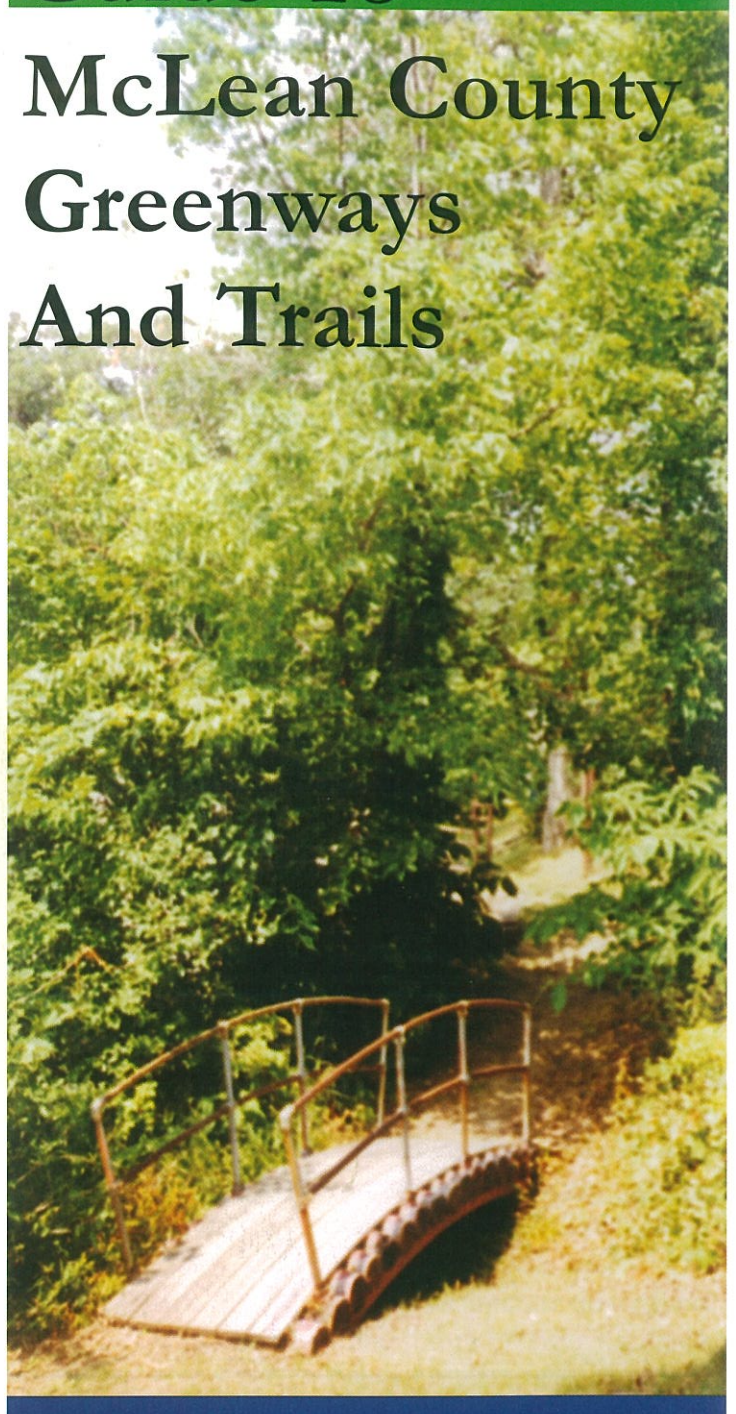
Guide To McLean County Greenways And Trails



"Imagine walking out your front door, getting on a bicycle, a horse, or trail bike, or simply donning your backpack and, within minutes of your home, setting off along a continuous network of recreation corridors which could lead across the country."

–American Outdoors

Nature trail at Merwin Nature Preserve

"Recreational trails should provide the people of Illinois with opportunities to enjoy physical and social activities…"

–Illinois State Trails Plan
IDNR, 1995

The McLean County Regional Greenways Plan is a local response to the national and statewide greenway movement. The establishment of a regional greenway network is important for preserving the natural environment and linear connections within the region. The greenway movement arose from the need to address the nation's urban and environmental problems and to meet growing demands for recreation and open space nationwide.

What is a Greenway?

Greenways are narrow bands of natural or landscaped open space for pedestrian or bicycle passage. Greenways provide habitat for wildlife and essential routes for species migration. They filter pollutants from water, enhance scenic and aesthetic qualities and expand recreational, social, cultural, and economic opportunities.

Greenways may be established along either a natural corridor, a scenic road, or a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use.

Playgrounds within the camping area at COMLARA Park.

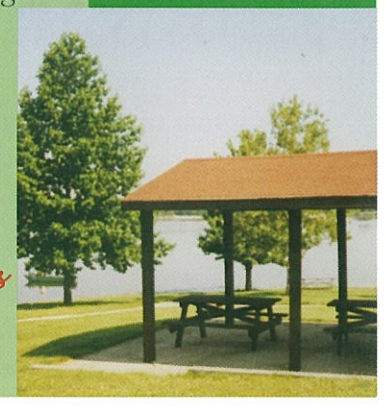
What is in this Brochure

The need to preserve and expand recreational opportunities is particularly important in rapidly growing communities such as McLean County, which since 1970 has experienced more growth than any other Illinois county outside the Chicago region.

This guide not only introduces the work and commitment of the McLean County Greenways Coalition, but also identifies for the user recreational opportunities within McLean County including:

- Location
- Information
- Park Facilities
- Trail Maps
- Contact Information
- Volunteer Opportunities

Evergreen Lake at COMLARA Park



How to find out more

To learn more about the National Greenway Movement, contact the **National Park Service** at:

1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240
Phone: (202)208-6843
www.nps.gov

For details about local area parks and greenways, refer to the contact list found on page 5.

Front cover image: Footbridge at Merwin Nature Preserve

Produced with funding and support from McLean County GIS and the National Park Service.

Brochure design and layout by:

McLean County Regional Planning Commission
211 W. Jefferson St.
Bloomington, IL 61701
(309) 828-4331

Boat docks along Lake Bloomington

Why Trails?

Transportation

Trails give us safe, scenic alternatives to driving. Trails provide pedestrians and bicyclists with direct routes to and from school, work, shopping centers, and parks. Using trails reduces traffic congestion, air and noise pollution.

Conservation

McLean County's natural beauty is everywhere—the shady trees, the prairies, the squirrels, and the birds. The numerous trails and park areas help to protect and preserve these plants and wildlife while making connections between communities.

Recreation

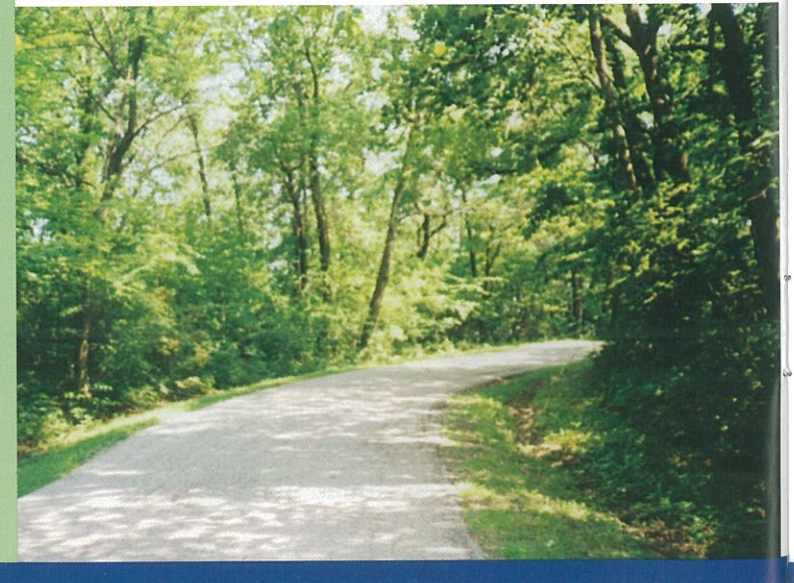
Trails and parks provide recreation for hikers, bikers, walkers, runners, birdwatchers, and nature lovers. Since trails can be located along almost any natural or cultural feature, they offer close-to-home places for people to exercise and stay healthy while enjoying the great outdoors.

Trails and recreation areas do more than provide facilities for users; they bring people together. McLean County residents are dedicated to establishing a system of intercity trails and bike routes linking people to places as well as offering numerous opportunities for you to express your support for hike and bike trails through local stewardship organizations. Come *DISCOVER* McLean County for yourself.

The Regional Greenways Plan

The McLean County Regional Greenways Plan presents a vision and provides a framework for achieving a regional system of interconnected greenways throughout McLean County. The plan presents specific goals and objectives and identifies priority future greenways, which reflect the vision and resources of the county. The plan also recommends a course of action to pursue in developing or preserving planned future greenways. Emphasis is given to ownership and acquisition strategies that involve voluntary participation of landowners, as well as strategies that may be eligible for funding under grant programs. Another consideration in the development of the plan is the potential for linking greenways to attractions and destinations, such as state-owned parks, beyond McLean County.

For a listing of high-priority future greenways, refer to the McLean County Greenways Plan located at both the Bloomington and Normal Public Libraries and at the Ecology Action Center.



Wildlife at COMLARA Park

Regional Initiative

The plan was developed in cooperation with the McLean County Greenways Coalition. The Coalition was formed to provide direct input from interested citizens, local governments and organizations, including recreational and environmental groups as well as the McLean County Farm Bureau and individual landowners. McLean County Regional Planning Commission appointed a steering committee to coordinate planning efforts between planning staff and the main body of the Coalition. The Coalition contained five subcommittees of which the chairpersons of each formed the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee met on a bimonthly basis, with the individual committees meeting monthly. Public meetings of the entire Coalition were held on a quarterly basis and provided significant citizen input for the greenway planning process. The structure of the McLean County Greenways Coalition allowed for input that reflects a wide range of expertise, talents and perceptions.

Following the formation of the steering committee, the proposed project proceeded with the identification of specific goals and objectives for greenway planning by first identifying existing conditions and future trends.

Greenway Goals & Objectives

The goals and objectives were developed in terms of five broad categories. The priority goals for each of the five categories are presented below. To view all of the goals and objectives for each of these categories, refer to the McLean County Regional Greenways Plan.

1. Conservation, Environment and Reservation

- Create a regional system of greenways that protects sensitive environmental areas and promotes conservation of habitat and endangered species.
- Develop additional trails and greenways to enhance the natural areas of the metropolitan area.

2. Parks and Recreation

- Create an interconnected park system that provides for a variety of active and passive recreational activities.
- Maintain intergovernmental coordination for the planning of parks, greenways, and trails to ensure that open space and recreational facilities are accessible to all residents.

3. Implementation, Management and Coordination

- Reserve greenways as a consideration in the review of development and redevelopment projects.
- Identify and establish programs for funding the acquisition, development and maintenance of greenways.

4. Legal Issues

- Implement a wide variety of legal tools available for use in developing or reserving greenways and trails.
- Insure a spirit of cooperation in the reservation and implementation of open space and greenways.

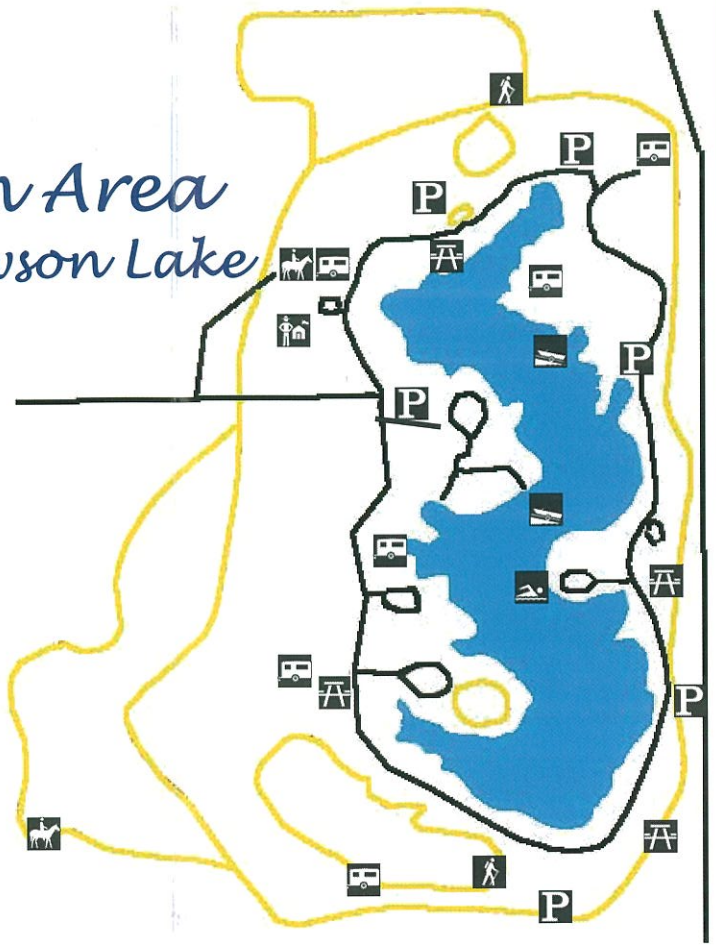
5. Education Issues

- Educate the public on the benefits of greenways to the environment in terms of improved air and water quality, the local economy, aesthetics, and the overall quality of life.

Parks, Trails, and Conservation Areas

Moraine View State Recreation Area
Dawson Lake

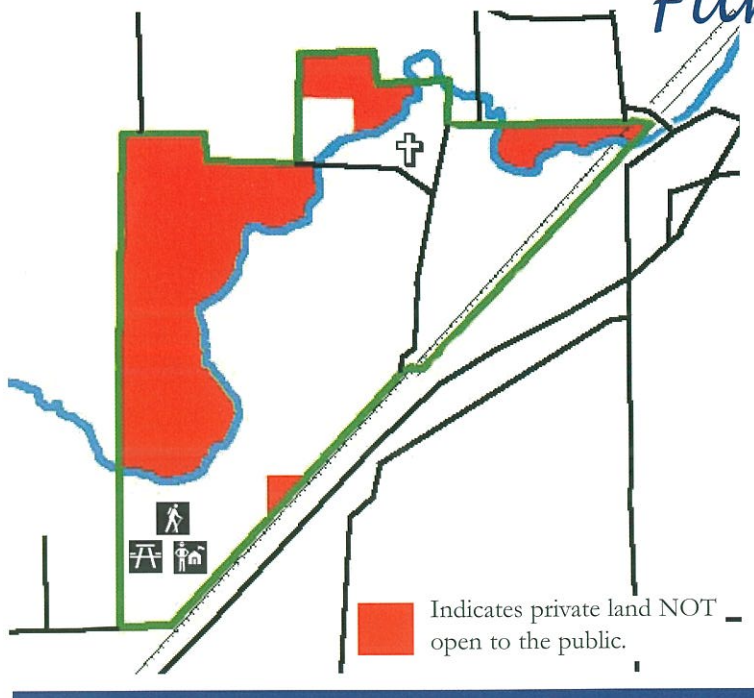
With its 158-acre Dawson Lake and fully developed facilities for almost any outdoor activity, Moraine View State Recreation Area is a beautiful, convenient, and accessible landscape for relaxation and recreation. Scenic trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding, along with campgrounds, picnic areas, and playgrounds, are located throughout the park's 1,687 acres. The park is open from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. year round and is located just minutes east of Bloomington/Normal. Boat rental and launching docks are available along the lake for any type of boat under 10 horsepower.



Legend

- Information
- Parking
- Hiking
- Equine Trails
- Picnicking
- Camping
- Boat Launch
- Swimming
- Canoe Access
- Chapel
- Park Boundary
- Road
- Water
- Trail

Funks Grove
Sugar Grove Nature Center



Indicates private land NOT open to the public.

Nestled along historic Route 66, a generations-old maple "sirup" business, a large stand of sugar maples, and a prairie restoration combine to make Funks Grove a significant cultural and natural resource for McLean County. The grove has never been cleared and is the best representation of pre-settlement forest conditions in the area. Funks Grove is home to Sugar Grove Nature Center, where visitors have access to various exhibits, displays, and programs for all ages. Funks Grove is a privately owned conservation area with hiking trails open to the public from dawn until dusk. For information on the Center's hours, call 309-874-2174.

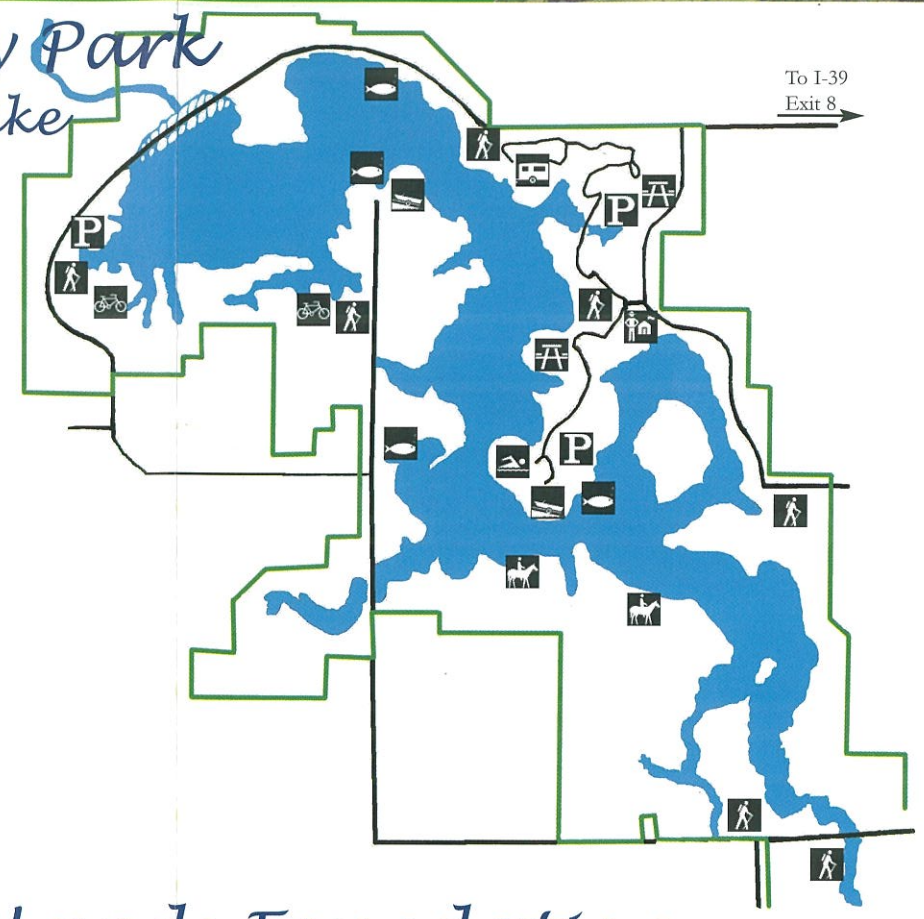
Aerial view of COMLARA Park at Evergreen Lake

COMLARA County Park
Evergreen Lake

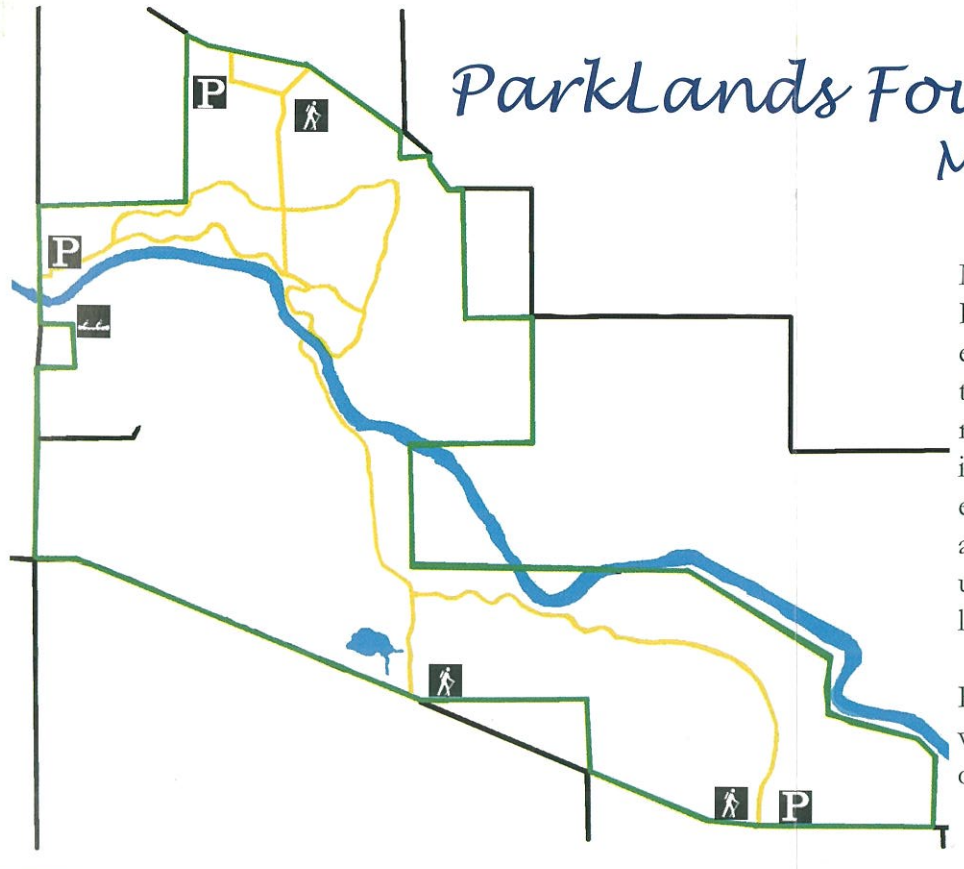
More than 10 miles of scenic trails are available for hiking and biking at COMLARA County Park, along with 5 miles of equestrian trails. The 2,200 acre park is also equipped with over 135 campsites, picnic areas, playgrounds, and numerous recreational opportunities within Evergreen Lake, including rental of sailboats, canoes, rowboats, and paddleboats. Evergreen Lake maintains a 10-horsepower limit.

The Visitor's Center also houses an environmental education facility with permanent audio/visual wildlife displays.

The park is located in northwestern McLean County on the McLean-Woodford county border and is open from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. year round.



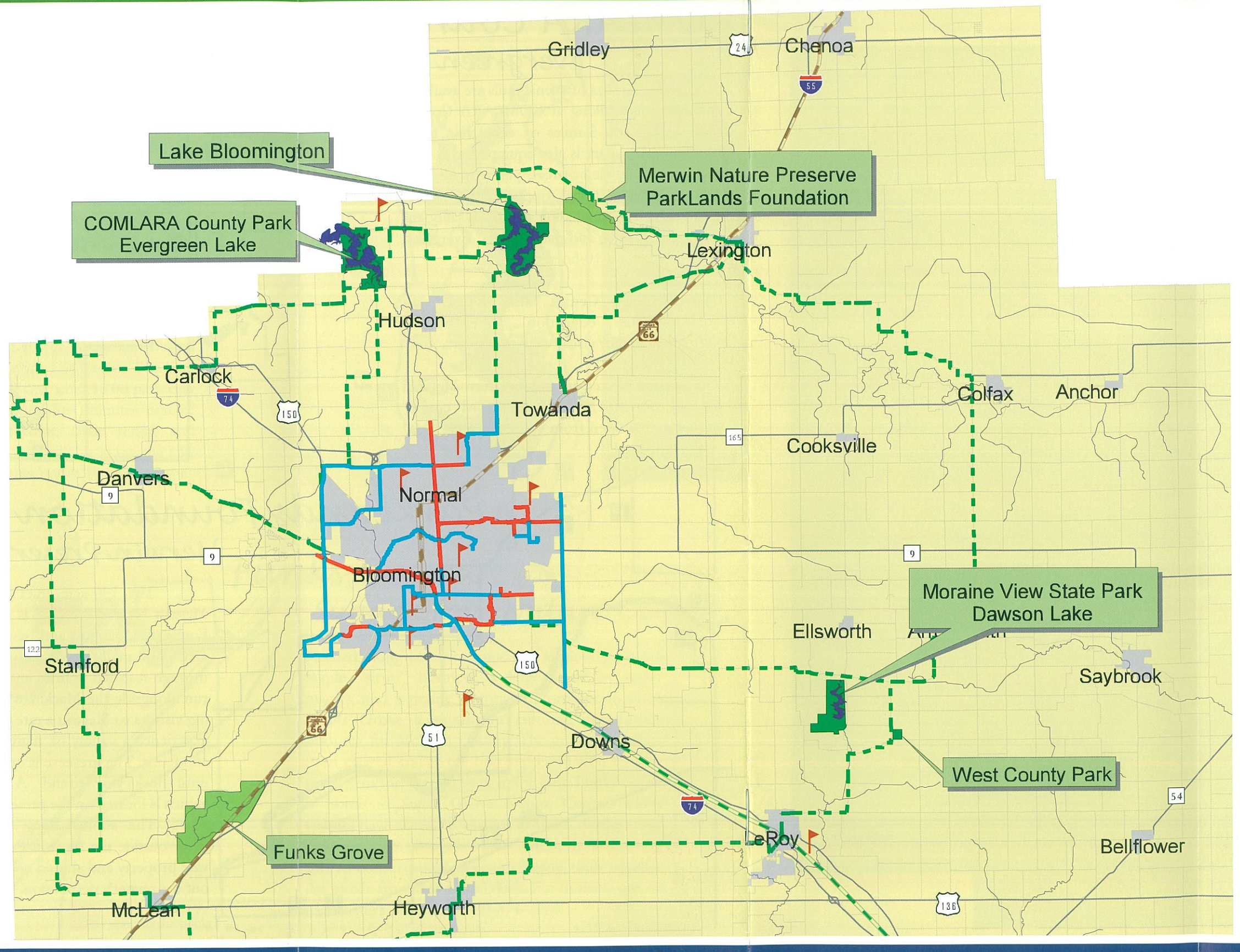
ParkLands Foundation
Merwin Preserve



The 730-acre tract known as the Merwin Nature Preserve is the ParkLands Foundation's largest and best known property. Well-maintained nature trails wind through restored prairies and savannas and run alongside the Mackinaw River, providing visitors to Merwin a rare opportunity to experience a variety of native Illinois flora and fauna. The preserve is open from dawn until dusk year round. A public canoe launch is located on the preserve's west side.

The shores along the Mackinaw River outside the Merwin Preserve are private property and should not be used without the owner's permission.

Regional Conservation and Recreation Areas



Legend

Parks and Conservation Areas

- Constitution Trail - Existing
- Constitution Trail - Proposed
- Proposed rail-to-trail corridor
- Recommended Routes for Biking
- Historic Route 66 (Route 66 Bikeway planning underway)
- Major Streams

Parks and Conservation Areas

- Public
- Private (Some areas open to the public.)
- Golf Course
- Lakes
- Corporate Boundary
- Highways
- Roads
- County

N W E S

2 0 2 4 Miles

Recreational Resources

	Biking	Bird Watching	Boating	Boat Rental	Camping	Equine Trails	Fishing	Hiking	Hunting	Picnic Areas	Rec. Fields	Restrooms	Swimming	Winter Sports	Info. Center
Parks and Conservation Areas															
Funks Grove	✓	✓						✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Moraine View	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
West County Park		✓						✓		✓	✓				
COMLARA County Park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lake Bloomington	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Merwin Nature Preserve		✓	✓					✓							
Designated Trails and Routes															
Constitution Trail	✓	✓						✓		✓		✓			
Historic Route 66	✓	✓													
Mackinaw River		✓	✓				✓								

Contacts

Boat docks in Hubbard Park at Lake Bloomington.

In addition to the park offices listed below, the following organizations may offer assistance.

McLEAN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION
13001 Recreation Area Dr.
Hudson, IL 61748
(309) 726-2022
www.mclean.gov/parks

BLOOMINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION
(309) 434-2260
www.cityhall.ci.bloomington.il.us

TOWN OF NORMAL PARKS AND RECREATION
611 South Linden St.
Normal, IL 61761
(309) 454-9540
www.normal.org

SUGAR CREEK NATURE CENTER
4532 N. 725 East Road
McLean, IL 61754
(309) 874-2174
www.funksgrove.org

McLEAN COUNTY WHEELERS BIKE CLUB
Box 947
Bloomington, IL 61702
www.wheelerspage.bizland.com

LAKE RUN CLUB
P. O. Box 742
Normal, IL 61761
www.lakerunclub.org

AUDUBON SOCIETY-JOHN WESLEY POWELL CHAPTER
Box 142
Normal, IL 61761
Call the Ecology Action Center at (309) 454-3169 for Audubon contact.

McLEAN COUNTY SPORTSMEN'S ASSOCIATION
Call the Ecology Action Center at (309) 454-3169 for sportsmen's groups.

ISU OUTDOOR STORE
220 N. Main St.
Normal IL 61761
(309) 438-8419
www.rec.ilstu.edu/adventure

Volunteer

There are numerous opportunities for stewardship within McLean County. Contact any of the following organizations to discover how they are working to better your community.

ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER
202 W. College Ave.
Normal, IL 61761
(309) 454-3169
www.ecologyactioncenter.org

FRIENDS OF THE CONSTITUTION TRAIL
PO Box 4494
Bloomington, IL 61702

SUGAR CREEK NATURE CENTER
4532 N. 725 East Road
McLean, IL 61754
(309) 874-2174
www.funksgrove.org

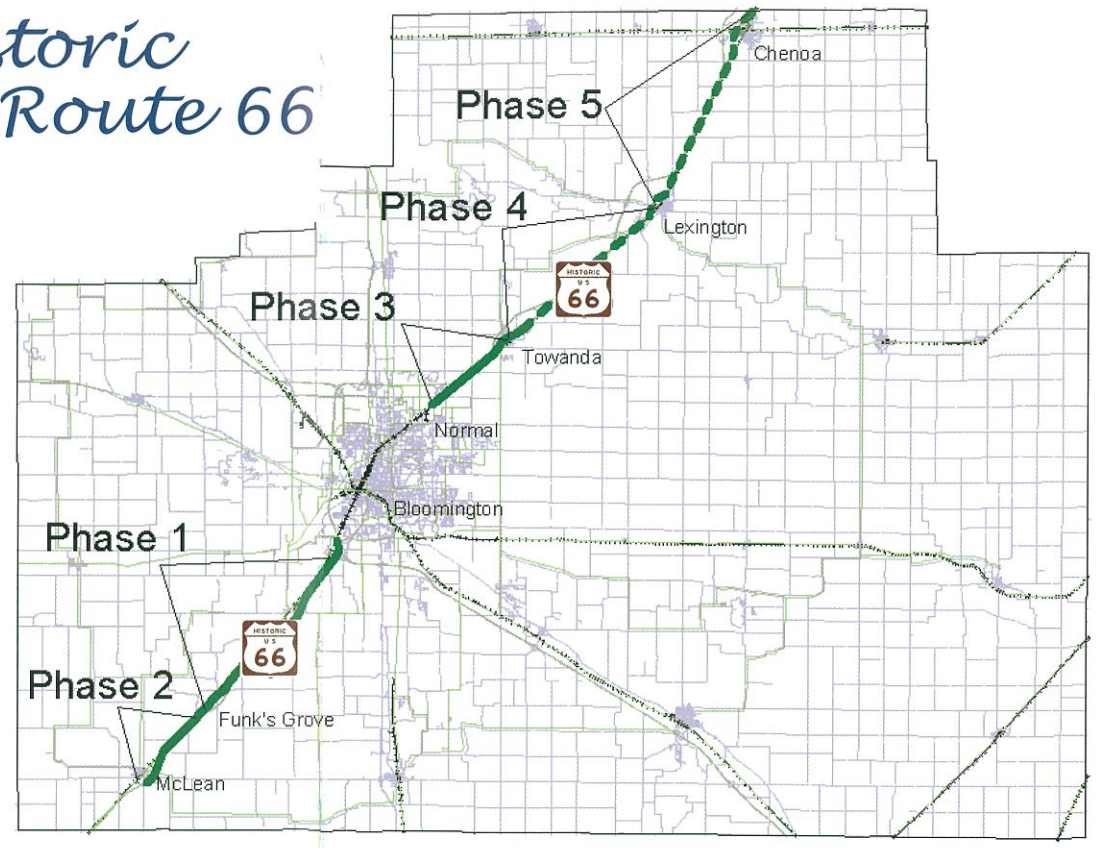
PARKLANDS FOUNDATION
P.O. Box 3132
Bloomington, IL 61702-3132
(309) 454-3169
www.parklands.org

Emergency Contacts

Report all accidents, injuries, and other emergencies to the respective park offices. When closed, call **911** or the Sheriff's Department at **309-888-5000**.

Designated Trails and Routes

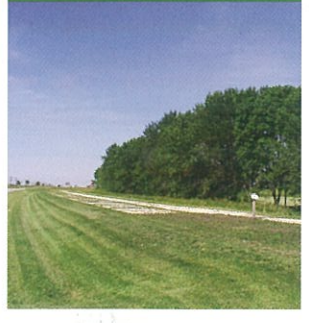
Historic Route 66



The Historic Route 66 Bikeway is a priority project of the McLean County Regional Greenways Plan. This bikeway extends an existing bike system, the Constitution Trail in the Bloomington/Normal area, and serves as an important greenways connection between communities in addition to providing increased opportunities for accessing natural and historic points of interest throughout McLean County. The future bikeway has been divided into five phases and when completed, would add 27 miles of trail to the existing 24 miles of the Constitution Trail. This future bikeway will provide a transportation and open space link between the county's largest tracts of forest—Funk's Grove and the Mackinaw River corridor. In addition, this bikeway will be used for access to areas of high quality prairie ecosystems and provide opportunities for photography and study of wildlife habitat.

A bikeway along Historic Route 66 creates an opportunity for non-motorized travel through this historic corridor. Various abandoned or altered alignments of the legendary road exist along this corridor which illustrate the evolution of road engineering and help to preserve a piece of American road history for future generations to experience first hand. This bikeway would unite many of the Route 66 points of interest in McLean County. These include sections of historic alignment, the Route 66 Walking Tour in Towanda, and the legendary "Memory Lane" in Lexington as an "active transportation museum" experience.

Historic Route 66

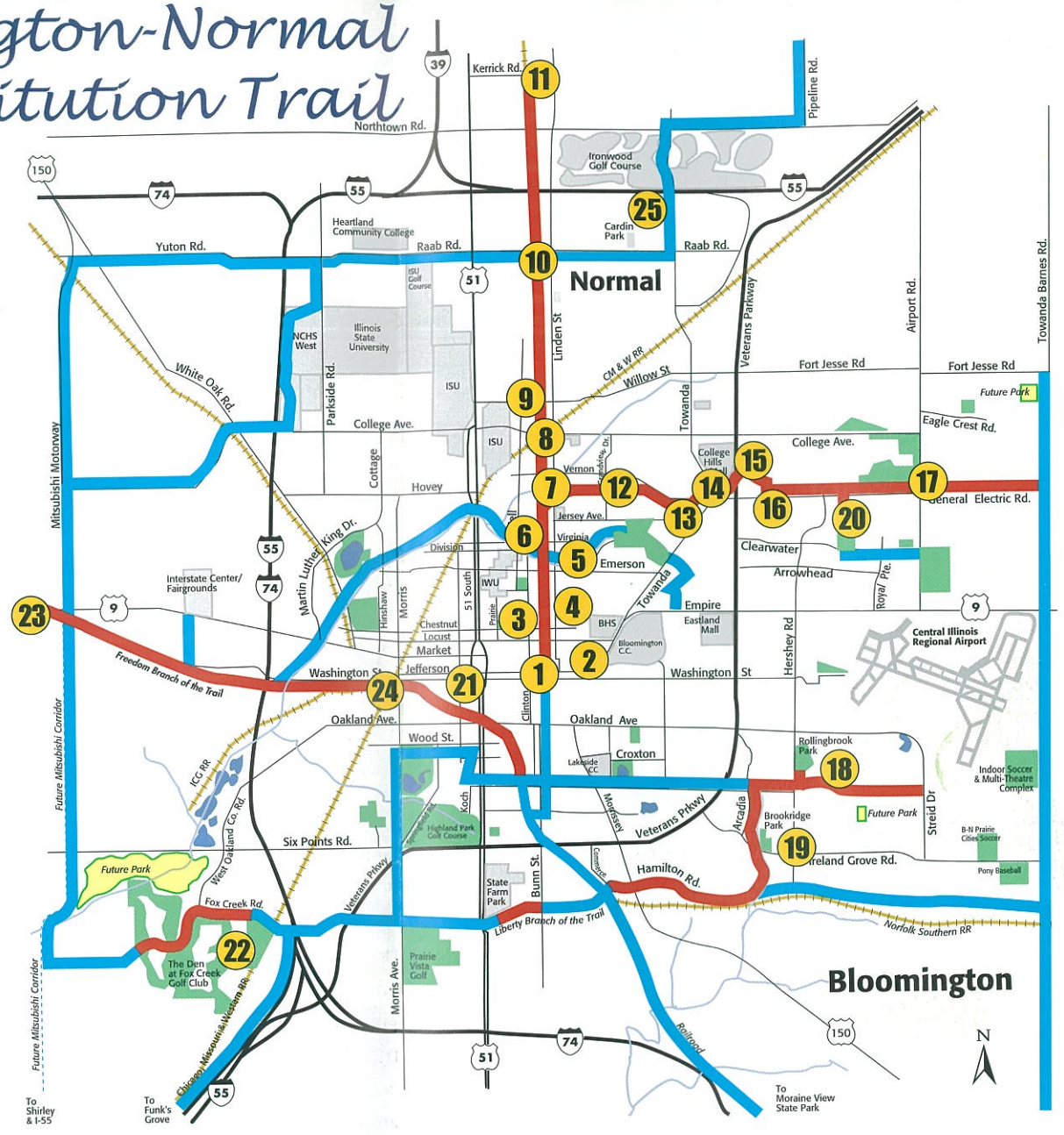


Recreational bicyclists on Constitution Trail

Bloomington-Normal Constitution Trail

Legend

- Existing Constitution Trail - approximately 24 miles
- Future Trail



The Constitution Trail is a paved, 24-mile long trail within Bloomington/Normal. Open from dawn to dusk, it is a popular multi-use trail for walkers, joggers, bicyclists and roller bladers.

Trail Heads

1 Atwood Wayside/Herb Garden
2 Davis Mansion/Jefferson St. Historic Dist.
3 Historic Franklin Park
4 Children's Discovery Museum
5 Camelback Bridge
6 Allers Shelter
7 Normal Parks and Recreation Office
8 Normal City Hall Access
9 Hidden Creek Natural Wayside
10 West Detention Basin
11 Kerrick Road
12 Colene Hoose School Access/Natural Prairie
13 Audubon Garden
14 Sister Cities Gardens
15 Natural Prairie Site
16 G. E. Road Access
17 Tipton Park
18 Rollingbrook Park
19 Brookridge Park
20 Clearwater Park
21 Bloomington Parks and Recreation Office
22 Pepper Ridge Park
23 West Route 9 Wayside
24 Alton Depot Park
25 Carden Park