

# McLean County

## Regional Greenways Plan



**McLean County Regional Planning Commission**

# Membership of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission

## **Commissioners**

Carl Teichman, Chairman  
*Town of Normal*

George Benjamin, Vice Chair  
*County of McLean*

Joseph Butcher  
*Charter School District #87*

William Doud  
*Water Reclamation District*

Mary Jefferson  
*Town of Normal*

Neale McCormick  
*Airport Authority*

Jay Reece  
*Unit School District #5*

Ken Ropp  
*County of McLean*

Shane Rutherford  
*County of McLean*

## **Executive Committee**

Carl Teichman  
*Chairman*

George Benjamin  
*Vice Chair*

David Hales  
*City Manager, City of Bloomington*

Mark Peterson  
*City Manager, Town of Normal*

Terry Lindberg  
*County Administrator, County of McLean*

Paul Russell, AICP  
*Executive Director*



# **McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL GREENWAYS PLAN**

**Prepared By**

**McLean County Regional Planning Commission  
Greenways Advisory Committee**

**September, 2009**

**The preparation of this report was financed  
in part through financial assistance from the  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources.**





## MCLEAN COUNTY GREENWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mary Jo Adams  
Mackinaw River Partnership

Jeanne Moonan  
Chair (1978-2008)  
Normal Planning Commission

Mike Brown  
Executive Director  
Ecology Action Center

Doug Oehler\*  
Friends of Constitution Trail

Mercy Davison  
Town Planner  
Town of Normal

Eric Schmitt  
County Engineer  
McLean County

Philip Dick  
Director of Building & Zoning  
McLean County

Scott Schuett  
McLean County Liaison  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Mike Hall  
Director of Public Works  
Town of Normal

Angela Smith  
Executive Director  
Sugar Grove Nature Center

William Jackson  
GIS Coordinator  
McLean County Regional Planning Commission

Mike Steffa  
Director  
Parks and Recreation  
McLean County

John Kennedy  
Director  
Parks & Recreation  
City of Bloomington

Bill Wasson  
Assistant Administrator  
McLean County

Garry Little  
Director  
Parks & Recreation  
Town of Normal

Doug Welch  
McLean County Wheelers

Gretchen Monti\*  
John Wesley Powell Audubon Society

Drake Zimmerman  
Friends of Kickapoo Creek

\*McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee Co-Chair





# Executive Summary

This plan presents an up-to-date vision for greenways and provides a framework for establishing a regional system of interconnected greenways throughout McLean County and beyond. The plan presents goals and objectives in support of this vision and identifies priority future greenways and potential greenway linkages to other regions. It also targets a number of initiatives for early action in support of the plan.

The plan was originally completed in 1997 in cooperation with the McLean County Greenways Coalition, which has evolved into the McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee (GAC). This committee participated in the plan update presented in this document and has been responsible to a large degree for the progress made to date on greenway initiatives consistent with the plan (see Table 1).

The *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan* is a local response to the national and statewide greenway movement. 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.

Greenways are narrow bands of open space that can provide habitat for wildlife, provide essential routes for species migration, filter pollutants from water, enhance scenic and aesthetic qualities, and in many instances expand recreational as well as social, cultural and economic opportunities. The need to preserve and expand these opportunities is particularly important in rapidly growing communities such as McLean County, which since 1970 has experienced more absolute growth than any other Illinois county outside the Chicago region.

The greenway planning process in McLean County has made effective use of broad-based public input, including extensive citizen participation. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources developed planning guidelines and provided technical and financial assistance for the local planning effort. The City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and County of McLean each passed a resolution of support for the greenways planning program. The McLean County Greenways Coalition was formed to provide direct input from interested citizens, local

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Progress on Greenway Initiatives Since 1997**  
**McLean County Regional Greenways Plan**

- Phase I engineering studies for the Historic Route 66 Bikeway from Bloomington to McLean
- Completion and adoption of local erosion control ordinances
- Completion and adoption of the Town of Normal stream buffer ordinance
- Completion of watershed studies for Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake
- Continued expansion of local and regional trail systems
- Completion of the Lexington jurisdictional transfer of right-of-way for trail expansion
- Publication of brochures, newsletters, displays, and plans promoting the expansion of greenways and trails and associated activities
- Coordination of public meetings to promote trail and greenway expansion
- Promotion of green building techniques in new development projects
- Coordination with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Department of Transportation on trail initiatives in McLean County

governments and organizations, including recreational and environmental groups as well as the McLean County Farm Bureau and individual landowners. The Advisory Committee was appointed by McLean County Regional Planning Commission to coordinate planning efforts between planning staff and the main body of the coalition. The result is a plan that reflects a wide range of interests, talents and perspectives.

The vision presented in the *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan* reflects national and statewide visions as well as those of county residents. This vision is embedded in a series of goals and objectives to guide the development and implementation of the regional greenways plan. These goals and objectives were established for the five areas listed in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Categories of Goals and Objectives**  
**McLean County Regional Greenways Plan**

- Conservation, Environment and Reservation
- Parks and Recreation
- Implementation, Management and Coordination
- Legal Issues
- Education Issues

This report also presents a series of conclusions that reflect the results of research completed on the county's natural and manmade features that have implications for greenways planning. McLean County has a number of important natural and scenic resources as well as numerous other resources that should be preserved and integrated into the regional greenway system. Major resources include the Mackinaw River system, Moraine View State Park, Funks Grove, COMLARA Park and Lake Bloomington in addition to Route 66 and other selected roads, as well as railroad rights-of-way and numerous other waterways throughout the county. The 24 miles of the Constitution Trail system provides an excellent basis for the development of a regional system of greenways and trails that could serve not only the metro area, but could also be extended to connect

important features throughout the county and other regions of the state. The plan incorporates these and other appropriate features.

The plan identifies numerous priority future greenways for ultimate development countywide. Priority greenways are defined as having at least one of the beneficial features listed in Table 3. These priority greenways

**Table 3**  
**Features of Priority Greenways**  
**McLean County Regional Greenways Plan**

- Benefits multiple communities
- Completes existing greenways
- Creates new connections
- Assists wildlife
- Preserves water quality
- Prevents flood damage
- Buffers existing preserves
- Maintains scenic or historic areas
- Provides trail opportunities
- Has implementation potential

include waterways, natural or man-made greenspace that are determined to be “threatened,” or offer the best chances for future implementation. Other contributing factors include previous community investment in the greenway and concerns over a present condition that is in need of improvement.

In order to facilitate analysis and ensure countywide coverage, the county was divided into five planning areas with priority future greenways identified for each. Greenways that have been identified as high priorities are listed in Table 4.

Implementation is a key component of the *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan*. The plan identifies methods available to aid in implementation, including regulatory ordinances and numerous acquisition, ownership and financial strategies that emphasize participation by landowners and private citizens. It also describes responsibilities for implementation, including those of federal, state and local



**Table 4**  
**High Priority Future Greenways**  
**McLean County Regional Greenways Plan**

- Mackinaw River
- Sugar Creek
- Money Creek
- Route 66 Corridor
- Six Mile Creek
- Kickapoo Creek
- Norfolk Southern Railroad line
- Kings Mill Creek
- Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake

governments as well as interested citizens and organizations. Additionally, the plan stresses the need for continuing coordination of plans, programs and projects in order to effectively meet plan objectives.

The planning report concludes by setting forth an implementation plan outlining actions that will be required to carry out plan recommendations. The implementation plan also targets a number of initiatives for early actions in support of carrying out the plan. These initiatives are listed in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Greenway-Related Initiatives**  
**Targeted for Early Implementation**  
**McLean County Regional Greenways Plan**

- Encourage and assist with watershed planning and protection
- Encourage and assist with ecosystem preservation and restoration
- Coordinate and assist with trail extension planning and development
- Strengthen relationships with public and private entities in greenways planning and development
- Promote greenways through public education
- Explore additional land preservation and protection mechanisms





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee	iii
Executive Summary	v
Table of Contents	ix
Index to Illustrations	xi
 Chapter 1.	
Introduction .....	1
Historical Perspective .....	1
What Is A Greenway? .....	4
The Greenway Movement .....	4
The Regional Greenways Plan .....	4
How The Plan Was Developed .....	4
Limitations And Use Of The Plan .....	5
 Chapter 2.	
The Vision for Greenways .....	7
Nationwide .....	8
The Illinois Greenway Movement .....	8
Greenway Goals And Objectives .....	9
 Chapter 3.	
Greenway Resources .....	13
Natural Features .....	13
Urban Growth .....	17
Public Open Space .....	21
Semi-Public Or Private Open Space .....	22
Trails .....	25
Railroads .....	25
Roadways .....	29
Interregional Considerations .....	29
 Chapter 4.	
Priority Future Greenways .....	35
Bloomington-Normal Metro Area .....	38
Northeast And Northwest McLean County .....	47
Southeast And Southwest McLean County .....	59
 Chapter 5.	
Implementation .....	65
Available Methods .....	67
Responsibilities for Implementation .....	72
Continuing Coordination .....	76
Progress On Initiatives .....	76
Implementation Plan .....	77
 Bibliography	79



## INDEX TO ILLUSTRATIONS

### Maps

Map 1.1 Regional Perspective .....	3
Map 3.1 Streams and Watersheds .....	15
Map 3.2 Environmentally Sensitive Areas .....	23
Map 3.3 Greenway Resources .....	27
Map 3.4 Trail Resources .....	31
Map 4.1 Regional Greenways Plan.....	41
Map 4.2 McLean County Greenways Bloomington-Normal Metro Area.....	43
Map 4.3 McLean County Greenways Northeastern McLean County .....	45
Map 4.4 McLean County Greenways Southeastern McLean County.....	49
Map 4.5 McLean County Greenways Southwestern McLean County.....	53
Map 4.6 McLean County Greenways Northwestern McLean County .....	57

### Charts

Chart 3.1 Top Ranked Illinois Counties in Absolute Growth.....	19
Chart 3.2 Trends and Projections in Urban and Rural Populations.....	19

### Tables

Table 3.1 Endangered and Threatened Species.....	14
Table 4.1 Priority Future Greenways .....	36
Table 5.1 Summary of Acquisition Strategies for Greenways .....	66
Table 5.2 Suggested Comparative Ownership Strategies .....	68
Table 5.3 Public Sector Funding Sources .....	69
Table 5.4 Local Government Public Financing Techniques .....	70
Table 5.5 Federal and State Funding Sources for Transportation Enhancement Activities .....	71
Table 5.6 Private Sector Funding Sources .....	72
Table 5.7 Natural Resource Management Incentives.....	73



# Introduction



McLean County offers a quality of life that attracts significant economic and population growth. Fertile soils have made McLean County a world leader in crop production while unemployment levels are consistently among the lowest in the state. Educational opportunities abound from elementary through the university level. In addition, a wide variety of cultural, entertainment and recreational opportunities contribute to the region's attractiveness. As a result, the county's population has increased steadily and significantly since 1950 and is expected to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Growth provides many benefits but it also creates challenges. Growing numbers of people increase demands for services, including recreation and open space, but also increase the abilities of local government to provide services through increased revenues.

The challenge for local government is to provide services and accommodate growth in an environmentally compatible manner. McLean County, like similar areas within the state, is faced with the need to protect valuable natural resources from development and environmental degradation while creating additional open space and recreational opportunities. Areas of prime farmland adjacent to the Bloomington-Normal metro area that were once considered "rural" have been replaced with residential, commercial or industrial development. Plant and animal species that were once prevalent, such as the Slippershell Mussel and Upland Sandpiper, have suffered greatly through loss of habitat or through a detrimental change in the environment, attributable at least in part to urban and agricultural development.

Waterways such as the Mackinaw River have fallen victim to man-made and environmental stresses such as flooding, habitat loss, sedimentation, pollution and stormwater

runoff. Within the metro area, the preservation of open space and the provision of recreation opportunities must compete with other development pressures.

State and federal environmental mandates are having a positive effect on greenway development and regional conservation efforts. Progress has been made towards implementing riparian buffers where needed. Mandated studies for Evergreen Lake and Lake Bloomington have assisted in establishing benchmarks to monitor and measure future water quality. This progress is a partial result of intergovernmental cooperation and active volunteerism from various local stakeholders and agencies.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

McLean County was chartered in 1830 from land that had been part of Tazewell County. The land area consisted of mostly grassland and patches of tree groves. The grasslands of central Illinois and McLean County contained few trees and shrubs. The county and most of central Illinois were part of the area later known as the North American Grassland Region or more specifically, the Central Grassland of North America. Early on, the county became known for its "tallgrass prairie" or "meadows" and "grassland fields."

The 1,186 square mile area that encompasses McLean County has few large bodies of water. Only three square miles of natural water were present in the early days of the first European settlers. These early peoples re-shaped some of the natural appearance of the region as they cleared out timber groves and grasslands in the pursuit of agricultural ventures. Natural fires brought on by lightning and high winds were known to occur and helped reshape the land.

The geography and climate did not lend itself to the growth of large swaths of forest.

Soils were subject to lengthy periods of drought. The lay of the land made it vulnerable to dry winds that blew in from the west. In most cases, tree groves were found among wetter soils or along the banks of waterways.

Settlers and later populations also introduced invasive species of plants that adversely affected the first natural ecosystems. This caused some extinction of plants, grasses and even animal species that were native to the area. As agriculture grew during the 1900s, the introduction of fertilizer and other chemicals into the ecosystem increased nitrogen fixation. This increased nitrogen content could and did cause some changes within the local plant community including acidification. It also adversely affected the quality of water in some lakes and streams.

The richness of the local prairie soils is without question. Only certain areas of Argentina, southern Ukraine and China have soil that is on par with that of central Illinois and specifically McLean County. The county continues to be one of the world's most productive agricultural areas.

### **Northeast and Northwest McLean County**

The Mackinaw River was and still is an attractive natural feature in this area of the county. Early settlers flocked to the river since it provided an important water source. Significant timber also dotted the landscape. These woods provided building materials for shelters and shade in warmer months and served as a natural wind break during the colder times of the year. Eventually, a significant amount of this area was cleared for farms since the prairie adjacent to the watershed featured the finest of soil for agriculture. As farming increased in popularity, many people built man-made hedges or fences to function as property lines.

### **Southeast and Southwest McLean County**

This area was devoid of any forestation, except for the small pockets that could be found along Kickapoo Creek. Diamond Grove was the most prominent area of woods in this section of the county. Kickapoo Creek was the dominant water body. Fish could be caught in the creek

and the water was considered to be of good quality. The surrounding topography was rolling and many of the farms sat atop small hills. A significant amount of the surrounding land was flat and was cleared out for farming.

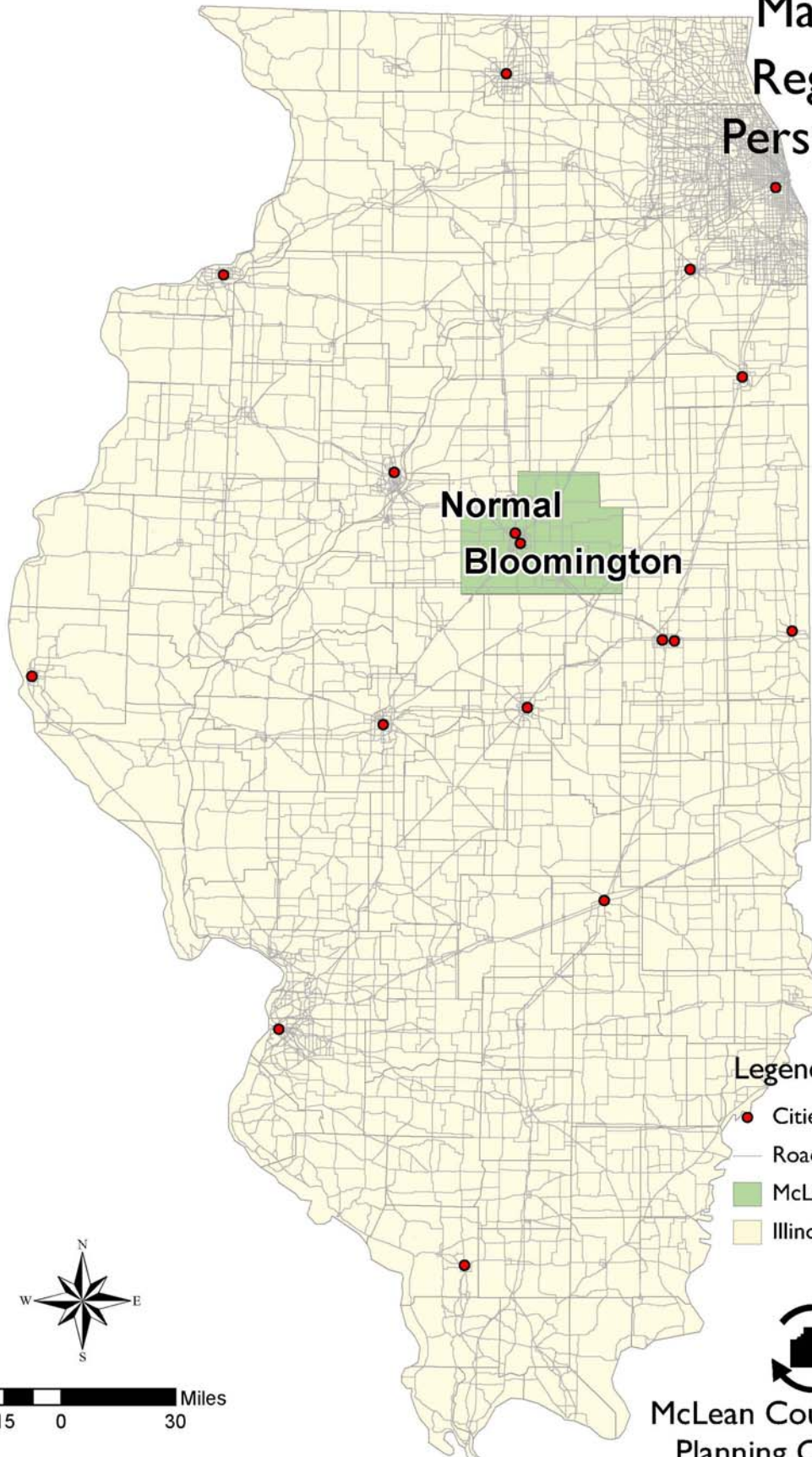
This section of the county was considered to be less desirable than others. Although portions of water bodies such as the Sangamon River, Salt Creek and Sugar Creek passed through the area, the land would dry out quickly after rains. Local inhabitants felt it was difficult to farm when comparing it to other parts of the county. The physical features included small groves of trees, flat to slightly hilly land and small creeks that dried up during hot periods in summer. This area of the county saw an influx of residents after 1865 when many soldiers returning from the Civil War decided to build farms since land was still plentiful.

A significant portion of this land is upland prairie that is located on higher ground. Natural water is limited to a small branch of Sugar Creek that runs through the area and Kings Mill Creek. There were no marshes or swamps that interfered with farming. Dry Grove and Twin Grove meet to form an almost unbroken line of timber across the southern side of western McLean County. Many early settlers congregated in and around these two groves of trees. The ground is rolling and is also known to dry quickly after rains.

### **Greenway Awareness**

Land stewardship has always been important in McLean County. Those that depended on the land for their livelihood have historically been its prominent conservationists. Bloomington-Normal and McLean County's rural communities have always been aware that providing public open space for its citizens is important. However, the development and conservation of open space has seen important strides over the last half century with the creation of two man-made reservoirs and more proactive activity concerning park development. An important project that brought even more local awareness and activity was the development of Constitution Trail in the 1980s. Since that time, more linear parks and open space have been

# Map I.1 Regional Perspective





developed throughout the county than any time in its history. As the county continues to grow, community leaders and activists continually make strides in conserving important lands for the future. These lands will be set aside to preserve important natural ecosystems, protect prime farmland or serve as locations for passive and active recreation.

## WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

Greenways represent a means to address these and similar challenges. The author, Charles Little, in his work, *Greenways for America*, defined a greenway as follows.

1. A linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline, or overland along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, a scenic road, or other route. 2. Any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage. 3. An open space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and with populated areas. 4. Certain strip or linear parks designated as a parkway or greenbelt.

Little's definition of a greenway illustrates the correlation between open space and recreational use. Sometimes it is appropriate for the two to function together; in other cases, the two should remain separate. Greenways provide a variety of environmental benefits that promote harmony between the natural and built environments.

## THE GREENWAY MOVEMENT

The greenway movement arose from the need to address important ecological and recreational issues nationwide. Government agencies at all levels, in cooperation with interested citizens and organizations, have collaborated nationwide to address environmental threats and concerns regarding open space and recreation availability. The *Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan*, developed by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, now the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning,

and the Openlands Project with assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), were the first cooperative efforts by public and private organizations to create a regional greenways plan in Illinois.

IDNR offers financial and technical assistance to other metropolitan areas in the state in preparing and updating regional greenway plans. The *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan*, as well as this update, was partially funded by IDNR.

## 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 the county. The plan presents specific goals and objectives while identifying priority future greenways that reflect the vision and the county's greenway resources. The plan 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 through the IDNR, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Another consideration in the development of the plan is the potential for greenway linkages to other regions (see Map 1.1).

## HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The plan was originally developed in cooperation with the McLean County Greenways Coalition. The McLean County Greenways 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. An advisory committee was appointed by the McLean County Regional Planning Commission to coordinate planning efforts between planning staff and the main body of the coalition. In addition, the original advisory committee

included three subcommittees: (1) the Conservation and Environment Committee; (2) the Legal, Implementation and Management Committee; and (3) the Recreation Committee. The chairpersons of these committees were members of the advisory committee. During the course of plan development, the advisory committee met twice a month, while the other committees met monthly. Public meetings of the entire coalition were held on a quarterly basis and provided a forum for significant citizen input. The structure of the original McLean County Greenways Coalition allowed for input that reflected a wide range of expertise, talents and perspectives.

Following the formation of the advisory committee, the process proceeded with the identification of specific goals and objectives for greenway planning. The identification of existing development patterns, land use characteristics, transportation features, and major activity centers occurred in the early stages of the planning process. Future growth areas and greenway needs were identified based on prior activities, existing comprehensive plans and ongoing comprehensive planning activities. An inventory of existing greenway resources was completed to identify locations, significant features, potential linkages, trail opportunities, primary implementation strategies and issues, and principal funding sources for potential greenways. Priority future greenways were selected from the inventory of greenway resources on the basis of criteria set forth in the plan.

Implementation was a major consideration and is addressed in the concluding chapter of the document. Various methods, strategies and responsibilities are presented along with recommended actions for carrying out the plan.

The McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee (GAC) is currently responsible for coordinating implementation as well as long range planning. This committee performed a major role in completing this update by assisting staff with the review and revision of data, maps and text to help ensure the plan reflects current information and policies.

## LIMITATIONS AND USE OF THE PLAN

A basic limitation of the Regional Greenways Plan is that it is advisory in nature and must be supplemented with appropriate follow-up actions. The plan does not represent an end result. The report summarizes findings, presents goals and objectives, identifies greenway resources, identifies priority greenways, describes available implementation and funding strategies, and recommends a course of action to follow in carrying out the greenways plan. The GAC should continue to take an active role in carrying out the plan through advocacy, education, and in helping to coordinate the implementation and management of greenways in McLean County.



# The Vision for Greenways

## CHAPTER 2

The vision for greenways encompasses both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, greenways and open space serve important functions for pedestrians, bicyclists and various plant and animal ecosystems. In rural areas, greenways establish ecological, scenic and recreational corridors that work in concert with established natural areas and agriculture. Greenways and open spaces can make a major contribution to environmental quality and its enjoyment by the public.

The concept of greenways has been evolving. Use of the term “greenway” is relatively new, being coined by landscape architects in the 1960s by merging the terms “greenbelt” and “parkway.” Up until the mid-1850s, greenways around the world consisted

mainly of gardens used for food production or aesthetic purposes. A transition occurred after this period as public parks were viewed as more important to develop. Parks were conceived as multi-use recreational facilities that combined passive and active uses for the masses. By the 1950s, parks were still conceptualized as such but were beginning to be developed and reconfigured as environmentally important. This thought also helped the linear park concept to re-emerge as the modern greenway and public open space movement began to take hold in the 1960s. The concept that public open spaces can provide multi-use functions has been ongoing on several fronts since. Evidence of this can be cited in villages, towns and cities throughout the nation, within Illinois and McLean County.



Audubon Gardens in Normal

Future greenways should link established greenways in both urban and rural areas. Future trails should connect to existing trailheads throughout the county. Locally, groundwork is in place to create, expand and connect future greenways to existing ones. This may include the creation of new wetlands from natural areas that already exist.

## NATIONWIDE

The national greenway movement began during the Civil War era. Its origins can be traced to Frederick Law Olmstead's campus design for the College of California grounds in Berkeley on October 3, 1865. This design proposed a linear open space linkage with the City of Oakland. Although only partially implemented, the idea of greenways was eventually accepted and put into use throughout many parts of the country—first in urban areas and later in rural areas through public land acquisition by the National Park Service and other government agencies.

Today, the national greenway movement is alive and growing due in large part to the physical, social and economic problems which prevail in the nation's urban areas. Each year, three million additional acres of land are consumed by urban sprawl. Moreover, new development often does not provide abundant public open space, nor does it provide ample opportunities for the social, cultural and economic interaction needed to achieve a sense of community.

These factors, combined with shrinking federal resources to fund public open space projects, have drawn people from all walks of life to the greenway movement. Earlier public open space movements focused on the purchase of large isolated tracts of land to preserve as public open space. Today's movement seeks to preserve linear bands of public open space which are usually less expensive to acquire and benefit the masses. A greenway is often more cost effective to implement because it provides more apparent public open space (known as edge value) than a consolidated parcel that is many times larger in terms of total acreage.

Greenways also foster a sense of community. Through linkage, greenways provide opportunities for neighborhoods and communities of people to connect and interact with each other and with nature. This linkage provides for species interchange which promotes ecological stability and produces an important recreational advantage.

## THE ILLINOIS GREENWAY MOVEMENT

The Illinois greenway movement has been led in large part by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The department provides financial assistance to metropolitan regional planning commissions throughout the state to help finance the development of regional greenway plans. This document is a result of that planning program. IDNR's regional greenway planning process requires broad-based public input and support. IDNR also provides technical support for greenway planning, grant assistance for acquisition and development of greenway and trail projects. In some instances, the department also acquires, develops and manages greenways. Through various programs, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has also provided significant funding assistance for transportation related projects that have made important contributions to greenway development and preservation in Illinois.

Also, IDNR engages in a number of other activities that directly benefit the Illinois greenway movement. In September of 1994, the department published an update of the *Illinois Outdoor Recreation Plan: 2003-2008*. This document identifies major statewide outdoor recreation concerns, including conservation of sensitive lands, public participation in the planning process, funding and maintenance of sites and facilities, and expanding conservation education efforts. In January of 1996, IDNR also published a *Strategic Plan for the Ecological Resources of Illinois*. This is a guide for private landowners, researchers, not-for-profit organizations, private businesses and local, regional and state agencies to collaborate in shaping the future landscape of the State of Illinois.

The *Illinois State Trails Plan* was published by IDNR in June, 1995. It presents the following vision for the future of trails-related outdoor recreation in Illinois:

*“Recreational trails should provide the people of Illinois with opportunities to enjoy physical and social activities... trails should provide opportunities to experience the natural, cultural and scenic amenities of the trail corridor... trails should reflect landscapes typical of the state’s different regions... trails should be accessible to the state’s citizens... trails should provide a pleasurable, non-polluting alternative to automobile travel for short trips... they should be economic assets to communities along the trail... and trails should contribute to the quality of life in Illinois.*

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

## **GREENWAY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR MCLEAN COUNTY**

Local support for the greenway movement is evident by the membership and activities of the McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee. The Committee membership is quite diverse and includes members from a number of entities and agencies that support the development or preservation of public open space, greenways and trails. These organizations include McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, League of Women Voters, Ecology Action Center, Friends of Constitution Trail, ParkLands Foundation, McLean County Wheelers, Friends of Kickapoo Creek, Mackinaw River Partnership, Sugar

Grove Nature Center, local and regional parks and recreation departments, local planning commissions, rural governments and other interested citizens. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources also appointed a liaison to the committee.

The committee in combination with the staff of this commission has identified a series of goals and objectives to guide the development and implementation of the McLean County Regional Greenways Plan. Goals and objectives were developed for the five broad categories of (1) Conservation, Environment and Reservation; (2) Parks and Recreation; (3) Implementation, Management and Coordination; (4) Legal Issues; and (5) Educational Issues. The goals and objectives for each of these categories are presented below.

### **Conservation, Environment and Reservation**

#### *Goal #1*

- The protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

#### *Objectives*

- Definition of criteria for environmentally sensitive areas. This should include wetlands, floodplains, lakes, streams, natural restoration areas, endangered species habitat, and wooded areas.
- Mechanisms for mapping environmentally sensitive areas.
- Identification of linkages between environmentally sensitive areas inside the urban areas and those outside the urban area.
- Prioritization of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Identification of stream valleys, drainage ways and other bodies of water that should be protected through greenways.

### *Goal #2*

- A regional system of greenways that protects sensitive environmental areas and promotes conservation of habitat and endangered species.

#### *Objectives*

- Development of additional trails and/or greenways to enhance the natural areas of the metropolitan area.
- Interconnected greenways as a means to preserve habitat and provide a buffer from human activity.

### *Goal #3*

- Conservation and/or development of greenspace and open space as a consideration in the review of development projects.

#### *Objective*

- Ordinances that require developers to dedicate resources to the park and public open space system.

### *Goal #4*

- Preservation of cultural and historic areas.

#### *Objectives*

- Identification of areas that have a cultural or historic significance.
- Identification of cultural or historic sites that can be linked to greenways.
- Local programs and measures that encourage the preservation of cultural or historic sites.

## **Parks and Recreation**

### *Goal #5*

- A regional park system that provides for a variety of active and passive recreational activities.

#### *Objectives*

- Sufficient parks and public open space to reflect the needs of existing and future area residents.
- A reasonable number of facilities to accommodate both active and passive recreational needs.

### *Goal #6*

- A regional park system that is interconnected by a system of greenways and trails.

#### *Objectives*

- Public and private development of specialized outdoor recreational facilities linked to greenways and trails.
- Codes that provide for the reservation of greenways in new development.

### *Goal #7*

- Intergovernmental coordination for the planning of parks, greenways, and trails.

#### *Objective*

- A mechanism for continuing dialogue that supports regional cooperation and coordination in the planning and provision of parks and public open space.

### *Goal #8*

- Open space and recreational facilities that are accessible to all residents.

#### *Objectives*

- A plan and capital improvements program that supports the development of public and private parks and open space that is accessible to all residents.
- A process for the review and monitoring of area needs for park land.



## **Implementation, Management and Coordination**

### *Goal #9*

- Preservation of greenways as a consideration in the review of development and redevelopment projects.

#### *Objectives*

- Identification of development standards for greenways.
- Identification of regional greenways and greenway linkages.
- Development and implementation of restoration standards for greenways that maximize conservation opportunities.

### *Goal #10*

- Preservation of natural areas for public and private use.

#### *Objectives*

- Identification and dedication of natural areas in new developments.
- A process that encourages reservation through innovative means such as conservation easements.

### *Goal #11*

- Continued development of a coordinated system of trails and greenways.

#### *Objectives*

- An advisory committee that includes representatives from local government and stakeholders to promote coordinated implementation of the greenways plan.
- A process that integrates the interests of private landowners into the implementation of the greenways plan.

### *Goal #12*

- A program for funding the acquisition, development and maintenance of greenways.

#### *Objectives*

- A process of capital improvement funding to help implement the greenways plan.
- Pursuit of innovative funding sources such as grants and impact fees.

## **Legal Issues**

### *Goal #13*

- Utilization of a wide variety of legal tools available for developing or preserving greenways and trails.

#### *Objective*

- Consideration of conservation districts, conservation easements, utility easements and other mechanisms for greenway development in McLean County.

### *Goal #14*

- Expand the use of abandoned railroad rights-of-way for greenways and trails.

#### *Objective*

- Cooperation and coordination with railroad companies in the acquisition of existing or future abandoned railroad rights-of-way.

### *Goal #15*

- A spirit of cooperation in the reservation and implementation of public open space and greenways.

#### *Objective*

- Establishment of a mechanism that provides an opportunity for a continuous open dialogue and exchange of information with interested citizens, government agencies, private developers

or landowners adjacent to potential greenway sites.

### **Education Issues**

#### *Goal #16*

- Public education 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.

#### *Objective*

- Identification of audiences to be targeted for greenways education and methods of outreach to engage these audiences.

# Greenway Resources

## CHAPTER 3

Greenway resources include natural and developed features that provide the basis for developing plans and establishing priorities for greenways. Terrain, drainage characteristics, floodplains and wetlands as well as vegetation and wildlife habitat are natural features—all of which are important considerations for greenway planning. Developed features include urbanization and the associated opportunities and constraints for greenways. Viewsheds can also be considered a greenway resource. These are areas of scenic or historic value that are deemed worthy of preservation. These are spaces that are visible from public roadways or parks. Protected public open space, existing and planned trails, and street and railroad rights-of-way, also offer potential for use as greenways or trails. The county's geographic location and its relationship

to surrounding regions is also a potential resource when viewed in the context of a statewide system of greenways. Each of these natural and developed features is addressed in the following pages with reference to its application for use in formulating greenway plans and priorities in McLean County.

### NATURAL FEATURES

The county occupies 1,184 square miles in the glacial till plain section of the state of Illinois. Geographically, it is the largest county within the state and is comparable in area to the state of Rhode Island. The glacial terrain is nearly level to gently sloping with localized areas of steeper slopes occurring along moraines and stream valleys.



Mackinaw River near Colfax

**Table 3.1**  
**ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES**  
**McLean County, Illinois**

Common Name	State Status	Habitat	Habitat Details
Slippershell Mussel	Threatened	Aquatic	Small to medium sized streams
Henslow's Sparrow	Threatened	Large, flat fields with no woody plants, tall, dense grass and standing dead vegetation	
Umbrella Sedge	Threatened	Open dune sand to open sandy spaces in early successional sand prairie.	
Upland Sandpiper	Endangered	Prairie	Prairies, pastureland and hayfields
Loggerhead Shrike	Threatened	Prairie, savanna	Open, agricultural areas interspersed with grassland habitat
Kirtland's Snake	Threatened	Moist to wet grasses, wet meadows and prairies, various water bodies, marshes	
Franklin's Ground Squirrel	Threatened	Intermediate and tall grasslands, weedy fields, shrub forests and wastelands	

Source: Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Heritage Database, October 8, 2008

### Streams and Floodplains

Drainage is primarily to the west and southwest, with the exception of the extreme southeastern part of the county which drains to the south and east. Major streams and rivers include the Mackinaw River and its tributaries in the northern part of the county; Sugar Creek, which flows through Bloomington and Normal; Kickapoo Creek and its tributaries, which run through southeastern McLean County; and Timber Creek, which travels through southwestern McLean County. These and other streams and floodplains are identified in Map 3.1.

The Mackinaw River is a scenic and ecological treasure that should be preserved. Although somewhat less than half of the Mackinaw's total miles lie within McLean County, most of these upper reaches of the river are rated good to excellent in terms of water quality by the Nature Conservancy, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

The floodplains of these and other streams of the county are not well-suited for intensive development but have great value as wetlands and linear open space. Generalized locations of the county's principal floodplains are delineated on Map 3.2.

### Tree Cover

Tree cover is another natural feature within the county that has importance as a greenway resource. Although the acreage of land in tree cover is low in relation to the amount of cultivated land, fairly significant tree cover remains. For the most part, major tree cover is confined to stream valleys and moraines. The upper Mackinaw River valley and Moraine View State Park are prime examples. Funks Grove contains the largest contiguous stand of trees, and numerous smaller wooded areas are found in many areas (see Maps 3.2 and 3.3).



# Map 3.1 Streams and Watersheds McLean County, Illinois

## Legend

- Rivers and Streams
- Lakes and Detention

### Salt Creek/Upper Sangamon River Basin

- Kickapoo Creek
- North Fork Salt Creek
- Sugar Creek
- Upper Salt Creek
- West Fork Sugar Creek

### Mackinaw River Basin

- Buck Creek-Mackinaw River
- Henline Creek-Mackinaw River
- Little Mackinaw River-Mackinaw River
- Money Creek
- Mud Creek-Mackinaw River
- Panther Creek
- Sixmile Creek-Mackinaw River

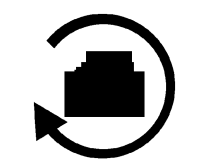
### Vermilion River Basin

- North Fork Vermilion River
- Rooks Creek
- South Fork Vermilion River
- Upper Vermilion River

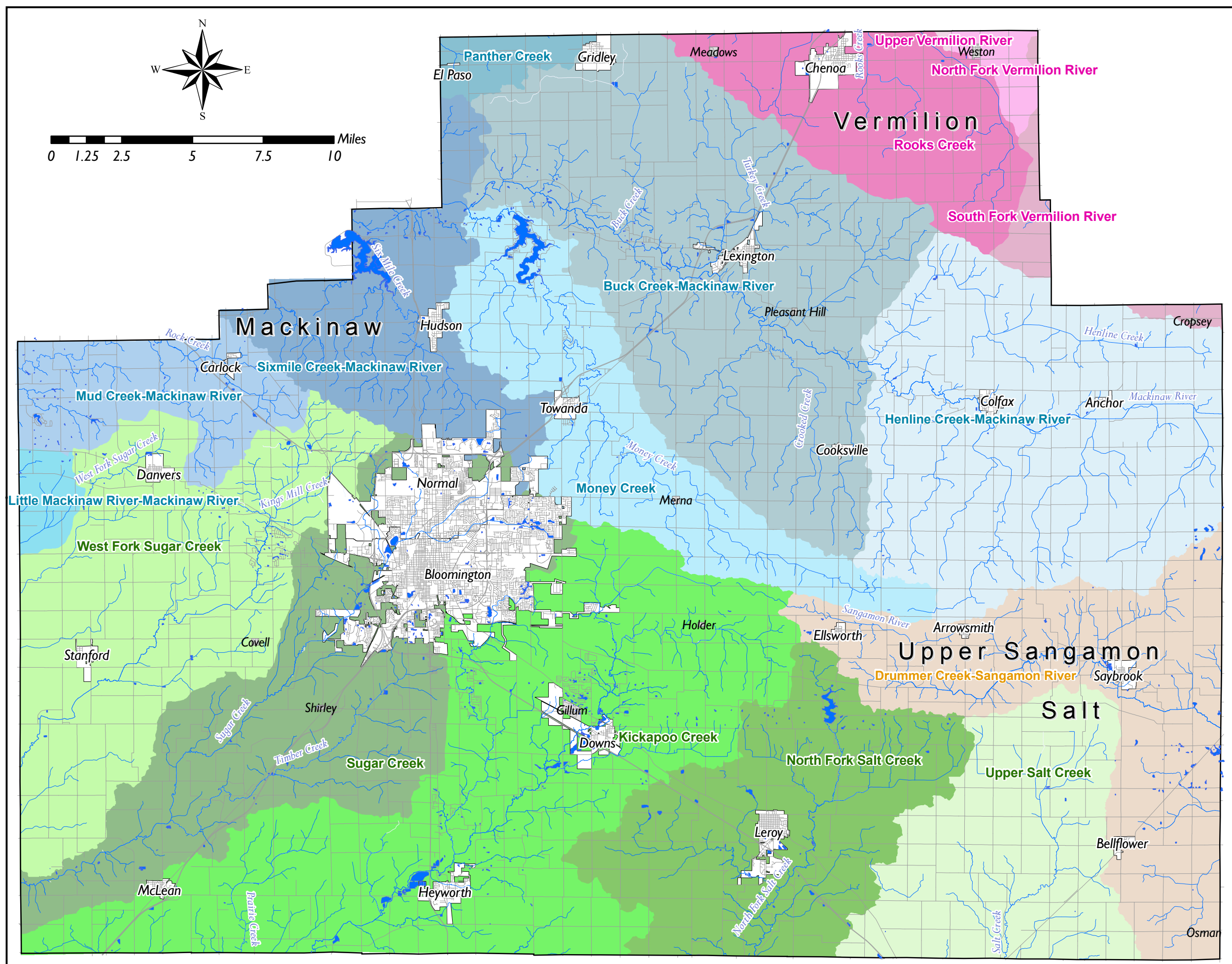
### Upper Sangamon River Basin

- Drummer Creek-Sangamon River

- Roads and Streets
- Incorporated Areas
- McLean County boundary



McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission



Data Sources: River basin and watershed data from National Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; stream data compiled by McLean County Department of Building and Zoning from 2003 aerial photography; data on County boundaries, incorporated areas, lakes and roads from McLean County, City of Bloomington and Town of Normal, and other local jurisdictions.

## Wildlife Habitat

Although of great economic importance to the county, the predominance of cultivated land has all but eliminated the natural prairie vegetation and much of the wildlife that once flourished here. Seven species are classified as endangered or threatened by IDNR (see Table 3.1).

Greenways offer a means to restore and preserve some of the vegetation and wildlife for the benefit of future generations. The Mackinaw River, Funks Grove, Danvers Geological Area and the Weston Cemetery have been identified by IDNR as Illinois Natural Area Inventory Sites. These and other natural areas provide important habitat for endangered species as well as other wildlife and should be preserved.

Local governments are becoming more proactive in the promotion of local stream protection. Adoption of local erosion control and stream buffer ordinances are among the first steps. This subject matter will be addressed more in Chapters 4 and 5.

## URBAN GROWTH

Growth brings challenges and opportunities for greenway planning and development. Growth may provide opportunities for greenway development through greater economic stability and increased construction activity. These factors, when combined with the proper enforcement of local ordinances, can be positive influences in the development of greenways and trails. The Bloomington-Normal urban area has been growing steadily for many decades. Local subdivision ordinances which provide for the dedication of land or cash in lieu of land are important for park and recreational purposes.

The challenge to provide quality land development with abundant open space and recreational areas is important. Population growth and its corresponding land use patterns can have a major influence on the need for and development of greenways. The distribution of population and related economic and social activities also affect the amount of open space available for preservation or development and the amount of land needed for open space and recreational pur-



Dawson Lake



poses. The following paragraphs summarize local trends in the economy, population and land use development and the impact these factors have on greenways.

### **Economic Growth**

McLean County is fortunate to have a strong and diversified local economy. Employment opportunities, combined with excellent educational systems and many other amenities, contribute to a high quality of life that makes McLean County an attractive place to live and work. McLean County has consistently recorded one of the lowest unemployment rates within the State of Illinois for many years. The Bloomington-Normal metropolitan area is home to State Farm Insurance Companies, Country Financial, Illinois Farm Bureau, and Growmark. Industry in McLean County is represented by Mitsubishi Motors Manufacturing of America, General Electric, Bridgestone-Firestone OTR, Beer Nuts and Nestle USA. BroMenn Health Care, OSF/St. Joseph Medical Center and Carle Clinic provide

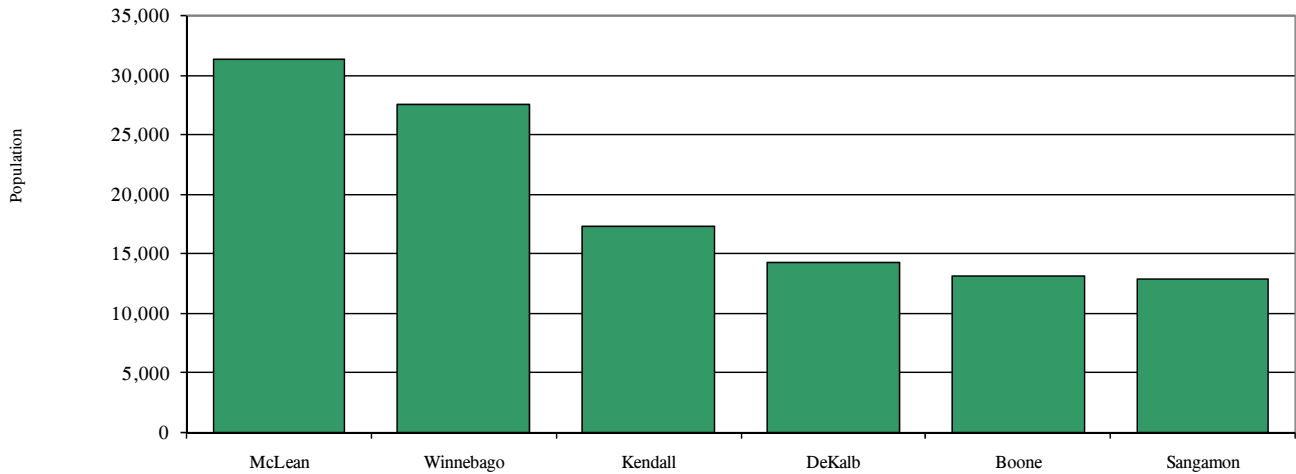
important medical services to the community while providing significant employment within McLean County. There are smaller medical facilities that offer specialized care in many disciplines. Agriculture also plays an important part in the economic success of McLean County, as does higher education. McLean County is home to Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Heartland Community College and a campus of Lincoln College. These institutions provide employment to residents of the region and create significant economic benefits for the local economy.

The growth of these industries, businesses and institutions has contributed significantly to the long term growth and development of the region and will undoubtedly continue to do so in the years ahead. In the rural area, agricultural activities dominate the landscape and have an important impact on the county's economy. McLean County contains an abundance of some of the world's most productive agricultural soils. As a result, agricultural related industries are an important sector of the local economy. More in-



Anderson Park, Normal

**Chart 3.1**  
**Top Ranked Illinois Counties in Absolute Growth**  
**Counties Outside Chicago Metro Area: 1980-2000**



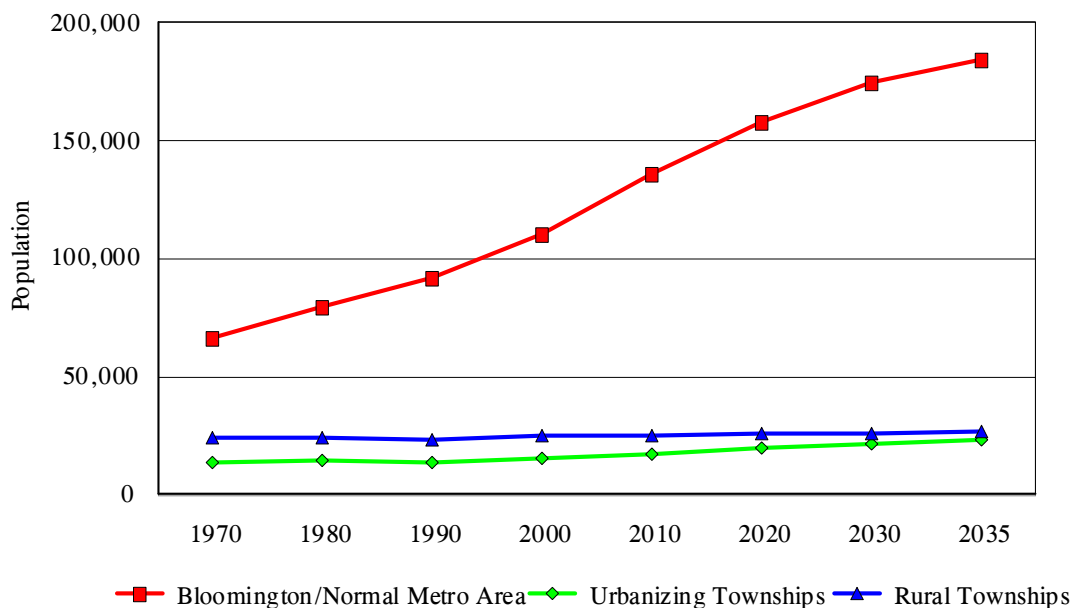
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

formation on the McLean County economy can be obtained by contacting the McLean County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area or by consulting their websites.

### Population Growth

The county's growth, particularly in the metropolitan area, emphasizes the need for measures to preserve open space. No other county outside the Chicago metro area experienced more

**Chart 3.2**  
**Trends and Projections in Urban and Rural Populations: 1970-2035**  
**McLean County, Illinois**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and McLean County Regional Planning Commission



absolute growth than McLean County from 1980-2000 (see Chart 3.1).

The large majority of the county's population is concentrated in the Bloomington-Normal urban area. Although the county contains 21 municipalities, approximately 110,000 of its nearly 150,000 residents in 2000 lived in Bloomington or Normal (see Chart 3.2).

Between 1970 and 2000, the county's rural population remained stable. The trend for major urban growth and slight to moderate rural growth is expected to continue through the year 2035 as illustrated on Chart 3.2. Smaller communities and rural areas within an easy commute of the metro area are expected to experience at least moderate growth. Therefore, special attention needs to be given to preserving open space in and around the Bloomington-Normal region in advance of expected growth and development, as well as preserving natural features and corridors throughout the county.

### **Land Use Development**

The principal areas of development activity are expected to remain on the fringe of Bloomington-Normal. Other development is expected to occur in satellite communities in the western two-thirds of the county. Residential uses, primarily low to medium density, are expected to comprise the major portions of developing areas, particularly in most satellite communities. Wind farms will utilize significant amounts of land in rural portions of eastern and northwestern McLean County. However, this type of land use contributes to energy conservation and positions the county to be a leader in the state in energy self-sufficiency. In the metro area, significant residential development is expected to occur in virtually all directions.

Nonresidential development is also expected in urban fringe areas. Four centers of major commercial/industrial growth are occurring and should expand during the planning period. These include: (1) the State Farm campus complex in southeast Bloomington; (2) the Enterprise Zone and adjacent areas on the west side of Bloomington-Normal, including the Mitsubishi automobile assembly plant, supporting industries, and the McLean County Fairgrounds site; (3) the

area of north Normal surrounding the I-55 and I-39 Interchanges; and (4) the area adjacent to the Central Illinois Regional Airport. Commercial and industrial development is also likely around selected highway interchanges in rural areas where services can be provided. Existing plans for the region also identify potential park and school sites to serve developing areas on the urban fringe.

In recognition of the demands of urban growth for open space and recreational facilities, greenways and recreational planning have become an integral part of the local planning effort. Planned greenways identified in the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal Comprehensive Plans are reflected in this regional greenways plan. The Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD), developers, local landowners and environmental groups collaborated to develop a new Facilities Planning Area (FPA) in 2005. An outgrowth of this process was the concept of stream buffering, which has important potential implications for greenway planning.

It is anticipated there will continue to be a demand for subdivisions within small communities and in rural areas near the metro area. However, special efforts are made to limit rural growth to areas that have or will be provided with satisfactory roads and infrastructure. Urban development on prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas should be discouraged. These efforts should be supplemented through proper subdivision and zoning regulations. Development contiguous to the metro area is strongly encouraged. Stakeholders in this effort include local governments, related agencies and commissions, Friends of Kickapoo Creek, John Wesley Powell Audubon Society, Ecology Action Center, Park-Lands Foundation, Mackinaw River Partnership, Sugar Grove Nature Center, and IDNR among others. A review and monitoring system has been established to encourage such development patterns. An intergovernmental development committee comprised of local planners, engineers and department heads from city, town, and county governments review proposed developments of five acres or more in concert with MCRPC staff. This process helps ensure building projects are in

compliance with local and regional plans. This committee also makes suggestions and recommendations to developers and governments on how projects can better comply with such plans. It is expected that rural communities close to Bloomington-Normal will continue to develop while others will remain stable.

## **PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

Public open space is land owned by public entities and accessible to the general public. Public open space sites in McLean County include municipal parkland located within municipal boundaries. There are a number of public open space sites outside municipalities that are owned and maintained by the City of Bloomington, McLean County and IDNR.

Neighborhood parks generally have a service area radius from a quarter to half a mile. Community parks are usually larger and designed to serve the entire community with recreational facilities often not found in neighborhood parks.

There are 51 park and recreation sites located within the City of Bloomington. The city offers many standard recreation facilities such as playground equipment, athletic fields, hard surface athletic and natural areas, three golf courses, two swimming pools, lakes, a zoo, a community garden, and facilities for recreation and leisure programs. In addition, segments of the Constitution Trail bisect the city and provide another recreational resource. The City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department has also experimented with the planting of prairie grasses, wildflowers and other native vegetation within some city parks.



White Oak Park

### **Bloomington-Normal Metro Area**

The City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal offer residents a variety of public open space facilities. Both communities have many neighborhood and community parks.

The Town of Normal Parks and Recreation Department is in charge of 18 parks with over 600 acres of open space. It maintains at least another 600 acres of municipal property including public rights-of-way and boulevards.

The Town operates Ironwood Golf Course, the Community Activity Center, and the nationally recognized Champion Fields Softball Complex. It manages over 400 recreation programs that serve over 10,000 people each year. The Constitution Trail is a multi-purpose trail that connects neighborhoods throughout Bloomington and Normal. Both the city and town have plans to extend the trail to emerging and existing neighborhoods. Eventually, all areas within the community will be within one mile of the trail. Normal's *Master Plan for Parks and Open Space* provides details on proposed extensions of the trail system for the Town of Normal. The Children and Elders Forest is also a greenway feature that was added to the metropolitan area in 2005. The concept was brought to the community by retired ISU professor Joseph Grabill. On a trip to a German village, Dr. Grabill was introduced to tree groves that had been planted by small children and adult sponsors in a small German village. Each tree was identified by a plaque with the name of the child who planted it. The idea has resulted in four such groves being planted in the Bloomington-Normal area (Turtle, Windrow, Eagle, and Winter Hill Groves) with more planned for the future.

### **Rural McLean County**

Outside the Bloomington-Normal urban area, public open space is under the ownership of rural municipalities, McLean County government, the City of Bloomington, and the State of Illinois.

The smaller communities in McLean County are responsible for providing parks and recreation facilities for their residents. Most of these sites are relatively small and do not contain as large a variety of facilities as are available in Bloomington and Normal. In recent years, many communities have made great strides in improving the size and scope of their parks and recreation facilities.

The County of McLean operates two parks. Evergreen Lake and COMLARA Park are located near the Mackinaw River, north of the Bloomington-Normal metro area and a few miles west of I-39 (see Maps 3.3 and 4.6). Evergreen Lake and COMLARA Park offer a variety of

recreational opportunities including camping, picnicking and boating. The county also operates West Park which is located north of the City of LeRoy. This facility is near Moraine View State Park and Dawson Lake. West Park offers picnicking opportunities.

In addition to various urban area parks, the City of Bloomington owns and operates Lake Bloomington and surrounding parkland. Lake Bloomington is located in the northwest part of the county (see Maps 3.3 and 4.6). Lake Bloomington is the source of the public water supply for the City of Bloomington and other areas.

In the southeast part of the county, a few miles to the northeast of LeRoy, is Dawson Lake and Moraine View State Park (see Maps 3.3 and 4.4). A variety of excellent recreational opportunities are available here. These include picnicking, camping, fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, horseback riding, winter sports and hunting. Owned and operated by IDNR, this site is an important recreational resource for McLean County.

### **SEMI-PUBLIC OR PRIVATE OPEN SPACE**

Semi-public or private open space and recreation areas include facilities such as golf courses and parks that are generally not owned by government entities. These types of facilities may have restrictions on usage or require that payment be rendered for use.

Golf courses represent one example of a semi-public or private open space and recreation area. Golf courses can provide habitat for some types of wildlife, especially when this purpose is considered in the design. Bloomington-Normal is home to many public and private golf courses with many more located throughout McLean County.

Corporate recreation areas represent another example. State Farm Insurance Company operates a park for its employees and families at a location in south Bloomington. This facility has expanded in recent years and offers many recreational activities. Recent renovations include a new water park and administration facility, additional ball fields for a variety of sports activities, and a new trail system that will connect to the Constitution Trail outside of the private facility.












# Map 3.2









## Environmentally Sensitive Areas

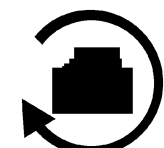
McLean County, Illinois

### Legend

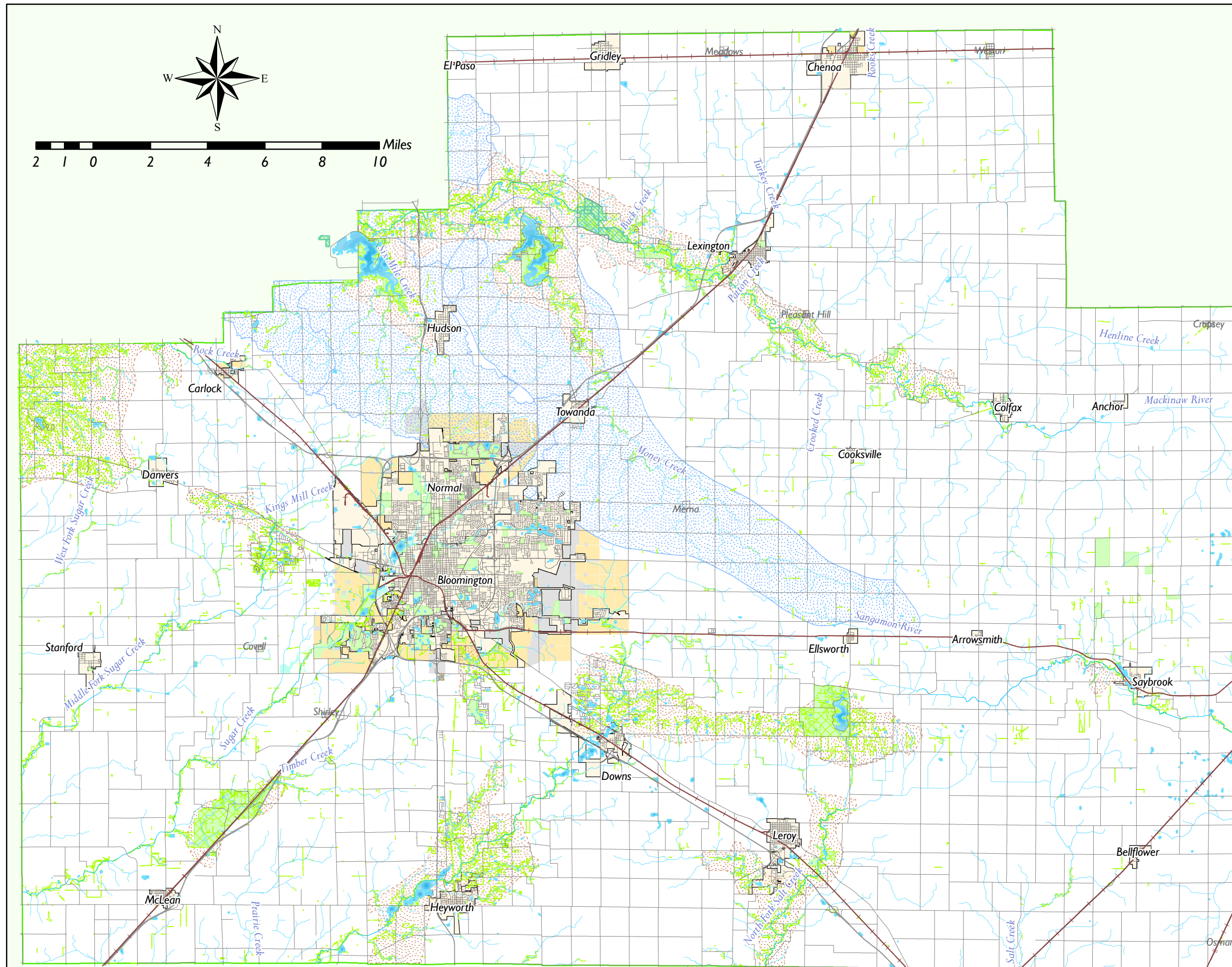
-  Parks and Preserves
-  Private Reserves
-  Wooded Areas
-  Unprotected Natural Areas
-  IEPA Watershed Study Areas
-  100-year Flood Hazard Area
-  500-year Flood Hazard Area
-  Lakes
-  Rivers and Streams

### Planned Urban Growth Areas

-  Non-residential
-  Residential
-  Conservation/recreation
-  Streets and Roads
-  Railroad
-  Incorporated Area
-  Unincorporated Settlement
-  McLean County



McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership and municipal and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; watershed data from National Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County.

In addition, General Electric Corporation operates a corporate park near its production facility on the east side of Bloomington. The park is owned and operated by the G.E. Employees Club. The 24-acre facility includes a renovated baseball field, swimming pool, and fishing pond. The facility can be rented out for private functions.

Semi-public and private conservation or recreation areas have been growing in number in McLean County in recent years. Funks Grove is a unique natural area located northeast of the village of McLean (see Map 3.3). Funks Grove is the largest remaining intact prairie grove in the state of Illinois with over 1,000 acres of high quality natural areas, most of which are protected as registered Illinois Land & Water Reserves or dedicated Illinois Nature Preserves. Portions have been designated a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of Interior. This contiguous natural area is comprised of tracts owned by several entities including Sugar Grove Foundation, Funks Grove Cemetery Association, IDNR, the University of Illinois, and private trusts. Sugar Grove Nature Center is located in the southern end of Funks Grove. This environmental education/interpretive center is open to the public year round and offers programs, special events, picnicking, access to hiking trails, and opportunities for other passive recreational opportunities.

The ParkLands Foundation is a nonprofit organization that acquires land for conservation purposes. ParkLands owns properties within McLean County and preserves those properties in their natural states. These properties are included as conservation areas and preserves as identified on Maps 3.2, 4.3 and 4.6.

## TRAILS

The Bloomington-Normal metro area is home to an excellent multipurpose trail system. Local governments and interested citizens continue to make every effort to expand local trail systems into new development. Following is a discussion of the existing and currently planned trail system (see Maps 3.3, 3.4 and 4.1).

### Constitution Trail

The Constitution Trail has expanded from the original 4.5-mile trail to more than 24 miles. The multipurpose trail traverses the Bloomington-Normal metro area. Considered a linear park, the trail is extremely popular with residents of the Twin Cities. The trail's asphalt pavement provides an excellent surface for bicycling, jogging, rollerblading and walking. Expansion continues to be a work in progress that will continue for many years. Recent additions include segments into Illinois State University and Heartland Community College in Normal, and along Hamilton Road and Fox Creek Road in Bloomington. Future trail segments are planned from East Lincoln Street in Bloomington to Route 9 West and beyond.

### Additional Proposals

Additional trail and bicycle route proposals are also identified in the plan. The plan identifies potential trails that would connect the Constitution Trail system with potential park and school sites in the urban area and with smaller communities and regional recreation sites throughout the county (see Map 3.4). These would be trails established on-road, off-road, and on railroad rights-of-way.

Other trail proposals and bicycle facilities are being explored for the proposed Main Street Corridor through Normal and Bloomington. The proposed Historic Route 66 Trail will run adjacent to the Route 66 Corridor throughout the entire county. This trail will eventually connect to the Route 66 State Trail envisioned by the State of Illinois. This proposed trail will also run along much of the Route 66 Corridor from Chicago to St. Louis. The Town of Normal is also completing a *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* that will also be used as a guide to plan non-motorized transportation routes for the future.

## RAILROADS

Railroad rights-of-way can have important implications for greenway planning. As rail service is discontinued, the rights-of-way can be preserved and developed for greenways and trails



as was done in the case of Constitution Trail. Under certain circumstances, trails can also be developed in conjunction with active rail lines. In most cases, railroad rights-of-way containing active rail service should not be considered for trail development while the railroad is active. But active rail lines may be considered for long range trail development with the expectation that rail operations may cease at some future point. At least certain active rail lines should therefore be monitored so that appropriate actions can be taken if and when abandonment becomes imminent.

### Active

Four major active railroad lines serve McLean County. The Union Pacific Railroad has an active line that links Bloomington-Normal with Chicago and St. Louis. This line provides freight service and Amtrak passenger service. Other communities along this line within McLean County are McLean, Shirley, Towanda, Lexington and Chenoa. This is a major line and it is

very unlikely that it will become inactive within the foreseeable future.

A second active railroad line traverses Bloomington-Normal and serves the Mitsubishi Motors Manufacturing of America automobile production facility in Normal. Other communities near this line include Carlock, Holder, Padua, Ellsworth, and Arrowsmith. Because this line serves the automobile assembly plant, it is likely to remain active.

An active east-west line crosses the county through Gridley and Chenoa in the north. This line makes connections to El Paso, Eureka, Washington and East Peoria to the west. It also connects several small communities to the east toward Watseka. At this time there is no reason to suspect a suspension of service on this line.

Another major active line serves the village of Bellflower in the extreme southeastern part of the county. This line makes connections to Gibson City and Kankakee to the northeast and Farmer City, Clinton and Springfield to the southeast. No major reduction in service is anticipated at this time on this line.



Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Adjacent to Old Route 66 at Lexington

# Map 3.3 Greenway Resources

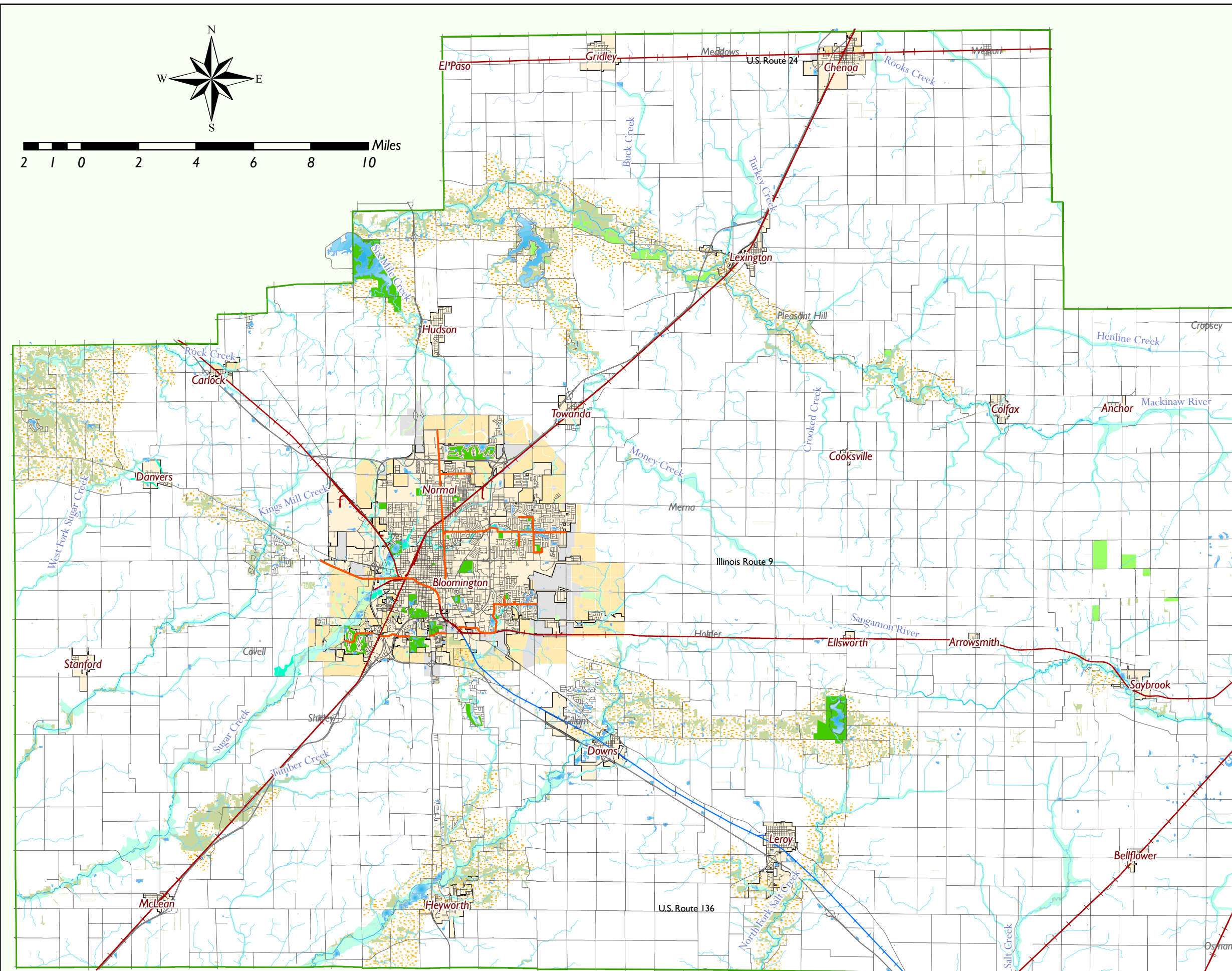
McLean County, Illinois

## Legend

-  Parks and Recreational Areas
-  Conservation Areas
-  Wooded Areas
-  Unprotected Natural Areas
-  100-year Flood Hazard Area
-  500-year Flood Hazard Area
-  Lakes and Detention
-  Rivers and Streams
-  Constitution Trail
- Railroads**
  -  Active
  -  Semi-active
  -  Streets and Roads
- Planned Urban Growth Areas**
  -  Non-residential
  -  Residential
  -  Conservation/recreation
  -  Corporate Boundaries
  -  Unincorporated Settlements
  -  McLean County



McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership and status, and municipal and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; watershed data from National Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County; 2035 land use derived from City of Bloomington and Town of Normal comprehensive plans; Constitution Trail data from Friends of Constitution Trail.



## Semi-Active

Semi-active railroad lines are those that have had service reduced or eliminated. Three semi-active lines have been identified in McLean County.

There is a limited amount of service on a line that runs from Heyworth to Clinton. This right-of-way could provide important access to the Clinton Lake State Recreational Area and Weldon Springs State Park. It also continues eastward as an active line to Champaign. Service on this line should be monitored closely.

There is also limited service on a line that begins in Colfax and runs northeastwardly to Anchor and beyond. This particular line serves nearby grain elevators. Activity on this line should be monitored, although it is some distance from population centers.

Service has been limited and discontinued use is a possibility on the Norfolk Southern line extending southeastwardly from Bloomington through Downs, LeRoy and onward through Champaign-Urbana and beyond. At last report, service had ceased on this line in McLean County but has not been abandoned. This right-of-way could provide an important greenway linkage with points throughout the southeastern parts of the county, including municipalities and Moraine View State Park, as well as with other counties and regions to the southeast. Therefore, this line should be monitored closely and interested agencies should be prepared to act if and when it becomes available.

## Abandoned

Long abandoned railroad rights-of-way also extend outward from Bloomington in several directions. One extends southwest along the Sugar Creek floodplain. Another extends northwest through Danvers. There is also an abandoned right-of-way extending northeast through the villages of Merna, Cooksville and Colfax. Another extends southward to Heyworth and another northward through Hudson. Most of these abandoned railroad rights-of-way contain major segments that have reverted to private use and offer only very limited potential for use as publicly accessible greenways. However, some may

offer potential as wildlife habitat and species corridors.

## ROADWAYS

In some cases, street and highway rights-of-way can provide important linkages for trails to connect greenways and other trails. The Friends of the Constitution Trail organization has classified numerous streets in the urban area according to the comfort level afforded to more experienced bicyclists (see Map 3.4). Although separated trails are the most desirable for most users, economic considerations and space limitations are often major obstacles to the development of separated trails within existing roadways. However, this is not always the case and should be given due consideration when appropriate. Local, regional and state plans address these scenarios, such as the *Main Street Corridor Plan*, Town of Normal *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* and the *Route 66 Trail Concept Plan*.

The planning for future roadways should consider providing safe connections between other trails and greenways whenever needed. In a high growth area such as Bloomington-Normal, roadways can provide an important source of new trail development when considered in conjunction with the development of new roads.

The Interstate 55, 74, and 39 corridors also offer potential as greenways. Although trails are generally not permitted within interstate rights-of-way, this policy should be reconsidered in certain situations where no other viable connections exist between activity centers or regions.

## INTERREGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proximity of McLean County to a number of small to medium size metro areas could offer some potential for interregional connections of greenways by way of floodplains, highway or railroad rights-of-way, or other greenways identified in adjacent regions. In addition to the proposed Route 66 Trail, following are other interregional considerations for trails and open space.



## **Springfield and Joliet**

As noted earlier in this chapter, right-of-way along Route 66 and Interstates 39, 55 and 74 in McLean County may offer some potential as greenway connections in the future. The leading possibility appears to be creating a state trail along Route 66. IDNR has established an executive committee that is organizing parameters for such a trail. Route 66 is a historic highway connecting Chicago with Los Angeles. It could be enhanced through the joint preservation as a greenway as a means to further benefit the residents of Illinois and to promote tourism opportunities.

## **Peoria**

The Mackinaw River is a leading greenway resource for connecting McLean County with points west as it flows to the Illinois River south of Peoria. While the preservation of this greenway should be actively pursued, the Mackinaw River appears to offer potential for water trail development. However, property rights of private landowners should be respected.

Discussions began in 2007 between the McLean County Parks Department and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission on potential regional trail connections from metropolitan Bloomington-Normal to the Greater Peoria Area near Morton. Three potential corridors for trail extensions have been discussed. These proposed corridors would take advantage of existing rural roads in an effort to connect Constitution Trail and the Rock Island Trail.

## **Decatur**

Potential trail and greenway connections to the Decatur urban area are also very limited. One semi-active/abandoned rail line and U.S. Route 51 were the only corridors identified. A considerable amount of further study would be required to determine the feasibility of connections with Decatur.

## **Champaign-Urbana**

An important opportunity for a greenway and trail connection between Bloomington and Champaign could be realized in the future. Service has been reduced/discontinued on the line connecting these two urban areas and the sale of the right-of-way to a public entity could become a possibility. Status of the Norfolk Southern line remains in question. Rail service on the line has been discontinued. However, the railroad has decided not to declare the line as abandoned. The situation continues to be monitored. This corridor could provide an important linkage between two urban areas that have major universities. The corridor could also provide an important link in the statewide trail system.

## **Statewide Greenway Planning**

Greenway plans have been completed and continue to be updated in many parts of the state. In addition to this update, a plan was completed in 2007 for Logan County by the MCRPC. According to IDNR, plans have been written and/or updated for the following communities or regions: northeastern Illinois, Boone/Winnebago counties, Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, Freeport, Henry/Rock Island counties, Kankakee, Peoria, Menard County, Quad Cities, Rockford, Sangamon County, Springfield, southern Illinois, Tri-County Area (Woodford, Tazewell and Peoria counties) and the Metro East Area that includes Collinsville.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter has identified the natural and developed features that represent existing or potential greenway resources in McLean County, Illinois. This information provides a framework for preparing greenway plans and identifying priorities for the development or preservation of greenways in the county. The chapter has addressed the county's natural features with emphasis on streams, floodplains, tree cover and wildlife habitat, including an identification of endangered species. It has also addressed developed features including urban growth and land use development, protected open space, trails, road-

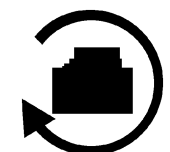
# Map 3.4

## Trail Resources

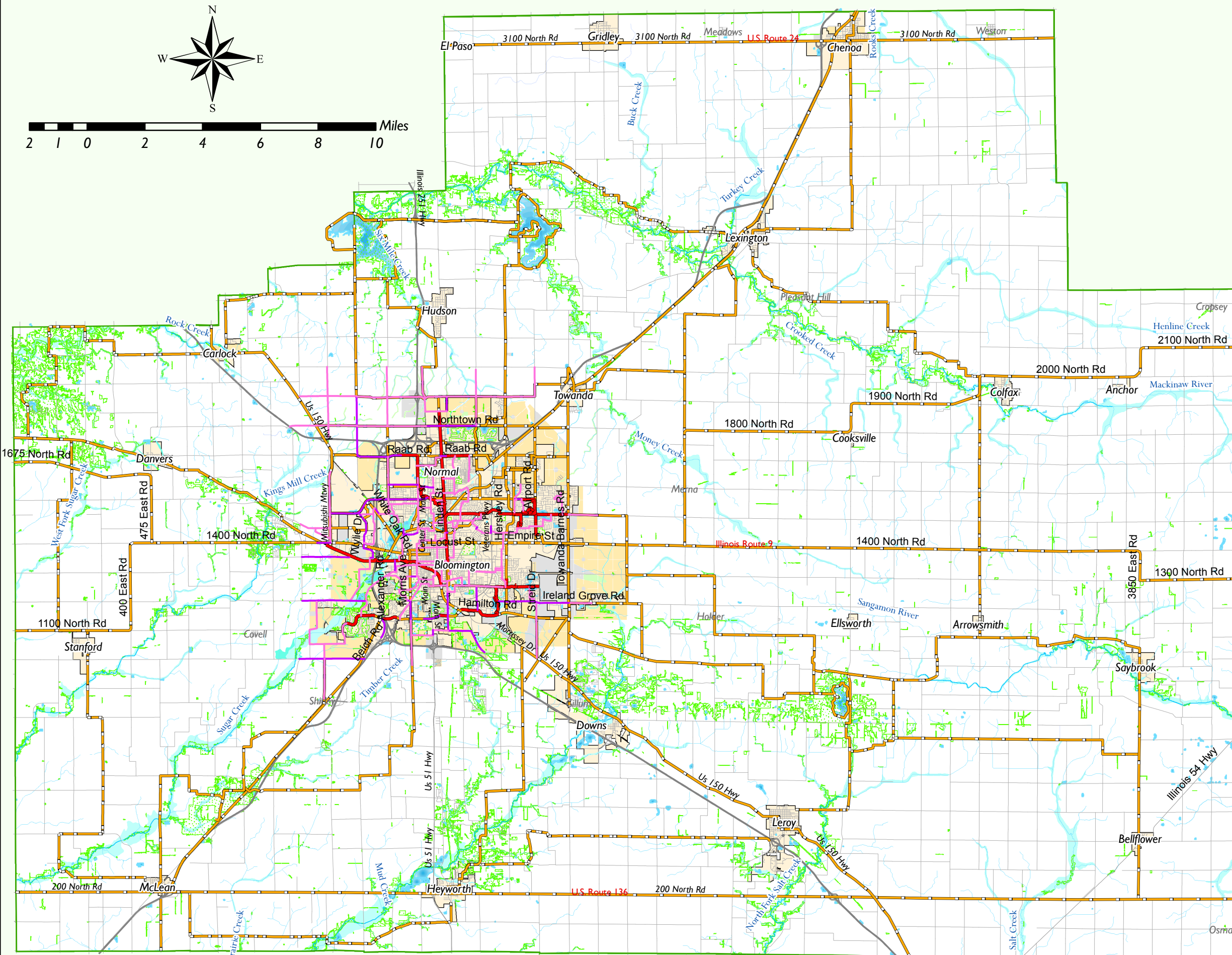
McLean County, Illinois

### Legend

-  Constitution Trail
-  Currently Proposed or Other Potential Trails and Conceptual Road Network
-  Streets More Comfortable for Bicycling
-  Streets Less Comfortable for Bicycling
-  Resource Areas
-  100-year Flood Hazard Area
-  500-year Flood Hazard Area
-  Lakes
-  Rivers and Streams
-  Streets and Roads
-  Railroad
-  Incorporated Area
-  Unincorporated Settlements
-  McLean County



McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership, and municipal and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County; Constitution Trail data and street comfort ratings for bicyclists from Friends of Constitution Trail.

ways, and railroad rights-of-way—both active and those in varying stages of abandonment. Also addressed was the geographic location of McLean County in relation to other regions of the state and the possibility of interregional connections of greenways.

From this analysis, a number of conclusions can be drawn for consideration in the selection and prioritization of planned greenways in the county. McLean County has a number of important natural and scenic resources and numerous others that should be preserved and integrated into a regional system of greenways. Major features include the Mackinaw River system, Moraine View State Park, Funks Grove, COM-LARA Park, Evergreen Lake and Lake Bloomington. The Constitution Trail provides an excellent basis for the development of a regional system of greenways and trails that could serve not only the metro area but could be extended to connect important locations throughout the county and quite possibly with other regions of the state. A major opportunity could soon exist for the acquisition and greenway development of a railroad right-of-way that would connect the Bloomington-Normal metro area with Champaign-Urbana and points east. This greenway would serve LeRoy, Downs and rural McLean County and could provide an important link in a statewide system of greenways. The Greater Peoria Area and McLean County are also in the process of identifying and discussing possible future corridors.





# Priority Future Greenways

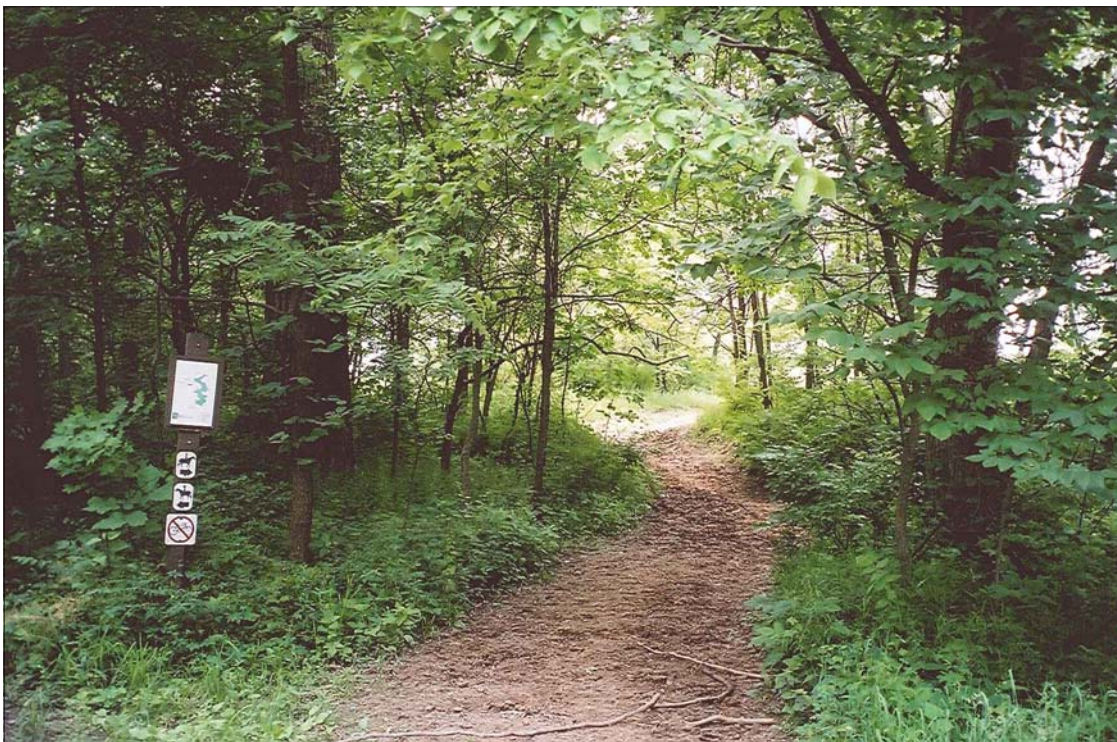
## CHAPTER 4

Priority future greenways are defined as proposed greenways that exhibit at least one of the following beneficial features:

1. **Benefits Multiple Communities** - Directly benefits multiple communities or a large segment of the population. It must serve more than one community or neighborhood.
2. **Completes Existing Greenway** - Segment completes an existing greenway with or without a trail.
3. **Creates New Connections** - Creates a new connection between greenways or trails.
4. **Assists Wildlife** - Provides wildlife habitat and migration paths for threatened, endangered or regionally rare species and is large enough to

possess high quality plant and animal communities in areas such as Funks Grove, Mackinaw River corridor, and Moraine View State Park.

5. **Preserves Water Quality** - Has an ecological function (i.e. floodplain, water storage/recharge, streamside forests, and filter strips) that improves water quality by trapping pollutants and sediment in waterways.
6. **Prevents Flood Damage** - Protects residential and commercial areas threatened by flood damage.
7. **Buffers Existing Preserves** - Provides habitat or potentially connects or buffers natural areas from development. Also provides for environmental education, research or casual nature observation or photography.



Trail at Moraine View State Park near LeRoy

**Table 4.1-1**  
**Priority Future Greenways**  
**Natural Space**  
**McLean County, Illinois**

			Benefits																			
			Benefits Multiple Communities		Completes Existing Greenway		Creates New Connections		Assists Wildlife		Preserves Water Quality		Prevents Flood Damage		Buffers Existing Preserves		Scenic & Historic Areas		Provides Trail Opportunity		Implementation Potential	
Greenway Name	Map #	Ref #		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	No. of Beneficial Features	Priority Status	Comments	Threatened					
Natural Space																						
Kickapoo Creek Watershed	3.1, 3.2, 4.5	1W		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10	1	As part of Grove Development, efforts began in 2007 to reinvigorate entire watershed.	yes					
Lake Bloomington/MoneyCreek Watershed	3.1, 3.2, 4.6	2W		●		●	●	●			●	●	●	7	1	Lake Bloomington Watershed Plan (2008) will establish water protection benchmarks for watershed.	yes					
Kings Mill Creek	3.2, 4.6	3S		●	●	●	●	●	●		●			7	1	Potential linkages with Sugar Creek and other waterways as a potential greenway make it attractive.	yes					
Sugar Creek & Tributaries	3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 4.5	4S		●	●	●	●	●		●			●	7	1	Sugar Creek and its floodplain offer potential greenway and trail linkages with Constitution Trail. Already under public ownership by BNRD.	yes					
Mackinaw River Watershed	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3	5S		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10	1	Recreational resource and potential development as a water trail. High quality river watershed.	yes					
Turkey Creek	4.3	6S		●		●	●	●	●			●		6	2	Maintains favorable water quality and is important as conservation waterway.	no					
Patton Creek	4.3	7S		●	●	●					●	●		5	2	Has aesthetic value and completes existing greenway.	no					
Rooks Creek	3.1, 4.3	8S		●		●	●	●		●	●			6	2	Vital tributary for the Mackinaw River. Important for preservation of wildlife and adjoining land.	no					
Six Mile Creek	3.1, 4.6	9S		●	●			●	●	●		●	●	7	1	Important for wildlife and hydrologic linkages to Mackinaw River and Evergreen Lake. Creek is part of TMDL studies.	yes					
Buck Creek	3.1, 4.6	10S				●	●	●	●	●				5	2	Waterway is important for potential linkages and local environmental aspects.	no					
Crooked Creek	3.2, 4.3	11S					●	●	●	●	●			5	2	Serves as an important natural preservation area for plants and animals.	no					
Sangamon River	3.1, 4.4	12S		●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●	8	1	Significant waterway that has multiple value and potential as an inter-regional waterway.	no					
Blue Ridge Special Creek	4.4	13S		●		●	●	●	●	●				6	2	Serves as buffer for natural areas and assists in water quality preservation.	no					
Salt Creek	3.1, 3.2, 4.4	14S				●	●	●	●	●	●		●	7	1	Important link in multi-county water and nature preservation.	no					
Mud Creek	3.1, 4.5	15S				●	●	●	●					4	2	Important detention and floodway waterbody.	no					
Timber Creek	3.2, 4.5	16S		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		9	2	Provides abundant tree cover as it passes through Funks Grove, the state's largest prairie grove.	no					
Prairie Creek	4.5	17S		●		●	●	●	●		●			6	2	Primary value is the potential greenway linkages it provides.	no					
Rock Creek	4.6	18S				●	●	●		●	●			5	2	Conservation and watershed protection efforts would provide valuable benefits for this waterway.	yes					
Henline Creek	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3	19S			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		8	2	Environmentally important tributary for the Mackinaw River. Key for wildlife habitat and migration.	no					

**Table 4.1-2**  
**Priority Future Greenways**  
**Public Open Space/Recreational**  
**McLean County, Illinois**

			Benefits										No. of Beneficial Features	Priority Status	Comments	Threatened	
Greenway Name	Map #	Ref #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10					
Public Open Space/Recreational																	
Constitution Trail	34, 4.1, 42	20T		●	●	●	●				●	●	●	7	1	Provides an alternative transportation artery that promotes fitness/wellness and is a cost-efficient amenity.	n/a
COMLARA Park	33, 4.6	21P		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10	2	Regional nature and recreation area that promotes wildlife habitat and conservation as part of the Lake Evergreen watershed.	n/a
Moraine View State Park	33, 4.4	22P		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9	2	Value as regional nature and recreation areas is important.	n/a
Tipton Park	42	23P				●	●	●	●	●	●	●		7	2	Nature and recreation area that provides multiple community benefits.	n/a
Fairview Park	42	24P				●	●				●	●	●	5	1	Improvements planned to park will make it more pedestrian friendly. Planned open natural prairie areas will provide diversity of wildlife habitat.	n/a
Fell Park	42	25P				●					●	●	●	4	2	Important for preserving and enhancing local historical character. Serves as multi-neighborhood gathering place.	n/a
Fransen Nature Area	42	26P				●	●				●	●		5	2	There is one of a passive recreational area that features a wooded and open natural landscape.	n/a
Maxwell Park	42	27P		●	●	●	●				●	●	●	8	1	Additional trees are planned for the upgrade of the park. Improvements include enhancing the park's character and sense of scale. Trails will be connected to the entire site to promote pedestrian and non-motorized uses.	n/a
One Normal Plaza	42	28P			●	●					●	●	●	5	1	Effort will be made to retain historic institutional campus feel of space.	n/a
Underwood Park	42	29P		●	●	●			●	●		●	●	7	1	Although it promotes active recreation, efforts will be made to encourage passive recreation. Provides trail connections.	n/a
Alton Depot Park	42	30P				●						●	●	3	2	New "neighborhood park" that provides trailhead connection.	n/a
Angler's Lake	42	31P				●	●			●			●	4	2	Nature area that features passive recreation opportunities.	n/a
Brookridge Park	42	32P			●	●	●		●	●		●	●	7	2	The combination of trails and natural areas made this an attractive greenway with additional potential.	n/a
Clearwater Park	42	33P			●	●						●	●	4	2	Provides multiple value as public park and trail connection.	n/a
Franklin Park	42	34P		●		●					●			3	3	Registered as a national historic site. Should be preserved as a greenway.	n/a
McGraw Park	42	35P			●	●						●	●	4	2	Provides value as a passive and interactive park and trail connection.	n/a
Miller Park	42	36P		●		●	●		●		●	●	●	7	1	Has merit as future trail link. Park also has historical significance.	n/a
Forest Park	42	37P		●		●					●	●	●	5	1	Important as future trail link.	n/a
P. J. Irvin Park	42	38P				●	●					●	●	4	2	Existing "nature park" that provides opportunity as potential trail connection.	n/a
Rollingbrook Park	42	39P			●	●						●	●	4	2	Provides value as possible future trail connection.	n/a
White Oak Park	42	40P			●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	8	2	Has continued value as public park, nature area and trail connection.	n/a
The Den at Fox Creek	42	41G		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	9	2	Trail connection and wildlife preservation potential.	n/a
Ironwood Golf Club	42	42G		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	9	2	Trail connection and wildlife preservation potential.	n/a
Prairie Vista Golf Course	42	43G		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	9	2	Trail connection and wildlife preservation potential.	n/a
Highland Park Golf Course	42	44G		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	9	2	Potential for trail linkage.	n/a
Schroeder Wildlife Sanctuary	45	76F				●	●			●	●	●	●	6	2	Provides wetlands, water purification, and wildlife conservation.	n/a

Table 4.1-3  
Priority Future Greenways  
**Semi-Public Open Space/Recreational**  
McLean County, Illinois

Greenway Name	Map #	Ref #		Benefits										No. of Beneficial Features	Priority Status*	Comments	Threatened	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10					
Semi-Public Open Space/Recreational																		
Bloomington Country Club	4.2	45G					●	●	●				●	4	2	Wildlife preservation potential.	n/a	
Lakeside Country Club	4.2	46G					●	●	●				●	4	2	Wildlife preservation potential.	n/a	
Crestwicke Country Club	4.5	47G					●	●	●					3	2	Wildlife preservation potential.	n/a	
State Farm Park	4.2	48P			●	●	●					●	●	5	2	Potential for trail linkage.	n/a	
General Electric Park	4.2	49P			●	●					●	●	●	●	6	2	Current trail linkage.	n/a

**8. Scenic and Historic Areas** - Protects important scenic vistas and historic areas from development.

**9. Provides Trail Opportunity** - Suitable for trail development which could result in improved access to trails, open space or recreational facilities.

**10. Implementation Potential** - No major use conflicts, ownership issues or major design problems were identified.

This chapter presents the priority greenways identified within McLean County. Each priority greenway is listed in Table 4.1, along with its corresponding beneficial features and map number. The locations of priority greenways within the county are graphically illustrated on Maps 4.2 through 4.6. The characteristics of each are summarized in Table 4.1, along with an indication of probable strategies for implementation. Several factors may affect the priority status of each greenway listed. In addition to the number of beneficial features assigned to each greenway, its priority may also be affected by its “threatened” status or available funds to develop a particular greenway. This was the case with the initial development of Constitution Trail. Unanticipated grant money was made available to be-

gin the project earlier than expected. Also factors such as increased pollution or unexpected loss of habitat may merit giving attention to a greenway that has been assigned a lower priority than another. It should be recognized unforeseen and changing circumstances may alter the priority of each greenway listed in the table. See Chapter 5 for more information on specific implementation methods and funding.

In addition to the priority greenways, the plan also identifies other potential bicycling locations in the county’s rural areas. These designations generally follow roadways and may be commonly used by bicyclists. Some have also been designated for trails in previous plans and studies. These locations are generally considered to be of lower priority, although this could be affected by changing circumstances.

In order to facilitate analysis, the county was divided into five planning areas. These are: (1) Bloomington-Normal Metro Area; (2) Northeastern McLean County; (3) Southeastern McLean County; (4) Southwestern McLean County; and (5) Northwestern McLean County. The following discussion is presented by planning area.

## BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL METRO AREA

Priority greenways in the Bloomington-Normal urban area include Constitution Trail, local college campuses, city streets that could be



**Table 4.1-4**  
**Priority Future Greenways**  
**Other Open Space**  
**McLean County, Illinois**

			Benefits										No. of Beneficial Features	Priority Status*	Comments	Threatened	
Greenway Name	Map #	Ref #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10					
Other Open Space																	
Illinois State University	4.2	50C		●	●	●	●				●	●	●	7	1	Greenspace enhancement , trail connections/development.	n/a
Illinois Wesleyan University	4.2	51C		●	●	●	●				●	●	●	7	1	Community gateway and possible trail enhancement.	n/a
Main Street/Route 51 Corridor	4.2	52R		●		●					●	●	●	5	1	Reassesses traffic patterns plus considers pedestrian and bicycle amenities along the corridor.	n/a
Downtown Renovations (Bloomington & Normal)	4.2	53M		●		●		●			●	●	●	6	1	Considerations include greenspace and trail enhancements, LEED building certification and traffic improvement.	n/a
Pipeline Road	4.6	54R			●	●						●	●	4	2	Possible trail connection.	n/a
Northtown Road	4.2, 4.6	55R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Potential as trail linkage to Main Street Corridor.	n/a
Raab Road	4.2	56R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Could serve as possible trailhead to the east and as trail linkage in north and west Normal.	n/a
North Towanda Avenue	4.2	57R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Important link in the growth of metro trail system in the northeast.	n/a
Old Route 66	4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6	58T		●	●	●					●	●	●	6	1	Primary artery for planned Historic Route 66 Trail.	n/a
Parkside Road	4.2	59R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Potential trail connection.	n/a
Mitsubishi Motorway	4.2	60R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Future primary connection artery for metro trail system.	n/a
College Avenue	4.2	61R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Various locations along this thoroughfare have been earmarked as possible trail connections.	n/a
Shepard Drive/Airport Road	4.2	62R		●	●	●	●					●	●	6	1	Will provide important trail linkage and potential greenway.	n/a
Hershey Road	4.2	63R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Potential trail linkage.	n/a
Rock Island Trail Extension	4.6	64T		●	●	●				●	●	●	●	7	1	Establishes regional trail system to the west.	n/a
Towanda-Barnes Road	4.2	65R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Potential as major north-south artery as trail connector on east side of metro area.	n/a
Empire & Market Streets (Route 9)	4.2	66R			●	●						●	●	4	2	Earmarked for possible trailheads in the future.	n/a
Lincoln Street	4.2	67R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Could serve as potential trail from Miller Park area to State Farm Corporate South.	n/a
Morris Avenue	4.2	68R			●	●						●	●	4	2	Feasible trail artery for south Bloomington.	n/a
Fox Creek Road	4.2	69R			●	●						●	●	4	1	Completion of trail along this road would add continuity to trail already in this area.	n/a
Norfolk Southern Railroad ROW	4.4	70T		●	●	●	●				●	●	●	7	2	ROW has yet to be officially abandoned. Trail extension would benefit multiple communities beyond county.	n/a
500 East Road	4.5	71R		●	●	●	●			●	●	●		7	2	Excellent proximity to Funks Grove nature area. Good potential for greenway linkages that would benefit several communities.	n/a
ICG/Canadian National Railroad (ROW)	4.2	72T		●	●	●	●					●		5	2	If abandoned, any section of ROW could be blended into existing or planned trail system.	n/a
2500 North Road (Lake Bloomington to COMLARA Park)	4.6	73R		●		●				●	●	●		5	3	Could enhance regional trail system if connected.	n/a
ParLands Foundation	4.3, 4.6	74F		●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●	8	2	Protects native plant and animal communities.	n/a
Sugar Grove Nature Center	4.2, 4.6	75F		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10	1	Environmental education/interpretive facility in quality natural area. Provides hiking trail access, biking destination, and other passive recreational opportunities.	n/a

\*Priority Status: Each listed greenway is assigned priority status. Priority One status locations or projects have the highest degree of implementation potential or are in the most dire need of attention. Locations/projects assigned a Priority Two status are important greenways but may not have the immediate implementation potential of other projects. Priority Three locations/projects are usually potential greenways that for one reason or another have low implementation prospects currently or do not provide immediate benefits to current greenway system.

potential greenway connectors, public and semi-public parks and golf courses.

### **Constitution Trail**

Constitution Trail is a multi-use trail made possible by a joint venture with the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal. The trail has been in operation since 1989. The existing trail traverses the entire community of Bloomington-Normal and was approximately 24 miles in length in 2008. The trail is a continuous work in progress. Major additions to the trail are planned for the Bloomington-Normal Main Street Corridor and southwest Bloomington. Plans are for the trail to eventually connect to regional and state trails.

### **Sugar Creek Tributaries**

Sugar Creek and its system of tributaries extend from east of Veterans Parkway in northeastern Bloomington and Towanda Avenue in northeastern Normal to West Washington Street near I-55 in western Bloomington (see Maps 4.2 and 4.5). This proposed greenway system fol-

lows floodplains and offers a number of potential linkages with Constitution Trail and a number of other proposed greenways. A Sugar Creek greenway offers opportunities for trail development and is already under public ownership by the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD).

Intergovernmental agreements between Bloomington, Normal and BNWRD would be the primary implementation strategy. Potential funding sources include participating local governments and IDNR. Transportation enhancement funds may also offer some funding potential. Development issues include neighborhood privacy (if trails are developed), potential flooding, steep slopes, bridges and other barriers. The Sugar Creek greenway would preserve open space and provide many ecological benefits to a large number of residents throughout a significant portion of the urban area.

### **Southwest Bloomington**

In southwest Bloomington, a system of greenways could extend from the Sugar Creek greenway to the southwest. Such a system would



Constitution Trail



# Map 4.1 Regional Greenways Plan McLean County, Illinois

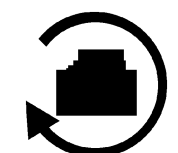
## Legend

### Existing Features

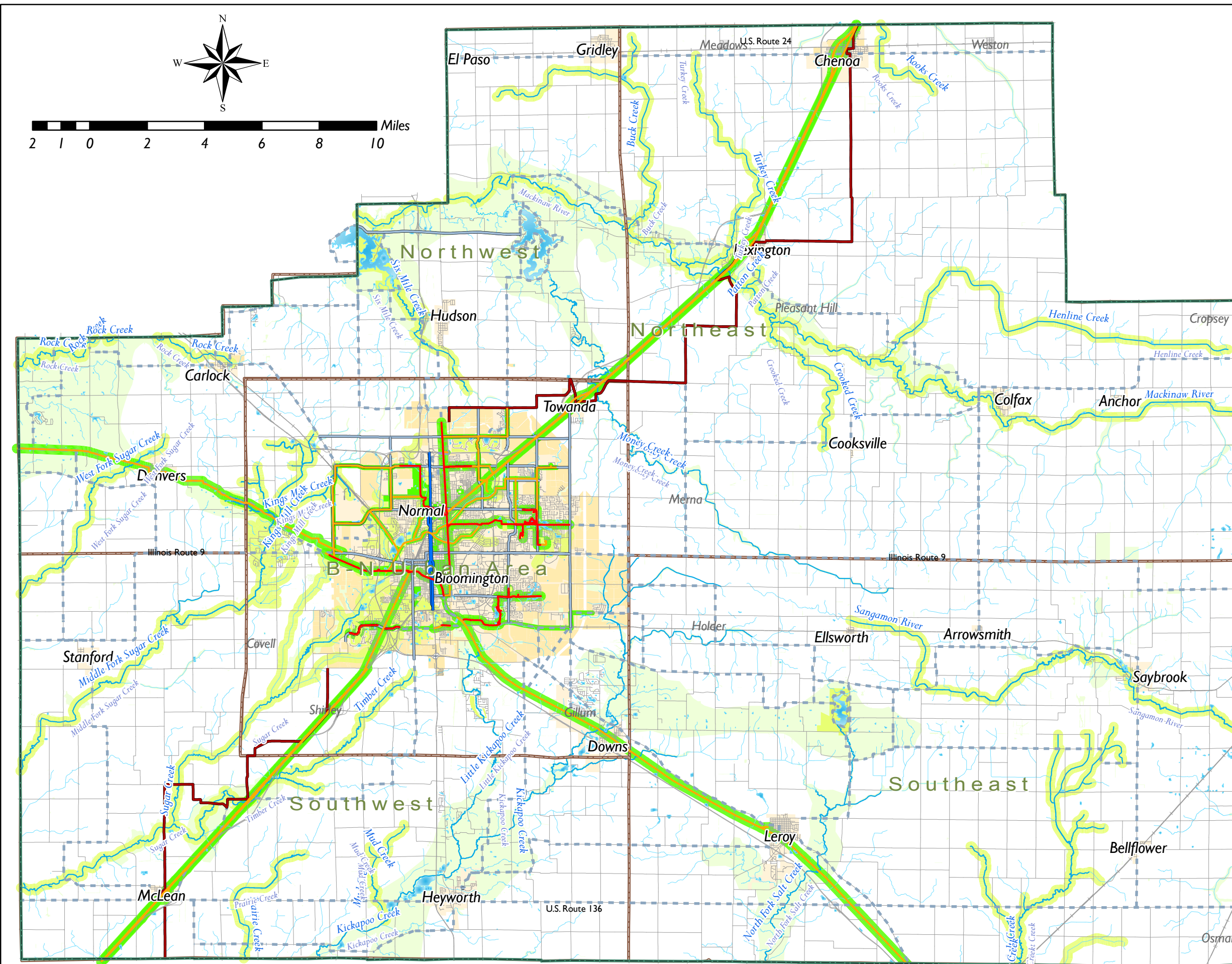
-  Constitution Trail
-  Urban Area Roadways Commonly Used by Bicyclists
-  Other Streets and Roads
-  Railroad
-  Lakes
-  Rivers and Streams
-  Incorporated Area
-  Unincorporated Settlement
-  McLean County Boundary

### Proposed Features

-  Priority 1 Greenways
-  Priority 2 Greenways
-  Priority 3 Greenways
-  Priority Trails
-  Main Street Bikeway
-  Interim Route 66 Bicycle Trail
-  Potential Rural Bicycling Locations
-  Planning Area
-  Urban Growth Area
-  Conservation/Recreation Areas



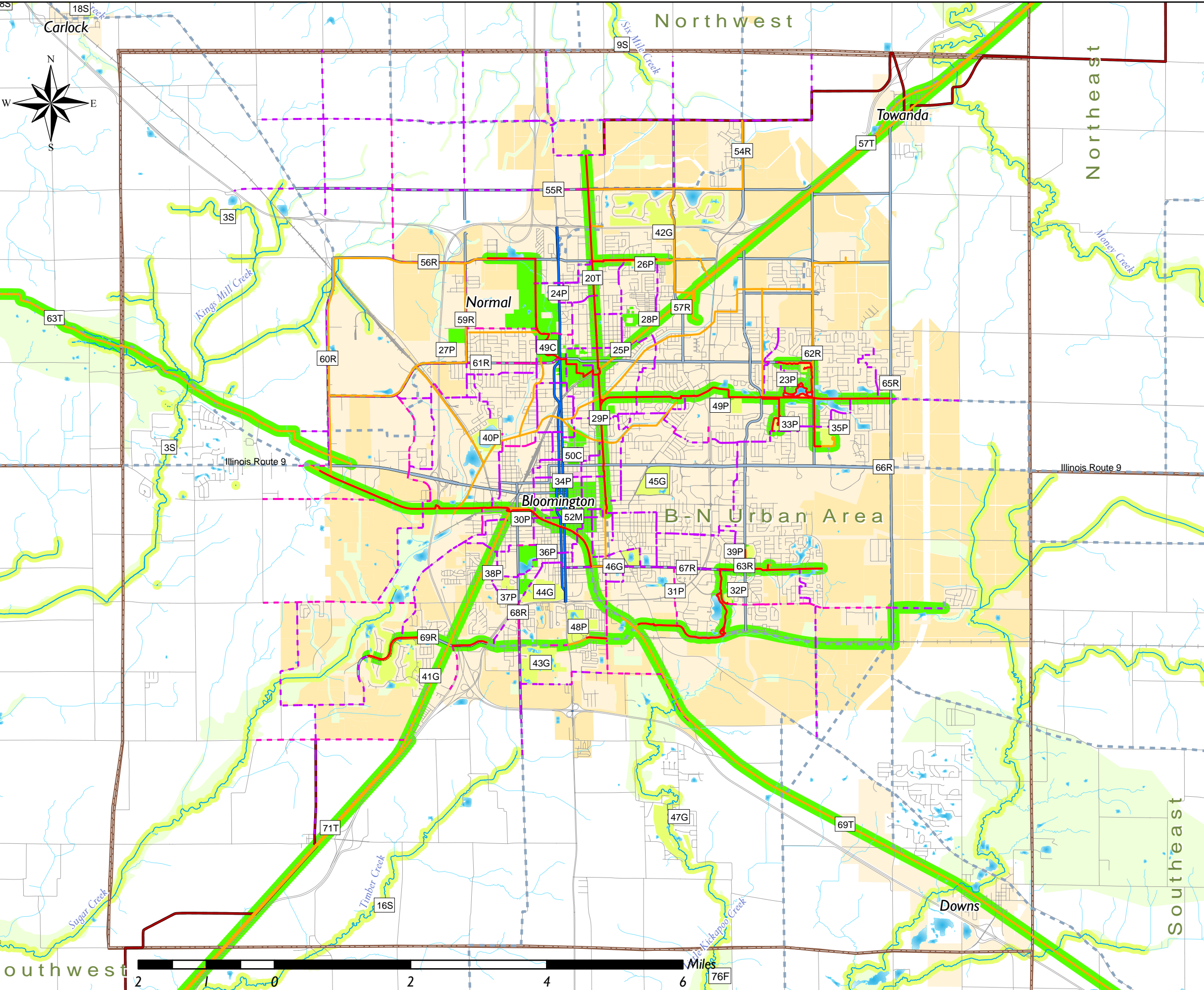
**McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission**



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership, and municipal and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County; Constitution Trail data from Friends of Constitution Trail; 2035 land use plan from municipal comprehensive plans of the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal.



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership, and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County; Constitution Trail data from Friends of Constitution Trail; 2035 land use plan from municipal comprehensive plans of the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal.



## Map 4.2

### Regional Greenways Plan

Bloomington-Normal Metro Planning Area

#### Legend

55R Key to Priority Future Greenways See Table 4.1

##### Existing Features

- Constitution Trail
- Roads Commonly Used by Bicyclists
- Streets More Comfortable for Bicycling
- Streets Less Comfortable for Bicycling
- Other Streets and Roads
- Railroad
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams
- Incorporated Area
- Unincorporated Settlements

##### Proposed Features

- Priority 1 Greenways
- Priority 2 Greenways
- Priority 3 Greenways
- Priority Trails
- Main Street Bikeway
- Route 66 Bicycle Trail Interim Route
- Potential Rural Bicycling Locations
- Planning Area
- Urban Growth Area
- Conservation/Recreation Areas












McLean County Regional Planning Commission

# Map 4.3 Regional Greenways Plan Northeastern Planning Area

## Legend

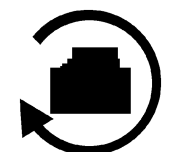
**55R** Key to Priority Future Greenways  
See Table 4.1

### Existing Features

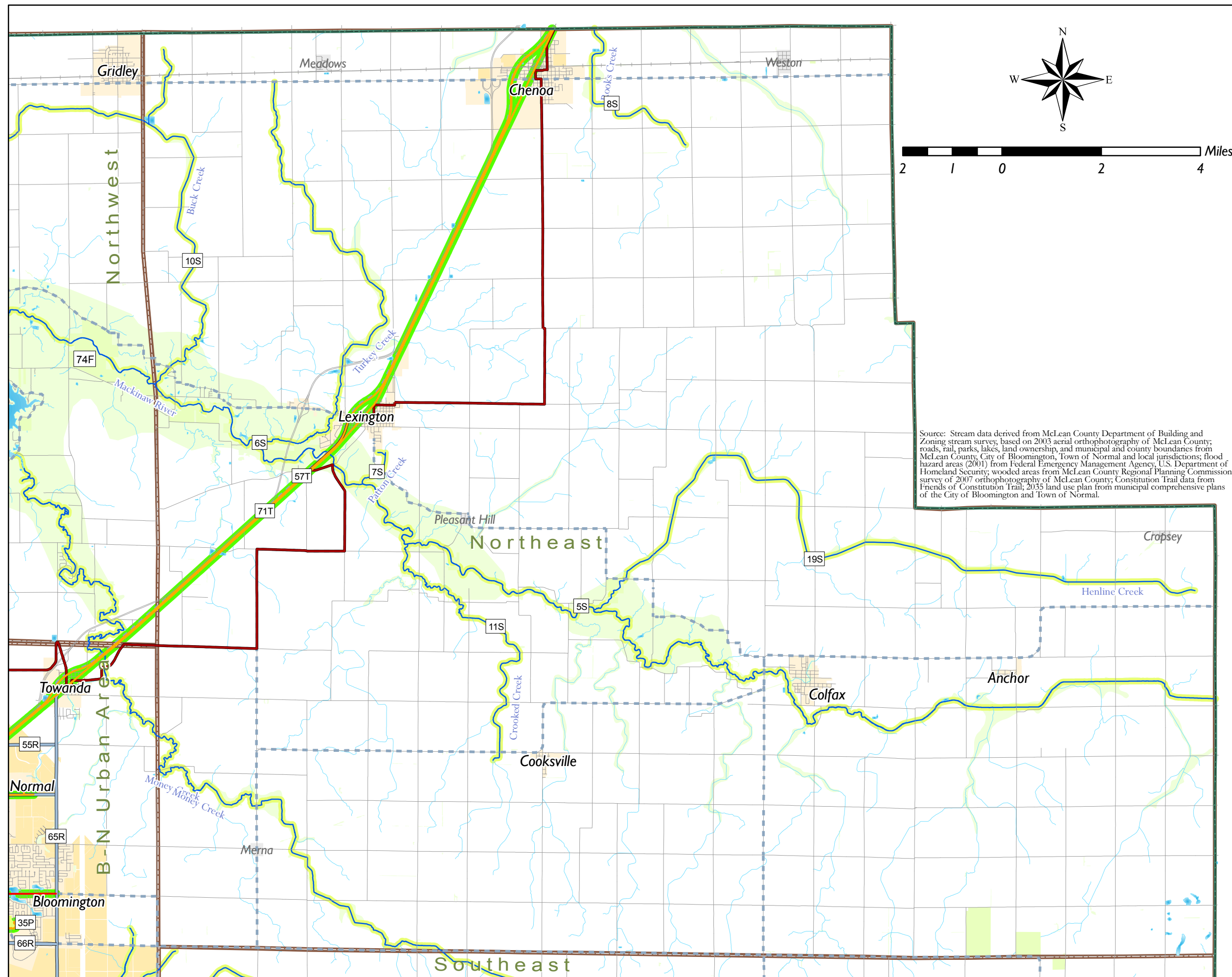
-  Constitution Trail
-  Urban Area Roads Commonly Used by Bicyclists
-  Other Streets and Roads
-  Railroad
-  Lakes
-  Rivers and Streams
-  Incorporated Area
-  Unincorporated Settlement
-  McLean County Boundary

### Proposed Features

-  Priority 1 Greenways
-  Priority 2 Greenways
-  Priority 3 Greenways
-  Priority Trails
-  Route 66 Bicycle Trail Interim Route
-  Potential Rural Bicycling Locations
-  Planning Area
-  Urban Growth Area
-  Conservation/Recreation Areas



McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission





preserve open space and provide important connections between proposed community facilities in an area that is experiencing growth. Southwest Bloomington greenways would serve this quadrant of the urban area from Illinois Route 9 southward and from I-55 westward. It also offers potential connections with The Den at Fox Creek, Constitution Trail, Mitsubishi Motorway, and Historic U.S. Route 66.

A combination of unique implementation opportunities exists for a proposed Southwest Bloomington greenway system. A number of land dedication possibilities exist. Public acquisition of some of the needed land is also a possibility as is the development of greenways and trails in conjunction with proposed major roadway improvements.

### **Public Parks**

McLean County has many public gathering places that are vital to an interactive greenway system that provides various recreational opportunities and can also function as greenway linkages. Both Bloomington and Normal have plans to improve and expand many of these public open spaces. Improvements are planned for several public parks in the Town of Normal while Bloomington has added new community and neighborhood parks in recent years. Both communities are making efforts to include natural features to these areas. A number of these parks and nature areas are considered high priority greenways.

According to local park officials, Bloomington-Normal falls below state and national standards for green and public open space. Future efforts should be made to obtain and preserve green space acreage that keeps pace with future needs and likely increases in population.

### **Semi-Public Open Space**

Semi-public open space includes private golf courses, private parks or use of any green space that requires a fee or membership to gain access to the facilities.

These types of facilities not only provide recreational opportunities but can serve as a buffer to development, supply linkages for other

green space and if properly constructed, can mean additional wildlife habitat. Bloomington-Normal and McLean County are fortunate that several of these locations have become important greenways. State Farm Park and G.E. Park are two local examples of semi-public open space.

### **Local College Campuses**

The campuses of Illinois State and Illinois Wesleyan Universities are important locations in future greenway expansion. Leaders from ISU and the Town of Normal have already collaborated on interactive greenway plans that will incorporate open space and trails to and from campus to adjoining neighborhoods in Normal.

Both ISU and IWU were active partners in helping to formulate the *Main Street Corridor Plan: A Call for Investment*. Both universities have incorporated greenway initiatives into campus long-range plans. Plans are for IWU to serve as an important gateway location for the community that will feature numerous greenway amenities. Heartland Community College is currently linked to the greenways system.

### **Streets and Roads**

Whether located in or outside the metropolitan area, streets and roads play an important role in greenway development. As outlined in Table 4.1, many of these thoroughfares are or will become important greenway linkages. Northtown, Raab, Towanda, Parkside, College, Hershey, and Fox Creek are all designated as potentially important streets to be used as connectors for trails and other greenspace. Several other streets and roads are also considered prime connectors. It is important that action is taken to preserve key rights-of-way for future greenway development and that these connections provide continuity to the present and future greenway system.

## **NORTHEAST AND NORTHWEST MCLEAN COUNTY**

Northern McLean County has many important priority greenways. It contains the four

rural communities of Hudson, Gridley, Lexington and Chenoa. Priority greenways include the Mackinaw River and its tributaries as well as Historic U.S. Route 66.

### **Mackinaw River**

The Mackinaw River is considered one of the finest waterways in Illinois. From its origin near Sibley in Ford County to the east, the Mackinaw traverses northern McLean County on its 130-mile journey westward to the Illinois River near Pekin (see Maps 3.1, 3.2 and 4.3). With its rural character and scenic views, the Mackinaw is renowned for its high quality plant and animal habitats. Significant tree cover and valuable wetlands are other positive features associated with this greenway. While a tremendous benefit to wildlife along its course, the Mackinaw also scenically and aesthetically benefits the communities of Anchor, Colfax, and Lexington which are located along its path. It also has vast potential as a water trail.

The Mackinaw River flows through McLean County for approximately fifteen miles. The river is made up of a series of pools and fast riffles flowing predominantly over sand and gravel substrate. The banks feature a heavy tree canopy, although cropland serves as the predominant land cover (66 percent). Groundwater seeps and springs occur in various locations close to the banks. Mussel and fish populations are plentiful throughout the course of the river. Upland woods, non-forested wetlands, and natural areas acreage is relatively low when compared to watersheds of similar size.

A small portion of the Mackinaw River floodplain passes through Lexington's current corporate boundaries. An additional section of the river's floodplain is included in the city's land use plan. The Mackinaw offers greenway linkages to its many tributaries as well as the Lake Bloomington and COMLARA Park/ Evergreen Lake areas near Hudson.

The ParkLands Foundation has acquired more than 2,000 acres of mostly contiguous land along the river. The purpose of this acquisition is to protect natural areas and aquatic vegetation in and along the Mackinaw River and its surrounding forests. Efforts to preserve the Mackinaw

River began through the creation and implementation of a watershed management plan originally formed by a partnership between the Nature Conservancy and landowners along the river. Watershed studies for both Evergreen Lake and Lake Bloomington also were completed in 2008. Both address pollution and run-off issues and other concerns in the area. The natural state of the Mackinaw River has contributed to maintaining water quality and preventing flooding in the upper river areas. Farm run-off along the river has had a negative effect downstream, resulting in habitat loss and poor water quality due to erosion. In addition, increasing urbanization and development are adding to the stresses of the river. A watershed management plan has been written to protect wildlife habitat and reduce erosion and poor water quality along the lower segments of the river.

The preservation of the Mackinaw River greenway will require cooperative efforts between public and private interests. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) of McLean and Woodford counties have been the primary organizations fostering stewardship and educating landowners about the Mackinaw River Watershed. The Nature Conservancy has limited its preservation efforts to the upper stretches of the Mackinaw. Participation by private landowners in the Mackinaw River Watershed will be essential to preserve this important resource. Private property rights must also be protected; therefore, participation should be voluntary.

The primary implementation strategy expected for use on the Mackinaw River greenway is to encourage the voluntary enrollment of private landowners in the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Other programs include Conservation Reserve Enhancement (CRE), Conservation and Agricultural Enhancement (CAE), and Wetland Reserve Programs. As described in Chapter 5, landowners receive rental payments for land that is enrolled in the program. In addition, there is a 50 percent cost-share available for landowners in which to establish protective cover of grasses, trees and shrubs. Other options include Partners for Conservation grants (C2000) and similar programs. The ParkLands Founda-

# Map 4.4 Regional Greenways Plan

## Southeastern Planning Area

### Legend

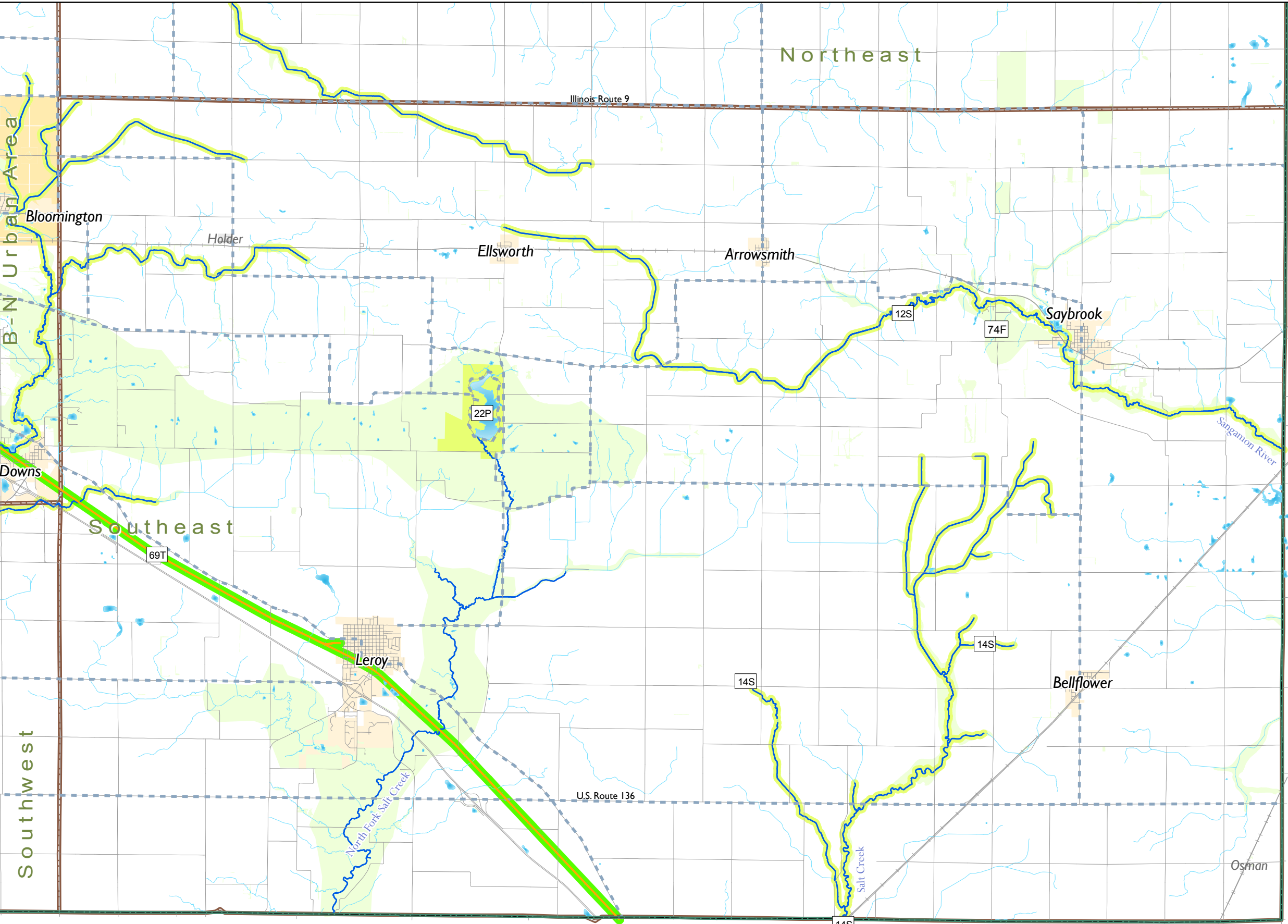
55R Key to Priority Future Greenways  
See Table 4.1

### Existing Features

- Roads Commonly Used by Bicyclists
- Other Streets and Roads
- Railroad
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams
- Incorporated Area
- Unincorporated Settlements
- McLean County Boundary

### Proposed Features

- Priority 1 Greenways
- Priority 2 Greenways
- Priority 3 Greenways
- Priority Trails
- Potential Rural Bicycling Locations
- Planning Area
- Urban Growth Area
- Conservation/Recreation Areas



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership, and municipal and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County; Constitution Trail data from Friends of Constitution Trail; 2035 land use plan from municipal comprehensive plans of the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal.



McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission



tion can be another active participant in the Mackinaw River greenway. The foundation offers conservation easements to interested landowners. Regardless of the avenue that is taken, there needs to be a concerted effort to recruit landowners into the process and provide an incentive for their continued participation if the Mackinaw River greenway is to flourish.

### **Turkey Creek**

Turkey Creek is a scenic waterway that originates northwest of Lexington and flows into the Mackinaw River west of the city (see Map 4.3). Turkey Creek also connects to other Mackinaw River tributaries in the Lexington area. A small portion of the creek's floodplain passes through the city's corporate boundaries. A Turkey Creek greenway would continue to provide valuable wildlife habitat and migration routes to the Mackinaw River. Turkey Creek also assists in maintaining favorable water quality and in preventing flood damage to adjoining land and property through conservation efforts. Bicycle and walking trails may also be a future consideration.

A likely implementation strategy for the Turkey Creek greenway is use of the Conservation Reserve Program and similar programs that encourage individual landowners to use proper conservation techniques (filter strips, etc.). Dedications of land through land trusts could also be an important implementation method. Conservation easements and public acquisition are also possible methods. Funding for the Conservation Reserve Program is through the USDA. Funding for conservation easements could come from IDNR, participating local governments and private donations.

Efforts have been made by private landowners to preserve the creek banks by adding natural plantings and making sure current development does not adversely affect the creek.

### **Patton Creek**

Patton Creek is a proposed greenway that originates southeast of Lexington near Pleasant Hill and flows into the nearby Mackinaw River (see Map 4.3). An important attribute of this greenway is its aesthetic benefits. It would also

complete an existing greenway and connect to the Mackinaw and its other tributaries. Assisting wildlife by providing natural habitats and migration pathways is another important benefit of the creek. Furthermore, conservation efforts along Patton Creek would enhance water quality in the Mackinaw River. Another beneficial quality of the Patton Creek greenway is its potential to protect important scenic vistas of the waterway from development.

The Conservation Reserve Program could be an important implementation strategy. Other methods of implementation include possible public acquisition of land and conservation easements. Possible funding sources for these strategies include the IDNR, the USDA, participating local governments and private donations.

### **Henline Creek**

The proposed Henline Creek greenway is a scenic waterway stretching from northwest of Anchor to the point of intersection with the Mackinaw River, about halfway between Lexington and Colfax (see Maps 3.1, 3.2 and 4.3). A potential benefit of preserving the land along its banks as a greenway is the environmental connections it would provide to the Mackinaw River and its tributaries. It would preserve habitats and migration paths for many species of wildlife. The proposed Henline Creek greenway would also serve to protect scenic vistas from development. As of 2007, the ParkLands Foundation protected 170 acres along this watershed.

The creek is approximately 18 miles in length. It is the only stream or river in McLean County other than the Mackinaw and Sangamon Rivers to be listed by the National Park Service Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI). Waterbodies registered by the NRI can qualify as national wild, scenic or recreational river areas. Henline Creek has outstanding hydrological features and is one of the county's few remaining undeveloped, fully functional high-order streams. Exceptional fish habitat and spawning grounds for rare or ecologically significant fish species can be found in Henline Creek. The creek's habitat supports an unusually wide diversity of fish species.

The creek has always scored high in biotic integrity studies. Further study is needed to

understand the interrelated nature of the biological, physical and chemical properties of this unique creek. Much of the creek was constructed and maintained as a drainage ditch. This calls for the creek to be monitored and mitigated in order to maintain and improve its value as an aquatic resource. Ditches and draining activities tend to degrade aquatic habitat by creating channels lacking physical characteristics necessary for many species. Lack of shade along the course of the creek is also a problem. This leads to higher water temperatures and causes damage to some natural habitats and animal species. In 1999, the Nature Conservancy designated the creek as a priority watershed for protection. Potential projects may include protection and restoration of habitat. Several demonstration projects have already been implemented in the watershed. These include the planting of buffer and prairie grasses along the riparian corridor, treatment of the timber stand and management of natural plant species such as hackberry and oak, and restoration of a floodplain forest.

Voluntary enrollment in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program by landowners repre-

sents a potentially important implementation strategy. Another strategy could involve the use of conservation easements that might be funded through sources including IDNR, donations and participating local governments.

### **Rooks Creek**

The scenic waterway and floodplain known as Rooks Creek is a proposed greenway that extends from southeast of Chenoa to the Livingston county line (see Maps 3.1 and 4.3). The creek empties into the Vermilion River in Livingston County. An important benefit of this proposed greenway is its link to Chenoa and the scenic and recreational benefits it would provide to area residents. It would also serve several environmental functions such as providing wildlife habitats and enhance water quality through preserving natural vegetation along the stream. This could also help prevent flooding to nearby areas. The Conservation Reserve Program appears to be a likely implementation and funding strategy supplemented by other methods.



Henline Creek



# Map 4.5 Regional Greenways Plan

## Southwestern Planning Area









### Legend

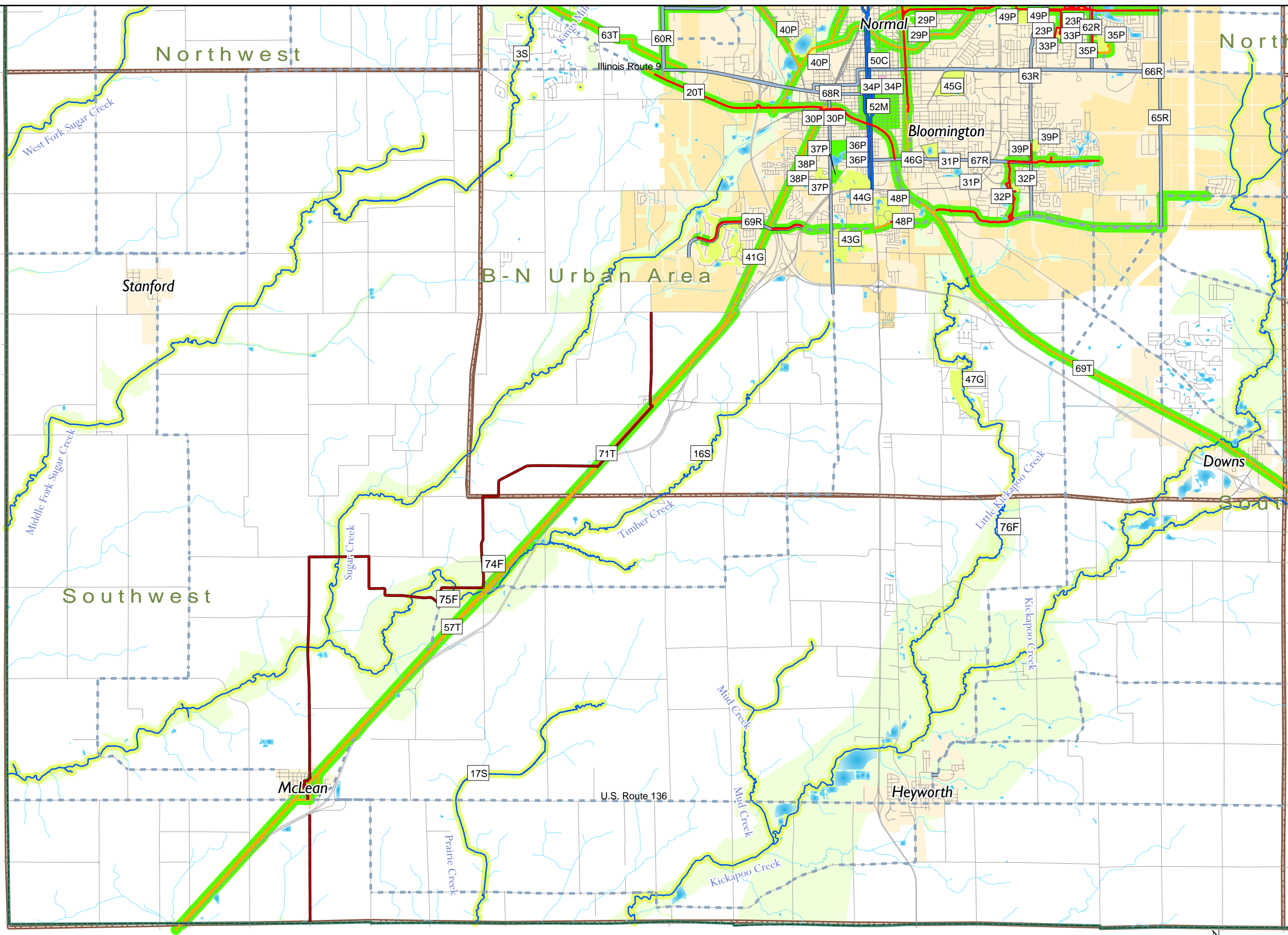
**55R** Key to Priority Future Greenways  
See Table 4.1

#### Existing Features

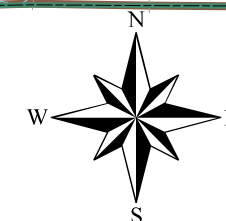
-  Constitution Trail
-  Roads Commonly Used by Bicyclists
-  Other Streets and Roads
-  Railroad
-  Lakes
-  Rivers and Streams
-  Incorporated Area
-  Unincorporated Settlements
-  McLean County Boundary

#### Proposed Features

-  Priority 1 Greenways
-  Priority 2 Greenways
-  Priority 3 Greenways
-  Priority Trails
-  Main Street Bikeway
-  Interim Route 66 Bicycle Trail
-  Potential Rural Bicycling Locations
-  Planning Area
-  Urban Growth Area
-  Conservation/Recreation Areas



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership, and municipal and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County; Constitution Trail data from Friends of Constitution Trail; 2035 land use plan from municipal comprehensive plans of the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal.



McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission

### **Money Creek/Lake Bloomington**

This important waterway begins approximately two miles north of Ellsworth and flows northwest passing just east of Towanda and into Lake Bloomington. From Lake Bloomington, the creek continues northwest for one and one-half miles until it intersects with the Mackinaw River (see Maps 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 4.6). Agricultural land uses are dominant in the Money Creek watershed accounting for 93 percent of the total land area. Only 2.3 percent of the area is considered wetlands while approximately 1.8 percent of the watershed consists of forests and/or surface water. Urban land use accounts for 2.5 percent which includes the village of Towanda and portions of the expanding Bloomington-Normal metropolitan area.

Although tall grass prairie was the prevailing ecosystem of the watershed, none remains. Only a few prairie plantings exist in the watershed as part of nature preserves and CRP lands. One of the primary preservation areas is Moon Tract of ParkLands. However, such plantings are of low diversity and infrequent. The Money Creek watershed suffers from habitat fragmentation and invasion from both non-native and aggressive native species. The National Wetland Inventory lists approximately 75 acres of wetland located near Lake Bloomington where tributaries approach the normal pool elevation of the lake. These wetlands should be earmarked for protection since they are paramount to the health of the Money Creek/Lake Bloomington watershed system.

An important feature of the Money Creek is its linkages to natural resources such as Lake Bloomington and the Mackinaw River. Besides connecting to the Mackinaw River greenway, Money Creek offers benefits to the village of Towanda, the Lake Bloomington community and the many landowners who live and farm near this waterway. These benefits include assisting wildlife along the creek, enhancing the water quality and preventing flood damage to adjoining land. Recommendations in the Evergreen Lake and Lake Bloomington watershed studies should assist in rectifying water quality concerns. A proposed Money Creek greenway would enhance the

water quality of the creek and combat potential problems such as erosion. Improvements to Money Creek will ultimately improve the downstream Mackinaw River and Lake Bloomington water quality. Money Creek and Lake Bloomington offer opportunities for expansion of wetlands and trails that would benefit the Bloomington-Normal urban area and surrounding region.

Preservation of Money Creek and adjoining land as a greenway would likely involve the participation of landowners. Various conservation practices including USDA's Conservation Reserve Program and conservation easements funded through a variety of sources may be options. Dedications of land through donations or land trusts are also possibilities.

Lake Bloomington is a man-made 635-acre lake that serves as a reservoir for the metropolitan Bloomington area. Not only is it the City of Bloomington's source for water, but it has been developed as a regional greenway serving the entire McLean County area. Boating, fishing, swimming, hiking and other passive recreational activities are part of the watershed's appeal. The lake is located approximately 10 miles north of the Bloomington-Normal metropolitan area. There are approximately 18 miles of shoreline and the lake can reach depths of over 35 feet. Just about any species of fish native to the Midwest can be found in the lake including bluegill, channel catfish, bass, crappie and bullhead. Northern pike and walleye were introduced into the lake several years ago and have flourished.

An intergovernmental watershed study on the lake was completed by the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District in 2008. The study explored total maximum daily load (TMDL) issues associated with the lake and its tributaries. The study recommends how to alleviate or greatly reduce phosphorus within the lake and other water quality problems that have resulted from run-off and the introduction of other pollutants into the watershed.

### **Six Mile Creek/Evergreen Lake**

Six Mile Creek is an important waterway that originates approximately one mile north of Normal and flows northwest into Evergreen Lake within COMLARA Park near Hudson. Like Lake

Bloomington, a watershed study was completed on the Evergreen Lake Watershed in 2008 that addresses similar issues of concern. The creek's terminus with Evergreen Lake creates an opportunity for a greenway linkage with the Mackinaw River (see Map 4.6). Primary ownership of this proposed greenway would be among private individuals. Like many other waterways within McLean County, Six Mile Creek provides valuable wildlife habitat and hydrologic functions. Six Mile Creek is an important greenway to preserve due to its linkages to the Mackinaw River and Evergreen Lake. The creek's maximum depth is approximately eight feet. It is home to various species of fish including bluegill, carp, bass, suckers and bullheads.

Evergreen Lake is a man-made reservoir that encompasses 925 acres. The lake has approximately 23 miles of shoreline and a maximum depth of nearly 50 feet. The lake is a regional recreation area. Boating, wind surfing, fishing, swimming, hiking, bicycling, camping and equestrian are popular activities. Game fish and an intensive aquatic vegetation project was introduced at the lake by IDNR in the 1990s and in 2006 respectively. Both initiatives have added to the appeal of the watershed for sportsmen and naturalists.

In 2008, a watershed management plan was adopted for Evergreen Lake. These plans addressed watershed impairments as defined by United States Environmental Protection Agency regulations. The management plans attempt to address the following: how to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering and present in the lakes, improve the monitoring of the watersheds to quantify and qualify impairments and the sources of these debilitating pollutants, and gauge results and future problems.

A significant amount of phosphorus in the watersheds is originating from sediments entering the lake and feeder streams. The watershed study indicates that a primary source of this sediment originates from agricultural practices that have been ongoing for close to 150 years. Adjoining land has become saturated with fertilizer that was applied as phosphorus. Stabilizing the lake beds with plantings, removal of ecosystem-damaging exotic fish, and destratifying the

water column will address much of the phosphorus problem in the lakes.

Other actions being considered in mitigating the erosion problem is stabilizing the lake-shores and banks of feeder streams by natural and mechanical means. Additional considerations include rebuilding floodplain setting areas, constructing more urban retention basins, restoring wetland areas along feeder streams, increasing the width of agricultural stream buffers and the amount of conservation acreage, and using best management practices in the control of wildlife, notably carp and geese.

To assess the impact of urban run-off, both quantity and quality of water entering both lakes needs to be monitored. Additional monitoring stations are currently planned for Evergreen Lake. Costs to implement these programs are anticipated to come from federal grants, state programs and local stormwater fees.

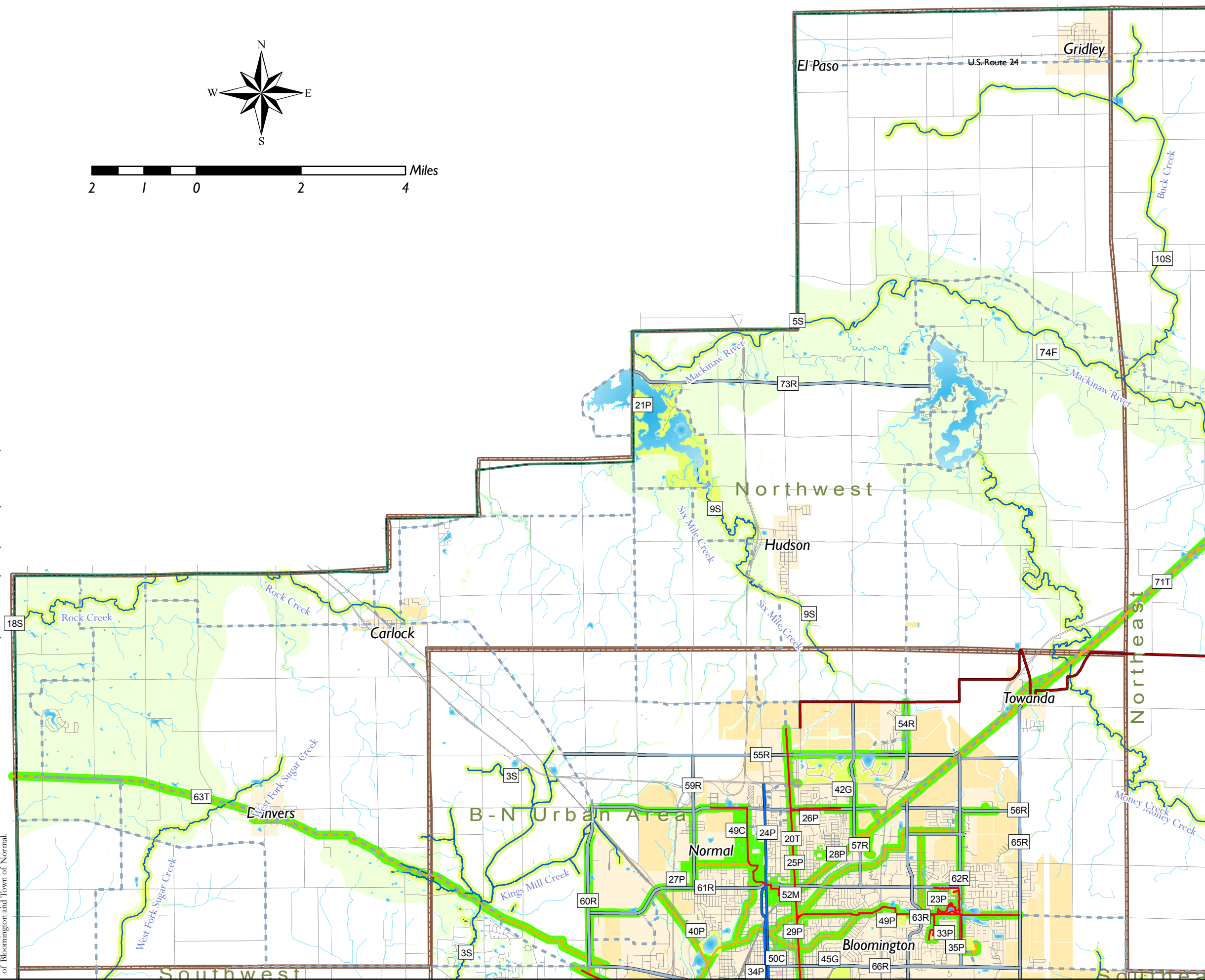
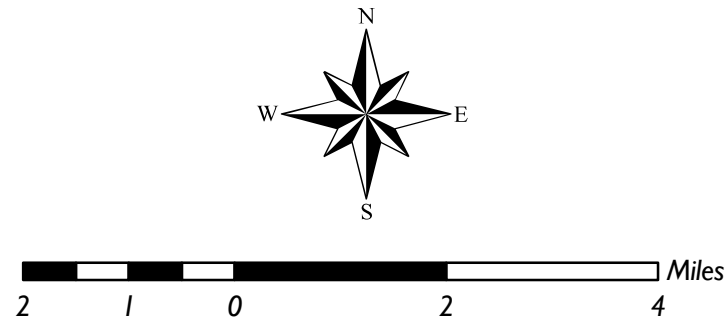
Voluntary actions by landowners through the Conservation Reserve Program, conservation easements or similar methods will be needed for the success of the proposed Six Mile Creek greenway. Efforts to improve the water quality of Six Mile Creek through responsible land practices are needed to produce a positive effect on the water quality of the Mackinaw River and Evergreen Lake.

### **U.S. Route 66 (Northwestern McLean County)**

U.S. Route 66 has a long and popular history as a pioneer roadway stretching from Chicago to Los Angeles. This once heavily traveled highway lost its reputation as a cross-country route once the interstate system was constructed. Today, Route 66 provides two lane traffic from Normal, northeast through the communities of Towanda, Lexington, and Chenoa (see Map 4.3). Adjacent to Route 66 are segments of abandoned two lane paved right-of-way that is in deteriorating condition and is being developed for use as greenways and trails. This section of road will eventually become part of Historic Route 66 Bikeway in McLean County and the state-wide Route 66 Trail that is being promoted by IDNR. An important feature of Route 66 is its connectivity to multiple communities. Another is the



Source: Stream data derived from McLean County Department of Building and Zoning stream survey, based on 2003 aerial orthophotography of McLean County; roads, rail, parks, lakes, land ownership, and municipal and county boundaries from McLean County, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and local jurisdictions; flood hazard areas (2001) from Federal Emergency Management Agency; U.S. Department of Homeland Security; wooded areas from McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey of 2007 orthophotography of McLean County; Constitution Trail data from Friends of Constitution Trail; 2035 land use plan from municipal comprehensive plans of the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal.



# Map 4.6

## Regional Greenways Plan

### Northwestern Planning Area

#### Legend

55R

Key to Priority Future Greenways  
See Table 4.1

##### Existing Features

- Constitution Trail
- Roads Commonly Used by Bicyclists
- Other Streets and Roads
- Railroad
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams
- Incorporated Area
- Unincorporated Settlements
- McLean County Boundary

##### Proposed Features

- Priority 1 Greenways
- Priority 2 Greenways
- Priority 3 Greenways
- Priority Trails
- Main Street Bikeway
- Interim Route 66 Bicycle Trail
- Potential Rural Bicycling Locations
- Planning Area
- Urban Growth Area
- Conservation/Recreation Areas

McLean County Regional  
Planning Commission



abandoned right-of-way and pavement adjacent to the roadway. The wide pavement would make an excellent base for a multipurpose trail. The abandoned right -of-way is separated by vegetation from the existing roadway, thus providing a buffer from traffic and an aesthetic value to the greenway.

Implementation of the Route 66 greenway is occurring through intergovernmental agreements and improvements to the existing roadway when needed. IDOT owns and maintains the right -of-way along Route 66. Funding to develop this greenway might be derived from IDNR, IDOT and from participating local governments. A Route 66 greenway would aesthetically enhance this roadway. This could be accomplished by planting trees and shrubs once the trail is completed. However since the highway is being developed as a trail, it would be important to balance trail and aesthetic development. The trail would provide a recreational facility for communities in northern McLean County and would promote tourism by taking advantage of the history associated with Route 66.

### **Buck Creek**

Originating south of the village of Gridley, Buck Creek flows south into the Mackinaw River near Clarksville (see Maps 3.1 and 4.6). Besides the connection to the Mackinaw, Buck Creek has the potential to provide a greenway linkage to Gridley because of its proximity to that community. Like other waterways in the region, Buck Creek and adjacent land provide a number of environmental benefits such as wildlife habitat, enhanced water quality and flood prevention. These benefits are particularly important due to its outflow into the Mackinaw River west of Lexington. However, a majority of the land along Buck Creek and like waterbodies is privately owned, limiting outside preservation efforts.

Implementation of the proposed Buck Creek greenway could involve participation in the Conservation Reserve Program, conservation easements, transfer of development rights or similar approaches.

### **Crooked Creek**

Crooked Creek is a waterway that originates near the village of Cooksville and extends to the Mackinaw River (see Map 3.2, 4.3 and 4.4). Ownership of the land within this priority greenway is primarily by private individuals. One of the important benefits of this creek and proposed greenway is its natural scenic beauty. Another important feature is its linkage to the Mackinaw River and the path it provides for species migration. Crooked Creek also serves other valuable ecological functions because it possesses plant and animal communities of high quality. Its natural vegetation enhances water quality by filtering pollutants. The natural vegetation also serves to limit flood damage to nearby areas by reducing runoff.

A number of implementation methods may be appropriate for the Crooked Creek greenway. One possibility is the Conservation Reserve Program. Another is the use of conservation easements or the transfer of development rights. Funding for this greenway could also come from a variety of sources including the USDA, private donations, the IDNR and local governments.

## **SOUTHEAST AND SOUTHWEST MCLEAN COUNTY**

This part of McLean County includes the rural communities of Heyworth, LeRoy, Bellflower and Downs. This area contains a number of potential greenways (see Map 4.4). These include the Norfolk & Southern Railroad right-of-way, Blue Ridge Special Creek, Salt Creek, Mud Creek, and Kickapoo Creek.

### **Sangamon River**

The Sangamon River is a greenway in southeastern McLean County of major importance (see Maps 3.1 and 4.4). It is a principal tributary of the Illinois River. The Sangamon River begins as a series of short headstreams near Ellsworth and Saybrook in the southern part of the county rising from a moraine. Part of this moraine contains Moraine View State Park. The river's course forms a significant arc to the county line separating Ford and Champaign

counties. This scenic waterway is lined with timber throughout most of its path in McLean County. It provides numerous benefits to a number of communities in central Illinois, including the village of Saybrook and surrounding areas including being a source of drinking water for the cities of Springfield and Decatur. In addition to the aesthetic quality of the river, it has many environmental benefits. The Sangamon River creates important wildlife habitats while generating potential linkages to the village of Saybrook, and points to the east and south. Watershed protection of the Sangamon River would benefit the animal and plant communities of the river by helping to maintain water quality and preventing erosion and flooding of nearby land. The Sangamon River is one of the region's largest waterways and offers numerous potential for interregional greenway connections. Ownership of the surrounding land is primarily by private individuals.

The USDA Conservation Reserve Program could be an important implementation strategy for the Sangamon River greenway. Conservation easements and transfers of development rights represent other possible strategies for implementation. Possible funding sources in addition to USDA include the IDNR, local governments and private donations. The use of public acquisition is also a possibility in certain instances.

### **Blue Ridge Special Creek**

Originating at the DeWitt and Piatt county line, the Blue Ridge Special Creek extends approximately three miles south of Bellflower and one mile southeast of State Highway 54. While limited in length and lacking connections to the north, a greenway would provide many important functions. It would create new connections to potential greenways in Piatt County and also provides environmental benefits such as the protection of natural habitats. It would also help in the preservation of water quality through natural filter strips. The creek also serves as a buffer for natural areas against development.

Implementation methods would most likely include the use of the Conservation Re-

serve Program, conservation easements, and possibly other techniques such as transfer of development rights. Public acquisition and dedications may also offer some potential. The principal funding source for this greenway is likely to be the USDA, although IDNR, local governments and donations are also possible funding sources.

### **Salt Creek**

Salt Creek is located in southeastern McLean County. This proposed greenway extends from the DeWitt county line northward to the source of Salt Creek, approximately two miles west of Bellflower, crossing U.S. Highway 136 in the process (see Map 4.4). One of the most important aspects of this waterway is its tributaries flow into Clinton Lake, a major recreation facility that was developed as a "cooling lake" for the nuclear power plant built near the waterway. Other linkages include Weldon Springs State Park. This greenway would help preserve the water quality of Clinton Lake, provide wildlife habitat, and reduce flooding.

The acquisition of conservation easements and participation in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program appear to be likely implementation strategies.

### **Mud Creek**

Mud Creek is a tributary of Kickapoo Creek and flows to the northwest portions of Heyworth (see Map 4.5). Although limited in length, this creek is valuable since it offers linkages with not only Kickapoo Creek but other proposed greenways. Mud Creek provides high quality habitats for plant and animal communities. Filter strips that trap pollutants and sediments serve an important ecological function, since Mud Creek connects to the Kickapoo Creek and other waterways. The natural vegetation serves as a water detention corridor to help prevent flooding.

Participation by landowners in conservation programs is a likely implementation strategy. The IDNR, along with local governments, should also be considered as possible sources of funding as well as the use of conservation easements.

The Saybrook Habitat Area is located just north of Saybrook between 3700 East Road and 3900 East Road. It is comprised of five separate tracts of land totaling approximately 646 acres. The IDNR purchased the land with revenue generated by the sale of Illinois Pheasant Stamps and through cooperation with the McLean County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. IDNR is responsible for preservation and restoration of the area and is used for public hunting and grassland habitat restoration.

### **Norfolk & Southern Railroad Right-of-Way - Southern Section**

The Norfolk & Southern Railroad right-of-way is a line that begins in southern Bloomington and extends southeast into DeWitt County, Champaign-Urbana and beyond (see Map 4.4). This high priority greenway would benefit not just the Bloomington-Normal area but also Downs, LeRoy as well as rural residents. The Norfolk & Southern right-of-way could create new trail opportunities and connections to Downs and LeRoy. It also has the potential for creating interregional connections with other areas of Central Illinois, including Champaign-Urbana.

Implementation of this right-of-way as a greenway will require intergovernmental agreements to jointly acquire, develop and manage the greenway. Due to the considerable length of the right-of-way and the multiple jurisdictions affected, a cooperative approach will be necessary. Principal funding sources for this greenway would likely be the IDNR, participating local governments and IDOT. Issues that need to be resolved include availability from Norfolk Southern and the execution of an intergovernmental agreement. Considerable interest has been expressed by local governments for the acquisition of the right-of-way if and when it becomes available.

### **Kickapoo Creek**

In McLean County, Kickapoo Creek extends from its source just northwest of Downs to near the DeWitt county line (see Maps 3.1, 3.2 and 4.5). This proposed greenway is a tributary of Sugar Creek and includes a considerable

amount of timber along its banks. This proposed greenway provides a natural connection to the community of Heyworth. Preservation of this stream and floodplain as a greenway would help buffer natural areas from development. It would also assist the process of groundwater recharge and would provide plant and animal habitat. Friends of the Kickapoo Creek and developers of The Grove Subdivision are expanding an existing wetland to 88 acres near the headwaters of the creek and downstream. Stream preservation is also part of future plans near and around Downs as sanitary sewers and more development is considered just outside the watershed. BNWRD is working with concerned organizations and citizens in creating wetlands and reducing phosphate remediation. A "fauna survey" conducted by the Natural Area Inventory in 2007 indicated the creek is high quality and has surprising amounts of fauna and animal life which include the reappearance of various species of fish, birds and insects that once populated the watershed. Development pressure in and around the watershed exists and is likely to continue. Efforts continue to be made to allow nature and development to coexist in the area.

Implementation strategies for this greenway are similar to those of other rural waterways in the county. Participation of landowners in conservation practices through the USDA Conservation Reserve Program appears to be a likely approach. Once again, conservation easements or the transfer of development rights may also be appropriate in some cases. In addition to the USDA, IDNR may be a possible funding source. Local government and private donations of land are other funding possibilities.

### **Kings Mill Creek**

Kings Mill Creek is a scenic waterway that stretches from Yuton to Middlefork-Sugar Creek past Stanford (see Maps 3.2 and 4.6). An important feature of the creek is its potential link with Sugar Creek as well as other proposed greenways. As a protected greenway, this creek would benefit multiple urban and rural neighborhoods since the creek flows through subdivisions on the western boundary of the metropolitan area. Establishing the Kings Mill Creek water-

shed as a greenway could expand wildlife populations by providing suitable habitat and migration pathways for species. Furthermore, this greenway would serve additional ecological functions such as preserving forests, improving water quality, and protecting residential areas from flood damage. A greenway would protect scenic and natural areas from current development pressure.

The leading implementation strategy appears to be the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, along with a number of other possible strategies including conservation easements or transfer of development rights funded by IDNR, local governments or donations. Land dedications are also a possibility.

### **Timber Creek**

Timber Creek is a scenic waterway beginning in southwest Bloomington and terminating two miles north of McLean. A significant feature of this waterway is the abundance of tree cover, especially as it passes through Funks Grove, the state's largest prairie grove. Timber Creek within Funks Grove is a state-designated Biologically Significant Stream and receives an "A" diversity rating based on the variety of fish, mussels, invertebrate, crayfish, and threatened and endangered species. Timber Creek would complete the existing greenway of Sugar Creek and create new connections to the planned U.S. Route 66 South greenway. The greenway would protect wildlife habitat, improve water quality and reduce flood damage. A Timber Creek greenway would buffer existing wildlife habitat and protect scenic areas from development.

A likely implementation strategy would be the use of the Conservation Reserve Program along with conservation easements and other methods that would most likely be funded by IDNR, local governments and private donations.

### **U.S. Route 66 (Southwestern McLean County)**

The segment of Route 66 that traverses southwestern McLean County offers similar benefits as its counterpart to the north. This greenway should be implemented as a top priority greenway utilizing an existing intergovernmental agreement and conforming to a proposed

state-wide trails plan. This section of Route 66 originates in southwest Bloomington and continues through the communities of Shirley and McLean into Logan County (see Maps 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5). The abandoned pavement will serve as a multipurpose trail providing linkage to the Bloomington-Normal area and points to the northwest. Route 66 is a national historic highway that also passes by the Funks Grove Natural Area. Sugar Grove Nature Center is an environmental education/interpretive center located in the southern end of Funks Grove. Year-round programs and special events are offered as well as access to over five miles of hiking trails on this 1,200 acre natural area. The Nature Center also provides a biking destination and location for other passive recreational activities.

Like the northern segment of Route 66, implementation will occur through intergovernmental agreements and road improvements. IDOT owns and maintains the right-of-way. The greenway could be funded through IDNR, IDOT and participating local governments. A Route 66 greenway would promote tourism and expand recreational opportunities, further enhancing the historic appeal of Route 66. As with its counterpart to the north, the opportunity to establish a greenway along Route 66 should be actively pursued.

### **Prairie Creek**

Prairie Creek flows south of Funks Grove to the DeWitt County line. Although limited in length in McLean County, this proposed greenway has the potential of linking to Kickapoo Creek and other greenways between McLean and Heyworth. Preservation of Prairie Creek as a greenway would protect scenic vistas from development.

### **500 E (McLean to Urban Area)**

This proposed greenway follows County Route 500E from the village of McLean to southwest Bloomington (see Map 4.5). A significant feature is its proximity to Funks Grove and Timber Creek. It would provide linkages with U.S. Route 66, 50N, 300E, and Sugar Creek. An attribute of this greenway is it provides for a pro-

posed trail, though right-of-way space is limited. This greenway would serve multiple communities including McLean and Bloomington. It would also create new connections between the communities of McLean, Funks Grove and Shirley and other proposed greenways, such as the Timber Creek greenway and U.S. Route 66. This particular greenway could assist wildlife near the Funks Grove area by providing a migration path and additional habitat. This greenway may also help in buffering the neighboring Funks Grove area from development.

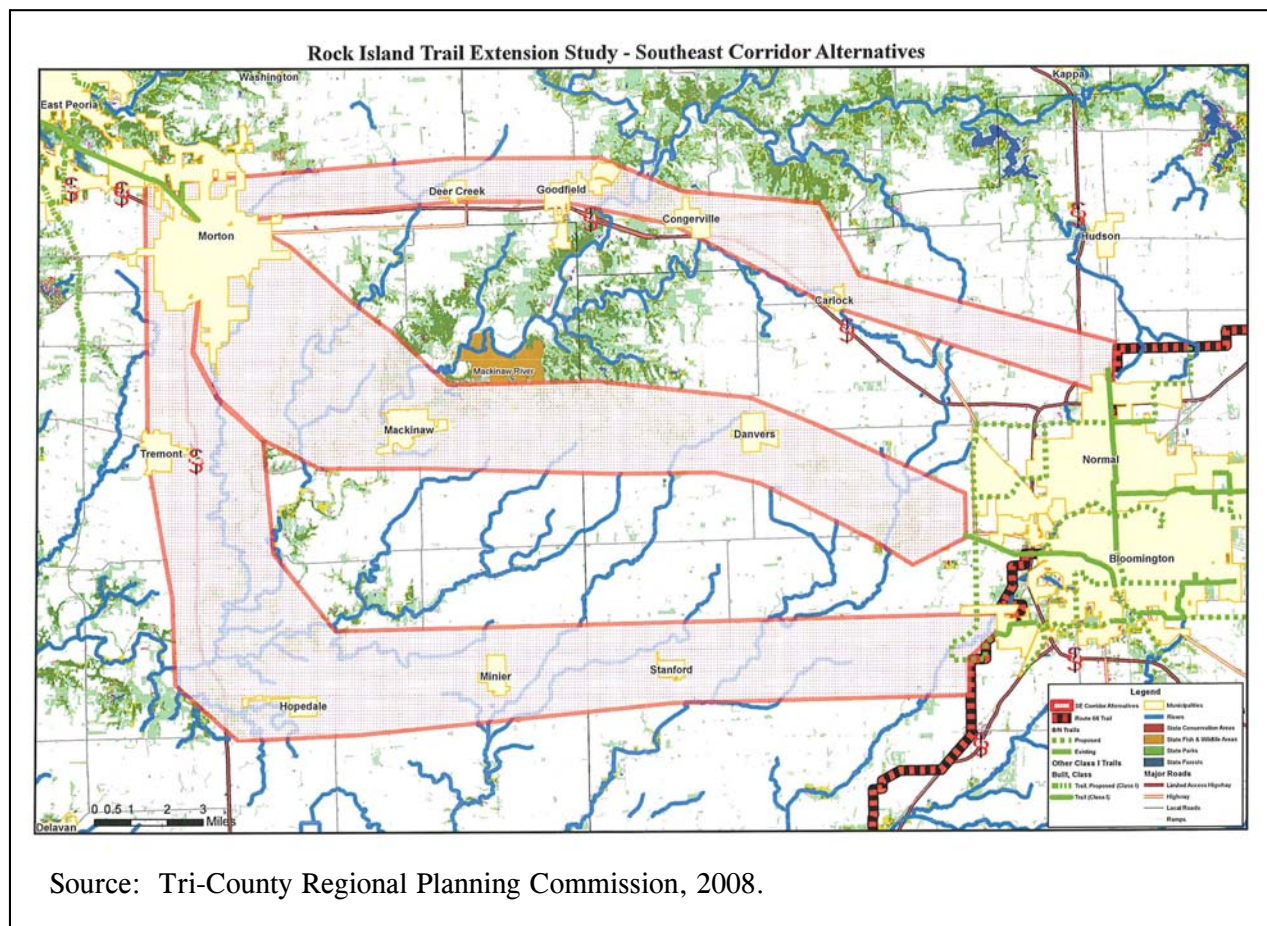
Greenway development would most likely be implemented through roadway improvements using IDOT and IDNR funds.

### Rock Creek

The McLean County portion of the scenic waterway of Rock Creek begins in Carlock and extends westerly to the Woodford and Tazewell County lines near Spin Lake (see Map 4.6).

This proposed greenway would link with the Mackinaw River, the community of Carlock, and other proposed greenways. Rock Creek is bordered by forests and significant riparian areas west of Carlock. The creek has been significantly degraded in some areas by run-off, channelization and lack of sewage treatment. An effort should be made to address the impact of development and other pollutants being dispersed into the watershed. Conservation efforts and watershed protection would provide several valuable benefits, including erosion and flood control and improved water quality. This proposed greenway would also provide wildlife habitat and important migrations paths to the Mackinaw River.

The Conservation Reserve Program appears to be one of the most likely implementation strategies.





## **Regional Connections**

Discussions are ongoing concerning the proposed development of a regional trail connecting Bloomington-Normal with the Greater Peoria Area. Three corridors are under consideration that would connect the two areas using existing streets, highways and county roads. In 2008, it appeared the central corridor option would be the most appealing and direct route. This corridor would take advantage of Illinois Route 9 and connect the communities of Bloomington-Normal, Downs, Mackinaw and Morton with existing trails to the east and west using improved streets, county roads and abandoned railroad rights-of-way when available.

All agencies and communities involved in these discussions have been urged to include bicycle and pedestrian enhancements in any future transportation or regional plans. IDOT is also collaborating with IDNR to encourage additional shoulder work on roads that could be part of this initiative so these arteries can be promoted as part of future trail networks.

# Implementation

## CHAPTER 5

The *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan* creates a vision, examines resources and identifies priority future greenways. The purpose of the plan is to serve as an advisory guide for public and private actions regarding greenway preservation and development within the county. The original planning process began in 1997 with the creation of the McLean County Greenways Coalition, a citizen-based organization headed by a commission-appointed advisory committee. The committee, with staff assistance, developed goals and objectives and evaluated important background information, including existing development patterns, future growth areas, and existing greenway resources in relation to anticipated future needs for greenways. Priority future greenways were then identified along with

possible implementation strategies. The Greenways Advisory Committee continues to work with staff in coordinating greenway planning and development in McLean County, and contributed significantly to this update.

Considerable progress on greenway initiatives has been made since the 1997 plan was completed. These initiatives are described in detail later in this chapter and are summarized in the sidebar on page 67.

This chapter presents a summary of the available methods and the responsibilities for greenway implementation. It also addresses the critical element of continuing coordination. It concludes with an implementation plan outlining the actions needed to establish proposed greenways and to ultimately achieve the vision for greenways in McLean County.



Conservation Subdivision near Lake Bloomington

**Table 5.1**  
**Summary of Acquisition Strategies for Greenways**

METHOD	EXPLANATION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Acquisition Strategies</b>			
Fee Simple Purchase	Outright purchase of full title to land and all rights associated with its use.	New landowner has full control of land. Allows for permanent protection and public access.	Cost of purchase may be outside local ability. Removes land from tax rolls.
Donations & Gifts	A donation by landowner of all or partial interest in the property. Land usually managed by private preservation organization.	Provides permanent protection without public expenditures. Tax benefits to seller.	Receiving agency must be able to accept donation and be capable of managing land.
Purchase & Lease Back	Full title is purchased then leased back to previous owner. Subject to restrictions.	Essentially land banking. Income is derived from lease payments. Owner is not displaced.	Lease may restrict public access. Land must be leased for appropriate uses.
Bargain Sale	Process is part donation and part sale. Property is sold at less than fair market value.	Tax benefits to seller. Difference in sales price is considered charitable gift.	Seller must be agreeable to terms of sale. Bargain price may be inflated.
Option Or First Right of Refusal	Owner agrees to provide first right of purchase to designated agency or individual.	Secures future right of purchase. It provides time frame to negotiate terms with seller.	Does not ensure that owner will sell or sell for a reasonable price.
Eminent Domain & Condemnation	The right of government to take private property for public purpose upon payment of just compensation. Can be exercised for recreational purposes in some states.	Provides tool for acquiring essential or dangerous properties. Usually done if other options are not possible or acceptable.	Costly and can create a negative perception of government and the concept of greenways. Only recommended as a last resort.
Installment Sale	Allows for buyer to pay for property over time.	Can lower taxes for seller if transaction seller-financed. Buyer can negotiate better sale terms.	Long-term financial commitment usually up to thirty years. Mortgage lien usually involved.
Land Exchange	Swapping of developable land for property with high conservation value.	Relatively cost free if trade parcel is donated. Reduces capital gains tax for original owner.	Owners must be willing to swap land that is of comparable value. Can be time consuming.
Exaction	As a condition of obtaining subdivision approval, local government requires developers to pay a fee or dedicate land to a municipal trust for open space.	New construction and development pays for its impact on open space. Good method during high-growth periods.	Acquisition funds depend on the specific development. Difficult to calculate fair costs. Not effective during recessionary periods.
<b>Easements</b>			
Management Agreements	Agreements between agency and landowner for a specific purpose	Avoid purchase and other options, gain desired rights with minimal negotiation.	Only applicable with current landowner and could be revoked at any time.
Land Leases	Short and long-term land rental.	Low cost use of land. Landowner receives income and retains control of property.	Leases do not provide equity and affords limited control. Does not assure protection.
Permits & Licenses	For fee agreements that specify specific uses. Time frames are usually involved.	An equitable arrangement that is specified to uses.	It is time and resource-base limited. Does not provide a long-term method of protection.
Right Of Public Access Easements	Provides the public with the right to access and use a parcel of land for a specific purpose. Land use is usually limited to a defined area.	Avoids need to purchase land from the owner. Provides right of public access and use. Excellent for greenways.	Can be time limited. Usually restricts other uses. Does not prevent owner from exercising other property rights.
Conservation Easements	A partial interest in property usually for purpose of protecting natural resources, Public access not always a component.	Inexpensive method for protection of natural resources. Landowner retains all other property rights and land remains on tax roll.	Public access is usually restricted. Easement must be enforced. Easement may lower resale value.
Preservation Easements	Same as conservation easement. Most useful for historic landscapes.	Defines protection of historic elements of landscape.	Can restrict public access. Must be enforced.
Joint Use Easements	Accommodates multiple uses within one easement type.	Provides opportunity to combine several public interests with one agreement. Easier for landowner to understand one request than multiple requests.	Can be difficult for all landowners to agree to multiple uses along an entire greenway corridor. A rejection by a single landowner can jeopardize the entire request.
Purchase Of Development Rights	Local or state government purchases the rights of more intensive land use from current owner.	Landowner derives financial benefit from selling rights. Lower property value reduces taxes.	Can be a costly endeavor.
Transfer Of Development Rights	Under legally established program, owner can transfer development rights from one property to another designated to support increased density.	Cost of preservation absorbed by property owner who purchases rights. Allows local government to direct density and growth away from sensitive landscapes.	Difficult to implement and can be considered controversial. Often difficult to identify areas where increased density is desirable. Must be established by legislation.
<b>Cluster Development &amp; Zoning</b>			
Cluster Development	Permits high density development in parts of subdivision to protect sensitive lands.	Flexible and negotiable with landowner and developer. Can reduce construction and infrastructure costs.	Open space may not be linked. Processing time for development may be increased.
Performance Zoning	A zone defined by permitted impacts as opposed to permitted uses.	Development occurs based on comprehensive environmental strategy	Criteria can be hard to establish. Development plans more expensive to prepare.

Source: The Conservation Fund, Greenways: A Guide to Planning, Design, and Development, 1993, p. 112.

## AVAILABLE METHODS

A number of methods and strategies are available to aid in the implementation of proposed greenways. These include the use of regulatory ordinances and a variety of acquisition, ownership and financial strategies. Each of these is briefly summarized in the following paragraphs with more detailed information on specific items provided in Tables 5.1 through 5.7.

### Regulatory Ordinances

Regulatory ordinances include such measures as zoning and subdivision regulations and the official map. Such devices may be used by local governments to guide development and also have applicability for greenway preservation and development. Regulatory ordinances provide a legal framework for actions which can lead to the implementation of proposed greenways. These tools are briefly summarized below in reference to the establishment of greenways.

#### *Zoning Ordinance*

Because it controls the use of land, the zoning ordinance is probably the single most effective means of implementing a land use plan. Therefore, it can be an important tool for executing the Regional Greenways Plan. The City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and McLean County each have a zoning ordinance. Care should be taken to ensure that zoning ordinances include adequate provisions to preserve open space and wildlife habitat consistent with the Regional Greenways Plan.

#### *Subdivision Regulations*

Subdivision regulations represent another effective tool for implementing greenway recommendations. By setting standards for the design of streets, sidewalks, utilities and community facilities, subdivision regulations can greatly affect the overall patterns and quality of development. These regulations may also require dedications of land or fee in lieu of land for parks, open space or trails in new developments.

Subdivision regulations may require dedications for stormwater detention basins designed to serve dual usage as recreational facilities.

The subdivision ordinances of Bloomington, Normal and McLean County have

### Summary of Progress on Greenway Initiatives Since 1997

#### McLean County Regional Greenways Plan

- Phase I engineering studies for the Historic Route 66 Bikeway from Bloomington to McLean
- Completion and adoption of local erosion control ordinances
- Completion and adoption of the Town of Normal stream buffer ordinance
- Completion of watershed studies for Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake
- Continued expansion of local and regional trail systems
- Completion of the Lexington jurisdictional transfer of right-of-way for trail expansion
- Publication of brochures, newsletters, displays, and plans promoting the expansion of greenways and trails and associated activities
- Coordination of public meetings to promote trail and greenway expansion
- Promotion of green building techniques in new development projects
- Coordination with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Department of Transportation on trail initiatives in McLean County

been updated jointly by local and regional planning and engineering staffs to ensure adequacy in their provisions as well as mutual consistency. The ordinances specifically identify trails and greenways for consideration in the design of future subdivisions.

### Official Map

The official map provides a municipality the means to reserve land designated for public purposes for a one-year period from the time

such land is subdivided. The map pinpoints the location of future public facilities and serves notice the municipality intends to acquire the designated land.

**Table 5.2**  
**Suggested Comparative Ownership Strategies**

METHOD	EXPLANATION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>PRIVATE OWNERSHIP</b>			
Individual Landowners	Adjacent landowners retain full title to land and provide for greenway through easements.	Property owners retain title to land. Large funds for land purchase not needed. Land remains on the tax rolls.	Easements can restrict certain types of greenways activities depending on the landowner.
Land Trusts & Non-Profit Organizations	A national or regional non-profit organization can acquire and hold land until a local land trust has been established or is able to finance acquisition.	A non-profit organization can finance an immediate acquisition and hold property until a land trust has been established or has acquired funds.	If a land trust does not exist, a community must establish one. A land trust needs solid support, funding and the ability to manage land.
Corporate Landowners	Corporation provides for greenway as part of the development process.	Greenway is provided at no expense to local taxpayer. Managed by corporation.	Corporation may restrict use of greenway to the public or may choose to deny access.
<b>PUBLIC OWNERSHIP</b>			
Local Governments	Acquisition by county or municipality.	Local government can be more flexible about the type of open space it requires.	Limited local funds and expertise limit the number of acquisitions.
State Governments	Acquisition by state agencies such as Department of Environmental Protection; Office of Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation; Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources.	Statewide bond acts can provide significant funding resources for important open space acquisitions throughout a state. Provides revolving loan funds to leverage non-profit activity.	Government may miss acquisition opportunities due to long time frame for acquisition approval.
Federal Governments	Acquisition by National Park Service, Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service or Bureau of Land Management.	Acquisition is at federal level thus eliminating financial obligation for locality.	Acquisitions are limited due to agencies' specific criteria for acquisition. Acquisitions need Congressional authorization.
<b>MIXED OWNERSHIP</b>			
Public/Private Ownership	A private nonprofit organization can help to implement government programs by acquiring and holding land until a public agency is able to purchase.	A nonprofit organization can enter the real estate market easier than government and can sell to government at less than fair market value if property was acquired through bargain sale.	Must have public agency willing and able to buy within reasonable time frame.
Public/Public Ownership	Multi-jurisdictional partnership between local, state, and federal agencies. Inter-agency projects.	Combining strengths of agencies enables greenway development to occur.	Development and management structure can be cumbersome. Partnership may not be equal.
Private/Private Ownership	Government works with private sector to implement greenway.	Private sector can realize tax benefits from participation. Cost share good for public.	Cost equity and management could be cumbersome.

SOURCE: The Conservation Fund, Greenways: A Guide to Planning, Design, and Development, 1993.



### *Stream Buffer Ordinance*

In 2008, the Town of Normal adopted an aquatic ecosystem management ordinance to protect streams and waterways within the town limits. Commonly referred to as a stream buffer ordinance, the purpose of the ordinance is to establish vegetated buffers adjacent to stream systems, provide environmental protection and establish resource management benefits for waterways. The City of Bloomington and McLean County are considering adoption of a similar ordinance.

The management plan and ordinance will provide the following benefits among others: restore and maintain integrity of water resources, assist in removing pollutants delivered by urban storm water, reduce erosion and sediment entering streams, stabilize stream banks, infiltrate storm water run-off, maintain base flow of streams and organic matter that is a source of

food and energy for the ecosystem, provide a tree canopy to shade streams, establish and preserve riparian wildlife habitat, protect and secure scenic vistas, and preserve and/or establish areas for recreational opportunity. The ordinance also promotes and sets guidelines for the concept that future development will occur outside and away from flood prone areas, wetlands and designated floodplains.

It is likely that similar initiatives may be adopted in other urban areas within McLean County.

### **Acquisition Strategies**

The acquisition process is sometimes the most difficult aspect of implementing a greenways plan. A variety of acquisition options are available for consideration. A number of other less common but innovative options are also available and may be effective in certain

**Table 5.3  
Public Sector Funding Sources**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Direct Loan Agency Fund	Public agencies provide funding and sponsor the greenway. Usually, agencies are parks & recreation departments or public works /engineering departments.	Substantial funding can usually be contributed for greenways and such agencies can commit future funding & support.	Selling the project to elected officials, general public, etc. Also stiff competition for funds among agencies.
State & Federal Grant Programs	Federal and state governments offer grant programs to government agencies and non-profit organizations for greenway acquisition and development.	Wide variety of grant programs available. Can tailor to a specific need or purpose. Various legislative initiatives available increase opportunities to acquire discretionary funding.	Competition for funds, regulation and red tape.
Public Agency/Joint Venture	Public agencies enter into a partnership to fund a greenway project.	Agencies can receive benefits from joint ventures. An example is a trail within a water reclamation district sewer line right-of-way.	Some highway, flood control sewer projects and utility corridors may not be compatible with a greenway.
Joint Development Techniques	The use of funds for private real estate development in conjunction with new public facilities.	New sources of tax revenue and other benefits are created through public/private cooperative agreements.	Development and management may be cumbersome.
Public Finance	Financing through special taxes, taxing districts, bonds or tax increment financing.	Can be excellent method of raising considerable revenue for greenway projects.	Additional taxes and special taxing districts can be unpopular methods of raising revenue.

SOURCE: The Conservation Fund

situations. Potential acquisition strategies have been identified by the Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit land and water conservation organization that protects land through partnerships. Identified strategies are summarized in Table 5.1. This table can serve as a reference guide when considering the acquisition of land for greenways.

### Ownership Strategies

Along with determining how to acquire a particular greenway, another important issue must be addressed: who will own it? There are three avenues of ownership—private, public or mixed ownership. Local government would be the most likely owner if the greenway is to be used for a recreational purpose or as a mode of transportation. If the greenway serves an environmental purpose such as wetlands protection, wildlife habitat protection, or stream preservation, a private entity such as a land trust may be the most appropriate owner of the greenway. There may be instances where

multiple or joint ownership of a greenway occurs. This is a likely scenario for regional greenway systems or where implementation and management costs are a burden for one entity. A number of potential ownership strategies have been identified by the Conservation Fund on Table 5.2 as a guide for ownership considerations.

### Financial Strategies

Acquisition, implementation and management of greenways will fail if financial resources are not available or a strategy has not been developed to pay for the greenway. A plan must be developed to ascertain the project cost and fundings. There are two fundamental types of greenway funding sources—the public sector and the private sector. Public sector funding sources have been identified and summarized by the Conservation Fund, IDNR and IDOT in Tables 5.3 through 5.5. Private sector funding sources have been identified and summarized by the Conservation Fund in Table 5.3. These tables

**Table 5.4**  
**Local Government Public Financing Techniques**

Source	Explanation
Special Tax	A special tax can include: special sales tax, sales tax on specific goods, hotel/motel tax, or special tax on real estate transactions.
Improvement Districts	Method of raising revenue for a greenway by establishing a special taxing district. The assessment is usually a property tax that is levied within the district. Revenues are used for funding improvements in a specific geographic area.
Special Assessment Districts	Used for projects such as street improvements, outdoor plazas, landscaping and park improvements.
Selling Bonds	Common finance approach; public sector borrows money. Most communities have limits on the amount of debt that can be incurred.
General Obligation Bonds	These bonds are repaid with general revenue income that a community receives through tax revenues. It can be a controversial process.
Revenue Bonds	Revenues that are generated by financed projects pay for these bonds. These are best used when financing greenway amenities such as fee-for-use facilities.
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	A TIF pays off a bond from the increased revenue generated on property adjacent to a public improvement such as a greenway.

Source: The Conservation Fund

Table 5.5  
Federal And State Funding Sources For Transportation Enhancement Activities

CATEGORIES	FUNDING PROGRAMS								
	Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)	Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)	Surface Transportation Program (STP)	Scenic Byways	Operation Green Light (OGL)	Federal Transit Act (FTA)	National Recreation Trails Fund (SYMMS)	Land & Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON)	Illinois Bicycle Path Grant
Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles	80 % federal money; 20 % local money	80 % federal money; 20 % local money	80 % federal money; 20 % local money	80 % federal money; 20 % local money	match varies	Up to 80 % federal money; 20 % local money	100 % federal money	50 % federal money; 50 % local money	Up to 80 % federal money; 20 % local money
Acquisition of scenic easements and historical sites	80 % federal money; 20 % local money								
Scenic or historic highway programs	80 % federal money; 20 % local money			80 % federal money; 20 % local money	match varies				
Landscaping and other scenic beautification	80 % federal money; 20 % local money								
Historic preservation (as portion of transportation projects)	80 % federal money; 20 % local money			80 % federal money; 20 % local money	match varies				
Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals)	80 % federal money; 20 % local money								
Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bike trails)	80 % federal money; 20 % local money	80 % federal money; 20 % local money	80 % federal money; 20 % local money				Up to 80 % federal money; 20 % local money (match varies)	50 % federal money; 50 % local money	50 % state money; 50 % local money
Control & removal of outdoor advertising	80 % federal money; 20 % local money			80 % federal money; 20 % local money	match varies				
Archaeological planning and research	80 % federal money; 20 % local money								
Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff	80 % federal money; 20 % local money								
Note : ITEP excludes land acquisition FTA-bicycle and pedestrian facilities related to transit projects only LAWCON- Includes land acquisition. State OSRAD program follows LAWCON guidelines. CLGP-restricted to Historic Register Properties only Archaeological planning and research and mitigation of water pollution eligible within ISTEA but not priority under ITEP									

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Transportation, 1997

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Transportation, 1997

**Table 5.6**  
**Private Sector Funding Sources**

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>	<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
Foundation Grants	Foundations, usually private or corporate, provide grant money for greenway related projects.	Variety of foundations creates a wealth of possible funding opportunities including local community foundations.	Foundation grants may have strict guidelines regarding use of funds and project scope.
Company Grants	Corporations provide grants of funds and resources for greenway related projects. Corporations provide financial support and often volunteer employee time as well.	Corporations seek out community service projects such as greenways.	Corporate giving for these types of projects are often committed quickly and there may be competition for funds.
Individual Donors & Memberships	Funding derived from individual fundraising campaigns or through membership drives through nonprofit organizations which solicit members as a way to raise money and support for projects.	Donated land can be swapped. Excellent method for raising funds and building support for a greenways organization and its projects.	Membership or nonprofit organizations may require significant time and effort investments in order to succeed. Partial improvement funds may be costly.
Planned Giving, Life-Income Gifts, and Bequests	This is a strategy to create a plan to address the donation of gifts while the donor is alive after he or she dies. These types of gifts involve a donor granting a greenway nonprofit organization or land trust ownership in a stock. The grantor receives earnings from the stock while he or she is alive. After death, the principal and earnings of the stock go to the nonprofit organization or land trust. A donor may bequest money in a will.	These techniques can be useful in protecting private land that has important greenway features. This strategy can offer tax and investment advantages to the donor and also the recipient. The process is complex but offers attractive opportunities.	Can be complex issues. These gifts usually require financial and legal expertise.
Service Clubs	Organizations that perform community service activities or sponsor projects such as greenways. Examples of service clubs include the Lions Club, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, etc.	Service clubs can sponsor fundraising activities and provide volunteers and publicity.	Getting commitment from a service club to assist in a greenways project can be difficult. Continuity of leadership and ongoing management can also be an issue.
Special Events & Fundraisers	These events are designed to raise funds through activities such as benefit dinners, races, tours and related activities.	Special events and fundraising can be successful in raising money and creating publicity for greenways.	These activities can require significant time and resources and may not provide a significant return.

Source: The Conservation Fund

provide a reference source for review when considering funding possibilities for specific greenways.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Achieving the goals and objectives for greenways in McLean County will require a coordinated effort on the part of government agencies, private organizations and individuals.

**Table 5.7**  
**Natural Resource Management Incentives**

PROGRAM	CONTACT	LANDOWNERS ELIGIBILITY	TERM	PURPOSE						
				MINIMUM ACREAGE	Natural Area, Habitat Preservation	Open Space & Recreation	Wetland & Water Restoration	Soil Conservation	Farmland Preservation	Forestry
Cost Share Programs										
Ag Conservation	ASCS	independent/corp.	10 years	one acre				X		X
Ag Loans	State Treasurer	independent/corp.						X		
Conservation Reserve	ASCS	ind., corp., & public	10-30 years	one acre				X		X
Forest Stewardship	IDNR		10 years	5 acres			X	X		X
Forestry Incentive	ASCS	ind.	10 years	10 acres						X
Ill. Forestry Dev. Act	IDNR	ind., ltd., pub.	10 years	5 acres			X	X		X
Partners for Wildlife	USFWS/IDNR	ind.	10 years	one acre			X			
Stewardship Initiatives	IDNR	ind.,corp.	10 years	5 acres	X		X			X
Trees, Shrubs & Seedlings	IDNR							X		X
Wetland Reserve	ASCS		permanent	2 acres			X			X
Technical Assistance Programs										
Conservation Stewardship	IDNR	public/private	10 years	5 acres			X			X
Research, Conservation & Development	IDOA	ind., pub.	open	N/A	X		X		X	X
Emergency Conservation	ASCS							X		
Forest Management Assist. Program	IDNR	ind., pub., corp.			X		X			X
National Heritage Landmark	IDNR	ind.			X					
Private Land Habitat	IDNR	ind.		one acre	X					
Private Waters	IDNR				X		X			
Register of Land & Water Reserves	IDNR				X					
Tax Incentives										
Assessment with Easements	SA, CA				X					
Conservation Easements	IDNR				X					
Exemption of Prairie Path Leases	Co. Board of Review				X	X				
Exemption of Lease to Park District	Co. Board of Review					X				
Forestry Mgt. Plan	IDNR		10 years	5 acres			X		X	X
Illinois Nature Preserves	IDNR	ind., pub.	permanent		X					
Open Space Assessment	SA, CA			10 acres	X	X	X			
Preferential Assessment of Farmland	SA, CA					X			X	
Subdivision of Common Areas	TA, SA, CA	ind.				X				
Tax Bills Optional for Less than \$150	County Clerk									
Tax Certified for Livestock Waste Mgt.	IEPA						X			
Abbreviations Defined:										
ASCS	Agricultural Stabilizations & Conservation Service				ind.	individual				
IDNR	Illinois Department of Natural Resources				corp.	corporation				
USFWS	United States Fish & Wildlife Service				pub.	public entity				
SA, CA	Supervisor of Assessments, County Assessor				ltd.	limited				
TA	Township Assessor									
IEPA	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency									

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Natural Resources



This may also include public-private partnerships. Responsibility for implementation of proposed greenways lies with government (federal, state and local), private developers, private landowners, engaged citizens, special interest groups, McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee, and the McLean County Regional Planning Commission. The Greenways Advisory Committee has laid the groundwork for the establishment of public-private partnerships.

### **Government**

All levels of government can and should be involved in the implementation of a regional greenways plan. To achieve an extensive greenway system usually requires a balanced approach with participation from federal, state and local governments.

#### *Federal Government*

The policies of the federal government have a major influence on the development of greenways throughout the nation. The federal government provides funding programs to assist local governments in developing greenway systems and to individual landowners to encourage conservation practices. These funding programs may come directly from federal agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture or may be distributed through state agencies such as the IDNR. Various legislative initiatives enhance opportunities for securing discretionary funding for projects.

#### *State Government*

State government has the responsibility of interpreting federal policy and applying it to state agencies and local government. State government must address the need for greenways and offer resources to local governments to encourage the development of greenway plans and projects on a local or regional level. A portion of funding opportunities for greenway projects in McLean County come from grant programs through IDNR or IDOT. The state has the responsibility for providing technical assistance to local government in the

development of greenway systems as was provided by IDNR in the development of this plan. As with federal funding, the state also has legislative initiative programs that utilize discretionary funding.

#### *Local Government*

Local government has a major responsibility in implementing the Regional Greenways Plan. The City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and County of McLean have taken an important first step with their support of the greenways planning program. Local governments adopted the McLean County Regional Greenways plan as official policy for greenway development within their respective jurisdictions. The plan is considered in the evaluation of future development projects to ensure that adequate provisions are made for greenways. Local governments must continue to support the greenways plan in diverse and creative ways. In addition to prioritizing the purchase of key greenways as part of the budgeting process, local governments can enhance their working relationship with existing land trusts and other like-minded organizations such as the ParkLands Foundation, Friends of Kickapoo Creek, Sugar Grove Nature Center, The Mackinaw Partnership, and the Ecology Action Center. The local governments could provide these groups with administrative or legal assistance in ways that support the goals of the greenways plan. For example, local governments could assist these groups in obtaining and maintaining conservation easements that link with future or existing greenways. It is also important for local governments to partner when appropriate with organizations such as the League of Illinois Bicyclists, the Mackinaw River Partnership, Ecology Action Center, and others that support alternative transportation options, land preservation, and ecological friendly living environments. Local governments must explore ways to establish a dependable funding source for greenways, even if some greenways are located outside of urban corporate limits.

### **Private Developers**

With rare exception, private developers should be required to adhere to the Regional Greenways Plan when their proposed development falls within a proposed greenway. Beyond acknowledging the need for greenways, private developers should take advantage of the benefits that greenways bring to a development including enhanced aesthetics and unique neighborhood branding opportunities. Dedication requirements from developers may also be used to support greenways.

### **Private Landowners**

Private landowners can play a crucial role in carrying out the greenways plan and achieving the vision for greenways in McLean County. Voluntary efforts on the part of individual landowners can help preserve valuable natural land and waterways. These voluntary efforts may take advantage of many different state and federal programs that provide financial incentives to the landowner for conservation practices (see Table 5.7). Because a great number of potential greenways are located on private property, efforts have been and should continue to be made to involve private landowners in the greenway planning and implementation process. These efforts should include educating landowners about conservation, watershed practices and programs to encourage their participation.

### **Engaged Citizens**

The successful implementation of the *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan* must begin at the local level with the participation and support of engaged citizens. Local people with a clear vision and enthusiasm will be the driving force to execute the plan. The enthusiasm, vision and hard work of interested citizens have been demonstrated in the preparation of this document through the efforts of the McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee. The support of citizens will continue to be required into the future as the plan progresses through the implementation stage. Interested citizens who

participate in the planning process can help to increase the likelihood of the plan's success.

### **Special Interest Groups**

Special interest groups also play an important role in the implementation of the Regional Greenways Plan. These groups are usually well organized and can offer valuable assistance with greenway related projects. The groups can become greenway activists and may provide funds or labor for a greenway project. Some special interest groups, particularly nonprofit organizations, may also acquire and manage greenways as mentioned in Chapters 3 and 5.

### **McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee**

The McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee has served as an umbrella organization for a variety of other groups as well as individuals with greenway interests. This broad-based organization has had an important role working in cooperation with the McLean County Regional Planning Commission in preparing and updating the Regional Greenways Plan. The advisory committee also assists in carrying out the plan through advocacy, education, and the establishment of a permanent organization to coordinate the implementation and management of greenways for McLean County.

### **McLean County Regional Planning Commission**

The Regional Planning Commission has a major responsibility in implementing the plan. The commission has been responsible for coordinating the preparation of the Regional Greenways Plan, including the formation of the advisory committee. The commission is also responsible for long-range planning throughout the county. The commission also reviews major development projects to ensure consistency with adopted plans and coordinates the review and updates of the local subdivision ordinances. The agency should provide continuing staff support within budgetary constraints to help coordinate implementation efforts.

## CONTINUING COORDINATION

To make the successful transition from plan formulation to implementation requires continuing coordination of plans, programs and activities. While the plan provides a general framework for greenway development, the implementation phase requires priority future greenways be targeted and necessary actions be taken toward development. This will require thorough analysis and consensus building in the selection of strategies for acquisition, ownership and financing the selection of targeted greenways. It will require dedication and perseverance to see projects through to successful completion. It will also require one or more organizations with the capabilities, willingness and legal authority to accept public and private funds, acquire property and maintain greenways.

Although many organizations, including local governments, have the capabilities to meet many of the requirements, none have within their respective missions the countywide coordination, development and management of greenways. Nor have any private organizations with the required capabilities expressed interest in expanding their roles in this manner. Therefore, the coordination provided by the McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee in concert with the Regional Planning Commission is of paramount importance in carrying out the Regional Greenways Plan.

## PROGRESS ON INITIATIVES

Following is a list of completed or in-progress tasks undertaken by MCRPC staff, Advisory Committee members and other associated greenway partners that have contributed to implementation efforts of the *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan*.

- Phase I Engineering Studies completed for the Historic Route 66 Bikeway (2004).
- Assisted City of Lexington in jurisdictional transfer of Illinois Department of Transportation right-of-way for trail use (2004).

- Completed *Guide to McLean County Greenways and Trails*. Brochure features McLean County trails, public recreation and natural areas in McLean County. Distributed to local recreational agencies and businesses throughout Bloomington-Normal (2004).

- Published newsletters on farmland preservation and conservation subdivisions.

- Completed local erosion control ordinances (2005).

- Completed *Logan County Regional Greenways Plan* per agreement with Logan County Board. Document will contribute in coordinating vision for local and regional greenways planning (2007).

- Completed table top exhibit on *Significant Watersheds in McLean County*. Exhibit entails significant and endangered watersheds in McLean County. Exhibit also suggests measures to protect watersheds (2007).

- Spring 2007 *VISIONS* (newsletter of MCRPC) dedicated to “Preserving Urban Waterways.” The newsletter was mailed to over 250 community leaders throughout McLean County (2007).

- Local government planners, engineers and legal departments completed a draft version of *Aquatic Ecosystem Management Ordinance* or “stream buffer ordinance” which will partially address Federal Clean Water Act regulations, Illinois EPA regulations and development infringement into watersheds and floodplains (2007). The ordinance was approved by the Town of Normal in April 2008. The City of Bloomington and McLean County will consider passage of a similar document in the future.

- Completed the update of *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan* originally published in April, 1997 (2009).

- Assisted in coordination of public meetings for *Main Street: A Call for Investment*. This plan

is an overview for redeveloping the Bloomington-Normal metropolitan Main Street Corridor which includes pedestrian and bikeway considerations (2007).

- Continue to work and coordinate with local government agencies in expanding and promoting metropolitan and regional trail systems (ongoing).
- Continue to promote “green” building techniques into new development projects during consistency review process (ongoing).
- Continue to monitor Norfolk Southern Rail Corridor for future trail opportunities.
- Participate on Executive Committee of State Route 66 Trail Committee (ongoing).
- Coordinate with Tri-County Regional Planning Commission on possible interregional connections of central Illinois trails (ongoing).
- Coordinate with IDNR and IDOT on current and future trails initiatives and related transportation studies (ongoing).
- Monitor and reassess priority greenway initiatives for McLean County (ongoing).
- Provide for extensions to the Constitution Trail. Completed connections include segments along G.E. Road to Towanda-Barnes Road, CONRAIL right-of-way from West Washington Street to Bunn Street, and Raab Road into Fairview Park. Other completed extensions include Clearwater Park, McGraw Park, Jefferson Street to Grove Street, Linden Street to Prairieland School and Heartland Community College.
- Completion of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies for Lake Bloomington (2008) and Evergreen Lake (2008).
- Completion of the Town of Normal Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan (2009).

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Long Range

The following actions have been identified as being of major importance to the successful, long-range implementation of the *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan*:

- The City of Bloomington, Town of Normal and County of McLean should adopt the updated regional greenways plan.
- The McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee should utilize an existing entity, or if necessary, encourage the creation of a new entity with the authority to acquire and manage property for the purpose of land preservation and/or greenway development on a county-wide basis. This entity should also have the authority to receive and disperse funds derived from private donations, government grants and other sources.
- The Greenways Advisory Committee should target priority future greenways for implementation and immediate action, beginning with those identified as “threatened” or greenways that can be easily implemented. Care should be taken not to overlook other possible opportunities for greenway development that may arise due to changing circumstances.
- The Greenways Advisory Committee should thoroughly evaluate and select appropriate strategies for acquisition, ownership and financing of targeted greenways, making every effort to maximize the use of private funding sources and federal and state grant programs.
- The Greenways Advisory Committee should work with the ParkLands Foundation in establishing a “water trail” along the Mackinaw River in McLean and Woodford Counties.
- The Greenways Advisory Committee in cooperation with McLean County Regional Planning Commission should perform periodic reviews of the Regional Greenways Plan to

measure progress and target implementation activities. A major update of the plan should be considered at five-year intervals.

- An active public relations and education campaign should be carried out by the Greenways Advisory Committee to broaden public understanding and support for greenways. An effective campaign should include newsletter publications and press releases that report on progress made toward carrying out the Plan. Sponsoring speakers and presentations to interested groups would also be beneficial.

- McLean County Regional Planning Commission should continue providing staff and technical support to the Greenways Advisory Committee to aid in coordinating implementation activities, monitoring progress and updating the plan.

- Local governments in McLean County should support implementation efforts with occasional technical support from staff, and with financial support to meet local match requirements or other specialized implementation needs as may arise.

- In the review of proposed development projects, local governments should consider the priority future greenways identified in the *McLean County Regional Greenways Plan* and the need to include these and other potential greenways in future development.

- Regulatory ordinances should be strictly enforced and be up-to-date with respect to provisions affecting greenways and dedication requirements.

### **Short Range**

The following greenway-related initiatives have been targeted for early implementation:

- Encourage and assist with watershed planning and protection.

- Encourage and assist with ecosystem preservation and restoration.

- Coordinate and assist with trail extension planning and coordination.

- Strengthen relationships with public and private entities in greenways planning and development.

- Promote greenways through public education.

- Explore additional land preservation and protection mechanisms.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- City of Bloomington. City of Bloomington, Illinois Website. 2007.
- Ecology Action Center. Significant Watersheds in McLean County. 2007.
- Friends of Constitution Trail. Constitution Trail. 2005.
- Horizon Wind Energy. Twin Groves Wind Farm. 2008.
- Illinois Department of Agriculture. Conservation 2000: Agriculture Resource Enhancement. 2000.
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Illinois Heritage Database. 2008.
- . Illinois State Trails Plan. 1995.
- . Mackinaw River Watershed Plan. 1998.
- . Natural Resource Management Incentives. 2002.
- . Outdoor Recreation Grants-In-Aid Programs. 2007.
- Illinois Department of Transportation. Federal and State Funding Sources for Transportation Enhancement Activities. 2007.
- Journal of Applied Ecology: "Effects of Nitrogen Addition on the Invasive Grasses *Phragmites Australis* and a Native Competitor *Spartina Pectinata*". Rickey and Anderson. Illinois State University. 2004.
- Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society: "Evolution and Origin of the Central Grassland of North America: Climate, Fire and Mammalian Grazers". Anderson. Illinois State University. 2006.
- Little, Charles E., "Greenways for America". Baltimore, MD. 1990.
- McLean County Parks and Recreation Department. Parks and Recreation Website. 2008.
- McLean County Regional Planning Commission. McLean County Regional Greenways Plan. 1997.
- . Trends and Projections in Urban and Rural Populations. 2007.
- The Conservation Fund. "Greenways: A Guide to Planning, Design, and Development". Flink and Stearns. Washington, D.C. 1993.
- The Nature Conservancy. The Mackinaw River. 2007.
- Town of Normal. "Parks and Open Space Master Plan." Town of Normal Parks and Recreation Department. 2005.
- . Town of Normal, Illinois Website. 2007.
- Tri-County Planning Commission. Rock Island Trail Extension Study. 2008.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1990 Census of Population and Housing—Summary Population and Housing Characteristics: Illinois. 1991.
- . Census Population and Characteristics of the Population: Illinois. 1980, 1990 and 2000.
- Wikisource. History of McLean County, Illinois. 2008.

# Staff of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission

Paul Russell, AICP  
*Executive Director*

Rick Nolan  
*Community Planner*

Jennifer Sicks  
*Land Use/Transportation Planner*

Melissa Dougherty-O'Hara  
*Travel Modeler*

Scott Fowler  
*Associate Planner*

Khalid Hasan  
*G.I.S. Director*

William Jackson  
*G.I.S. Coordinator*

Teresa Casselman  
*Office Manager*