



Friends of the Chicago River

Introduction to
The Chicago-Calumet River
Watershed Council Initiative

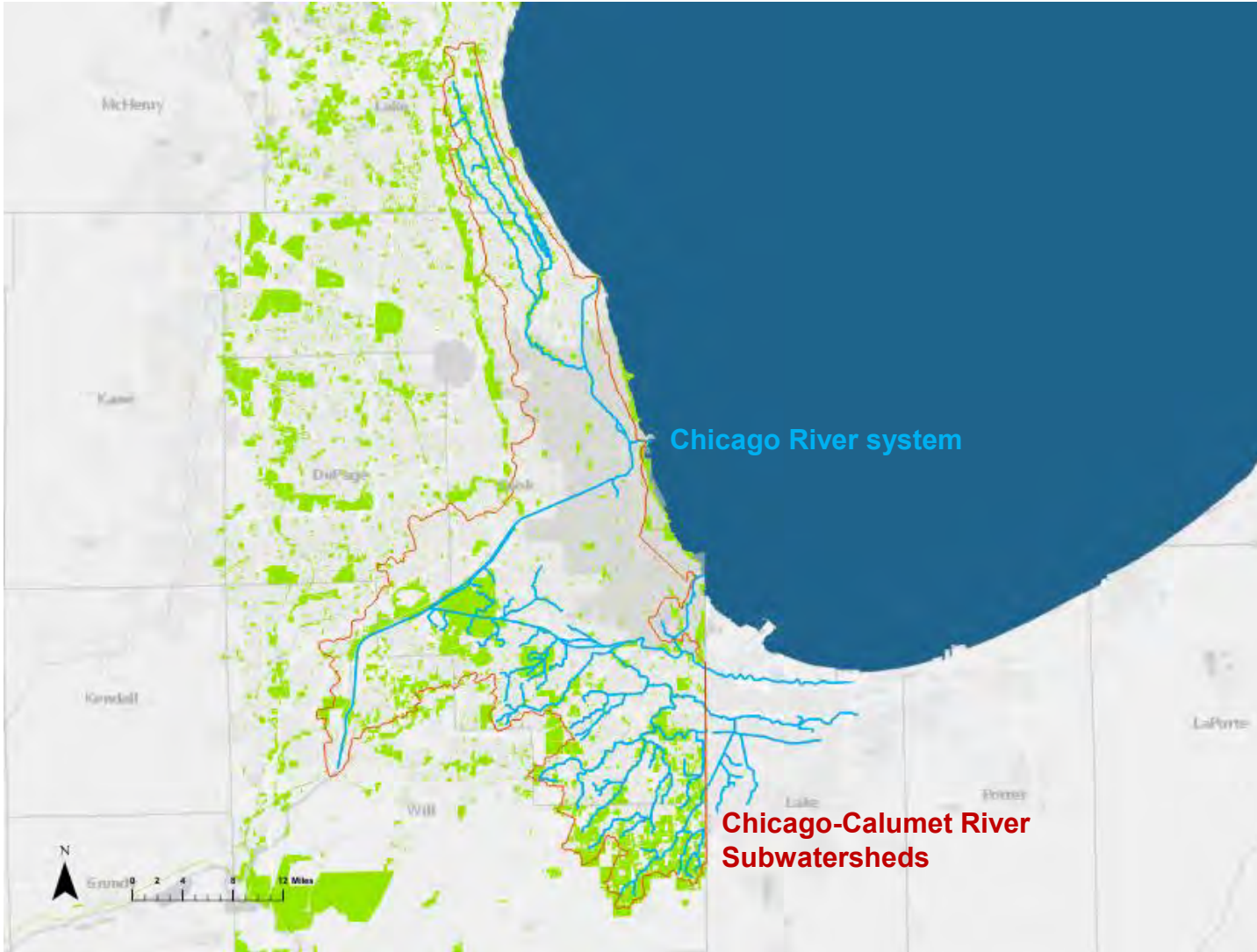


Friends of the Chicago River:

is an award-winning nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve and protect the Chicago River system for **people, plants, and animals.**

www.chicagoriver.org

OUR MISSION



- Subwatersheds cover roughly 1,000 square miles
- 156 linear miles of waterways
- 75% natural shoreline
- 37,000 acres of open space (within ½ mile)

WHERE WE WORK



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- Chicago River Schools Network
- Chicago River Day
- Overflow Action Days ™
- Litter Free Chicago River
- McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum
- Canoe program / Canoes and Clean-ups



ON-THE-GROUND PROJECTS

- Instream restoration projects
- Wildlife habitat construction projects
- Landscape-scale restoration
- Chicago River Eco Warriors (CREW)
- Centennial Volunteers
- Wildlife monitoring

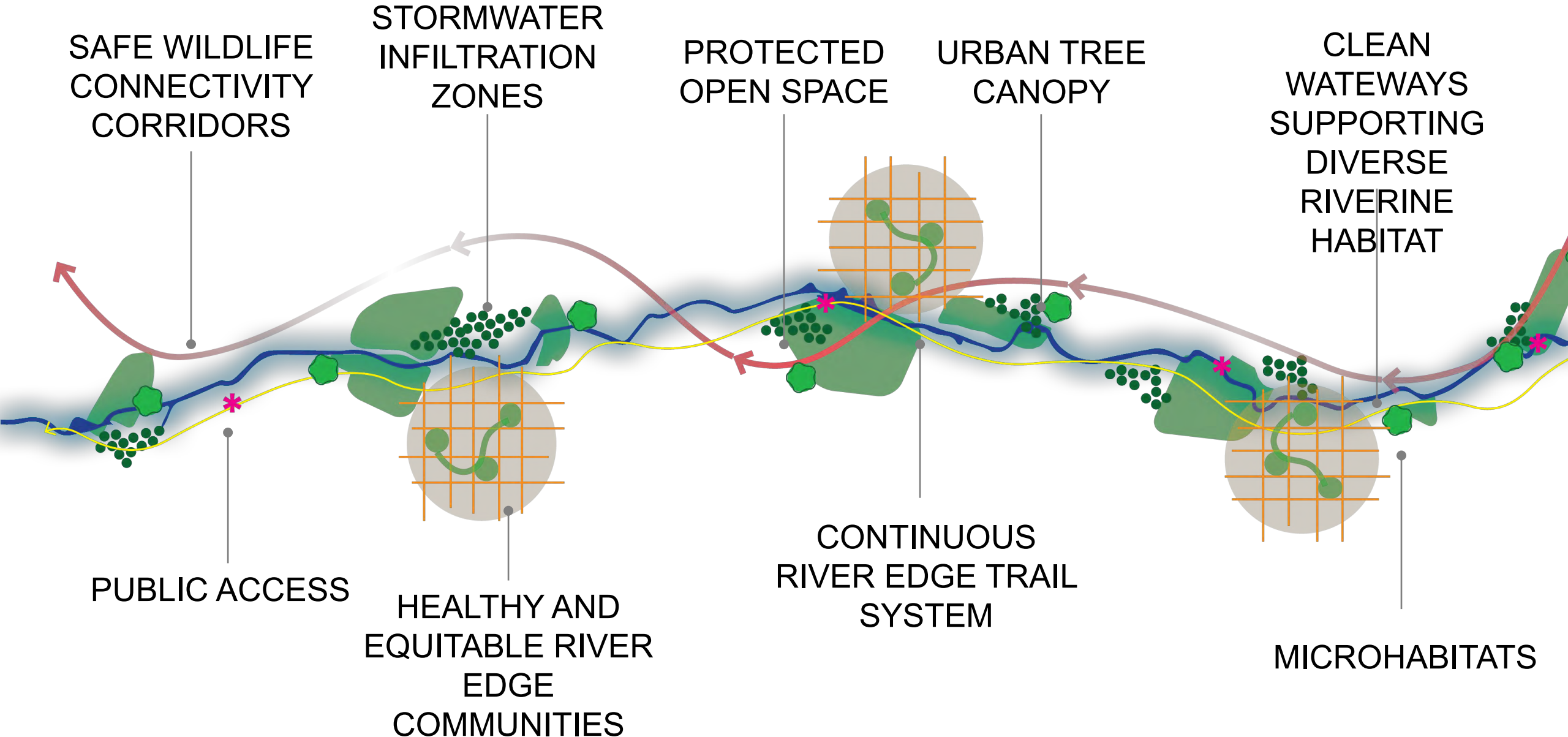


POLICY & PLANNING

- Conservation land use advocacy planning
- Continuous Chicago River Trail
- Improved water quality
- River edge development
- Nature based stormwater management advocacy
- Wildlife corridor connectivity planning

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

Friends' Blue-Green Corridor Vision



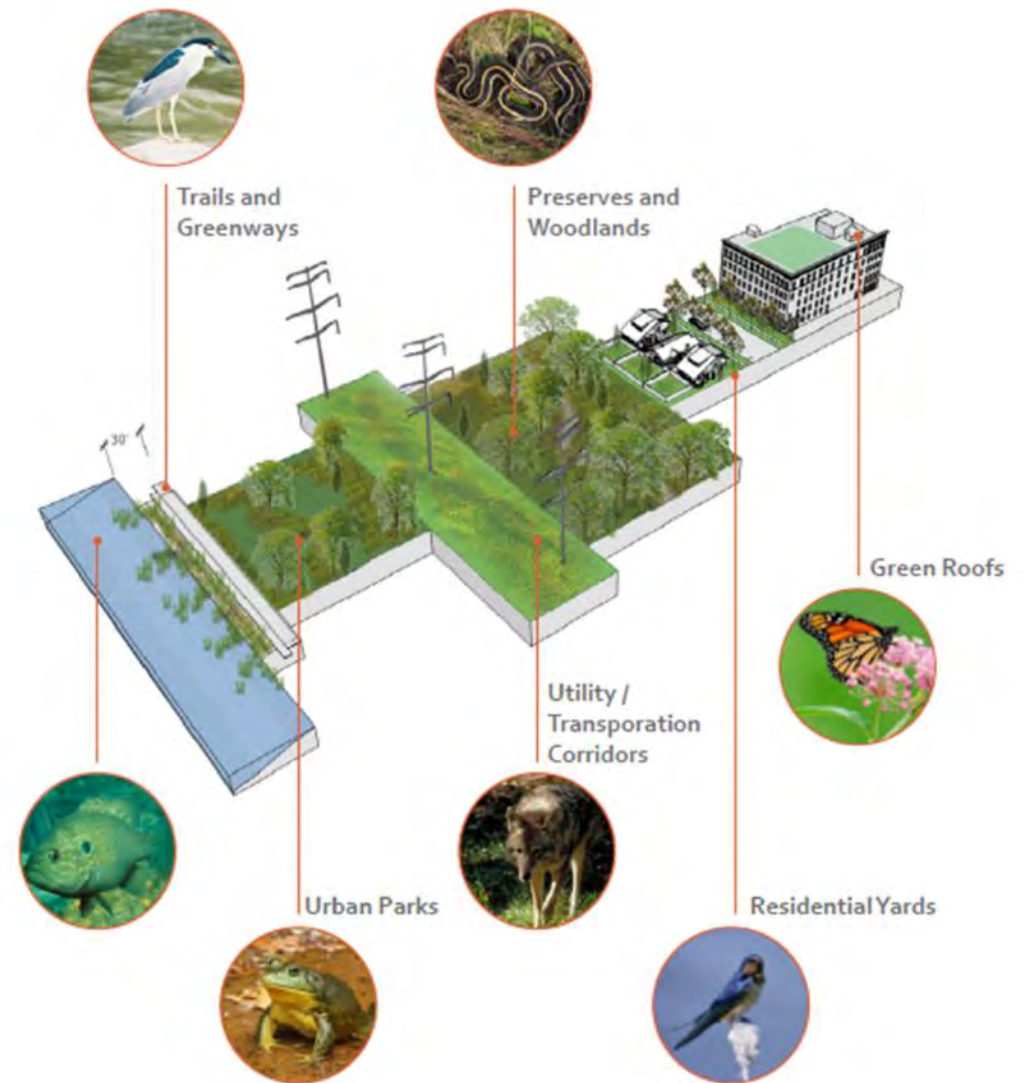
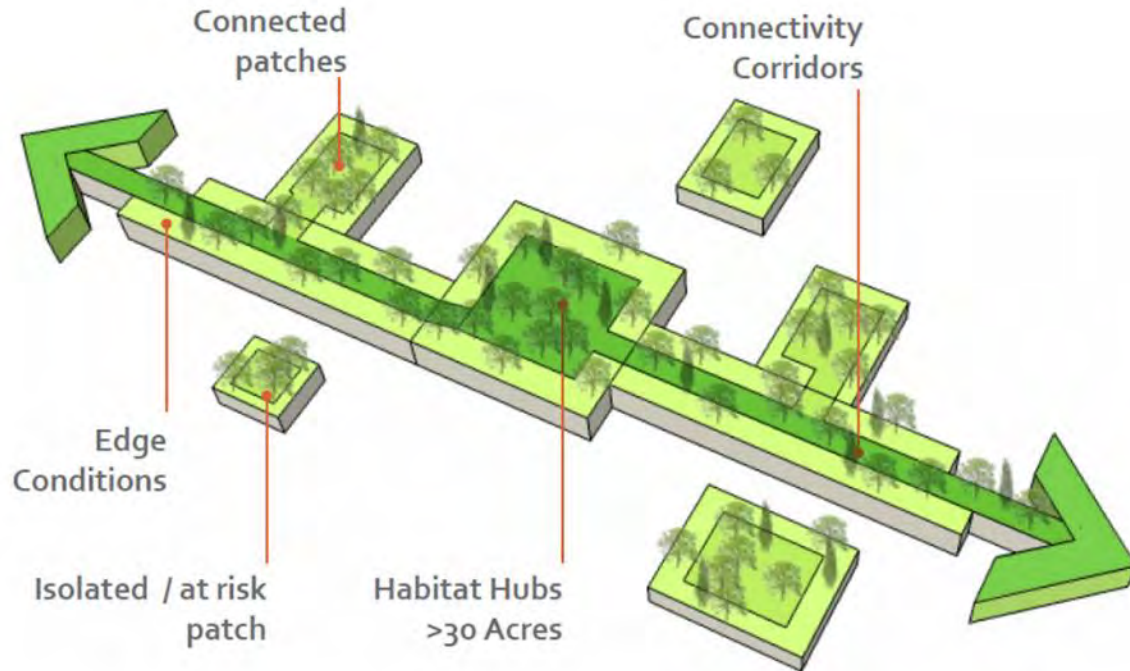
OUR PRIORITIES FOR RIVER EDGE DEVELOPMENT



1. Protect, improve, and expand river habitat connectivity
2. Prioritize a naturally sloped and restored river edge
3. Maintain and expand ecologically valuable river edge vegetation

WATERWAYS PROTECTION & ADVOCACY

HABITAT PATCHES, CORRIDORS, AND HUBS



HABITAT CONNECTIVITY & BIODIVERSITY

Habitat Hubs



Chicago-Calumet River Watershed



Chicago River System



Hine's Emerald Dragonfly Critical Habitat



Freshwater Emergent Wetlands



Remnant Oak Habitat



Private Open Space



Illinois Nature Preserves Commission



Public Open Space



ON TO 2050: Conservation Areas



Local Conservation Priority



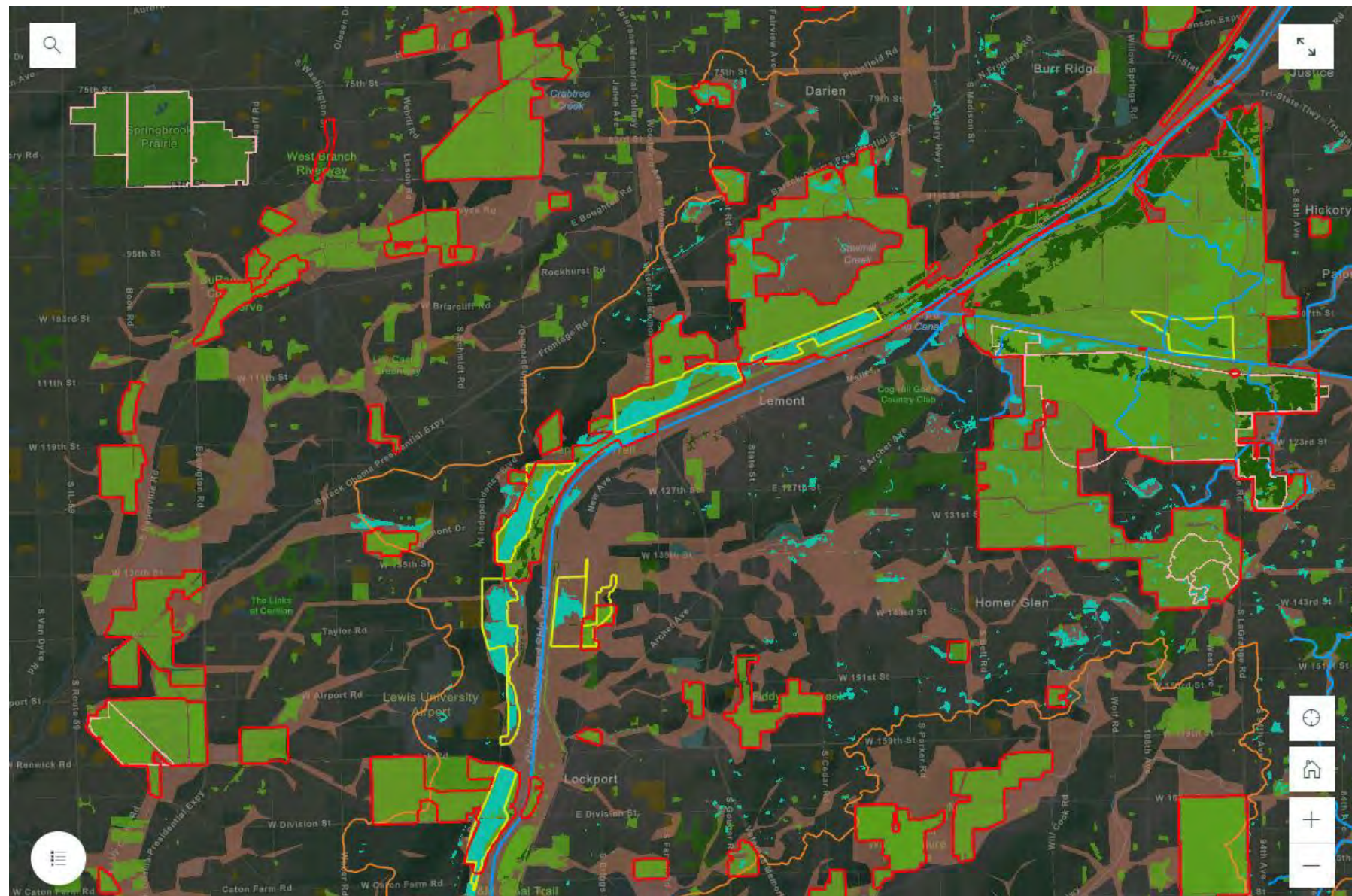
Regional Conservation Priority



State Important Bird Areas



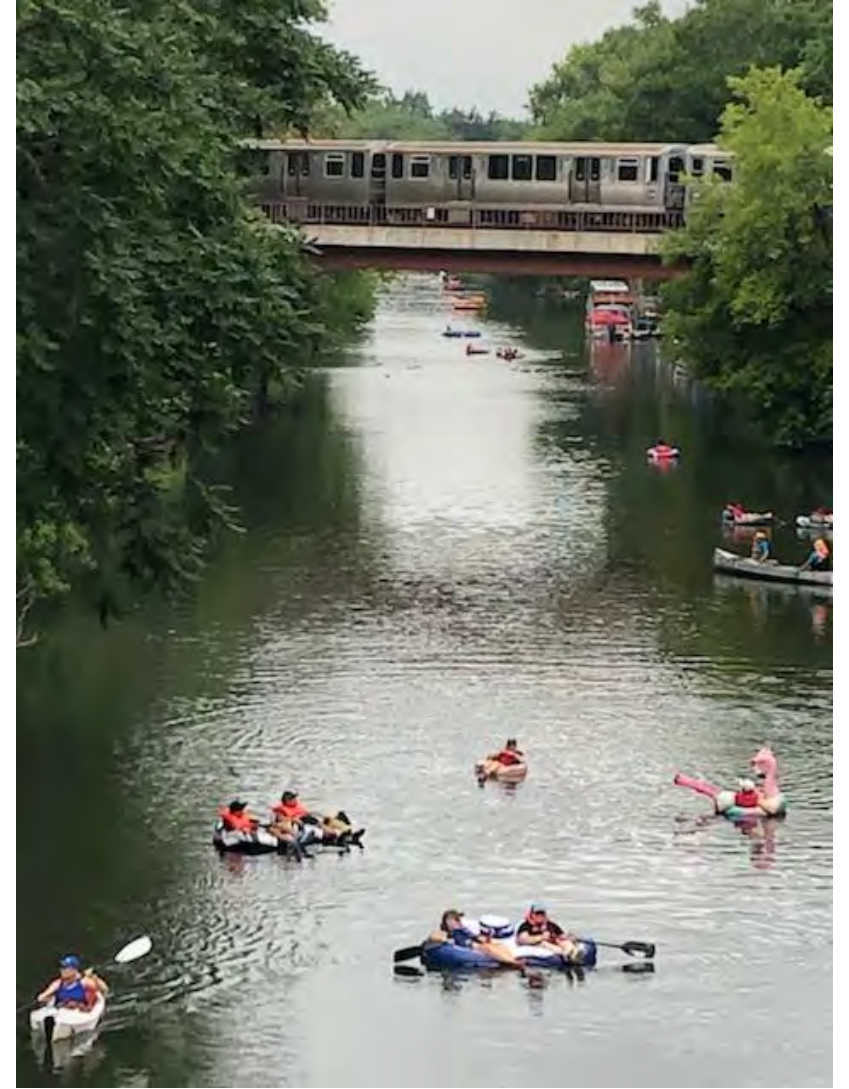
Illinois Important Bird Areas



WATERSHED HEALTH & OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

The background features a repeating pattern of water droplets in the upper half and reeds in the lower half, both in a lighter blue shade than the background.

Introduction to the Chicago-Calumet River Watershed Council



SUMMER FLOAT 2022

CHICAGO CALUMET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Steering Committee Participants:



WHY?

What We Heard...

“Usually a **lack of funding** and **overall coordination efforts.**”

“There is broad focus and **collaboration** on GSI maintenance. There are **multiple avenues** to pursue GSI including shared services, trained volunteer teams, trained DPW staff, etc.”

“**A lead organization** to wrangle us all into a group to talk about all our roles in a solution.”

“Organizational and staff **capacity.**”

“**Competing Priorities** and **cash-strapped** government agencies.”

“**Combined efforts** to **implementing** projects that reduce flooding and improve water quality.”

“**Working in silos**, **lack of shared resource opportunities/mechanisms.** Jurisdictional limitations”

“A **watershed wide work plan** has been development that identifies hundreds of acres of open space for restoration, with additional **priority restoration projects** in motion.”

“To work in a **collaborative manner** to continue to achieve our mission”

“Obtaining support/buy-in from key implementers (gov & non-gov agencies); **sustainable funding; coordination** and **capacity.**”

Watershed Council Goals, Purpose & Process

- Collaborative regional watershed-based stormwater management
- Cross jurisdictional cooperation
- Multi-benefit nature-based stormwater solutions
- Achieving broader social, environmental, and economic benefits



CHICAGO CALUMET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

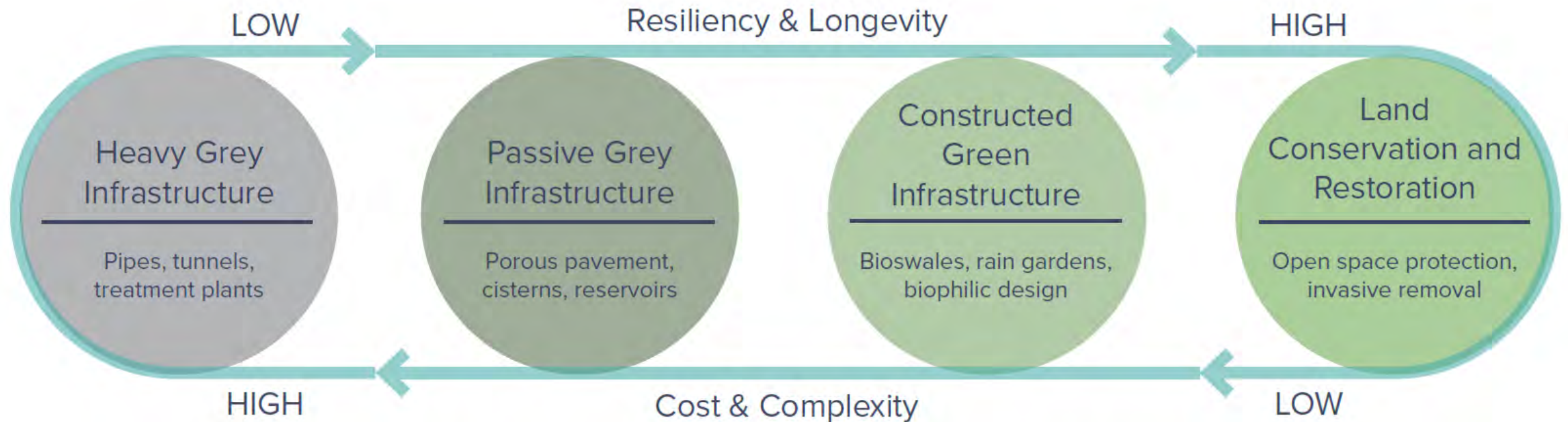
Elevating & connecting existing efforts



Expand regional capacity for natural stormwater solutions

“The role of America’s lands and waters in climate change is often overlooked, **but nature is one of the most cost-effective and enduring solutions to the climate crisis.**”

- from the US *Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient, and Just America*



Watershed Council Achievements

- Strong participation by all Steering Committee participants, especially key agency partners
- Seventh quarterly workshop
- Connecting nationally and locally:
 - Council for Watershed Health (Los Angeles), Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Joint Benefits Authority (San Francisco), One Water Denver, etc
- Helped partners move forward with aligned projects through Council support
- Funded and launched two collaborative Council pilot projects



Pilot Projects: Coordinated Capital Planning Research, Indian Ridge Marsh South, Natural Solutions Tool

Our Climate-Smart Cities process bring together a team of experts to research, design, and build the infrastructure and tools that help increase our resilience to climate change. Our strategy is to:



Trails and transit lines provide carbon-free transportation and link residents to popular destinations and each other.



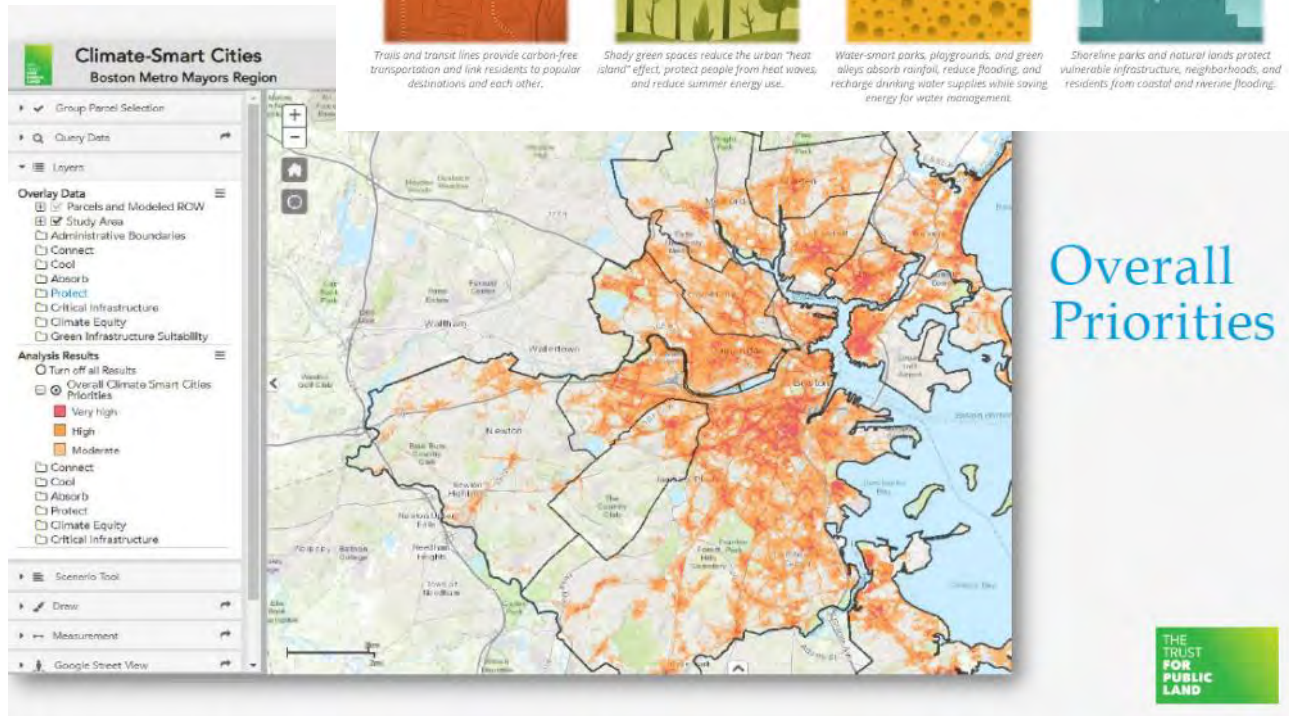
Shady green spaces reduce the urban "heat island" effect, protect people from heat waves, and reduce summer energy use.



Water-smart parks, playgrounds, and green alleys absorb rainfall, reduce flooding, and recharge drinking water supplies while saving energy for water management.



Shoreline parks and natural lands protect vulnerable infrastructure, neighborhoods, and residents from coastal and riverine flooding.



CHICAGO CALUMET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Indian Ridge Marsh South





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