

Go Green Illinois meeting July 10, 2018: Great Rivers Chicago

Henrietta Saunders introduced the program. Sarah Cardona, Manager of Storm Waters Collaboration, Great Rivers Chicago at Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) began. MPC is an 84 year old organization working on housing, health, transportation and other regional planning issues. Great Chicago Rivers is a unifying and forward-looking vision for all 3 of Chicago's rivers - Chicago, Des Plaines and Calumet Rivers. The 3 combined provide 150 miles of waterfront, and Great Chicago Rivers' vision is to make these rivers inviting, productive and living places by 2040.

The vision was developed through extensive outreach in communities along these rivers. Input from 6,000 residents and 100 events shaped the plan. They set goals to unify visions for change by asking questions, analyzed the input and developed the vision for 2040, along with intermediate goals.

The Vision and Goals are for the Rivers to be:

1. Inviting: accessible paths, clean, curbed runoff, flags for condition warnings, trails, etc.
2. Productive: commercial fishing, tourism, jobs, transportation, water dependent manufacturers, barge activity.
3. Living: native species, plant, bird and animal, harmony with river fronts, ecological shoreline management (for example, bioswales at Bubbly Creek), and larger set backs from the river for development.

By 2030: There should be swimmable places in rivers.

They conducted design charrettes to come up with local solutions for specific sites along the rivers. Great Chicago Rivers involves numerous partners and funders, including: Chicago Community Trust, Driehaus Foundation, Donnelley Foundation, Joyce Foundations, Boeing, Goose Island, Wholefoods and others. MWRD is a leader in this effort. One of the goals is to reduce the amount of runoff by holding water within properties.

Chicago Community Trust might help fund local efforts. All are eager for local efforts and are ready to go outside of the Chicago boundaries.

Rosemary Heilemann introduced the watershed game. She is trained to facilitate the game, which models reduction of run off and control of phosphorus and other nutrients. The game is suitable for local government officials, planning organizations, community groups, business associations and others. It helps decision makers learn how they can work together to make a difference regarding water. Rosemary explained that today we are playing only one round, but in other games, communities not only find methods for reducing phosphorous, but also agree on planning expenditures. In subsequent rounds, industries could bargain with urban groups, etc. for solvable results. The overall effect of the game is that players come to the realization that community decisions can make a difference without financial or severe life burdens.