

## 8. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

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### VISION

Bloomington will practice environmental stewardship and provide healthy and active lifestyle choices for all.

Planning in the United States originated with a public health purpose. Rapid urbanization in the 19th and early 20th century resulted in overcrowded and often poorly constructed housing, noxious industrial and manufacturing uses, new levels of human and animal waste, and intensified outbreaks of infectious diseases. Planning was rooted in the need to reduce congestion, improve public health, and support reform in housing and sanitation. Given this history, the concept of “health” has historically been associated with issues surrounding physical health.

Today however, healthy communities are those that embrace a complex set of factors that contribute to good health such as clean environments, active transportation, cultural and recreational opportunities, employment options, quality education, availability of public health programs and services and many more as illustrated in Figure 8-1. While many of these components are addressed in many sections of this plan, this chapter is devoted solely to discuss the physical health, social health (or community wellbeing) and the health of the environment surrounding us. While access to good quality

health care services is a major factor that contributes towards the overall health of the community, it is not a primary topic of discussion in this chapter.

The City’s policies relating to land use, food access and the transportation system have a strong influence on people’s lifestyles and in promoting the physical, social and environmental health of the community. This section provides a framework for consideration of health in all policies essential to building a healthy and vibrant community for all.

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

The McLean County Health Department’s IPLAN identified obesity along with mental health and oral health as a major health priority for the county. Over 62.5% of all adults in McLean County were either overweight or obese during the years 2007-2009. The percentage of obese adults in McLean County increased from 20.7% in 2004 to 22.0% in 2008. The percentage of overweight adults increased from 35.0% to 39.5% during the same time period. This is an alarming trend. The two primary factors contributing to obesity

are lack of physical activity and access to fresh food.

#### Physical Activity

To address the issues that resulted from rapid urbanization in the early 20th century, a series of policies related to zoning, housing, and transportation were created. Many of these policies were geared toward separation of residential land uses from the non-residential

uses. They had a lasting impact on the ways in which we develop the built environment. In many communities across the United States, including Bloomington, the residential land uses are segregated from other uses to the point of strongly discouraging any active mode of transportation. As shown in Figure 8-2, 8.9% of residential units in Bloomington are within ¼ mile of a grocery store, 2.6% live

within ¼ mile of a pharmacy, and 29.7% are within one mile of an elementary school. Today, many studies show that people tend to be more active when they can easily and safely access key destinations such as parks, schools, workplaces and shops by walking and biking. Throughout the public outreach campaign, residents emphasized the value of parks and recreational opportunities. The Constitution Trail



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

Figure 8-1. Factors Influencing Health

## GUIDING THEMES

- Bloomington’s enjoyable, accessible, safe park system enhances the quality of life and promotes a strong sense of community.
- Bloomington’s walking and biking network will enhance healthy lifestyle choices in the community by connecting people to places in a safe and attractive way.
- Bloomington will become a food-secure community that promotes the ability to grow, consume, and distribute healthy, locally produced food. Our food system will benefit our community, our economy and our environment.
- Bloomington will be a community that provides quality physical and mental health care to all of its residents.
- Bloomington will demonstrate stewardship of its environment and natural resources.
- Bloomington will be an active community year-round with plenty of recreation options for people of all ages and income levels.
- Bloomington strives to be an inclusive City that provides a basic quality of life and opportunity for all.

spanning Bloomington- Normal is a treasured local amenity for recreation, fitness, and transportation.

Changes in demographics are bringing in many changes in the trends of popular recreational activities. It is important to be aware of these changing needs for the park

and recreational facilities to be relevant and utilized. This will require an ongoing analysis and resources for the City’s parks and recreation department.

Improvements in placement of sidewalks, conditions of sidewalks, bike lanes and safety

measures such as proper lighting are steps the City can take to encourage greater physical activity in existing neighborhoods. It is important for the City to take an active role in county-wide efforts such as those initiated by the health department, school districts or the McLean County Wellness Coalition to improve the overall health of the community.

Current development regulations, such as the subdivision ordinance, should be revisited and revisions made to encourage mixed use developments that foster active living.

### *Access to Fresh Food*

Along with lack of physical activity, poor nutrition is also a risk factor for obesity and related chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. While people’s health is influenced by personal decisions, national research shows that in communities where healthy food options like fresh fruits and vegetables are available, residents have better diets and lower rates of obesity and diet-related chronic disease.

Municipalities addressing the access to fresh food is a relatively recent phenomenon that is

triggered by the obesity epidemic and increased food insecurity, particularly among low-income households. The availability of fresh, affordable, healthy food is of particular concern on the west side of Bloomington, or the Regeneration Area. A majority of this area has been designated as a food desert by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The lack of available fresh food, including transportation access to grocery stores and the concentration of lower income households are contributing to that designation.

Although the Walmart on West Market Street is on the west side of the City, the I-55/I-74 interchange presents a dangerous barrier

to accessing the store by non-motorized transportation. While attracting a neighborhood grocery store to locate within the Regeneration Area (West Side) can solve the issue to some degree, the challenges of attracting one are much greater.

There are some grassroots efforts like the “gleaning” project, a partnership between the Wellness Coalition, IWU Action Research Center and the Downtown Farmers Market and Artists Alley, that gleans and distributes left over fresh produce from the farmers market to the residents in the Regeneration Area.

Recently the USDA, through its Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women,

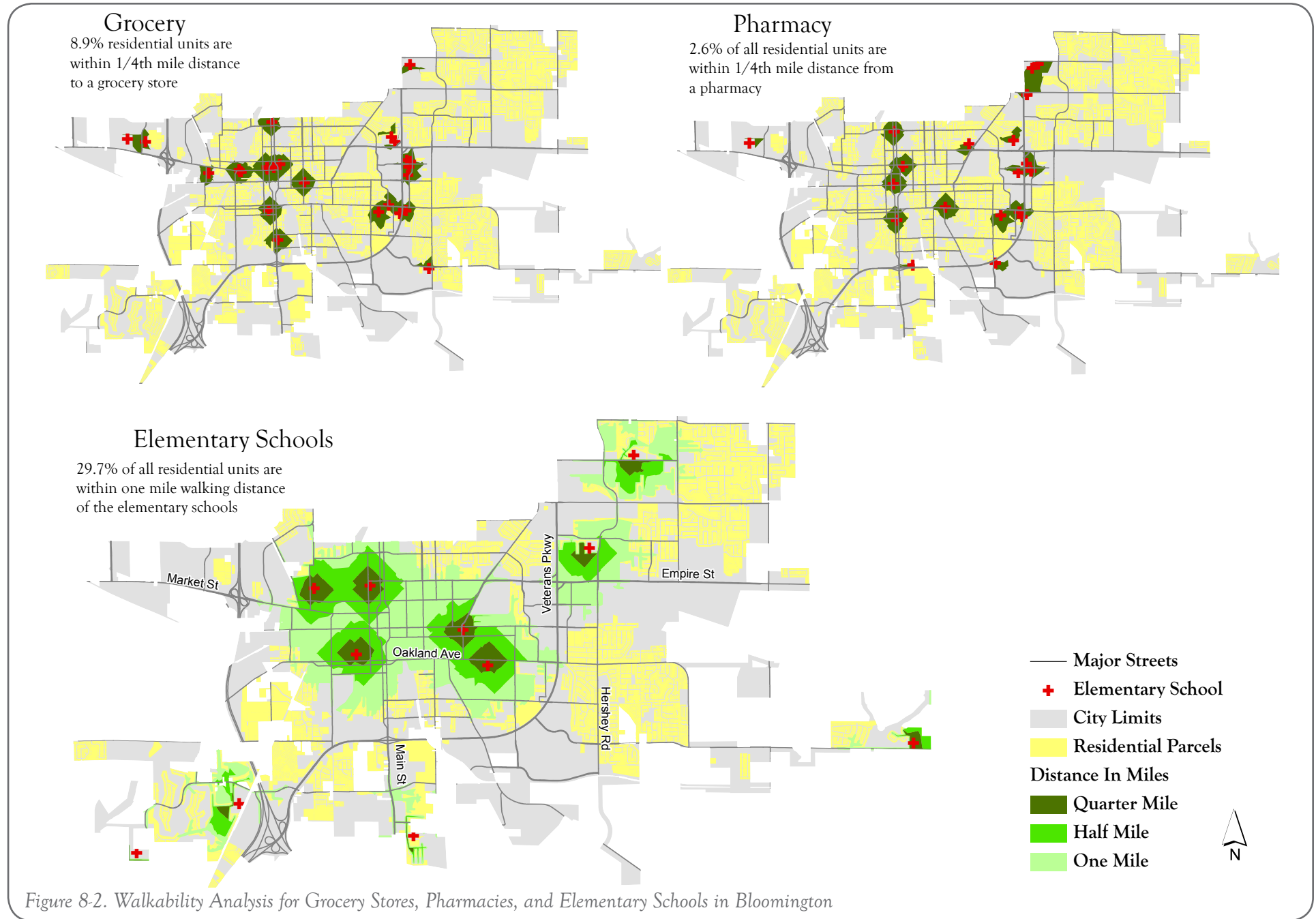
## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- There are 9 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, falling approximately 75 acres short of the 10 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Currently there are 44 parks, 3 golf courses, 2 aquatic facilities, a zoo, an ice rink, 15 facilities and shelters and 25 miles of Constitution Trail in Bloomington (37 within Bloomington and Normal).
- Health Department’s IPLAN (2012-2017) identified obesity, mental health and oral health as the major health priorities for McLean County.
- The USDA designated a majority of the west side of Bloomington as a “food desert.”

Infants and Children (commonly known as WIC), introduced the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) to increase access to fresh produce to low-income families. McLean County Health Department administers this program locally. In 2014, only 35% of all tokens issued were redeemed at the farmers market. This indicates a need for increased education and promotion.

Green Top Grocery, Bloomington-Normal's first co-op grocery store, recently announced that it would be locating just east of the Downtown area at 921 E. Washington Street. This facility, located in a food desert, is anticipated for completion in mid to late 2016. Along with connecting fresh food from local farmers to local consumers, one of Green Top's core values is social responsibility. While this is definitely a step in the right direction for affordable fresh food in this community, it does not respond to all the needs.

Bloomington is also fortunate to have Home Sweet Home Ministries, a local not-for-profit organization, operating its Bread for Life co-op which allows low income individuals and families to work at the co-op a certain number of



hours in exchange for fresh healthy food for themselves and their families.

The local food movement has grown in popularity throughout the country as a way to increase connections between locally grown foods to the community. This trend is growing fast in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County. This is evidenced by the success of the Downtown Farmers' Market, an increase in the number of community gardens, and farm to fork restaurants like Epiphany Farms and Garlic Press.

The local University of Illinois Extension office is making strides in encouraging more small to mid-size farmers. Despite these efforts, there are significant gaps in all aspects of the local food chain from production and processing to distribution and consumption. This plan calls for increased collaboration among the local government units, schools, universities, local farmers, and restaurants to ensure access to fresh local food to residents of all ages and income levels.

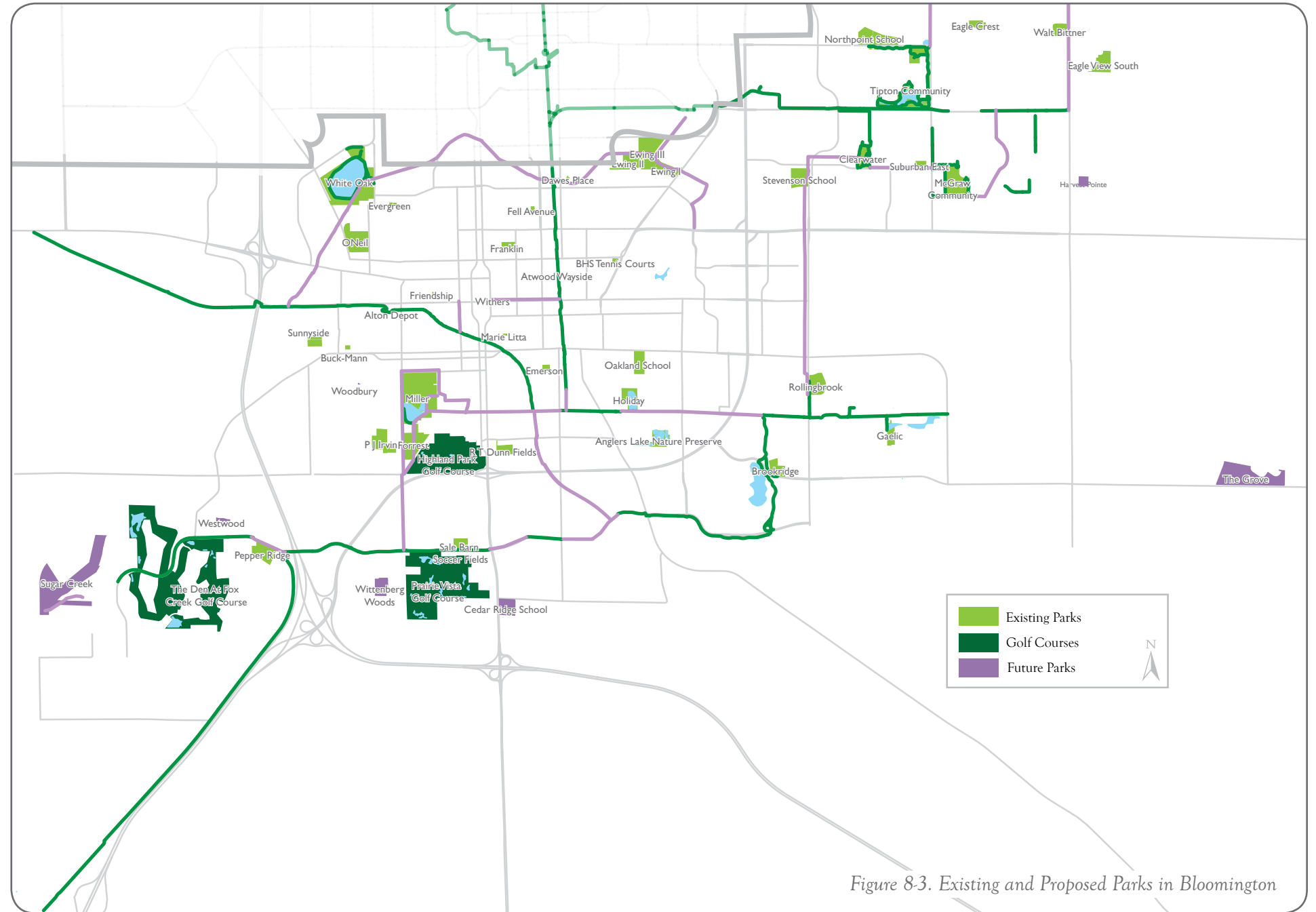


Figure 8-3. Existing and Proposed Parks in Bloomington

## HL-1. Create a park and green space system that provides for a variety of active and passive recreational and wellness activities for current and future residents.

### HL-1.1 Coordinate park planning with other agencies and entities.

#### METRICS

- Consistent goals and objectives among plan documents

HL-1.1a Keep the City's parks plan current through regular schedule of updates every five years that provide detailed guidelines necessary to plan, finance, develop and manage the individual park facilities and programs. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

HL-1.1b Maintain consistency among the City's parks plans, adopted comprehensive plan, long range transportation plan and other special purpose plans specifically undertaken to address components of the park systems. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCRPC



*Constitution Trail*



*Miller Park Pavillion*

Table 8-1. Park Upgrades or Improvements as Suggested by the Current Parks Master Plan

<b>PARK</b>	<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>Trail Upgrades</b>	<b>Play Ground Improvements</b>	<b>Sports Field Upgrades</b>	<b>ADA Improvements</b>	<b>Pavillion</b>	<b>Landscaping</b>
Airport Park							
Alton Depot Park							
Anglers Lake Nature Preserve							
Atwood Wayside Park							
BHS Tennis Courts							
Brookridge Park							
Buck-Mann Park							
Clearwater Park							
Dawes Place							
Eagle Crest Park							
Emerson Park							
Evergreen Park							
Ewing I Park							
Ewing I I Park							
Ewing I I I Park							
Fell Avenue Park							
Forrest Park							
Franklin Park							
Holiday Park							
Marie Litta Park							
McGraw Community Park							
Miller Park							
O'Neil Park							
PJ Irvin Park							
RT Dunn Fields Park							
Rollingbrook Park							
Sale Barn Soccer Fields							
Stevenson School Park							
Suburban East Park							
Sunnyside Park							
Tipton Community Park							
Walt Bittner Park							
White Oak Park							
Withers Park							

## HL-1.2 Protect, enhance and maintain parks and green space equitably throughout the City.

### METRICS

- 10 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents
- # of households within 1/4 mile of parks (excluding golf courses) ↑
- # of Part 1 and Part 2 crimes within 1/4 mile of parks ↓
- # of dog parks ↑
- Pump track
- # of park upgrades completed ↑

HL-1.2a Increase developed outdoor parkland to reach 10 acres per 1,000 residents. (Neighborhood parks are generally 1-10 acres in size, community parks 10-50 acres, and regional parks 50-100 acres). *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, medium*

HL-1.2b Update older equipment in various City parks as identified by the City's Parks Plan. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

HL-1.2c Consider latest trends in recreation, including the water recreation, when updating park facilities. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

HL-1.2d Parks and other community facilities serving the newer areas should be closer to the center of the development or within 1/4 mile of all its housing units. Where feasible, colocate future park space within or near the conservation areas and regional detention ponds to create an integrated park and open space system. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, medium*

HL-1.2e Address neighborhood crime and safety concerns. Work with area residents, property owners and law enforcement to develop and implement design-oriented solutions that address the safety concerns identified in neighborhoods with higher crime rates. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

HL-1.2f Promote park and facility design principles that discourages vandalism, deters crime, provides natural surveillance, and creates a safe, comfortable environment. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

HL-1.2g Add a dog park to one of the existing parks, preferably on the south side of Bloomington. Investigate the feasibility of a future dog park at parks such as Emerson or Pepper Ridge Park. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-1.2h Investigate adding a pump track facility, which can become a regional attraction. The currently underutilized quarry lake on Bloomington's west side could be a great location. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

### Pump Track

A pump track is a continuous loop of dirt berms and “rollers” (smooth dirt mounds) that you ride without pedaling. The name “pump track” comes from the pumping motion used by the rider's upper and lower body as they ride around the track. The idea of a pump track is to use this pumping motion to maintain your speed around the track without pedaling. The old quarry site on Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Drive could be a great location for this type of facility. A pump track at this location could become a regional attraction on this currently underutilized City property.



### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCHD Environmental Health, volunteer groups, neighborhood associations, local pet shops, local cycle shops and advocacy groups such as Bike BloNo and Friends of Constitution Trail, Bloomington Police Department



### HL-1.3 Enhance the walking, jogging and biking trails system.

#### METRICS

- # deaths from obesity-related chronic illnesses ↓
- # miles of on-street bike facilities ↑
- # miles of off-street bike lanes and trails ↑
- bike infrastructure (such as bike parking) ↑
- # of walkers to and from schools ↑
- # total mileage of sidewalk ↑
- # miles of sidewalk with rating 5 or above ↑
- # trail count ↑
- # of ADA accessible sidewalks ↑
- # of bicycle/pedestrian collisions ↓

HL-1.3a Walking/jogging/biking trails to continue to receive the highest priority in development of public recreational amenities. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

HL-1.3b Implement the recommendations of the City’s Bicycle Master Plan. *City of Bloomington, short*

HL-1.3c Adopt and implement the City’s Sidewalks Master Plan. *City of Bloomington, short*

HL-1.3d Prioritize trails and street improvements to promote safe walking and biking routes for all age groups around schools, parks and employment centers. *City of Bloomington & Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-1.3e Accommodate walking/biking infrastructure in any future bridge improvements. *Bloomington Public Works, ongoing*

HL-1.3f Provide park-to-park trail linkages as identified in the City’s Park Plan (O’Neil Park to White Oak Park; Clearwater Park to McGraw Park and P. J. Irvin). *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, medium*

HL-1.3g Develop additional walking routes that network with existing trails so that neighborhoods are linked to retail areas, major employers, and activity areas. *Bloomington Public Works, medium*

HL-1.3h Adopt strategies (crime watch, lights) to enhance personal safety in areas (playgrounds, bike lanes, walking paths, etc. where people are or could be physically active). *City of Bloomington, short*

HL-1.3i Integrate the City’s park system with regional parks through trails and greenways. *Regional Greenways Committee, ongoing*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

School districts, Community centers, City of Bloomington Community Development, City of Bloomington Police Department, MCHD Health Promotion, IPLAN Obesity Task Force, McLean County Wellness Coalition

## HL-2. Ensure maximum usage of the City's parks and recreational facilities and associated resources.

### HL-2.1 Ensure easy access and availability of park facilities for residents as well as community groups.

#### METRICS

- # of households within 1/4th mile of parks (excludes golf courses) ↑
- # of community groups/schools using the parks ↑
- A database of senior recreational needs
- # of seniors participating in parks programming ↑
- Walking/biking audit for all the schools, parks and other community facilities

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

Local schools and universities, Community groups, School Districts, Community centers, MCHD Health Promotion, IPLAN Obesity Task Force, McLean County Wellness Coalition

HL-2.1a Ensure greater access to the area parks from the surrounding residential areas, GIS analysis to identify such connections. *City of Bloomington & Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

HL-2.1b Conduct a walking/biking audit as a metric to measure the accessibility of the City's parks. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-2.1c Focus groups with seniors to identify the parks and recreational needs of older adults. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-2.1d Dedicate times for seniors at the City's parks and pool facilities. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-2.1e Develop Woodbury Park (currently undeveloped) to increase recreational access to the surrounding residential mobile home parks and subdivisions as identified in the City's parks master plan. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, medium*

HL-2.1f Provide assistance to community groups wishing to enhance physical activity in the parks. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

HL-2.1g Integrate with external parties such as schools to promote physical activity in off-hours. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

#### Play Streets

Play Streets is an initiative aimed at providing children with safe, supervised opportunities for play and recreation in areas that do not have easy access to parks. With a play street event, a city street is closed down to offer the children in the neighborhood a variety of activities in which to participate. This program benefits neighborhood children in two ways, one in that they are provided a safe environment in which to play, the second in that they are engaging in physical activity. These types of events can also be a tremendous tool for building community and bringing neighborhoods together in a positive environment. In recent years, Chicago has utilized this method to offer opportunities for physical activity and community building in neighborhoods all throughout the City. These events in Chicago were made possible through collaboration between the Chicago Department of Public Health, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Illinois, and other partners from throughout the community. The City of Bloomington can utilize the concept of the Play Streets in the Regeneration and Preservation Areas where adding a new park or green space can be challenging.



## HL-2.2 Create a smoke free and tobacco free environment in parks and public spaces.

### METRICS

- Designated smoking area signage at City parks and recreation facilities

HL-2.2a Prohibit smoking, except in designated smoking areas, in all City-owned recreational properties including parks and playgrounds, Constitution Trail, swimming pools, and sporting and recreational facilities. *City of Bloomington & Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short-medium*

### PARTNER AGENCIES

McLean County Health Department  
Health Promotion, McLean County  
Wellness Coalition, Bloomington  
Police Department, YMCA

### Health Department's Tobacco-Related Efforts

In recent years, it has become more and more important to address tobacco use both as a personal and public health issue. The McLean County Health Department has shown a continued commitment to assisting individuals who are trying to quit using tobacco and educating the public on the impact of tobacco use on individuals and to the public at large.

#### *Illinois Tobacco-Free Communities Grant (ITFC)*

1. Services offered in this grant include providing education and enforcement of the Smoke-Free Illinois Act, promoting the Illinois tobacco Quitline via fax referral partners, tobacco-free media campaigns, providing smoking cessation programs and working toward smoke-free policies such as smoke-free parks and smoke-free multi-unit housing.
2. Advocacy and enforcement of the Smoke-Free Illinois Act is extremely important because there is a possibility that the law may cease to exist in Illinois, exposing patrons to deadly secondhand smoke. It is also important to continue educating the community on emerging tobacco issues and offering services to help them quit, such as Freedom From Smoking at little to no cost. Many efforts focus on preventing tobacco use among youth, which is extremely important for the future of the community.

#### *REALITY Illinois*

1. This program engages teens from McLean County to spread tobacco-free messages in talking to other teens, planning events and activities, and advocate for smoke-free policies at a local level.
2. Last year, REALITY Illinois empowered teens to learn more about their local government and how to get adults to listen to their ideas. The community at large will benefit from smoke-free policies at local parks because it will limit exposure to secondhand smoke and model healthy behaviors for children and teens. It also adds to the normalcy of tobacco-free public spaces all across the country.
3. REALITY is about engaging youth for positive change and allows teens to find their voice and discover that they can evoke change in an adult run world. Government leaders are likely to listen to youth in their community and this program provides teens a professional platform to do so.

## HL-3. Ensure a healthy environment and accessibility of parks and open spaces.

### HL-3.1 Eliminate barriers that discourage people from walking and biking to parks and recreational facilities.

#### METRICS

- Database of walking/biking barriers to parks and recreation facilities
- # of Part 1 and Part 2 crimes within 1/4 mile of parks ↓
- # of deaths from obesity-related chronic illnesses.↓

HL-3.1a Provide for the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists in compliance with the City's Sidewalk and Bicycle Master Plans. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

HL-3.1b Work with law enforcement to identify land use issues affecting safety and security in neighborhoods. *Bloomington Community Development, ongoing*

HL-3.1c Provide street calming measures and ensure appropriate levels of lighting to make recreational facilities accessible and safer. *City of Bloomington, medium*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

Bloomington Police Department, MCRPC, Bloomington Public Works, YMCA

### HL-3.2 Ensure accessibility of parks, open spaces and other recreational facilities to all residents.

#### METRICS

- # of ADA accessible sidewalks ↑
- # of ADA accessible parks and playground equipment ↑

HL-3.2a Continue to comply with the American with Disabilities Act. *Bloomington Public Works, ongoing*

HL-3.2b Coordinate with the transportation plans to provide safe walk/bike routes to promote physical activity. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*



#### Accessible Parks and Playgrounds

Having parks and recreation amenities that are accessible to residents of all ages and abilities is an objective of this plan. Many lifelong communities make their parks, playgrounds and other recreational facilities wheelchair accessible. They have ramps to the playground activities so that children in wheelchairs can enjoy them as well. Many of the activities at these types of playgrounds are sensory in nature and have flat surfaces to make them all easily accessible to children with disabilities. Some also feature accessible swings that accommodate children with disabilities. A great example of such a playground can be found in Pocatello, Idaho in Brooklyn's Playground. This effort was begun by a couple whose young daughter suffers from spina bifida and wanted to provide her, and other children like her the opportunity to enjoy a playground accessible to them. Over \$500,000 was raised to build the playground.

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCRPC, LifeCIL, Connect Transit, McLean County Health Department Health Promotion

## HL-4. Continue to develop quality parks and recreational programming for all.

### HL-4.1 Ensure that all parks have amenities and facilities that appeal to residents of all ages and abilities.

#### METRICS

- # of outdoor and accessible physical activity stations ↑
- Amount of available programmable space ↑
- # of skating rinks (permanent and temporary) and ice time ↑
- # of age-friendly park amenities and programs ↑

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

U.S. Cellular Coliseum, Central Illinois Arena Management (CIAM), Local community centers like the YMCA, Western Avenue Community Center, and Lincoln Leisure Center, McLean County Health Department and Collaborative Community Health Needs Assessment

HL-4.1a Provide physical activity stations and play equipment that is accessible for people of all ages and abilities. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-4.1b Additional programmable indoor space to serve the community, providing more recreation opportunities in the form of classrooms and multi-purpose programming, possibility of incorporating gymnasium space within community center. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation/YMCA, short*

HL-4.1c Maximize use of U.S. Cellular Coliseum ice to meet ice demand. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-4.1d Investigate possibility of temporary ice skating rinks to address the high demand for ice time during winter. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-4.1e Implement Miller Park Master Plan. *City of Bloomington & Bloomington Parks and Recreation, medium*

HL-4.1f Conduct periodic surveys to identify the changing recreational needs of the community. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

HL-4.1g Ensure collaboration among various city departments to design age-friendly parks amenities and programming and see that they are integrated into the parks master plan. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

#### Snapshot of Current Park Programming

The City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department currently has 51 parks and recreation facilities throughout the City offering a variety of activities for residents of all ages. The parks department publishes a winter/spring programming guide, a summer guide, and a fall guide, each detailing the parks and recreation activities available in each season. The Parks and Recreation Department offers artistic, educational, and recreational opportunities for the youth of the community year round including such activities as swimming and skating lessons, art classes, soccer, t-ball, and many others. In addition to physical activities for the youth of Bloomington, the parks department also offers opportunities for adults such as Zumba and tennis. For senior citizens, the parks department offers the adult center with a variety of daily activities, in addition to plays, concerts, and bus trips. The Special Opportunities in Recreation (S.O.A.R) program is designed to provide individuals with disabilities and special needs with traditional recreational programming. The program, jointly sponsored by the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal Parks and Recreation Departments, works towards the goal of therapeutic recreation opportunities, skill development, and socialization for participants. As evidenced during the community outreach survey, there has been and continues to be great appreciation throughout the community for the S.O.A.R program. The parks and recreation department also partners with local schools for parks facilities. The Bloomington High School tennis courts and parks at Northpoint, Oakland, and Stevenson Schools serve as parks for those school buildings and their students, as well as to the general public.

## HL-5. Provide access to healthy foods and promote food security to build community.

### HL-5.1 Encourage local food production.

#### METRICS

- # and acres of community gardens ↑
- # of community gardens on City property ↑
- # of community gardens at schools ↑
- # of small to mid-size farms ↑
- A regional food plan

HL-5.1a Create a regional food plan to address the local food issues from production to consumption. *MCRPC, Green Top Grocery, HSHM, medium*

HL-5.1b Facilitate a strong network of small to mid-size local farmers growing sustainable food. *Legacy of the Land, medium*

HL-5.1c Consider expanding community gardens on City property, including parks and surplus property, to expand our capacity to grow, process, distribute, and access local foods. *City of Bloomington, short*

HL-5.1d Expand the number and acres of community gardens in Bloomington. *City of Bloomington & University of Illinois Extension office, medium*

HL-5.1e Identify and remove regulatory barriers and develop mechanisms to provide permanent community garden plots. Ex: Amend the zoning ordinance to define community gardens and allow them in residential areas as a permitted use. *City of Bloomington, short*

HL-5.1f Support development of school gardens, especially in USDA-designated food desert areas on the West Side. *City of Bloomington & local school districts, medium*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCRPC, local farmers, Ropp Farms, Rader Farms, Epiphany Farms, Prairie Earth Farms, U of I Extension Office, neighborhood organizations, WBRP, Heartland Community College, YMCA

#### Legacy of the Land - [www.thelegacyoftheland.com](http://www.thelegacyoftheland.com)

Legacy of the Land is a network of local farmers in McLean and Livingston County. The group, which is an LLC formed three years ago as a way to make small-scale farming viable and sustainable for local farmers. The company is currently comprised of nine farms spread throughout the central Illinois area. This collective produces chemical free, non-genetically modified organism (GMO) fruits and vegetables to the local community.

#### Sustainable Agriculture Food Systems Funders ([www.safsf.org](http://www.safsf.org))

The Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Funders (SAFSF) is a network of individuals and organizations providing grants for projects that connect sustainable agriculture to food systems. SAFSF has a membership that includes nearly 100 foundations and organizations across the United States. SAFSF's mission is "To create networking, educational, and collaboration opportunities for the philanthropic community working to support vibrant, healthy, and just food and farm systems."

## HL-5.2 Facilitate local food processing and distribution.

### METRICS

- A food hub
- A food processing and distribution center in McLean County
- # of convenience stores and grocery stores offering healthy food choices ↑
- # of grocery stores on the west side of Bloomington ↑
- # of CSA offerings ↑
- # of food co-ops ↑
- # and type of farmers at the local farmers markets ↑
- Participation at the farmers markets ↑
- # of SNAP/WIC tokens being used at the local farmers markets ↑
- Local food database/resources
- Urban ag workforce and jobs ↑

HL-5.2a Create a food hub that allows urban agriculture scalable and feasible for local farming operations from preparation of goods to distribution. Consider the railyard site or the Sugar Creek packing facility site for this operation. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.2b Partner with Heartland Community College to create an urban agriculture workforce development program. *HCC, EDC, medium*

HL-5.2c Encourage food based entrepreneurship. This can be done by providing incentives as well as identifying and removing barriers for start up restaurants and food trucks. *EDC, Chamber, ongoing*

HL-5.2d Consider creating a worksite Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program for the City employees. Encourage other public agencies to do the same. *City of Bloomington, long*

HL-5.2e Coordinate with convenience stores and gas stations to offer healthy food options, especially in the food deserts. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.2f Encourage a food co-op or grocery store to locate on the West Side. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.2g Gather and distribute data on local food efforts in the community. *City of Bloomington, short*

HL-5.2h Expansion of Downtown Bloomington Farmers' Market to include more farms. *Downtown Bloomington Association, medium*

HL-5.2i Identify and encourage successful models to increase food security for low income residents such as HSHM's Bread For Life (low income food co-op). *McLean County Health Department, long*

HL-5.2j Identify and remove barriers to mobile food markets. *McLean County Health Department, short*

### PARTNER AGENCIES

Local farms, City of Bloomington, Religious institutions with commercial-scale kitchens, Bloomington Technical Academy, ISU Agriculture Department, U of I Extension Office, ISU SBDC, Local convenience stores and grocery stores, Green Top Grocery; Midwest and other Food Banks; Clare House and other food pantries

### HL-5.3 Facilitate consumption of healthy, affordable, locally produced food for all residents.

#### METRICS

- # Death statistics from obesity-related chronic illnesses ↓
- # of SNAP/WIC tokens being used to buy fruits, vegetables and dairy ↑
- # of schools sourcing local food ↑
- # of restaurants sourcing locally grown food ↑
- # of healthy vending options at public venues ↑
- # of low cost food co-ops ↑
- # of mobile food markets (stands) ↑

HL-5.3a Encourage locally grown ingredients for school lunch programs. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.3b Encourage locally grown ingredients at university cafeteria programs. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.3c Encourage restaurants to source locally grown food. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.3d Encourage programs that distribute free or low cost produce on the West Side, e.g., OSF Community Garden providing vegetables to Home Sweet Home Ministries and farmers' market distribution of leftover vegetables. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.3e Collaborate with McLean County Health Department to maximize the role of WIC and SNAP programs for use of nutritious food. *City of Bloomington & MCHD, short*

HL-5.3f Investigate HUMAN Healthy Vending and consider contracting with them to provide healthy snacking options for residents at public venues. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.3g Provide a place for breastfeeding, identified through signage, at City facilities. *City of Bloomington, medium*

HL-5.3h Increase community education on issues related to childhood obesity. *City of Bloomington & MCHD, short*

HL-5.3i Create an educational campaign on what eating healthy means and encourage ownership in growing, selecting, and preparing food. *McLean County Wellness Coalition, short*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

Local farms, school districts, local universities, local restaurants, Green Top Grocery, Double Value Coupon Program, Normal Seed Library, Master Gardeners, local nurseries, Illinois Prairie Community Foundation, University of Illinois Extension, IWU ARC Gleaning Project, McLean County Health Department, OSF St. Joseph Center for Healthy Lifestyles, Advocate BroMenn, YMCA



## **Best Practices in Promoting Local and Healthy Food Options**

Throughout the country, communities are using a variety of methods to provide healthy, local and fresh food to residents. From small measures to comprehensive campaigns, communities have used a number of approaches to provide greater access to fresh and healthier food options. A few of them are listed here.

### ***Healthy Food Options in Convenience Stores***

The New York City Health Department works with bodegas (convenience stores) in areas of the city with higher rates of obesity and diabetes to promote and provide healthier food and beverage options to residents. Partnering with the bodegas, the health department provided signage on the benefits of low fat milk, as well as connecting the bodegas to farmers markets and local distributors to provide fresh produce in their stores.

### ***Healthy Vending in Public Places***

Moving beyond gas stations and convenience stores, entities such as the City of Chicago Park District have taken steps to see that healthier options are offered in vending machines as well. In the summer of 2011, 98 healthier choice vending machines were put in place in parks throughout Chicago. The

park district engaged in a vending contract to see that all items featured in vending machines in parks met “Fit Pick” guidelines. The Fit Pick program focuses on providing vending options that are lower in calories, sugar, fat, and sodium. As of 2015, there are now 117 healthier choice vending machines in Chicago parks.

The Illinois “Rethink Your Drink” campaign was launched in 2014 to encourage residents throughout Illinois to drink less sugar-sweetened beverages, and educating the public on the adverse effects that those kinds of drinks can have on your health. Many organizations have taken this a step further through a “green-yellow-red” signage campaign at grocery stores to educate the public on healthier beverages and encourage them to put more thought into their beverage choices. This system uses green signage to identify beverages that the public should be drinking regularly, (e.g., water, low-fat milk and unsweetened teas), beverages that should be drunk in moderation (diet soda, 100% juice) and those that people should drink rarely, if at all (sodas, energy/sports drinks, whole or 2% milk).

Initiatives such as these not only make the healthier food and beverages choices easier for residents but also work to educate them.

***Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FNMP)*** This initiative is geared towards providing healthy food options to low-income families. The WIC Program is an initiative to provide assistance to low-income mothers and their children. The program provides funding for food, access to healthcare services, and nutritional information to pregnant and postpartum women and their children. All of these services are provided at no cost to those who participate in the program. The Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) began under WIC in 1992 as a Congressional program as a way to provide fresh, local fruits and vegetables to those participating in the WIC program. The McLean County Health Department currently oversees the WIC program for McLean County, including the City of Bloomington. Currently, there is an average of 2200 individuals in McLean County who are enrolled in the WIC program. This year, the Health Department received 1,000 checks to distribute to WIC participants, 250 in June and 750 for the remainder of the farmers market season. Of the checks distributed, only about 35% of them are redeemed at the farmers market.

### ***Food Hub***

A comprehensive method of providing access to local, fresh, and healthy food that has grown in popularity across the United States is the establishment of a food hub.

Food hubs are facilities that streamline the process of food collection, processing and distribution by housing all of those activities in one building. Facilities such as these can be a tremendous asset to a community as both a place for farmers to process and sell their crops, as well as providing healthy food to local residents. It can be difficult for one small farmer to support an entire community and a food hub can act as a conduit for bringing many farmers together in one location, strengthening the overall state of local agriculture and the services that it provides to the community. Two possible locations for a food hub in Bloomington include the Sugar Creek Packing facility near Downtown and the railyard site in the Regeneration Area.

These are just a few examples of methods that could be brought to the City of Bloomington to help provide local, healthy, fresh food to residents and strengthen the agriculture community.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (NATURAL ENVIRONMENT)

Bloomington is a growing community. Locating that growth carefully within or adjacent to the existing urban areas or eliminating sprawl is key to assuring the provision of adequate urban services in a fiscally sustainable manner and preserving the prime farmland in McLean County. Preserving farmland and other environmentally critical areas such as riparian buffers, and trail and habitat corridors should be an integral part of planning. These measures help provide essential natural resources such as fresh air, clean water and other natural resources critical for a sustainable future.

Natural resources often cross jurisdictional boundaries and are best addressed at the regional level. Local support for protecting the environmentally sensitive areas at the regional level is evidenced by many intergovernmental and public/private groups such as the McLean County Solid Waste Management Committee and McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee. While the comprehensive plan does not duplicate any of the individual plans created by these groups, efforts have been made to

integrate the relevant recommendations into this section.

Many of the goals and objectives in this section depend on well-maintained spatial data and inventory of natural resources that is essential to guide development, prioritize resource conservation efforts, evaluate natural resource management practices and guide policy. The City of Bloomington's draft storm water master plan points out that the official flood map does not reflect the existing conditions on the ground. Given the potential impact of this project on development, the City should undertake the floodplain remapping effort and utilize that revised GIS layer to identify and remove structures encroaching the floodway.

Significant natural communities, including wetlands, riparian ecosystems and rare plant sites, should be conserved and preserved to retain living examples of natural ecosystems, furnish a baseline of ecological processes and function, and enhance and maintain the biodiversity and water quality of the region. The designation of the conservation land use in this plan is the first step in protecting the environmentally sensitive areas

from adverse impacts in the future growth areas.

Air, water and noise pollution and overall environmental degradation should be reduced as much as possible or eliminated in order to prevent potential harm to life, health and property. Transportation is one of the significant contributors to environmental pollution. Promoting the use of alternatives to driving alone, such as walking, bicycling, use of transit, and carpooling reduces transportation impacts on the environment.

The Ecology Action Center (EAC) conducted a study of greenhouse gas emissions in the area and calculated baseline levels of the relevant pollutants. The EAC analysis also extrapolated the levels of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the operations of local units of government, including the City, and evaluated which sectors of activity contributed to greenhouse gas pollution. Generally, energy generation is the largest producer of greenhouse gas, followed by transportation. Ongoing assessment using the process the EAC has begun will allow the City and other local governments to determine if implementation of the steps for addressing regional air quality result

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Water:** Bloomington's primary sources of drinking water are Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake. The City faces two challenges in managing the public water supply. The short-term need is to mitigate the effects of high nitrate levels in Lake Bloomington. This requires reducing nitrate infiltration from watershed and agricultural runoff, and ongoing improvements to water treatment systems. The long-term challenge is adding public water supply sources to meet the need of a growing community, by preserving current resources and identifying new sources for water.
- **Energy:** The Ecology Action Center calculated that as of 2008, residential use in Bloomington accounted for 31% of greenhouse gas emissions produced by electricity use, 61% of emissions were from commercial users, 5% from industry, and 3% from local government use of electricity. Private sector users produce nearly all emissions caused by transportation.
- **Waste:** The McLean County Landfill #2 is scheduled for a 2017 closure upon reaching its capacity of nearly 4 million cubic yards. Annual volume in the landfill has been 90,000 tons, equaling 300 tons per day. Discussion of alternative disposal sites is underway, with locations outside of McLean County under consideration.
- **Farmland Preservation:** The growth of the City of Bloomington has often been achieved by converting farmland into new development. Historically, the City expands in area at a faster rate than it grows in population. Much of the farmland that surrounds the City is highly productive, and development there results in the loss of all the food it might grow in the future.

in lower levels of these pollutants.

Vegetation, especially street trees, has an important role to play in minimizing air pollution.

For example, large street trees that provide an overhanging canopy improve air quality, calm traffic, and act as buffers between people and

automobiles. As the Emerald Ash Borer continues to ravage the vegetation, it is important for Bloomington, along with Town of Normal, to be cognizant of the diversity in the regional urban forestry. It is important to introduce more native plants into the local landscape. Native plantings are hardy, less susceptible to pests and diseases, and unlikely to escape or become invasive.

A sufficient supply of safe water is essential – without water a community cannot survive. We are fortunate our region is not experiencing the historic levels of lengthy drought conditions experienced in the Southwest and California, which continue to devastate agriculture, industry and economic conditions for millions of Americans. To address future demand and potential vulnerabilities in the water supply systems, the City should consider the adoption and ongoing updating of the Interim Water Supply Plan completed in 2010, and the implementation of recommendations it contains.

The comprehensive plan goals specifically address the interim plan discussion regarding long-term regional solutions for sourcing water for the Bloomington-Normal urban area. In addition to the

surface water resources at Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake, the plan looks to the future of water sourcing from the Mackinaw River, and the potential for drawing water from the Mahomet Aquifer. Use of the Mackinaw is already subject to regulatory limitations needed to protect the river itself. Developing well fields to tap into the Mahomet Aquifer will require coordination with other communities for which the aquifer is already a primary water source.

Lastly, this section addresses the need to reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill. With landfill #2 scheduled to close in 2017, this subject is more important now than ever before. Through an intergovernmental agreement, the EAC acts as the Solid Waste Agency for McLean County, the City of Bloomington, and the Town of Normal. This plan recognizes the importance of the above mentioned collaboration to increase awareness of the issue and addressing recycling, household hazardous waste and composting at a regional level.

## Greenways

### *Definition*

Greenways are narrow bands of open space that provide habitats for wildlife, 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. Greenways can run along natural corridors such as streams or man-made corridors such as old rail lines.

### *McLean County Greenways Plan*

The 2009 McLean County Greenways Plan presents a vision for greenways and provides a framework for the establishment of a regional system of interconnected greenways throughout McLean County. It identifies local greenways resources, including streams, watersheds, forested areas, parks, and other open spaces that can be developed or utilized for recreational purposes or conservation. It also suggests goals and strategies for maintaining and developing open spaces in the future for recreation or conservation as well as suggesting methods and respon-

sibilities for local greenway implementation. The objectives of the plan supports the local greenways vision by identifying future priority greenways and potential greenways linkages to other regions.

High-priority greenways identified in the plan include the Constitution Trail, the Lake Bloomington/Money Creek Watershed, the Mackinaw River Watershed, the Kickapoo Creek Watershed, Sugar Creek and its tributaries, Six Mile Creek, and the Sangamon River, among others.

This Greenways Plan is a local response to the national and state greenways movement that arose from a need to address urban and environmental problems. It was also a response to meet growing demands for recreation and open space.

Implementation of the plan is the responsibility of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission along with the McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee that serves as an umbrella organization to direct

plan implementation.

The Greenways Plan also identifies strategies for acquisition, easement, and zoning for greenways. See Table 5.1 of the Greenways Plan available at [www.mcplan.org](http://www.mcplan.org).

### *Advisory Committee*

The Committee is comprised of government, not-for-profit agencies and citizens charged with local greenways advocacy and education.

Current membership includes representatives of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission, Town of Normal, City of Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois State University, Sugar Grove Nature Center, Pheasants Forever, ParkLands Foundation, Prairielands Preservation Foundation, Ecology Action Center, Audubon Society, Friends of Constitution Trail, McLean County Wheelers, Bloomington Cycle and Fitness, and Good To Go.

### Ecology Action Center

The Ecology Action Center is a not-for-profit environmental agency with a mission to inspire and assist residents of McLean County in creating, strengthening and preserving a healthy local environment. EAC is a central resource for environmental education, information, environmental advocacy and environmental technical assistance within McLean County.

Since 1971 and the origin of Operation Recycle, the EAC has grown into a local environmental resource and educational center that is a leader in solid waste and residential recycling, stormwater education, storm drain stenciling, and various other environmental and ecological programs and initiatives. The agency also publishes regular newsletters on the local environment and does an extensive ecological educational outreach to local elementary and high schools.

The EAC sponsors residential electronics and computer recycling, household hazardous waste events, water monitoring and testing, distribution of rain barrels, and in-

struction on rain garden construction. It also is responsible for writing and helping to implement the area's solid waste plan which is updated every five years. The agency also sponsors various workshops on recycling, alternative energy planning, eco-responsible lawn care and various clean water initiatives.

As a not-for-profit, the EAC relies on the financial support and backing of local organizations, grantors and business partners. It is with the assistance of these organizations and others that the EAC is also able to provide programs and environmentally-responsible resources. Some EAC sponsors are: Center for Sustainable Community, Friends of Kickapoo Creek, John Wesley Powell Audubon Society, Vision 2020 Bloomington-Normal, Sugar Grove Nature Center, Park-Lands Foundation and Wild Ones-Illinois Prairie Chapter.

The EAC also is a member and works in concert with the Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake Watershed Management Oversight Committee to improve and protect not only the watersheds of the two city reservoirs but other wet-

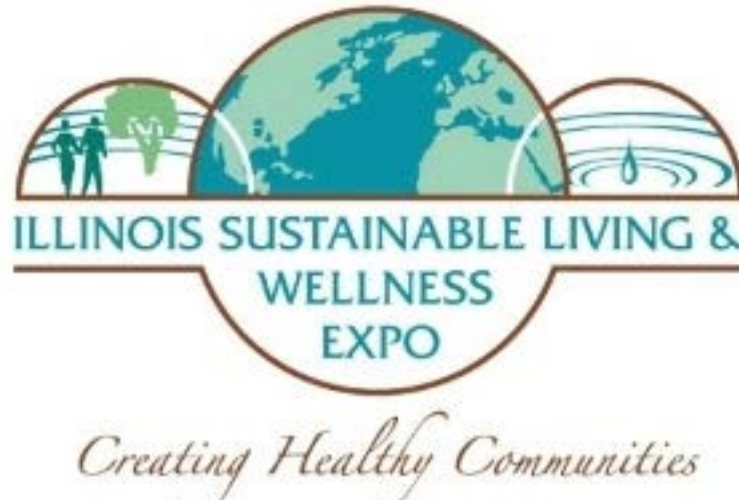
lands and streams that feed these important water sources. The McLean County Soil and Water District serves as agency liaison for this important group who assists in the updating and implementation of local watershed plans and initiatives.

The EAC also sits on the McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee, which is responsible for assisting in the implementation of the Regional Greenways Plan. The Center is an active partner with the Heartland Community College Green Institute that supports a wide-range of campus programs related to sustainability, energy renewables and conservation and other environmental technologies.

Besides local governments, the agency also partners with Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, McLean County Health Department, and Home Sweet Home Ministries. Statewide partnerships include: Illinois Recycle Association, Illinois Green Business association, Illinois Environmental Council and Faith In Place.



Sample EAC Programs: YARD SMART WEEK



Sustainable EXPO



Sugar Creek Cleanup Day

## NE-1. Protect and conserve the community's vital natural resources.

### NE-1.1 Identify and protect sensitive environmental areas and promote conservation of habitats and native species.

#### METRICS

- Comprehensive natural resource database
- Density (population/square mile)  
↑

NE-1.1a Maintain an updated regional Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Database on bodies of water, floodplains, flora and fauna and other environmentally sensitive areas. *MCRPC, ongoing*

NE-1.1b Identify linkages between environmentally sensitive areas in and around the urban area. *Greenways Committee, MCRPC, short*

NE-1.1c Encourage development in the urban core to alleviate development pressures on farmland. *Bloomington Community Development, ongoing*

NE-1.1d Carefully consider the impact of development projects on environmentally sensitive areas. Utilize the database to inform the environment aspects during the development review process. *Bloomington Community Development, ongoing*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

Regional Greenways committee, Municipalities, Local universities, Audubon Society, Parklands Foundation

#### Natural Resource Inventory

Harmonious coexistence of natural and built environments begins with a good understanding of our natural resources. In an effort to provide the environmental data that can form a basis for local planning and development review process, the McLean County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) created a comprehensive Natural Resources Inventory for McLean County.

The goal of this inventory is effective integration of nature into the man-made environment by compiling the natural resources of our County in a usable format and interpreting the findings. While an inventory at the parcel level might be quite useful, this county-wide GIS based Natural Resources Inventory is, by necessity, more generalized.

The data is gathered from a host of public sources including the Illinois State Geological Survey (ISGS), the National Soil Survey and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. MCRPC has compiled this data, along with additional data generated in-house in an interactive map format that enables users to query, locate and analyze a variety of natural resources.

The "Natural Resource Inventory" application is available via the [www.McGIS.org](http://www.McGIS.org) website and includes resources such as lakes and streams, flood zones, wetlands, aquifers, soils, slopes, watersheds, hydrology, bedrock geology, surficial geology, coal resources, wind resources and the natural areas in the County. Data gathering for this project is a work in progress. The application will be enhanced with additional layers of data as they become available.

## NE-1.2 Establish a greenway standard to protect the streams and high-priority bodies of water in the urbanized area.

### METRICS

- Flood plain remapped
- Structural barriers in the floodplain ↓
- Miles of stream bank restored ↑
- Levels of pollutants (nitrate and phosphorus) and sedimentation in Evergreen Lake and Lake Bloomington ↓
- Monitor Sugar Creek and Kickapoo Creek for ammonia, phosphorous and dissolved oxygen.

### PARTNER AGENCIES

Engineering firms, Major organizations with a stake in the remapping effort (ex: Illinois Wesleyan University)

NE-1.2a Implement a floodplain remapping effort in areas where the official mapped floodplain is not representative of existing conditions such as Sugar Creek along its upper reaches, and Little Kickapoo through Ireland Grove to Stone Brook Court as identified in the City’s stormwater master plan. *Bloomington Public Works, short-medium*

NE-1.2b [upon completion of NE 1.2a] Utilize the updated floodplain map and GIS software to create a database of structures (houses, fences or other features that could impede the flow) encroaching on floodplains. *Greenways Committee, Bloomington Public Works, short-medium*

NE-1.2c [Upon completion of NE 1.2b] Work with the property owners to remove or retrofit the encroaching structures. This can be achieved by establishing a cost share program using the City’s stormwater funds. *Bloomington Public Works, short-medium*

NE-1.2d Implement streambank restoration projects in the areas of moderate to severe erosion identified in the City’s Stormwater Master Plan. Conservation easements can be an effective tool to achieve this objective. *Bloomington Public Works, short-medium*

NE-1.2e Create regulations to protect the riparian corridor identified as the conservation zone in the figure . Ensure that these areas meet the flood control and water quality needs while accommodating maintenance vehicles and pedestrian access. *Bloomington Public Works, short-medium*

### Conservation Zones

The intent of the conservation land use is to protect the riparian buffers. Riparian areas are the green ribbons of trees, shrubs, and grasses growing along water-courses. They serve as a buffer between the water body and the land based systems protecting from runoff by providing filtration, bank stability, recharge, attenuation, volume reduction, and shading. In the process:

- These buffers reduces pollution, minimize erosion, control flooding and provide natural stormwater management.
- These greenways provide aquatic and terrestrial habitat.
- They enhance bike/pedestrian linkages by providing connections between multiple neighborhoods, maintaining a continuous path along a stream while minimizing roadway crossings.

The purpose of the conservation land use designation is to ensure protection and proper functioning of these riparian areas in the future growth areas. The right of way (ROW) widths of the conservation zone is based on the drainage areas guidelines in the City’s draft storm water master plan.

Drainage Area in Acreage	ROW widths
<80	50'
80-160	75'
160-320	100'
320-640	125'
640-1280	160'
1280-2000	175'
>2000	200' (Minimum).

For drainage areas with over 2,000 acres, actual ROW should be based on engineering analysis of floodplain width, existing wetlands and pedestrian corridor needs. Also see Future Growth and Landuse chapter.

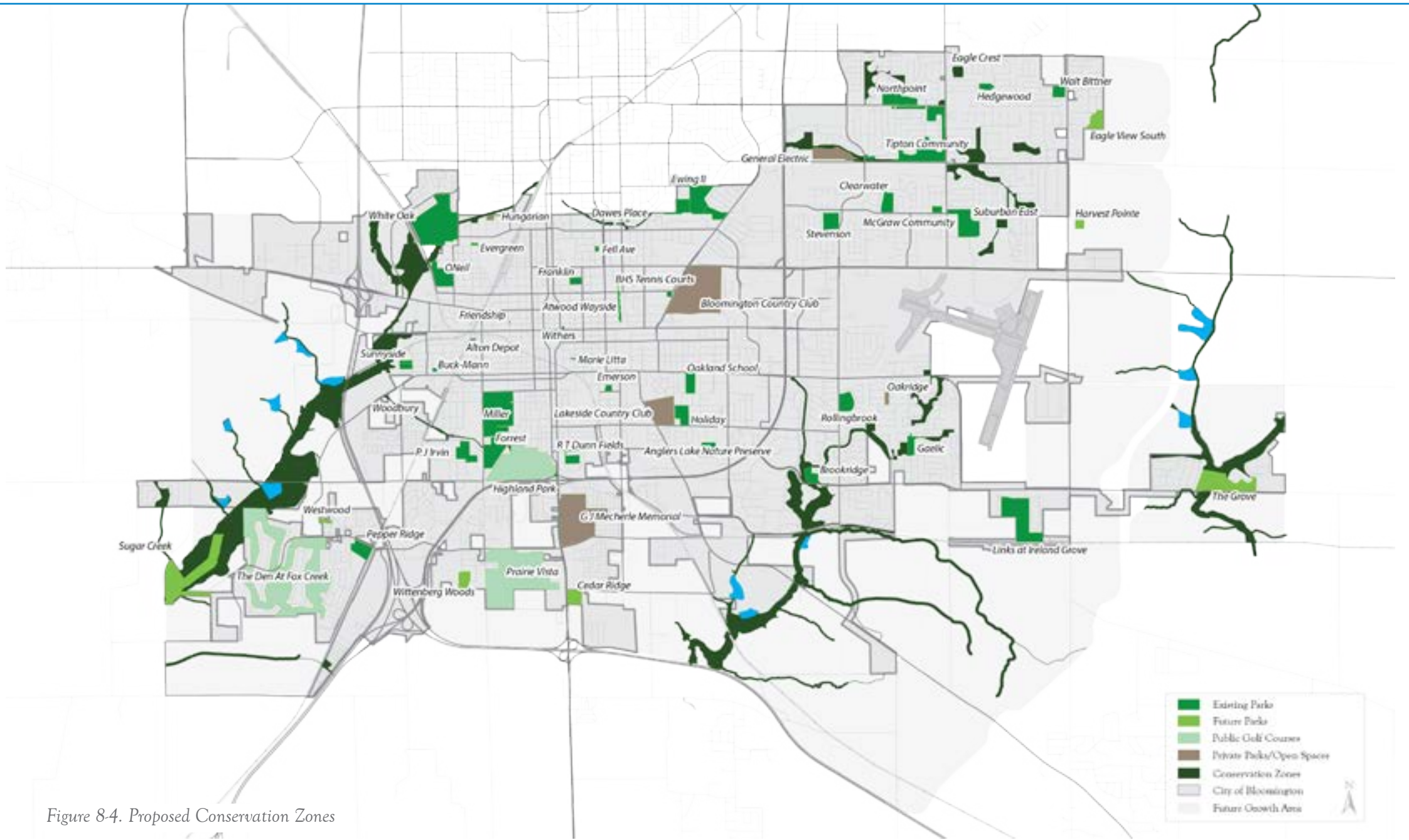


Figure 8-4. Proposed Conservation Zones

## Relevant Discussion and Examples from the City's DRAFT STORMWATER MASTER PLAN

### Snapshot of Storm Infrastructure

- 46 dry bottom detention ponds totaling 60+ acres
- 27 wet bottom detention ponds totaling over 150 acres and 2.5 miles of shoreline
- 300 privately owned detention ponds; about 75% of them under 0.5 acres

### Key Definitions

**Greenways** are defined based on the impacts on the stormwater and the multi-use needs. It includes riparian corridors, floodplain/floodway, access for maintenance vehicles and staff, pedestrian/bicycle linkages, allows for regional stormwater detention and provides wetland and stormwater quality enhancements.

**Level of Service** is defined as storm and sanitary sewers flowing freely without placing a burden on property owners by way of frequent surface flooding or basement backups.

### Issues

- Issues with flooding: floodplain is not contained within the channel corridor; land use changes and development altered the peak flow rates and flood plain elevations; many structures built within the stream corridor and often within the easement
- Outdated flood plain maps do not reflect the current conditions on the ground.
- Undersized sewer infrastructure: Deteriorating pipes/manholes; drainage channels not centered within the easement; maintenance difficult or impossible due to limited widths of the easements

- The bottoms of both public and private dry ponds have become difficult to maintain due to lack of underdrains/outlet structures, clogged under drains, accumulated sediments.
- Erosion along the shorelines and nuisance due to vegetation

### Key Recommendations

- Implement floodplain remapping in the areas where official floodplain is not representative of the existing conditions. Use the new data to remove encroachments in the floodway.
- Conduct streambank inventory. Implement streambank restoration projects. In areas where the channel is too deep or too constrained to access, explore the feasibility of a dual open/closed conveyance system.
- Implement City-wide detention pond inspection program for both public and private ponds
- Establish a shoreline stabilization program for wet bottom detention ponds assuming a 20 year maintenance cycle. Encourage naturalized shorelines.

### For Future Development

- Evaluate the appropriate corridor width for greenway easement/ROW acquisition.
- Utilize regional stormwater detention basins instead of smaller basins. These publicly owned ponds would be much more efficient than the many smaller public and private ponds.



*Good and Bad Examples of Greenways  
Source: City of Bloomington Stormwater Master Plan*



## NE-2. Create a park and green space system that protects the environment and provides for a variety of active and passive recreational activities for current and future residents of Bloomington.

### NE-2.1 Increase the diversity, quality, and quantity of tree cover and greenery throughout the City.

#### METRICS

- # of trees ↑
- # of trees along major corridors ↑
- % of each tree type (goal - no more than 6% per type)
- % of native trees ↑
- Regional GIS database of urban forestry
- # of prairie patches in parks and public areas ↑

NE-2.1a Achieve diversity in urban forestry. Plant more native trees. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

NE-2.1b Follow best practices in tree spacing and maintenance to ensure their long-term health. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

NE-2.1c Encourage site-appropriate tree planting. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

NE-2.1d Expand the City's landscaping ordinance to include an acceptable plant list and an invasive plant list. *Bloomington Community Development, short*

NE-2.1e Create a 50/50 tree program where the City and the citizens can split the cost of planting trees. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

NE-2.1f Encourage rain gardens on private properties. *Bloomington Community Development, ongoing*

NE-2.1g Create a GIS database of urban forestry in conjunction with the Town of Normal. Such information will help plan with long-range urban forestry planning and avoid problems like the Emerald Ash Borer. *MCRPC, short*

### NE-2.2 Encourage the use of native prairie plantings.

NE-2.1a Create prairie habitats, where practical, in City-owned parks. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

NE-2.1b Use passive natural parks to highlight Illinois natural prairie ecosystem. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, ongoing*

NE-2.1c Install interpretive signs to help educate the public on the importance of the native prairie plantings. Tipton Trails can be a good pilot project. *Bloomington Parks and Recreation, short*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

Developers, Homeowners, Town of Normal, ISU, Audubon Society, EAC, Illinois Prairie Wildones

## Urban Forestry

Urban forests provide enormous environmental, social, and economic benefits. In addition to aesthetics, urban forests conserve natural ecosystems and sustain clean air and water. The need for effective planning and implementation of urban forestry is becoming more apparent in a nation that is increasingly focusing its attention on serious environmental challenges like climate change. In recent years, urban forestry research has documented and quantified a variety of benefits from trees. These include:

- stormwater runoff filtering;
- soil stabilization;
- filtering of some types of air pollution;
- urban heat island mitigation;
- reduced building energy consumption (through tree shading and wind breaks); and
- improved mental health and social interaction for residents, particularly in densely developed areas

Considering the benefits associated with the urban forestry and the unique needs of each community, the regulations to protect the urban forestry should respond to such needs. The objectives identified in this plan are in response to the needs of Bloomington's urban forestry.



## Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is a catch-all term for a variety of methods of reducing the harmful effects of stormwater runoff by using or mimicking natural processes. The U.S. EPA identifies several such measures including:

- **Downspout disconnection** refers to the rerouting of rooftop drainage pipes to drain rainwater to rain barrels, cisterns, or permeable areas instead of the storm sewer. Downspout disconnection stores stormwater and/or allows stormwater to infiltrate into the soil. This simple practice may have particularly great benefits in cities with combined sewer systems
- **Rainwater harvesting systems** collect and store rainfall for later use. When designed appropriately, rainwater harvesting systems slow and reduce runoff and provide a source of water. These systems may be particularly attractive in arid regions where they can reduce demands on increasingly limited water supplies.
- **Rain gardens** are shallow, vegetated basins that collect and absorb runoff from rooftops, sidewalks, and streets. Rain gardens mimic natural hydrology by infiltrating and evapotranspiring runoff. Rain gardens are versatile features that can be installed in almost any unpaved space.
- **Bioswales** are vegetated, mulched, or xeriscaped channels that provide treatment and retention as they move stormwater from one place to another. Vegetated swales slow, infiltrate, and filter stormwater flows. As linear features, vegetated swales are particularly suitable along streets and parking lots.
- **Permeable pavements** are paved surfaces that infiltrate, treat, and/or store rainwater where it falls. Permeable pavements may be constructed from pervious concrete, porous asphalt, permeable interlocking pavers, and several other materials. These pavements are particularly cost effective where land values are high and where flooding or icing is a problem.
- **Green streets and alleys** integrate green infrastructure elements into the street and/or alley design to store, infiltrate, and evapotranspire stormwater. Permeable pavement, bioswales, planter boxes, and trees are among the many green infrastructure features that may be woven into street or alley design.
- **Green roofs** are covered with growing media and vegetation that enable rainfall infiltration and evapotranspiration of stored water. Green roofs are particularly cost effective in dense urban areas where land values are high and on large industrial or office buildings where stormwater management costs may be high.
- **Land conservation:** Protecting open spaces and sensitive natural areas within and adjacent to cities can mitigate the water quality and flooding impacts of urban stormwater while providing recreational opportunities for city residents. Natural areas that are particularly important in addressing water quality and flooding include riparian areas, wetlands, and steep hillsides.

## NE-3. Reduce environmental pollutants.

### NE-3.1 Identify and reduce air pollutants.

#### METRICS

- Greenhouse gas emissions per capita ↓
- Public transit ridership ↑

NE-3.1a Work to attract and provide incentives for wind, solar, geothermal, biofuel, and other types of renewable energy development. *EAC, ongoing*

NE-3.1b Expand and improve the City's public transportation network. *Connect Transit, short*

NE-3.1c Expand and improve the City's network of trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, and other walking and bicycling infrastructure. *Bloomington Public Works, ongoing*

NE-3.1d While considering new development opportunities with other public and private entities, consider the environmental impacts (oil drilling, hydraulic fracturing, or other fossil fuel production projects have an impact on the region). *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

NE-3.1e Maintain a greenhouse gas inventory and develop a climate action plan. *EAC, short-medium*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCRPC, Connect Transit, EAC, Greenways Committee, IDOT, Local bike advocacy groups

### NE-3.2 Identify and reduce water pollutants.

#### METRICS

- Nitrate and phosphorus levels in Lake Bloomington and Evergreen ↓

NE-3.2a Adopt and implement the recommendations of the proposed 2014 Stormwater and Sanitary Sewer Master Plans to reduce the impact of stormwater and wastewater on local bodies of water. *Bloomington Public Works, short/ongoing*

NE-3.2b Increase the use of green infrastructure. *Bloomington Public Works, ongoing*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

EAC, McLean County Greenways Committee

### NE-3.3 Identify and reduce light and noise pollutants.

NE-3.3a For areas with light pollution issues, identify appropriate action for mitigation. *Bloomington Public Works, short/ongoing*

NE-3.3b Continue to control truck traffic routing to reduce transportation-related noise impacts on residential uses. *Bloomington Public Works, ongoing*

NE-3.3c Continue to minimize construction noises in residential areas. *Bloomington Public Works, ongoing*

NE-3.3d Continue to enforce existing codes to minimize noise. *Bloomington Community Development, ongoing*

## NE-4. Increase cooperation and coordination among governments, nonprofits, and businesses across the region to address shared environmental issues.

### NE-4.1 Continue to protect greenways at the regional level.

#### METRICS

- Rails to trails ↑
- Miles of greenways ↑

NE-4.1a Continue to participate on the Greenways Advisory Committee. *Bloomington Community Development & Public Works departments, ongoing*

NE-4.1b Continue to play an active role in the implementation of the Regional Greenways Plan. *Bloomington Community Development & Public Works departments, ongoing*

NE-4.1c Coordinate with railroad companies to expand the use of abandoned railroad rights-of-way for greenways and trails. *MCRPC, medium-long*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

McLean County Greenways Committee

## NE-4.2 Continue to participate in regional efforts to establish a sustainable and responsible water supply.

### METRICS

- Nitrate and phosphorus levels in Lake Bloomington and Evergreen  
↓
- Water demand estimates revised at least every 5 years

### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCRPC, MCSWCD, Mahomet Aquifer Consortium, McLean County watershed committees (Urban, Ag and Biological), Town of Normal, McLean County

NE-4.2a Continue to maintain and analyze water department data regarding municipal water supply conditions, service issues and anticipated demand by all municipal water customers. *Bloomington Water Department, ongoing*

NE-4.2b Continue to be an active partner in the Mahomet Aquifer Consortium. *Bloomington Water Department, ongoing*

NE-4.2c Continue implementation of Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake watershed plans. *Soil and Water Conservation District, ongoing*

NE-4.2d Expand watershed planning to include Sugar Creek and Kickapoo Creek. *Soil and Water Conservation District, ongoing*

NE-4.2e Schedule periodic updates for the watershed plans. *Soil and Water Conservation District, ongoing*

NE-4.2f Continue to implement streambank stabilization projects to prevent erosion and also curb nutrients from entering the streams. *Soil and Water Conservation District, ongoing*

NE-4.2g Implement programs to reduce phosphorus and other pollutants entering the streams from the urban run off. *Soil and Water Conservation District, ongoing*

NE-4.2h Increase monitoring efforts to monitor urban runoff. *Soil and Water Conservation District, ongoing*

NE-4.2i Reduce water consumption. Promote xeriscaping. *Bloomington Water Department ongoing*

### Regional Watershed Efforts

The City of Bloomington Water Department and the McLean County Regional Planning Commission continue to be involved with the Mahomet Aquifer Consortium. The City Water Department sits on the Board of Directors and Technical Advisors for the Consortium while MCRPC is invited to attend as an interested party.

The Mahomet Aquifer Consortium (MAC) was formed in 1998 by stakeholders concerned about the future longevity and health of the aquifer. The Consortium expanded its mission in 2010 to include all water resources (groundwater and surface water) in the aquifer's 15-county area. Members of the consortium include water authorities; water companies; local, county and state governments; professional groups; and interested members of the general public. MAC operates with funding from private donors and also receives funds from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Office of Water Resources. The Illinois State Geological Survey is a primary technical advisor to the MAC.

The City of Bloomington and other government representatives, along with the MCRPC are members of the Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake Watershed Management Oversight Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to periodically update and be responsible for the implementation of the Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake Watershed plans. The committee also provides a forum for proactive strategies to protect the watersheds and tributaries in order to maximize local oversight of these important supplies of water.

### NE-4.3 Increase education, awareness, and public involvement on environmental issues.

NE-4.3a Partner with area schools to educate students. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-4.3b Continue to make an effort to inform public officials on the importance of environmental issues. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-4.3c Expand awareness and outreach programs aimed at the general public. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-4.3d Include the local environmental professionals during planning of major development projects. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

#### METRICS

- Gallons of water usage/capita ↓
- Gallons of irrigation water/capita ↓
- Greenhouse gas emissions/capita ↓
- Nitrates and phosphorus in local water bodies ↓

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

School districts, Regional solid waste management committee (EAC, COB, Town of Normal, McLean County, MCRPC), McLean County Greenways Committee

### NE-5. Provide more efficient and sustainable municipal solid waste management.

#### NE-5.1 Reduce the amount of waste and toxicity going to the landfill.

NE-5.1a Continue to actively promote Bloomington's automated single-stream curbside residential recycling program for single family homes. *Bloomington Public Works department, ongoing*

NE-5.1b Investigate means to increase recycling in small businesses and apartments with more than 6 units. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-5.1c Promote zero waste community events for City events. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-5.1d Encourage recycling in public places, such as parks and Downtown, by providing necessary infrastructure. *Bloomington Public Works Department, short*

NE-5.1e Promote source reduction of household hazardous waste. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

#### METRICS

- Waste going to the landfill ↓
- Residential recycling ↑
- Commercial recycling ↑
- Zero waste community events ↑
- Household hazardous waste collection events ↑

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

Regional solid waste management committee (EAC, COB, Town of Normal, McLean County, MCRPC)

## NE-5.2 Continue to address solid waste issues at the regional level.

### METRICS

- Composting ↑
- Permanent household hazardous waste site
- Electronic recycling ↑

NE-5.2a Research methods to provide food scrap composting services to community residents. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-5.2b Work with area schools to increase recycling. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-5.2c Target recycling awareness campaigns to populations recognized as currently not being reached satisfactorily—senior citizens, lower income households, and non-homeowners. *Ecology Action Center, ongoing*

NE-5.2d Continue participation in the Regional Solid Waste Committee. *Bloomington Public Works, ongoing*

NE-5.2e Explore sustainable and innovative ways to address the waste generated in McLean County after the scheduled closure of the local landfill in 2017. *Ecology Action Center, short-medium*

NE-5.2f Explore the possibility of providing a permanent household hazardous waste collection site within McLean County. *Ecology Action Center, short-medium*

### PARTNER AGENCIES

Regional solid waste management committee (EAC, COB, Town of Normal, McLean County, MCRPC)

NE-5.2g Devise a sustainable framework for safe disposal of electronic recycling in the County. *Ecology Action Center, short-medium*

NE-5.2h Investigate sourcing during City procurement. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

## SOCIAL HEALTH (COMMUNITY WELLBEING)

Communities should be places where people of all ages and abilities can live as long as they would like. All too often, individuals find the community in which they have lived for years no longer meets their needs. Communities should support development of a wide range of accessible housing options that are close to services and available to a full range of incomes. Communities should also encourage mobility and service options. These factors ensure that as individuals age, they can access basic services and remain independent. Many of these interrelated issues are addressed throughout this plan. This section focuses on addressing the needs of all ages and abilities, behavioral health, homelessness and access to services.

The built environment can have a tremendous impact on a person's social health and overall state of mind. Creating environments that are safe and inviting can go a long way in improving the mental health and overall community well-being for Bloomington residents. According to the Human Environment-Research Lab, exposure to greenspace helps to foster an

increased sense of community and also lessens the effects of chronic mental fatigue, which reduces violence and aggressive behavior.

### *Behavioral/Mental Health*

For many people, having a mental health condition may have minimal impact on their lives. Most people can and do live independently in their own homes. However, serious mental illnesses disrupt people's ability to carry out essential aspects of daily life, such as self-care and household management. Mental illnesses may also prevent people from forming and maintaining stable relationships or cause people to misinterpret others' guidance and react irrationally. This often results in pushing away caregivers, family, and friends who may be the force keeping that person from becoming homeless. As a result of these factors and the stresses of living with a mental disorder, people with mental illnesses are much more likely to become homeless than the general population.

In McLean County, mental health is a growing concern. The Health Department's IPLAN identified mental health as one of the three major health priorities for McLean County. In May of 2015,

the McLean County Board adopted a Mental Health Action Plan in response to the serious mental illness issues in the County jail. That plan points out that the prevalence of people with serious mental illnesses in jails is three to six times higher than for the general population. Once incarcerated, they tend to stay in jail longer and upon release, are at a higher risk of returning than individuals without these disorders (recidivism).

While issues related to the jail triggered that action plan, it highlighted the complexity of mental illness and identified many consequences including homelessness, public safety and access to services. It urged breaking down the silo approach for providing services and increased collaboration among stakeholders and community leaders including the local governments, hospitals, and service providers.

The 'no wrong door' model focuses on providing training to all the agencies and organizations throughout the community, including residents, teachers, doctors, and employers to recognize the signs of a person having a mental health crisis and to provide assistance.

Facilitating care solutions for mentally ill residents is incentive

enough, but doing so in cooperation with the County and other organizations, the City of Bloomington can use its resources much more effectively. As identified in Figure 8.5, nearly 22% of all law enforcement and EMS calls were related to mental health issues. This comprehensive plan not only calls for increased training for emergency response personnel on behavioral health issues, but also recommends investigating the possibility of diverting the behavioral health calls at the dispatch center.

### *Homelessness*

The City of Bloomington is an active member in the Central Illinois Continuum of Care (COC). This group of agencies and organizations, led by PATH, play a significant role in addressing homelessness in McLean County. They provide and coordinate housing options, programs and services for veterans, families, youth and individuals facing homelessness who are dealing with issues like disabilities, health challenges, domestic violence, and unemployment.

Despite these efforts, there is unmet need. Homelessness and housing was identified as one of the five major areas of concerns

that needs to be addressed in the County's mental health action plan. The City can encourage a range of housing options along with housing-based services to help people stay in the community in the least restrictive environment possible. The City can address this need in partnership with other agencies and organizations.

Knowledge of model shelters and supportive services can help the City of Bloomington to help improve upon others' successes. These models and best practices can give a sense of the range of approaches to homelessness and stimulate new ideas. One such approach to addressing homelessness that has gained traction throughout the nation is the "Housing First" model. The state of Utah was the first to implement this model and report positive results.

This comprehensive plan encourages various City departments within Bloomington to become more involved, beyond providing support through Community Development Block Grants, in mental health and homelessness issues to not only improve the quality of life in the community but also achieve greater efficiencies.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** This program works to provide housing and supportive services to those experiencing issues such as chronic homelessness, substance abuse issues, mental illness, or chronic health challenges. The program works with tenants to assess their housing needs and permanent supportive housing allows them to stay in the housing unit for as long as they choose, provided they pay their rent, which is usually not more than 30 percent of their income. In Bloomington, Permanent Supportive Housing is provided through Mayor's Manor. This facility, located just west of Downtown has 26 efficiency units available to residents, provided that they meet the criteria of being 18 years or older, meet income requirements, and for 15 units they must meet the HUD definition of being homeless or disabled.
- **Transitional Housing:** Transitional housing aims to allow homeless individuals temporary housing and stability in order for them to work their way up to having their own housing. Unlike permanent supportive housing, transitional housing is for a shorter period of time, usually lasting at most two years. Individuals in this type of program could be those who have experienced sudden, unexpected homelessness, or are victims of domestic violence. Mid-Central Community Action in west Bloomington offers a transitional housing program that provides homeless families housing for up to 24 months, along with case management, provided they are working full-time, or attending school and working at least part time.
- **Emergency Shelter:** An emergency shelter provides a temporary place for individuals to reside while experiencing homelessness. These facilities typically offer beds to homeless individuals on a first-come, first-served basis. The City of Bloomington currently has two such facilities in Home Sweet Home Ministries (HSHM) and the Salvation Army. The HSHM shelter has over 90 beds, and provides services such as a case worker to assist with employment, day care, and housing, among others. The Salvation Army through its Safe Harbor Program allows individuals to stay for 8 weeks. This program requires that individuals work towards overcoming their homelessness in that time and provides services including drug and alcohol treatment, mental health referrals and training for job counseling.
- **Recovery Housing:** Recovery housing is geared towards those individuals that are recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, or are experiencing mental illness, providing them a positive environment from which they can work towards bettering their lives. Chestnut Health Systems in Bloomington offers services such as Adolescent Addiction Treatment Services as case management for those dealing with mental illness, family therapy, domestic violence counseling, and community support services.
- **Seasonal Housing:** The McLean County Department of Human Services works to provide shelter to homeless individuals throughout the winter through offering a warming shelter at its facility. Seasonal housing is a program that could be further investigated to provide housing to homeless residents during the summer and winter months when the homeless face further challenges of the harshness of outdoor conditions during those periods.

## HOMELESSNESS ISSUES IN MCLEAN COUNTY

### DEFINITIONS

#### Chronic Homelessness:

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development defines chronic homelessness as: “Either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.”

#### Transitional Homelessness:

Individuals generally enter the shelter system for only one stay and for a short period. Such persons are likely to be younger, are probably recent members of the precariously housed population and have become homeless because of some catastrophic event, and have been forced to spend a short time in a homeless shelter before making a transition into more stable housing. Over time, transitionally homeless individuals will account for the

majority of persons experiencing homelessness given their higher rate of turnover.

#### Episodic Homeless:

Individuals who frequently shuttle in and out of homelessness are known as episodically homeless. They are most likely to be young, but unlike those in transitional homelessness, episodically homeless individuals often are chronically unemployed and experience medical, mental health, and substance abuse problems.

### CONTINUUM OF CARE

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is an initiative from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide aid to state and local municipalities as well as nonprofits with the goal of ending homelessness.

One such tool for achieving this goal is through Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs). The intent of CDBGs is to provide states and municipalities with the means



*A tent city on the west side of Bloomington*

to offer affordable housing to low and moderate income individuals and families, along with expanded economic opportunities. These CDBGs are supervised locally by the City of Bloomington Community Development Department.

The local coordination for the Continuum of Care is handled by Providing Access to Help (PATH) through the Central Illinois Continuum of Care. The McLean

County Continuum of Care grew out of a decision to pool resources among counties in the region to be able to make a stronger case for HUD funding. There are currently 11 counties that participate in this regional Continuum of Care. Each of these counties has a local continuum that meets and the entire continuum meets bimonthly. Due to the increase in funds from HUD to assist people at the local level, along

with an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness, the number of people assisted by HUD grants through the McLean County Continuum of Care has grown from 806 in 2003 to 1,813 in 2014.

## CWB-1. End chronic homelessness and reduce the severity of situational homelessness.

### CWB-1.1 Reduce homelessness through programs for prevention.

#### METRICS

- # of chronically homeless individuals in the City (zero or close to zero)
- Length of stay for situational homeless ↓
- Occupancy of homeless shelters ↓
- # of permanent supportive housing ↑
- Recidivism ↓
- Supportive programs for the homeless ↑

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCRPC, Local universities, IWU Action Research Center, Illinois Prairie Community Foundation, United Way, Local faith community, Homeless shelters (HSHM, Salvation Army), HUD, IHDA,

CWB-1.1a The City of Bloomington should actively partner with groups such as McLean County Continuum of Care and Human Service Council to address factors contributing to homelessness. *McLean County Continuum of Care, short*

CWB-1.1b Continue to increase focus on prevention of homeless by making funds available that would alleviate the need for emergency shelter for families and individuals with income < 80% of median family income. This can also help alleviate foreclosures. *McLean County Continuum of Care, short*

CWB-1.1c Foster public-private partnerships to make permanent housing available for the extremely low income population where there is the most need. *McLean County Continuum of Care, medium-long*

CWB-1.1d Establish a housing first/rapid re-housing model to prevent homelessness. *McLean County Continuum of Care, short*

CWB-1.1e Obtain local research showing savings/quality of life improvements for the above mentioned programs. *McLean County Continuum of Care, short*

#### PATH

Throughout its over 40 year history in the Bloomington-Normal area, Providing Access to Help (PATH) has continually expanded the services it offers to the community including crisis response, services for seniors, and coordinating efforts to combat homelessness.

Through its presence as the local affiliate for the Illinois 2-1-1 crisis help line, PATH is able to offer 24/7 assistance to individuals who are in need of health and human services. PATH serves over 30 counties throughout the state providing adult protective services to seniors with disabilities in McLean and Livingston County. In addition to its work with the senior population, PATH works to connect homeless individuals and families with temporary emergency shelter, as well as permanent housing.

PATH has been able to continue this work over time through grant funding from various sources to provide for different segments of the population. A grant received in 1985 allowed them to provide outreach to older adults age 60 and over. In the ensuing years, PATH has expanded its services to the senior population to include in-home counseling, elder abuse prevention, and caregiver support, among others.

PATH received an additional grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1998. It was used for providing outreach to the homeless in McLean County. Currently, PATH coordinates efforts for the homeless throughout the county and operates three homeless service programs.

## CWB-2. Create a lifelong community that meets the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.

### CWB-2.1 Promote the welfare of older adults and persons with disabilities to foster maximum independence so they can continue to be an integral part of the community.

#### METRICS

- Access to social services ↑
- # of engagement events with older adults ↑
- Population served by the senior programs ↑

CWB-2.1a Ensure that affordable and safe transportation services are available, especially for older adults and persons with disabilities. *Connect Transit & MCRPC, short*

CWB-2.1b Collaborate with community organizations to identify and remove barriers to mobility and access to public and private facilities and services. *LIFE-CIL & MCRPC, ongoing*

CWB-2.1c Analyze the needs of older adults for possible engagement opportunities, new or additional projects, programs, and activities for this growing segment of the community. *ECIAAAA & MCRPC, short*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

MCRPC, Connect Transit, YWCA, YMCA, Advocate Bromenn Senior Services, Faith in Action, Homes of Hope, LIFE CIL, Prairie Legal, MARC First, PATH, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (ECIAAAA), City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, Mc-Lean County



Seniors Playing pool at the senior center

#### LIFELONG COMMUNITY

Providing the type of community where people want to grow up and grow old is essential for any City, particularly those with an aging population. There are many steps the City can take to ensure that Bloomington is the kind of City that will be appealing to residents as they grow older and retire. Ensuring housing and neighborhood environments that are accessible and walkable for seniors, along with the mobility to be able to continue to be active members of society can go a long way in attracting and retaining the senior population in the community.

The City of Bloomington has many organizations working towards providing for the aging population within the community. Groups such as the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, Mid Central Community Action and PATH are committed to seeing that Bloomington continues to be a City where older adults can continue to reside and live an active lifestyle. The City, collaborating with these organizations and others, can work towards seeing Bloomington is the kind of City where senior citizens will want to live and to have the kind of life that allows them to be active, involved members of society.

One of the greatest keys to achieving this goal is connectivity. Creating neighborhoods that are walkable and accessible to public transportation is essential to allowing seniors to have access to facilities and services including neighborhood retail, pharmacies, and appointments. Designing for connectivity also allows for greater opportunities for social interactions for older adults, providing for their behavioral health. In examining planning for their own aging population, the Atlanta Regional Commission established seven lifelong community planning principles; connectivity, pedestrian and transit access, neighborhood retail and services, social interaction, dwelling types, healthy living, and consideration for existing residents.

## CWB-3. Develop a coordinated and efficient system of services that addresses comprehensive needs of children, families and communities.

### CWB-3.1 Coordinate access to social services.

#### METRICS

- One-stop shop database of resources, data, programs and services
- # of social service agencies to receive cross-training ↑
- # of Community Schools ↑
- Funding for 211

CWB-3.1a Enhance public transportation access to the social service sites. Identify and remove any public transportation barriers to those sites. *MCRPC, ongoing*

CWB-3.1b Enhance the viability and long term sustainability of McLean County's 211 system. *PATH, medium*

CWB-3.1c Investigate community schools as a model for increasing access to social services within neighborhoods (also see Education). *United Way, short*

CWB-3.1d Promote creation of a one stop shop database and website for all available social services in the County. *PATH, medium-long*

CWB-3.1e Foster cross-training for all the social service agencies. *PATH, ongoing*

#### PARTNER AGENCIES

Center for Human Services, MCRPC, Connect Transit, school districts, YWCA, Marcfirst, Advocate Bromenn, Faith in Action, Homes of Hope, Connect Transit, SHOW Bus, YWCA, YMCA, LIFE CIL

#### Pay for Success

Pay for Success is an initiative similar to that of the Social Impact Bond Program in the United Kingdom. It serves as a way to build public-private partnerships between sectors, as well as to spend public dollars in the most effective way possible. With the "Pay for Success" model, private investment is made towards a particular goal or objective with an agreement with the public sector that if the goal or objective is achieved, the investment will be reimbursed. This program can be a very efficient method in conserving public dollars by only devoting funds to those investments that have been proven to be effective. In 2014, the City of Chicago, along with private partners announced a pay for success program of nearly \$17 million to provide early childhood education to over 2,600 children.

## Summary of the County-Wide Health Plans

### Health Department's IPLAN

The McLean County Community Health Plan, completed in 2012 with a five-year horizon period, established the top health priorities in McLean County. These priorities are established through an analysis of seven criteria: Demographic and Socioeconomic Indicators, General Health and Access to Care Indicators, Maternal and Child Health Indicators, Chronic Disease Indicators, Infectious Disease Indicators, Environmental Health/Occupational Health/Injury Controls, Sentinel Events (e.g., Infants Hospitalized for Dehydration, Children Hospitalized for Asthma, Adults Hospitalized for Uncontrolled Hypertension)

Through an analysis of these criteria, the plan identified obesity, mental health and oral health as the top three health priorities for McLean County. Obesity and its related adverse health effects were selected as one of the top priorities for the county. It established that 62.5% of adults in McLean County were overweight or obese. This plan looks to address both obesity and mental health in ways that will improve the quality of life for Bloomington residents. The City can work with the McLean County Health Department and others to ensure the community is more walkable and bikeable and provide healthy food options to improve the health of citizens. Collaborating with the McLean County Board and its Mental Health Action Plan will allow for coordination among local municipalities and organizations.

### County's Mental Health ACTION Plan

The McLean County Mental Health Action Plan initially grew from an analysis that was conducted to assess mental health conditions within the McLean County jail. This

assessment provided recommendations to improve the jail environment for those in the jail system with mental health issues and to create a greater access to services for those individuals once they have served their sentence and are back in the community. In 2014, the McLean County Board Executive Committee formed two working groups, one which would assess the mental health needs in McLean County and the other identifying best practices to resolving these issues. The action plan sets out short and long-term goals for achieving its objectives, along with establishing timelines and lead agencies for each of the next steps.

The action plan outlines five areas of focus for improving the overall mental health of residents in McLean County:

1. **Collaboration and Coordination:** This section encourages all sectors working together and advocates the “no wrong door” model for addressing mental health. Residents could use any number of avenues in order to get the assistance that they need.
2. **Access to Medical Services and Medical Management:** This chapter focuses on improving access to medication and medical services for those suffering from mental illness and of the need to recruit additional behavioral health professionals to the community to address the behavioral health needs of children, adolescents, and adults.
3. **Juvenile Services (21 and under):** highlights a wellness recovery action plan (WRAP) for different youth age groups, with action plans from birth to 5 years, 5 to 12 years, 11 to 15 years, 14 to 21 years, and post-high school. The WRAPs identify measures that can be taken from prevention and identification, to intervention, to possible institutionalization for someone experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

4. **Housing:** The plan identifies two main concerns for housing to those suffering from mental illness.

- a. To provide access to clean, safe, and sanitary housing on a transitional/temporary, seasonal, or permanent basis, and
- b. Ensure the availability to supportive housing.

5. **Crisis Services:** Needs assessed by the County Board Mental Health Advisory Committee for crisis services include enhanced crisis services such as a crisis response team with the necessary knowledge and skills required to effectively respond to crisis situations. It also calls for a 10-14 bed crisis stabilization program for adults .

The Mental Health Action Plan provides action plans for each of the areas of focus, outlining short-term and long-term objectives. Such action items for the Housing section include seeking additional housing vouchers for behavioral health clients, forming a coordinated system for reviewing applications for housing assistance to maximize resources, and construction of a sufficient number of housing units – permanent and transitional to meet different levels of need.

## CWB-3.2 Support coordination and integration of behavioral health services for all residents.

### METRICS

- # of individuals through Mental Health First Aid ↓ ↑
- # of poor mental health days in the last 30 days based on behavioral health surveillance information per Healthy People 2020 ↓
- # of emergency room visits for a mental health issue ↓
- Suicide rate ↓
- # of police officers and firefighters with public safety certification ↑
- # of police/Fire/EMS calls related to behavioral health issues ↓

CWB-3.2a The City should actively participate at the county level on behavioral health training. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

CWB-3.2b The City should participate in the County review of behavioral health data for the City, assess local resources and needs for behavioral health. *City of Bloomington, ongoing*

CWB-3.2c Strengthen relationships between behavioral health providers and local schools. *McLean County Health Department, short*

CWB-3.2d Provide “Crisis Intervention Training” for those in law enforcement and public safety to help them better understand symptoms of mental illness. *City of Bloomington, Bloomington Police Department, Bloomington Fire Department, ongoing*

CWB-3.2e Investigate the possibility of screening the behavioral health related calls and dispatching a crisis intervention team. This can be done more efficiently in collaboration with the County. *City of Bloomington, Bloomington Police Department, Bloomington Fire Department, Short-Medium*

### PARTNER AGENCIES

McLean County, McLean County Health Department, school districts, PATH, Continuum of Care, Chestnut Health Systems, MCWC, YMCA

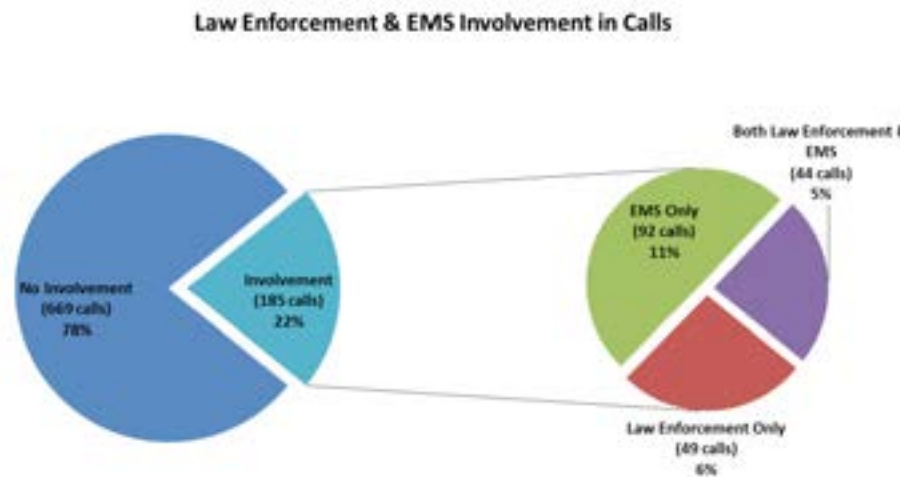
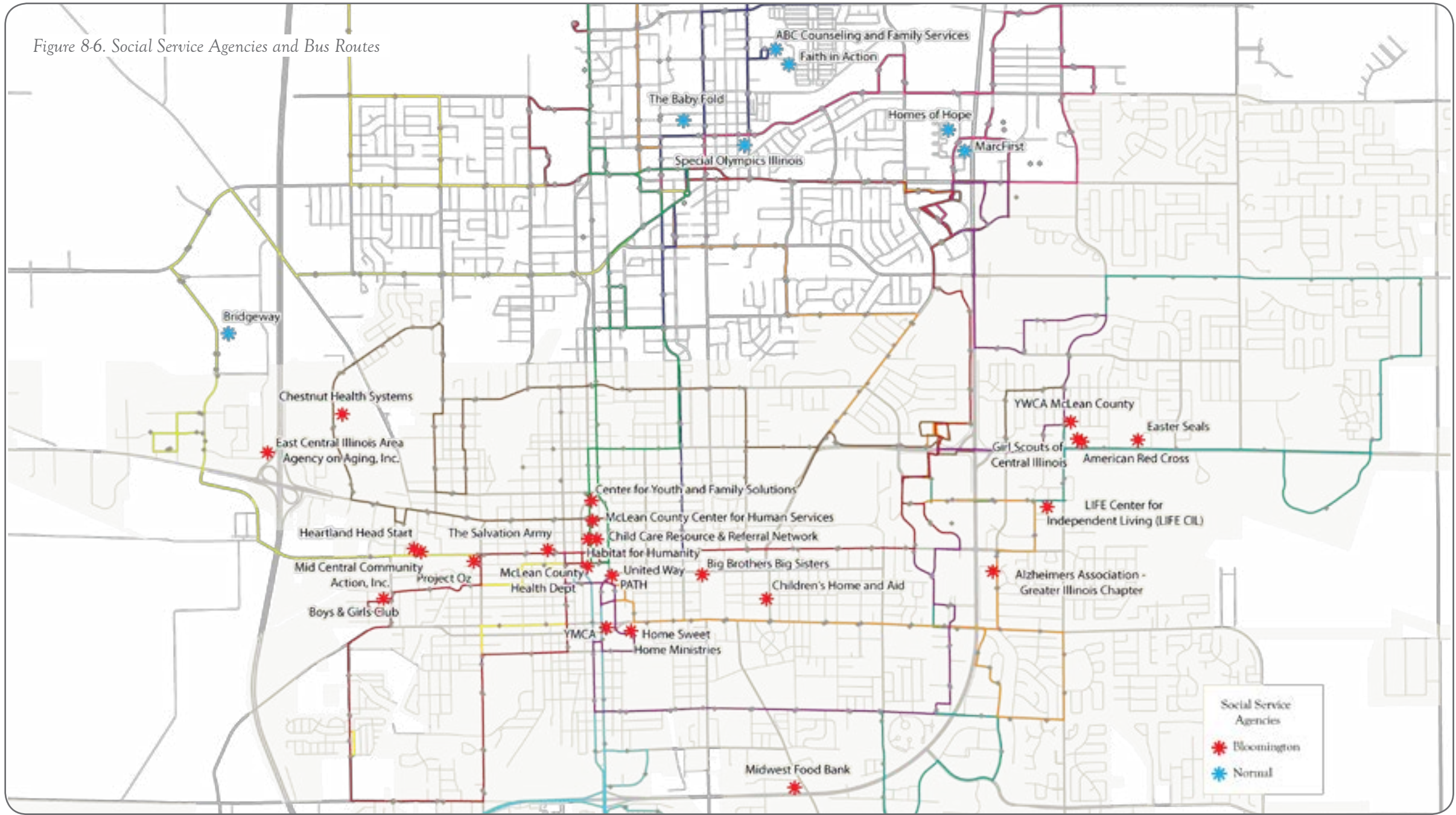


Figure 8-5. Source: McLean County Mental Health Action Plan

The McLean County Mental Health Action Plan notes that 22% of all calls to law enforcement and EMS in the second quarter of FY 2015 were in response to a behavioral health issue. Of those calls, 11% involved EMS only, 6% involved only law enforcement, and 5% necessitated the involvement of both law enforcement and EMS. This data shows the strong connection between health and public safety and the impact that it has on the Bloomington Police and Fire Departments. The establishment of a local crisis intervention team, filled with individuals with the knowledge and skills to handle a behavioral health crisis would both provide relief in these matters to the police and fire departments, as well as providing the proper care to those experiencing mental illness. Changes in the local dispatch system to allow for calls relating to behavioral health to be directed to the crisis intervention team would assist in achieving this objective.

Figure 8-6. Social Service Agencies and Bus Routes





## CWB-3.3 Education and Awareness.

### METRICS

- # of outreach events ↑
- # of people reached ↑

CWB-3.3a Increase awareness on homelessness issues. *Continuum of Care, ongoing*

CWB-3.3b Coordinate with existing agencies to raise awareness on issues around poverty with programs such as the poverty simulation. *PATH, Continuum of Care, short*

CWB-3.3c Coordinate with McLean County to bring awareness to behavioral health issues. *City of Bloomington & MCHD, short*

### PARTNER AGENCIES

ISU, University of Illinois Extension, YMCA, McLean County Wellness Coalition, OSF, Advocate BroMenn, McLean County Health Department

#### Mental Health First Aid

The Mental Health First Aid Program works to train people how to identify the signs of someone struggling with a behavioral health crisis and directing them to the proper resources to provide them the help that they need. It provides courses for providing aid to both children and adults and has a five-step action plan for reaching the desired outcome. The McLean County Center for Human Services, in partnership with other entities and local organizations, is currently providing this training to the community for those who want to learn how to identify the signs of mental illness and to provide help to those that are suffering from it.



**Sometimes, first aid isn't a bandage, or CPR, or calling 911.  
Sometimes, first aid is YOU!**

You are more likely to encounter someone experiencing an emotional or mental crisis than someone having a heart attack. The Mental Health First Aid class teaches a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to people with the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or crisis, and connect them with the appropriate care. Mental Health First Aid is for anyone — parents, neighbors, students, first responders, teachers, leaders of faith communities, human resources professionals, and caring citizens.

### BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Join the Mental Health First Aid Collaborative for: **Adult Mental Health First Aid Training**

**Date:** Thursday, May 21st from 8:00 a.m. until 4:45 p.m.

**Location:** McLean County Health Department, 200 West Front Street, Bloomington

**Fee:** \$10.00 (includes book and lunch)

Lunch provided by the All Our Kids Early Childhood Network

Course materials and snacks made possible by a grant from the Women to Women Giving Circle of the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation

Course instructors provided courtesy of McLean County Center for Human Services

**Register at:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/H73CQRH>

The Mental Health First Aid Collaborative is a partnership effort involving the McLean County Health Department, Advocate BroMenn Medical Center, McLean County Center for Human Services, Chestnut Health Systems, the Central Illinois Area Health Education Center, and the Regional Office of Education #9



