



# Community Planning Program



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

# Local Technical Assistance Program

## Application form: Community Planning program and Local Technical Assistance program

**DEADLINE:** Noon on Wednesday, June 26, 2013

This application form is online at [www.rtachicago.com/applications](http://www.rtachicago.com/applications). You may submit the form by email to [applications@rtachicago.com](mailto:applications@rtachicago.com).

Upon receipt of application, you will receive an e-mail verifying that your application has been received.

**1. Name of Applicant:**

Prairie State College

**2. Main Contact for Application (please include name, phone number and email):**

Alessandra A. Cairo  
acairo@prairiestate.edu  
708-709-3764  
Alt: 401-640-9259

**3. Type of Applicant (please check any that apply):**

Local government

Multijurisdictional group\*  $\longrightarrow$  Please list the members of the group (including government and nongovernmental organizations):

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Nongovernmental organization\*  $\longrightarrow$  Name of local government partner(s):  
City of Chicago Heights

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\*Applications submitted by multijurisdictional groups and nongovernmental organizations must include a letter indicating support from each relevant local government. See the FAQs for more information. Nongovernmental applicants are strongly encouraged to contact CMAP or the RTA prior to submitting their application to discuss their project and the demonstration of local support.

#### 4. Project Type (please check any that apply):

Please check all statements below that describe characteristics of your project. (This will help us determine whether your project is best handled by CMAP or RTA.)

- My project involves preparation of a plan.
- My project helps to implement a past plan.
- My project links land use, transportation, and housing.
- My project has direct relevance to public transit and supports the use of the existing transit system.
- My project is not directly related to transportation or land use, but implements GO TO 2040 in other ways.

#### 5. Project Location:

Please provide a brief description of the location of your project. You may include a map if that helps to describe location, but this is not required. If your project helps to implement a past plan, please include a link to that plan.

[The Prairie State College Nature Preserve and Campus Grounds project will be located at 202 S. Halstead St, Chicago Heights, IL. The project is centered on a 32-acre parcel of land which is adjacent to Joe Orr Road, Coolidge Drive and S. Halstead St and will include green infrastructure design elements throughout the campus.](#)

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[View a map of Prairie State College's campus, including the nature preserve, at http://prairiestate.edu/images/campus\\_map98.jpg.](http://prairiestate.edu/images/campus_map98.jpg)

#### 6. Project Description:

**Please tell us what you would like to do in your community, and what assistance is needed.** If you have more than one idea, please submit a separate application for each project. Please be specific, but also brief (less than two pages per project idea)—we simply want to have a basic understanding of what you want to do. CMAP and RTA staff will follow-up with you if we need any additional information to fully understand your proposed project.

(Please include any additional information that is relevant, preferably by providing links to online documents.)

[As part of its sustainability initiative, Prairie State College \(PSC\) intends to restore ecosystems in the Prairie State College Nature Preserve. This 32-acre natural area was formally dedicated by the college in 1994. Initially, it was intended to feature a fitness trail, community garden, and outdoor classroom space, as well as wildlife habitat and much needed open space for area residents. Currently, the preserve suffers from the lack of a formal management plan as well as the lack of strategies to engage students and the community. The intent of this project is to develop a formal management plan to restore and maintain the Prairie State College Nature Preserve. Additional goals are to plan for campus grounds sustainability projects \(rain gardens, rain barrels, permeable paving as future demonstration projects\) and to ensure the Preserve is integrated into the Illinois Department of Natural Resource's Millennium Reserve, Green Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision, the Calumet Stewardship Initiative, the Cook County Forest Preserve District, and others as an important open space resource.](#)

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The proposed project would provide a forum for the community to engage in open space planning, which in turn will promote and encourage the preservation of other open spaces in communities that PSC serves, forming partnerships for continued application from project success form this effort. Another unique aspect of this project is we can modify existing and create new curriculum to support this initiative, thereby training students to be future land stewards.

At a minimum, PSC will integrate the following components into the management plan:

- Elimination, control and education of the invasive species threatening the livelihood of native plants.
- Infrastructure for stormwater management to lessen the burden on city sewers and reduce the amount of rain water contributing to the periodic flooding of Coolidge Road and surrounding areas, improvements in flow of the small stream that feeds into Thorn Creek, and additional infrastructure as deemed necessary to allow the public access to the land and enhance the learning experience.
- Formal and non-formal educational components, as well as community outreach and development.
- Short and long term management goals and objectives.

The first stage of this project is to hire a consulting firm with expertise in the area of prairie and natural area restoration. These experts will be instrumental in assisting the College determine the best course of action and how to successfully manage this open space once the project is completed. In addition, this project has the potential to reach various stakeholders and numerous community members in both Cook and Will Counties.

The restoration process, in concert with the educational component, provides a unique and experiential learning opportunity for the residents in the College's district. In addition, this project addresses several components of the Go To 2040 plan.

Go To 2040 recommends the management and conservation of water and energy resources. Prairie State College's restoration project will address stormwater management by including green infrastructure recommendations to reduce flooding in and around the parking lots and adjacent streets and neighborhoods. In addition to reducing standing water in the roadways, the green infrastructure implemented at Prairie State College will serve as a model for local residents to replicate at their own place of residency, thus reducing stormwater overflow on a larger scale.

A second recommendation in the Go To 2040 plan is to expand and improve parks and open space. The proposed restoration project will provide community members in both Cook and Will counties access to open space and natural areas, green trails and a destination site. In fact, in the City of Chicago Heights' Active Transportation Plan, the Prairie State College nature preserve is already identified as a "Destination Place." This restoration project will further advance these efforts and will make the preserve even more desirable and accessible when connected to community and regional trail planning.

And finally, among other recommendations, Prairie State College's restoration plan will address go To 2040s recommendations to improve education and workforce development, as well as supporting

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economic innovation. The plan will be designed to integrate modified curriculum, green job training, volunteer opportunities, and strategic partnerships.

In conclusion, this restoration project has the ability to meet the needs and demands of many stakeholders in the surrounding communities and has the opportunity for a high impact, environmentally, economically and socially. Prairie State College requests funds to develop a comprehensive management plan for the 32-acre natural area and campus to incorporate the various components successfully.

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