Potential policy applications for regional green infrastructure — September 25, 2012

Purpose: Provide more detailed recommendations for conserving the green infrastructure network identified in the Chicago Wilderness/CMAP GIV 2.0 project.

Product: Report at ~ 25 pages, fairly high level discussion, to be complete December 2012. Multiple audiences.

Initial recommendations

- CMAP population projections
 - Background: The 2040 household and job projections released with GO TO 2040 assume a certain amount of land protection in certain places, which affects the forecasted distribution of urban activity. The locations where land protection is assumed to take place were selected based on a "natural resource score" developed by NIPC.
 - Recommendation: When the 2040 projections are updated, CMAP should use the green infrastructure data instead of the natural resource score.
- Transportation project development
 - Background: The green infrastructure network defines a minimum level of connected open space that should be planned for and maintained even with urban growth.
 Transportation projects can work against the preservation of the green infrastructure network either by direct construction impacts or by encouraging greenfield growth.
 - Recommendation: Project implementers should consider effects on the green infrastructure network as part of their normal environmental process (recommended in GO TO 2040 in major capital projects section). Three options are as follows:
 - State policy to mitigate disturbance of green infrastructure network statutory, administrative rule
 - Individual agency policy to mitigate disturbance to GI network write into design manuals, etc.
 - Project-by-project recommendations through agency consultation or agency review of
 - GIV could also be used to indicate priority areas for compensatory mitigation, as also recommended in GO TO 2040.
- Facility Planning Area review
 - Background: Again, the green infrastructure network defines a minimum level of connected open space that should be planned for and maintained even with urban growth. Sewer service is often a precondition of urban development, and this is reviewed by CMAP (as well as Illinois EPA). GO TO 2040 says that "sewer service should not be permitted in especially sensitive areas of the green infrastructure network."

- Recommendation: If a proposed sewer service area includes part of the delineated green infrastructure network, the applicant should show CMAP what measures will be used to protect that network. Both the green infrastructure network data and a description of potential protective measures could be made available to the applicant. This new step to the FPA process could be balanced by eliminating less important parts of the review (e.g., those that duplicate a review Illinois EPA already performs).
- Municipal comprehensive plans
 - Background: A number of municipalities are now undertaking green infrastructure mapping projects. They use different definitions and different datasets; this is not necessarily bad, since local data may be available in some places and local priorities may be different. At their beginnings, however, many local green infrastructure mapping projects become mired in questions about data availability, what to include, and so forth.
 - Recommendation: Promote regional green infrastructure as a minimum network of green infrastructure which can be supplemented as suitable with local data. Local priorities can be set or at least evaluated using these data. Comprehensive plans with a green infrastructure component undertaken through the LTA program should use the regional green infrastructure network as their starting point for open space protection.
- Land conservation
 - Background: Open space protection is undertaken by a number of different entities and via a number of funding programs with differing priorities. GO TO 2040 recommends alignment to protect a connected network of green infrastructure.
 - Recommendation: In general, conservation organizations should use location within the green infrastructure network as a factor in land conservation decisions (e.g., prioritizing acquisition, awarding grants for land purchase, etc.). Potential organizations include:
 - Private foundations
 - Land trusts
 - Forest preserve and conservation districts
 - Park districts