2019/2020 Local Technical Assistance and Community Planning Programs

**Application Number:** 3

**Project Title:** FoxWalk River Plan

**Applicant:** City of Aurora

**Project Description:**

The City of Aurora and CMAP have recently worked together to create the Downtown Plan that was adopted by our Council in 2017. Building upon the success of that plan, the City is in need of an updated FoxWalk Master Plan (2007) to help improve and protect the Fox River. The City's FoxWalk/Riverwalk was initially conceived as a continuous, two-level pedestrian walkway system. Since the plan's adoption many sections have been constructed. However, many sections did not come to fruition as planned for a number of reasons such as funding, ownership, and regulations.

Aurora is experiencing an amazing revitalization with expanding commercial development, riverfront and downtown redevelopment and an eclectic cultural scene. In 2019 almost 200 new residential units will be finished, companies are filling office spaces, and many new restaurants will open. Many long vacant historic buildings, some that have been vacant for decades, have been purchased by private developers who are constructing new residential units and retail/office spaces.

In addition, Downtown is continuing to become a regional arts and entertainment destination. The Paramount Theatre sees nearly 400,000 visitors each year. A new 200 seat concert space called The Venue opened in June along the Water Street Mall, and RiverEdge Park continues to draw thousands of concert goers each year to the banks of the Fox River. Downtown has proximity to the Metra Station, a new pedestrian bridge, the Fox River Trail, and the Green Mile, each of these supporting walkability and bikability in our community and region.

It is evident that more and more pedestrians, bicyclists, and canoeists/kayakers are drawn to the Downtown and many long time Aurorians are quick to point how pleased they are to see activity on the streets and the river. Now is the time to work with our partners including the Fox Valley Park District and Kane County to take another look at the 2007 FoxWalk Master Plan to focus on those missing sections that will create a truly connected pedestrian environment along the river. A new plan will allow for the addition of new building techniques, sustainable and environmental technologies, and fresh eyes to help prioritize. The plan will not only include recommendations on how to construct new improvements but it will also contain strategies that help protect wildlife, improve fish habitat, and clean the water quality.

**Project Location:** The project will be centered along the Fox River as it runs through Downtown Aurora, on both sides extending outwards approximately 100', and including all of Stolp Island.