Application form:
Community Planning Program and
Local Technical Assistance Program

**DEADLINE:** Noon on Thursday, June 26, 2014

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

1. **Name of Applicant:**
   - Will County Illinois

2. **Main Contact for Application (please include name, phone number and email):**
   - Kathy Pecora-815-727-7906. kpecora@willcountylanduse.com

3. **Type of Applicant (please check any that apply):**
   - **X** Local government
   - ___ Multijurisdictional group*  
     Please list the members of the group (including government and nongovernmental organizations):
     __________________________________________
     __________________________________________
     __________________________________________
   - ___ Nongovernmental organization* 
     Name of local government partner(s):
     __________________________________________
     __________________________________________
     __________________________________________

*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.)

- [x] My project involves preparation of a plan.
- [ ] My project helps to implement a past plan.
- [x] 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.

My project area is located in Will County, Illinois: The entire County will have consideration for the purposes of this project.

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.)

Will County would like to have a comprehensive food assessment and develop Local Food Plan to clearly identify the demand for fresh fruits and vegetables; develop a strategy for strengthening the economy through job training and job creation in the emerging fields of local food growing, processing and distribution, ensuring access to healthy food to all residents, reducing food shipping distance and preserving farmland thus enhancing the livability of all the municipalities within Will County.

A comprehensive food assessment and local food plan that will clearly identify the potential of growing food to strengthen Will County’s economy by creating local jobs in food production, processing and distribution to make Will County a destination hub because of its proximity to Chicago and other large suburban markets that seek locally grown food. Will County simply by proximity to the Chicago metro region has tremendous potential to expand its’ economy from farming food. Due to historical trends and the Great Recession, there are municipalities in the County that have vacant commercial and industrial parcels that are ideal for redevelopment for urban farming, commercial processing and distribution uses.

Developing a Local Food Plan is an opportunity to bring together a mix of stakeholders through the planning process that can offer diverse perspectives and can become Will County’s partners in implementing “a system that promotes sustainability, food justice, resiliency and improved health of our citizens that will be a valuable link in the growing local food distribution system in the State of Illinois.
Proximity to existing major interstates makes Will County the ideal candidate for transport of food grown within our County. Will County has the potential to become an aggregation hub to facilitate the transfer of locally grown food from the County to meet the demand of the regional market. Expansion of the intermodal and trucking industry locally, and major transportation system connections like the proposed Illiana Tollway which facilitate distribution of Will County grown produce and other value added products to neighboring states as well.

The relatively high unemployment rate in the county combined with the needs of vets returning home from the wars, homeless and displaced residents create demand for job skills training in food production/processing and distribution industries.

Considering the recent development of new industries in Will County, future plans for improved transportation systems including the Illiana Tollway and South Suburban Airport, there is a need to plan for how growth will protect the ability of Will County to utilize remaining farmland to provide food to our residents and compete in a regional local food economy.

A necessary portion of the plan is to show how County government can coordinate with municipalities, townships and local farm community to enact policies that allow agricultural production on vacant and underused land and buildings within their jurisdiction.

Will County, realizing the potential of food as an economic driver and a means to reduce chronic illness of its’ population has already taken the following actions in support of prioritizing local food system planning: Allowing the current Land Use Department Resource Recovery and Energy (RR&E) Grant Assistant to transition to a full time position specifically to implement energy efficiency and conservation projects. This position is responsible for working in partnership with the Will County Regional Office of Education, the Will-South Cook Soil and Water Conservation District and the University of Illinois Extension to construct school edible gardens in areas that are designated food deserts; pilot garden is located at Gompers Junior High School in Joliet, Gompers has over 50% of its students receiving subsidized meals and is part of the summer meals program.

The Grant Assistant has also partnered with Lockport Township Park District to supply vegetable plants to the garden at Fairmont Community Center, located in unincorporated Will County. Fairmont is a designated food desert with a large population of low-income residents. For a full map of low income, low food access for 1-10 miles, and low vehicle access see link below:


The Grant Assistant is also a member of the Will County Mobilization for Action Through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) Collaborative, a member of the Chronic Care Committee-she has introduced the local food initiatives such as the promotion of access to fresh fruits and vegetables to the members of the County’s underserved communities into community health plans. Local data sources confirm that lack of healthy food options is a contributing factor to the County’s high rate of childhood and adult obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and heart disease; which are all preventable, diet based illnesses.

According to key health findings from the 2014 MAPP strategic health initiative, Will County is ranked towards the bottom of all counties in Illinois in terms of environmental health. The following measures for Will County were ranked below the 50th percentile; 1) Safety of drinking water, 2) Number of fast food restaurants and 3) Limited access to healthy food.
Additional data shows that nearly 7% of the Will County low income population has limited access to a grocery store, this number is higher than that found statewide.
The number of supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) authorized food stores in Will County per 100,000 people is nearly half of statewide or national averages.

The Grant Assistant using the RR&E’s website WillCountyGreen.com created the Fresh Food Options section of the site in 2012 which lists all the farmers markets in the County that accept SNAP benefits to help increase use of benefits to these markets. The Grant Assistant is also a member of the Illinois Farmers Market Association and through her, the County provides current information to guide local markets in obtaining their electronic benefit transfer machines and other available funding for SNAP participant marketing tools.

_Sources of statistical information for Will County farm production, land use and operator demographics:
Nationwide-Largest number of beginning farmers-Illinois ranked #9 with 13,596
http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/Highlights/Farm_Demographics/
June 25, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

As principal of Gompers Junior High School, I have been privileged to work with Kathy Pecora of the Will County Land Use Department. Kathy has worked with the students and staff at Gompers to educate us all on the benefits of eating healthy foods. She along with a group of volunteers and our staff has planted a vegetable and herb garden for our use. Students have maintained the garden, and Kathy has taught students about plants, gardening, and healthy foods. Many of our students live in apartments or in areas where a garden may not be an option. Kathy has taught the students about container gardening and shown them how they can garden in a small space. We are waiting for the fruits of our efforts to mature, and then Kathy has plans to demonstrate some simple preparation options with the vegetables and herbs that were grown.

I am not sure if Kathy and her volunteers fully comprehend how much the gift of the Gompers vegetable and herb garden means to the students and staff. We thank Kathy for the contribution made by her and her volunteers. We want you to know that at Gompers, the garden project is profoundly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Connie Russell
Principal
Gompers Junior High School
June 23, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written to express support by the Will South Cook Soil & Water Conservation District (WSCSWCD) for CMAP funding of a Local Technical Assistance Program Grant being sought by Will County.

Will County is currently working to establish a Will County Food Assessment and Local Food Plan. For some time the WSCSWCD has been working with the County to identify a strategy for creating a healthy foods program for the children of Will County, particularly those in underserved communities. This spring, under the leadership of County staff, school children are learning how to grow food and are being instructed in the benefits of a healthy diet. As the scope of these efforts expand, the growing, processing and distribution of these fresh fruits and vegetables will also be recognized as an economic driver and job creator.

With abundant, healthy soil and an established farm community, Will County is well positioned for success with this endeavor. Please join the SWCD in its support of Will County’s plan for a healthier community by approving the LTA Grant being requested.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further our support of this proposal, I can be reached at (815) 462-3106 x3.

Best regards,

Everett Moeller, Chairman
Will South Cook SWCD

All programs and services of the Will-South Cook SWCD are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.