

Vital Signs

PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BOONE & WINNEBAGO COUNTY REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

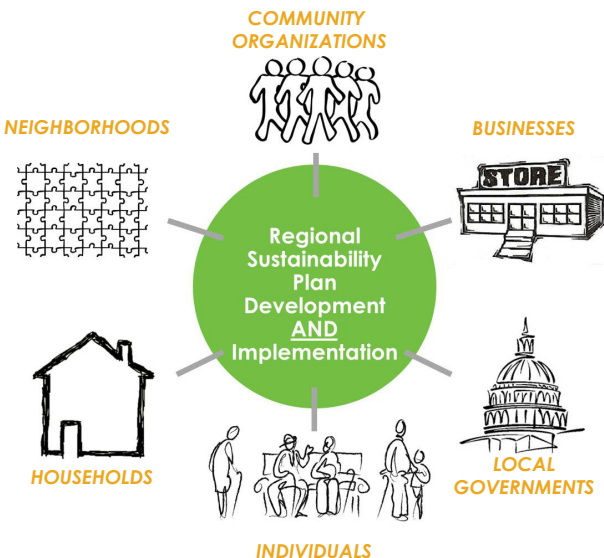
The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Partnership for Sustainable Communities has awarded the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP) a \$600,000 grant to expand and continue the efforts to create a regional sustainability plan and performance measuring process. Only 45 communities in the country were awarded this grant, and only a few (including ours) were fully funded.

The HUD award is the result of a local consortium of agencies in Boone County and Winnebago County agreeing to support and align their strategic plans and long-range visions into a set of common goals and action steps. The local consortium is anchored by RMAP, our regional metropolitan planning organization, and the Rockford Region Economic Development District (RREDD), our local economic development planning organization.

The grant award positions the region to receive future implementation grants from the US Department of Transportation (DOT), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and HUD. This partnership seeks to further livability by providing more transportation choices, promoting equitable and affordable housing, increasing economic competitiveness, supporting existing communities, leveraging federal investment and valuing local communities and neighborhoods.

PLAN FOR OUR COMMUNITY, BY OUR COMMUNITY

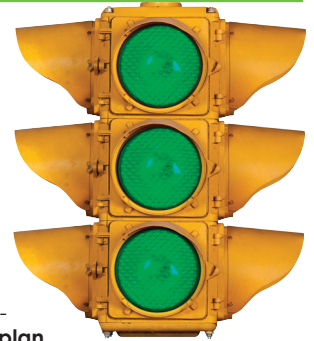
Broad-based stakeholder engagement will be crucial to the success of this process (empowering and engaging informal and formal community members). Ownership is key for the successful engagement and eventual implementation of marginalized populations (including low-income, minority and economically-disadvantaged) and integrate indigenous knowledge into the RPSD.



THE PROCESS

This planning process aims to do four-fold:

1. Collect and maintain measurable **sustainability indicators** (20-year "sustainability finish line")
2. Develop a regional, implementable **20-year sustainability plan** addressing 16 core areas for Boone and Winnebago Counties based on the sustainability indicators and including goals, objectives, and action items
3. Create a **regional governance model** empowered to help area residents, businesses, organizations, agencies, and governmental units implement the plan
4. Establish catalytic **implementation tools** (policies, incentives, codes, guidelines, etc)



HOW CAN I HELP???

- **Get informed.** There will be extensive outreach and events that you can partake in to learn about what we're doing and also about what sustainability is about in general.
- **Spread the word.** Tell your friends, family, and co-workers about what you hear about with what we're doing, help us teach them about how sustainability is important to Boone and Winnebago Counties, and talk about how this plan is important for our collective and individual futures.
- **Join a district team.** Your neighborhood will have a team you can join and help identify and develop opportunities and strategies for your locale within the plan
- **Be sustainable.** Individuals, households, businesses, organizations, and governmental units don't need to wait for the plan to be adopted to be sustainable today. Do your part and begin being more sustainable, now.



REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

A crucial component of our process will be developing and measuring regional sustainability indicators. These sustainability measurements help the community understand the social, economic, and environmental impact (the three colored rings) of our region's 16 different areas of sustainability.

Safety. Police stations, fire departments, and community groups protect the community so we may enjoy our region at any time of day, and in any neighborhood. Crime levels affect not only our well-being but the ability to create and retain jobs.

Civic Vitality. Networks, organizations, institutions, and gathering places involve individuals in community leadership. They help keep talent within the region, connect people and businesses to resources they need, and give a forum for governments to interact with those that elected them. Communities with high civic participation are able to better address issues as they arise.

Cultural Life. Tourism, ethnic and neighborhood identities, visual art, and performance art make up cultural life. Festivals, parades, and museums also add experiences and education. Together these create jobs, bring visitors to town, and make the Rockford Region an attractive place to live and work. This component measures how cultural life affects the ability of the region to attract and retain jobs and overall community wealth.

Health & Wellness. Quality medical, educational, and recreational facilities allow us to tackle quality of life and health challenges facing our community. By having healthy citizens we lower the amount of sick days we take while enabling ourselves to live and work longer. The indicators of this sector measure how health and happiness affect our ability to be productive at work and school.

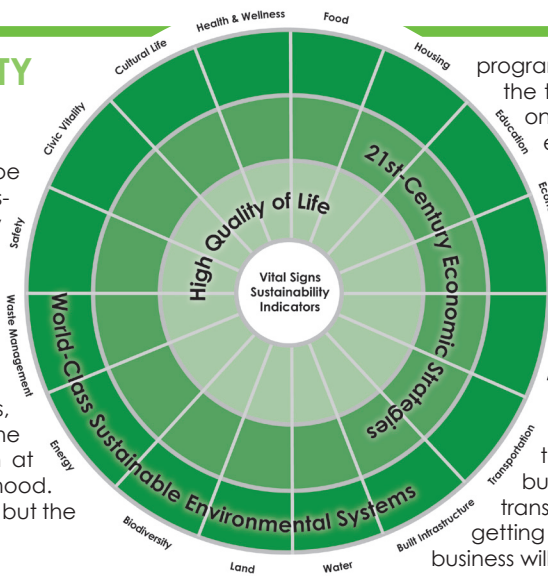
Food. Food processing and local food systems are both opportunities for job creation but also for community wellbeing. From growing to production, and from distribution to consumption, food systems are being recognized internationally as having a large effect on community wellbeing. The local food system is capable of attracting and retaining jobs and improving overall community wealth.

Housing. Housing is a critical component to regional sustainability as when local residents have quality housing their quality of life improves vastly and they are then able to be more effective at work and be happier overall.

Education. Public, private, and parochial schools give students the opportunities to succeed in life. The Rockford Area's economic well-being means we must keep growing the workforce pipeline. If we had the nation's average of college graduates in our region, community wealth would grow by over \$1 Billion dollars each year locally. This component measures how education opportunities in the area affect the ability of the region to attract and retain jobs and overall community wealth.

Economic Development. Entrepreneurship, skilled labor, and growing the workforce in the Rockford Region keep businesses thriving. This sector measures the health of employment in key industry sectors and various indicators of community wealth in the Rockford Region.

Technology. Trade organizations and partnerships, along with



programs and education, give the Rockford Region the tools to pursue technological advances, not only for the region, but the nation. Identifying entrepreneurs and helping them succeed help our community succeed. Growing businesses creates more jobs, faster, than attracting new businesses to the region. Technology accessibility and innovation levels affect the ability of the region to attract and retain jobs and overall community wealth.

Transportation. The Rockford Region has a large network of transportation options allowing residents, workers, and visitors to travel to and around the area by car, bus, bicycle, or on foot. Understanding our transportation infrastructure and how it affects getting to work, enjoying the community, and doing business will help our region face its economic future.

Built Infrastructure. The built environment includes the buildings and physical infrastructure of our region. This includes everything from roads, bridges, parks, housing and the buildings housing our workplaces. Collectively these assets are measured to determine their effect on our community's economic wellbeing, including the area's ability to attract and retain our workforce and employers.

Land. Agriculture and open land are just as important to plan for as land already built. This plan will measure and track initiatives for the unbuilt property in the two-county region as well.

Biodiversity. Ensuring the viability of the biodiversity of our region is critical for the future of our entire ecosystem within the area for quality of life purposes, the economic wellbeing of our farmland, and the general health and wellbeing of area residents.

Energy. Creating and making energy more efficient are two fundamental components needing to be measured for the future wellbeing and sustainability of our communities.

Waste Management. Recycling and how we plan for our waste management is the final component of sustainability. Understanding the interrelated nature of this area will help area residents, businesses, and governments plan for our collective futures.



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