

20

Capital Improvement Plan

UPDATE TO THE 5-YEAR PLAN
2024-2028

24



January 17, 2024

TONI PRECKWINKLE
President

**Board of
Commissioners**

Frank J. Aguilar
Alma E. Anaya
Scott R. Britton
John P. Daley
Dennis Deer
Bridget Degnen
Bridget Gainer
Monica Gordon
Bill Lowry
Donna Miller
Stanley Moore
Josina Morita
Kevin B. Morrison
Sean M. Morrison
Anthony J. Quezada
Tara S. Stamps
Maggie Trevor

**General
Superintendent**

Arnold L. Randall

Dear President Preckwinkle and Commissioners,

The final **2024 Update to the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan** for the Forest Preserves of Cook County is enclosed for your records. There have been a few updates in cost estimates and timing for a few projects since the release of the draft report in November 2023.

Projected 2024 capital spending is now \$56 million up \$3 million since the release of the draft due to updated cost estimates and delay of a few projects with associated increase in rollover of capital funds. While this is still lower than the \$59 million projection for last year, it is still substantially higher than 2022 levels prior to new ARPA, referendum and state infrastructure funding.

Projected capital funding needs over the next four years (2025-2028) is now almost \$222 million, up by \$81 million from last year. New investments in this year's update include reconstruction of two new Des Plaines River Trail segments, site development for hundreds of acres of newly acquired land, a new restroom renovation program and elevation of a few "wish list" projects (Salt Creek ecology center, 3 new maintenance garages, 5 new picnic shelters).

Even with new referenda and ARPA funding, there is still a projected shortfall of roughly \$89 million in the next four years. Additional capital funds will be needed to avoid shelving shovel-ready projects in 2025.

An electronic version of this report can be downloaded from our web site at this link: <http://fpdcc.com/cip>.

This is my last report to you. I appreciate your support for important investment over the past 13 years. Please contact Eileen Figel, Interim General Superintendent or Chris Slattery, Director of Planning and Development, at [\(708\) 771-1572](tel:7087711572) or chris.slattery@cookcountyil.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,

Arnold Randall
General Superintendent

Table of Contents

Overview of Process, Project Selection and Needs	5
Description of Funding Sources and Capital Spending	6
Guiding Principles and Plans.....	7
Landscape Restoration Priorities.....	8-9
Urgent Land Improvement Needs.....	10
Des Plaines River Trail Upgrades Map	11
New Bridges and Trail Connections	12
Trail Safety Improvements.....	14
Access Roads Repaving	15
Recreation Amenities: Picnic Groves and Shelters, Fishing and Paddling	16-17
Golf Course Renewal.....	18
Making Sites More Welcoming	19
Urgent Building Repairs, Renovations, and Replacement Needs	20
Updating Buildings.....	21
Sustainability Upgrades.....	22
Longer-Range Plans and Studies	23
Grants and Partnerships	24
Summary of Spending By Funding Source.....	25
High Priority Capital Projects 2024-2028.....	APPENDIX
Additional Unfunded New Amenities 2024-2028	APPENDIX

Description of Funding Sources & Capital Spending

Overview of Process, Project Selection, and Need

The Forest Preserves of Cook County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a five-year projection of planned capital improvements to the Forest Preserves' land and buildings, excluding land and buildings managed by Brookfield Zoo and the Chicago Botanic Gardens. The policy of the Forest Preserves is to keep at least 80 percent of its land in a natural state, and limit development for education and recreation uses to no more than 20 percent. Developed areas include over 350 miles of trails (including 125 bridges), 200 picnic shelters, 60 restroom buildings, 10 golf courses, six nature centers, five campgrounds, three aquatic centers, three visitor and volunteer centers, fishing access and water control structures and dozens of maintenance yards and field offices.

This year's \$277 million 5-Year Plan has increased from \$200 million last year, largely due to projected new investment in a few major new projects and programs, including two new Des Plaines River Trail segments, site development for hundreds of acres of new Forest Preserve land in Southeast Cook County, a new restroom renovation program and desire to advance some projects that had been on the wish list (Table 3) such as a new Salt Creek ecology center and three new maintenance garages.

Needs Assessments. Staff and consultants continue to improve information on the condition of existing infrastructure. Conditions assessments for paved trails, parking lots, picnic shelters and dam structures is fairly current, but updates to Palos trail conditions will be a big focus in 2024. Districtwide bridge and underpass inspections were completed in 2023. Limited inspection of building exteriors was completed in 2022 and more in-depth energy audits at 16 facilities in 2021-2023. Assessment of lighting at 45 support facilities and 15-20 restroom buildings will be completed in 2023.

Project Selection. Capital investment priorities are based on a variety of factors, including condition of the facility or amenity, level of use, importance to guiding plans and principles, and uniqueness of the resource or facility. Funding requirements and limitations from grants and fees related to utility licenses also impacts some priorities. Staff are in the process of developing new custom database tools to transition to a streamlined, information-based prioritization process. Capital improvement requests received through our website, correspondence or community meetings are also reviewed and considered, which can have an impact on investment decisions.

Capital Funding Needs. Projected 2024 capital spending of just over \$56 million is proposed, with \$25 million funded through grants, mitigation fees and Motor Fuel Tax funds. Transfer of \$4 million from reserves is proposed to supplement the Construction and Development tax levy of \$19 million. An estimated \$222 million will be needed to cover capital needs over the next four years. Construction & Development funds from annual tax levies and grants or partner funding is expected to cover approximately \$133 million in needs, leaving an estimated \$89 million in unfunded gap. Funding under a 5-Year \$25 million Intergovernmental Agreement with Cook County Department of Transportation & Highways (DOTH) will be exhausted by 2025.

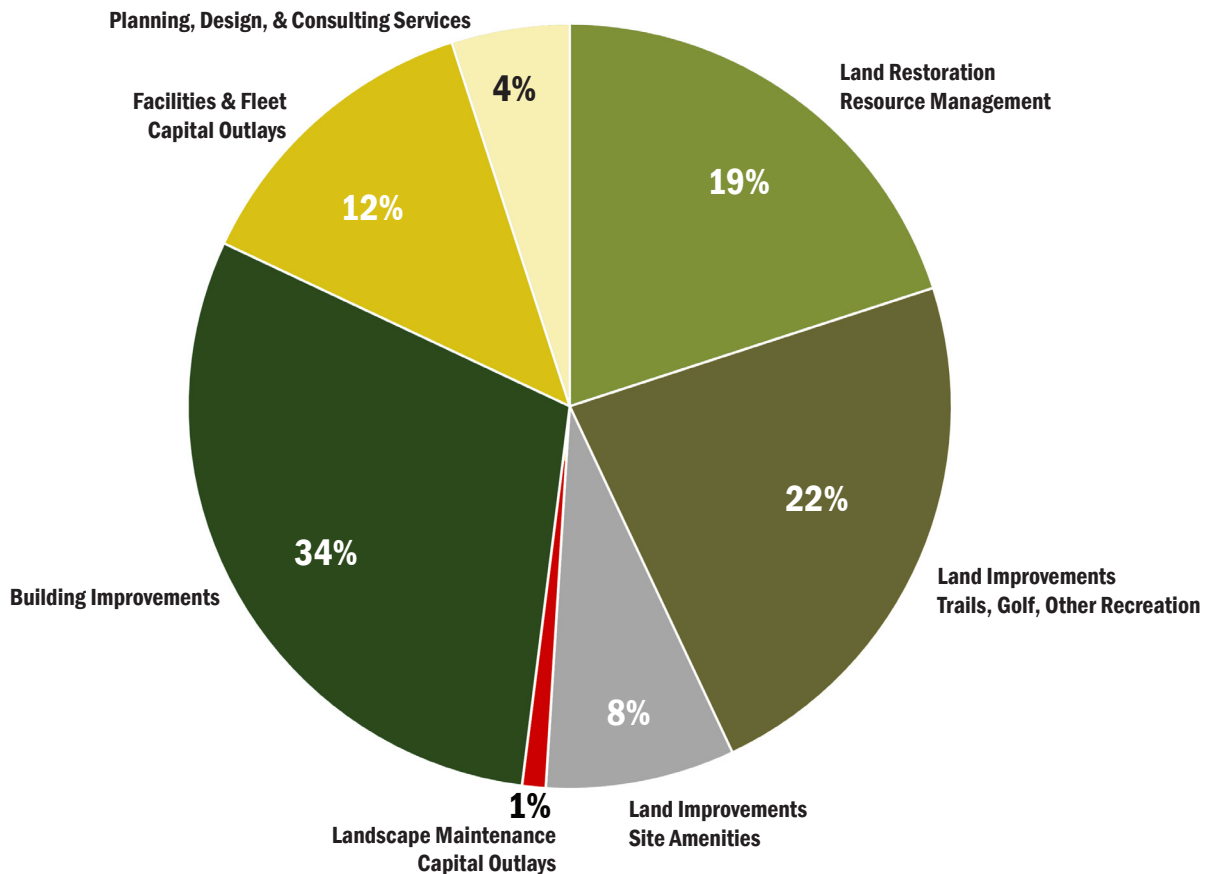
A detailed list of highest priority needs are summarized in Table 2, available in an Appendix along with Table 3. Table 3 also includes an additional \$69 million in new amenities that are not considered an immediate or necessary capital improvement but an additional amenity or facility that would benefit County residents. The Forest Preserves will pursue additional grants and partner support for these projects. Two new Des Plaines River Trail segments moved from this "wish list" table to funded projects in Table 2 this year due to success in finding new partners and funding.



Description of Funding Sources & Capital Spending

FUND	DESCRIPTION
GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS	General Obligation Bonds are issued to pay costs of certain capital improvement projects of the Forest Preserves, Chicago Botanic Garden and Brookfield Zoo as well as land acquisition. Very limited funds remain from a 2019 bond issue. Bond refinancing in 2022 has lowered debt service cost and increased capacity to issue new debt in the future if necessary.
CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT	The Construction & Development fund is established to account for roughly 10 percent of the annual tax levies devoted to capital improvements, including large-scale landscape restoration. C&D funds must be spent within five years. Any unspent funds at the end of the five-year period are transferred to the Corporate Fund.
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND	The purpose of this fund is to account for all capital expenditures of the Forest Preserves that are funded by other financing sources and that are not related to land acquisitions. This includes transfers from the Corporate Fund.
GRANTS, FEES & OTHER	The Forest Preserves receives funds outside of its tax levy that are to be used in the construction of major capital facilities. These funds are received through grants, intergovernmental agreements, settlements and mitigation fees resulting from the Forest Preserves' Tree Mitigation Ordinance.

2024 CAPITAL SPENDING: \$56 MILLION



Guiding Plans and Principles

The Next Century Conservation Plan continues to provide the overarching long-term vision and goals for connecting people to nature. Other important plans released around the time of the Forest Preserves' centennial in 2014 and 2015, such as the Natural & Cultural Resources Master Plan, Trail Master Plan and Gateway Master Plan, also to continue to guide priorities for investment in large-scale land restoration, trails connections, and new amenities at special sites

Trail Capital Plan and Guiding Principles

In 2022, the Forest Preserves released a new report as a “part 2” to the 2014 Trail Master Plan to document larger long-term gaps in the trail system and annual on-going capital investment needs to keep the extensive system in good condition. This Plan also dovetails with the 2023 Cook County Bike Plan which recommends expansion of the low-stress off-street bike trail system as an alternate mode of transportation.

Racial Equity and Nature-Based Recreation Position Papers

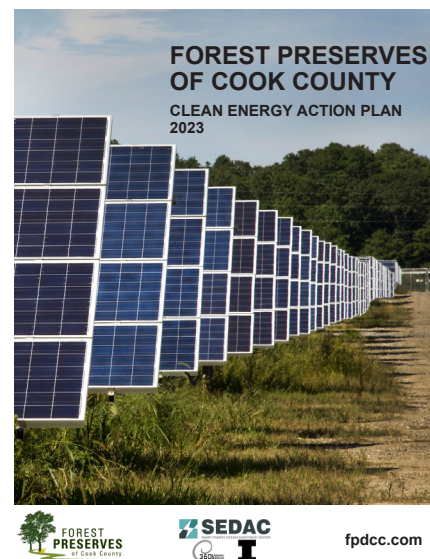
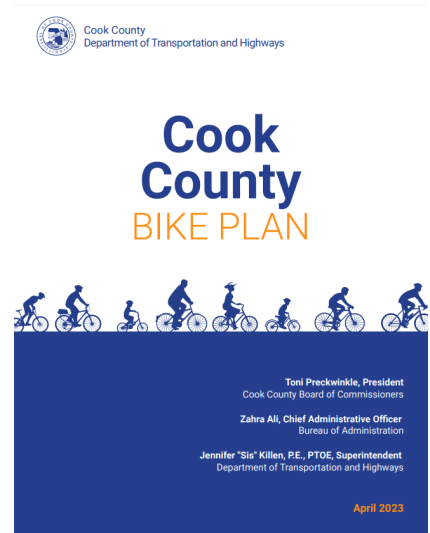
In 2020, the Conservation & Policy Council adopted a series of four position papers and two of these continue to influence capital investment: “Moving Towards Racial Equity” (which challenges staff to consider capital investment and engagement in adversely impacted communities) and Nature-Compatible Recreation (which asks if some uses, such as aquatic centers, could be converted over time to be more compatible or phased out).

Sustainability and Clean Energy

In 2019, the Forest Preserves Board of Commissioners pledged to shift to clean electricity by 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2050 by reducing its energy use, ideally eliminating fossil fuel usage and investing in new renewable energy sources. A **Clean Energy Framework** report was released in 2021 with assistance from the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center's (ISTC) Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois. The Smart Energy Design Assistance Center of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and 360 Energy Group, LLC, also prepared a **Clean Energy Action Plan** in 2022 to provide a roadmap for achieving these goals along with new **Green Building Standards** to be released in late 2023

Flooding and Climate Resiliency

Although the Forest Preserves is not yet a partner in Cook County's Hazard Mitigation Plan, it is entering into a master agreement with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago in 2023 that provides for cost sharing on green infrastructure and ecosystem restoration projects over the next five years. The Forest Preserves also intends to join as a partner in Cook County's 2024 **Hazard Mitigation Plan** with the Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.



Project Highlights

Landscape Restoration Priorities

Large-scale land restoration and habitat enhancement remains one of the largest categories of capital spending. Major work was at the Powderhorn Lake Preserve in 2023. The largest on-going projects are featured on the following pages.

Deer Grove

The Deer Grove West Woodland and Wetland Nature Preserve is part of the Deer Grove Landscape Unit, the fourth highest priority landscape for ecological restoration and management. In 2015, the Forest Preserves of Cook County and Openlands began a five year restoration project within a 238-acre portion of the site with funds from the O'Hare Mitigation and Moderation Account. The first phase of the project was so successful that second and third phases of work have been added, totaling an additional 180 acres. Restoration activities include removal of invasive brush, thinning of trees, hydrologic repairs, and native seed enrichment. This project aims to continue funding work adjacent to the Openlands project area to expand restoration at this unique preserve.



Deer Grove



Red Gate Woods

Red Gate Woods

Palos is the Forest Preserves' highest priority landscape for restoration based on the Natural & Cultural Resources Master Plan. The landscape, with its rolling morainal topography, contains mesic oak woodlands, oak savanna, sedge meadows, emergent wetlands, and even a bog. With assistance from the State of Illinois, a major trail construction and restoration project is anticipated to begin in Palos, with major work happening in the "Red Gate Woods" sector of Palos impacting 1,100 acres.

Swallow Cliff Woods

Swallow Cliff and surrounding areas are another important part of the Palos Preserves that contain some of the most dramatic topography in Cook County. Glacial outlet waters carved the valley, leaving a steep bluff line that consists of a patchwork of remnant and disturbed dry-mesic and mesic oak-hickory woodland mixed in with forest on slopes and ravines, and savanna and prairie on flat uplands. The work necessary for Swallow Cliff consists of invasive brush removal and canopy thinning that will increase light levels and promote regeneration of the ground layer. The area is one of the more popular spots in Cook County for hiking activities, and efforts to preserve the ecological integrity of the area have included steering the public to utilize official trails.



Swallow Cliff Woods

Camp Sullivan Woods

The floodplain forest and ravines surrounding Camp Sullivan provide a hub for activity and nature exploration, with access to both a public campground and an extensive paved trail system. Major land restoration work began on 180 acres in 2022 and will continue through 2026 to remove invasive brush and dense trees and address erosion issues (in-stream sedimentation, channelization, downcutting and disconnection of Tinley Creek and its tributaries to their floodplains). When complete, the restored landscape will result in increased natural infiltration of rainwater, reduced flooding, and improved community resilience to impacts from climate change. Work is funded by the Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability and the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).



Project Highlights

Sauk Trail Woods

Sauk Trail Woods is a 630-acre preserve in far southeast Cook County which is bisected by Thorn Creek and contains a rich mesic oak woodland and ravine system. The Forest Preserves has been sub-awarded federal funds received by the Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability under ARPA to conduct a 220-acre riparian restoration at Sauk Trail Woods to facilitate stabilization of creek banks and restore floodplains and their associated upland habitats. The project began in fall 2022 and will continue through 2026. Invasive vegetation control work will restore a diverse ground layer of plants, enhance wildlife habitat, improve air and water quality, and reduce flooding in nearby historically disadvantaged communities. Erosion and channelization of tributaries to Thorn Creek will be assessed and repaired as part of the riparian restoration component of the project.



Sauk Trail Woods

Chipilly Woods

Chipilly Woods is located in the northern part of the county and is part of the Somme complex, a high-quality mosaic of prairie, savanna and woodland. Chipilly Woods is bisected by the Middle Fork of the North Branch of the Chicago River, which flows from the northwest to the southeast corner of the site. The area consists of mesic oak-hickory and wet-mesic woodlands, wet floodplain forest, and mesic savanna with a shrub component. Areas of Chipilly Woods have remnant pockets of high-quality vegetation as well as a healthy canopy. To restore ecological health, 193 acres of invasive brush removal as well as tree thinning, and herbaceous invasive management are planned to begin in 2024. These actions will increase viability of prescribed fire, a management technique that will be utilized once restoration is completed. This area is used for paddling and is notable for having a high potential for improving habitat for turtles and other wildlife.



Chipilly Woods



Project Highlights

Urgent Land Improvement Needs - Trail Repairs

The developed areas of forest preserves include an extensive system of access roads, parking lots, paved and unpaved trails, bridges and culverts, dams and water control structures, golf course irrigation systems and other site improvements. Major federal and state grants and remaining Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) funding from Cook County are important sources of funding in 2024, however, there are still significant unfunded needs for other land improvements in the next four years after 2024.



Drainage Repair at Spring Lake Trail

Trail Resurfacing and Rehabilitation

Unpaved Trail Repair Needs

The Forest Preserves currently maintains a system of roughly 200 miles of unpaved trails. Unlike paved trails, the unpaved trails don't have an expected life and require continual maintenance by Resource Management crews. Capital funding is needed to address more serious problems that often result from erosion on steep grades that are beyond the capacity of in-house crews. A \$3 million contract was awarded in 2023 to rehabilitate and realign severely-eroded portions of the unpaved trails at **Deer Grove, Spring Lake/Beverly Lake, Salt Creek, and Thorn Creek trail systems**. Swallow Cliff and Palos trail assessment and design will be a major focus in 2024 in addition to continued investment in the Des Plaines River Trail.

Major rehabilitation of 4.4 miles of the Des Plaines River Trail from Touhy Avenue south to Lawrence Avenue was substantially completed in 2023 in partnership with two municipalities (Park Ridge and Rosemont), Cook County DOTH and other agencies. State and federal grants covered more than 80 percent of the \$11.5 million construction and construction engineering cost for resurfacing, realignment, new boardwalk, and a new bridge (over Lawrence Avenue) to make the trail safer, drier and easier to maintain (see map on p. 11). Over \$30 million in additional funding may be needed in the next four years for improvements south to Schiller Woods and north of the current trailhead at Sunset Bridge Meadow in River Grove

Paved Trail Repair Needs

The Forest Preserves currently has a system of over 157 miles of paved, off-street bicycle trails. New trail conditions data is now available to prioritize work at specific locations. The Tinley Creek trail system is one of the oldest paved systems and has been a priority for resurfacing in recent years. A 3-mile segment of the 9.4-mile red loop trail south of 143rd Street will be completed in 2024, but there is more work planned in 2025 to resurface the 1 mile black spur to Catalina Grove. In 2024, paved trail improvements will continue in South Cook at the Midlothian Meadows loop trail and with a new connection from the Major Taylor to Cal-Sag Trails at Whistler Woods. Priorities are still being confirmed for 2025-2028 but are likely to include parts of paved trail systems at Dan Ryan Woods, Major Taylor, Busse Woods, Poplar Creek, Thorn Creek, and North Branch.

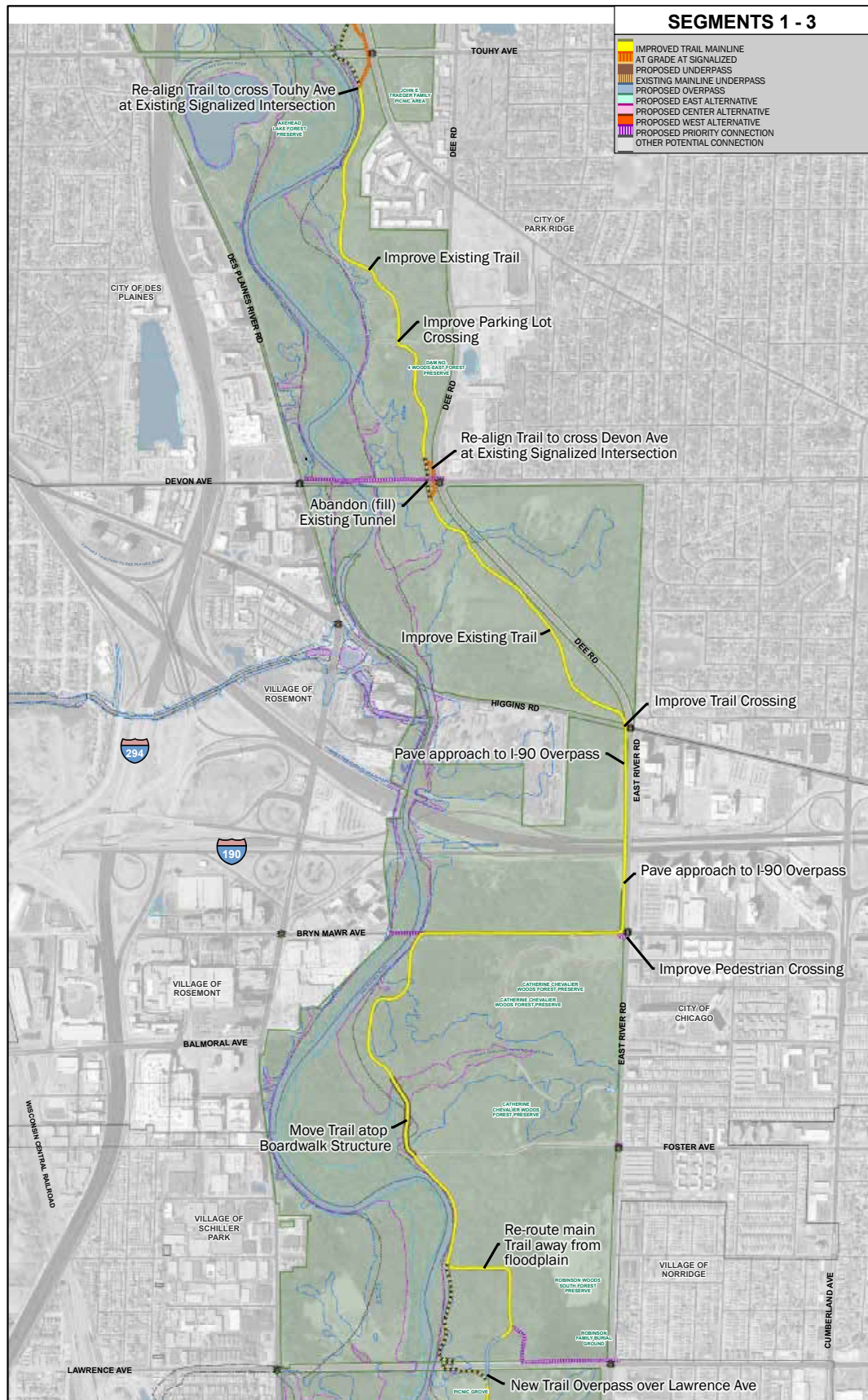


Des Plaines River Trail New Boardwalk in Catherine Chevalier Woods



Project Highlights

Des Plaines River Trail Upgrades



Project Highlights

Filling in the Gaps: New Bridges and Trail Connections

The Des Plaines River Trail is the key focus for two new bridges in 2023 and 2024 as part of a larger partnership effort with Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways, four West Cook municipalities, and federal and railroad funding. A new bridge over Lawrence Avenue opened in late October as part of 1.7-miles of trail improvements between Bryn Mawr and Lawrence Avenues. Work is expected to break ground on a second bridge over Union Pacific Railroad tracks east of Oakton Community College in 2024. Motor Fuel Tax funds from Cook County DOTH are also supporting construction of trail connections to the **Major Taylor Trail along 87th Street in Dan Ryan Woods** and connections to the **Oak Forest Heritage Preserve trails** from new IDOT-constructed paths on the west side of Crawford Avenue that also connect to Midlothian Meadow. Improvement of a new 1.2-mile loop trail at Horizon Farm is another area of focus in 2024.



Des Plaines River Trail New Bridge over Lawrence Ave

New Trail Connections Completed by Municipalities and the Illinois Department of Transportation

Several municipalities and transportation agencies are also investing in connections to Forest Preserves trails under intergovernmental license agreements or IDOT easement agreements.

North Branch Trail connections. The **Village of Skokie** has recently completed a paved trail connection on Old Orchard Road to connect to the North Branch Trail within Harms Woods North along with crossing upgrades within that preserve. The **Village of Niles** has constructed a connection from Touhy and Caldwell Avenue to the North Branch Trail, which includes new “gateway” signs, masonry pillars and landscaping improvements.

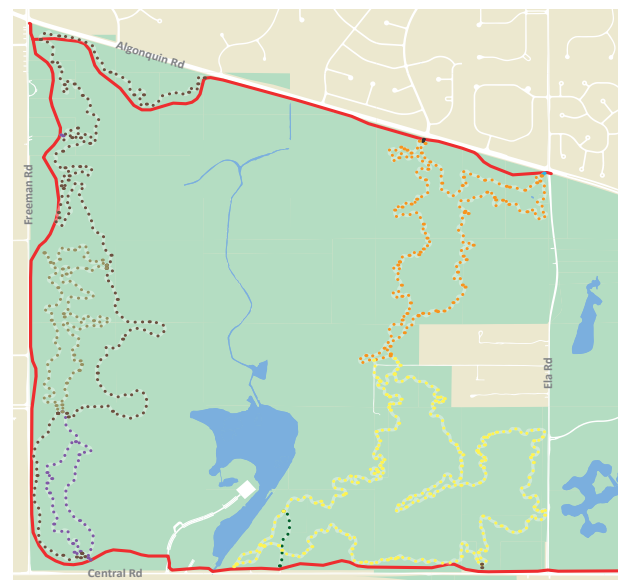
Des Plaines River Trail connection. The City of Des Plaines constructed a side path, for use by both pedestrians and bicyclists, along the north side of Oakton Street between Des Plaines River Road and the Des Plaines River Trail. Improvements included a new refuge median to improve safety of the Preserves existing Oakton Ave crossing.

Midlothian Meadow Pulaski Road side path. Cook County DOTH is also planning for a shared use path along Pulaski Road from 127th to 159th Streets that would tie into Midlothian Meadow trails that should wrap up in 2023.

Deer Grove trail connection from Dundee Road and Smith Street. The Village of Palatine plans to construct and maintain a connection from the Village to the paved trail within Deer Grove East.

Paul Douglas Preserve – new Single-Track Loop Trail System. Over 17 miles of new single track trail opened in 2023 thanks to efforts of the Chicago Area Mountain Bikers (CAMBr).

Requests for additional connections to other Forest Preserves trails are received on a regular basis and reviewed by an internal Land Use Committee with representatives from various departments.

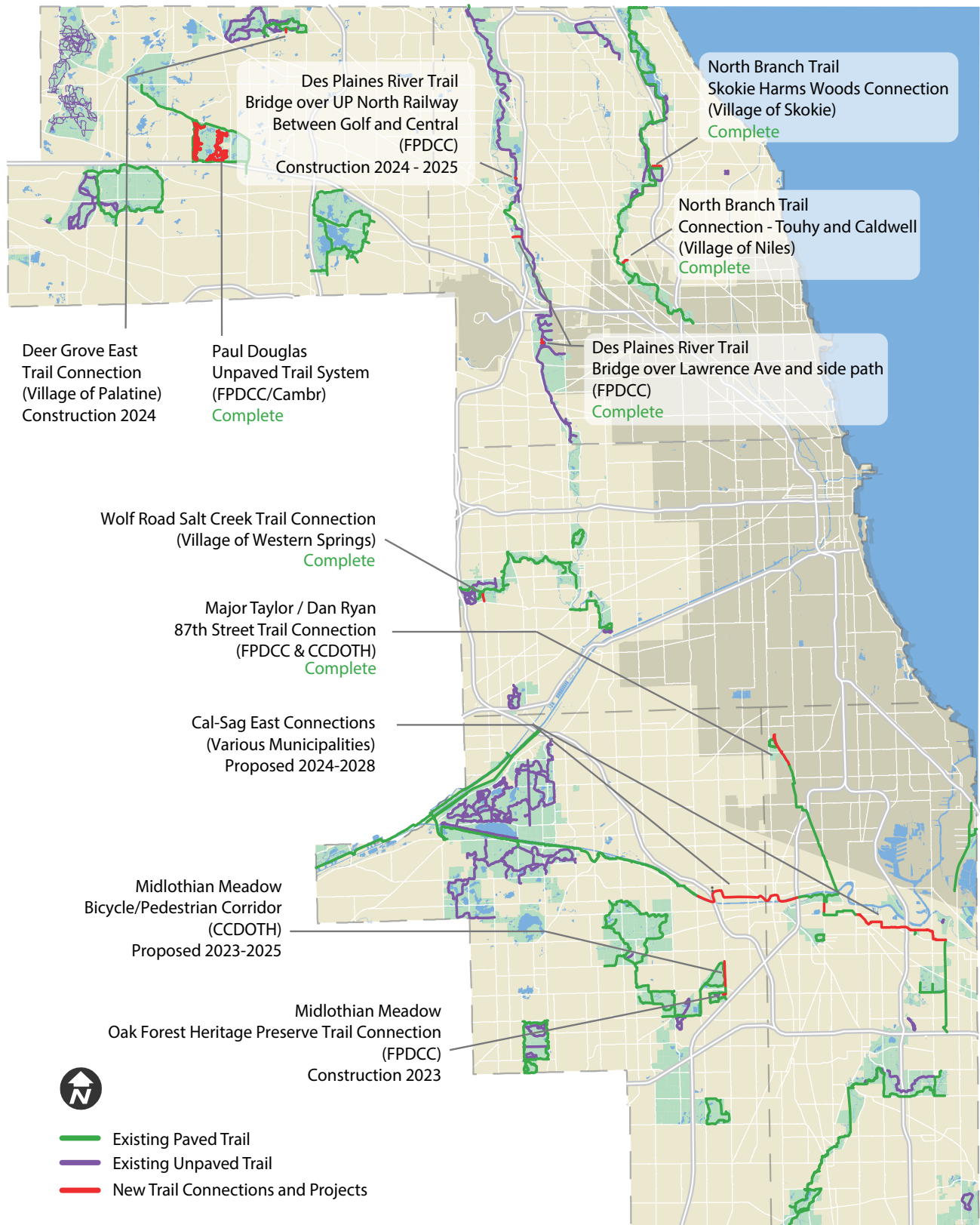


Paul Douglas Single Track Trails



Project Highlights

Trail Improvements



Project Highlights

Trail Safety Improvements

In addition to resurfacing and drainage improvements, the Forest Preserves' extensive system of trails includes other structures and safety features that require periodic inspection and maintenance.

Drop Gate and Striping Upgrades

As the number of trails increases and more people of all ages and abilities become trail users, the opportunities for exposure to the risks associated with road and trail intersections will continue to grow. Orange posts or drop gates are common on Forest Preserves trails to keep vehicles off but are ineffective if not kept upright and visible to cyclists. In keeping with current best practices, trail planners are taking action to remove most drop gates from our trail systems and replace them with "NO MOTOR VEHICLE" signs. Removal or replacement of drop gates on the busy North Branch and Salt Creek systems took place in 2023 and will continue on all paved trail systems over the next five years. Work is planned on the Poplar Creek and Thorn Creek systems in 2024.

Bridge and Underpass Repairs and Inspections

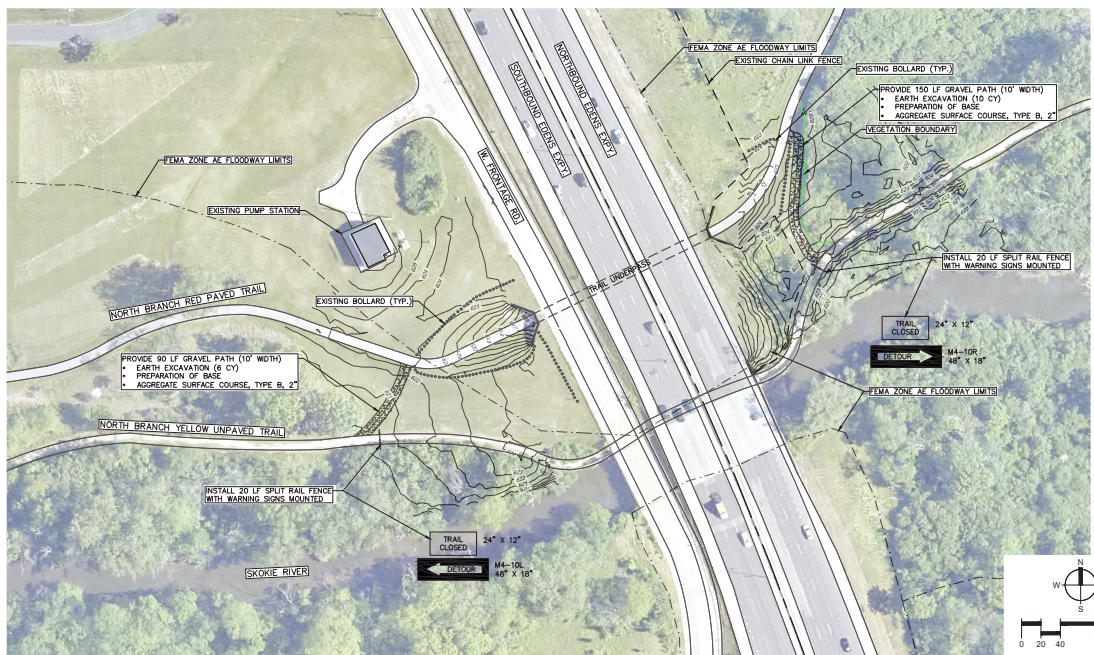
The Forest Preserves trail system includes 125 bridges and several underpasses that require regular inspection and maintenance. The Cook County Department of Transportation & Highways provides regular inspection reports for some of these that cross public roads. Forest Preserve consultants inspected more than 100 other bridges and underpasses in 2022. Repair of an Oakton Avenue bridge and closure of a Devon Avenue underpass were completed in 2023. Repair of eight more bridges and re-route of North Branch Trail traffic under the Edens Expressway is planned in 2024.



Safety Improvements - Salt Creek Trail



Drop Gate and Signage - North Branch Trail



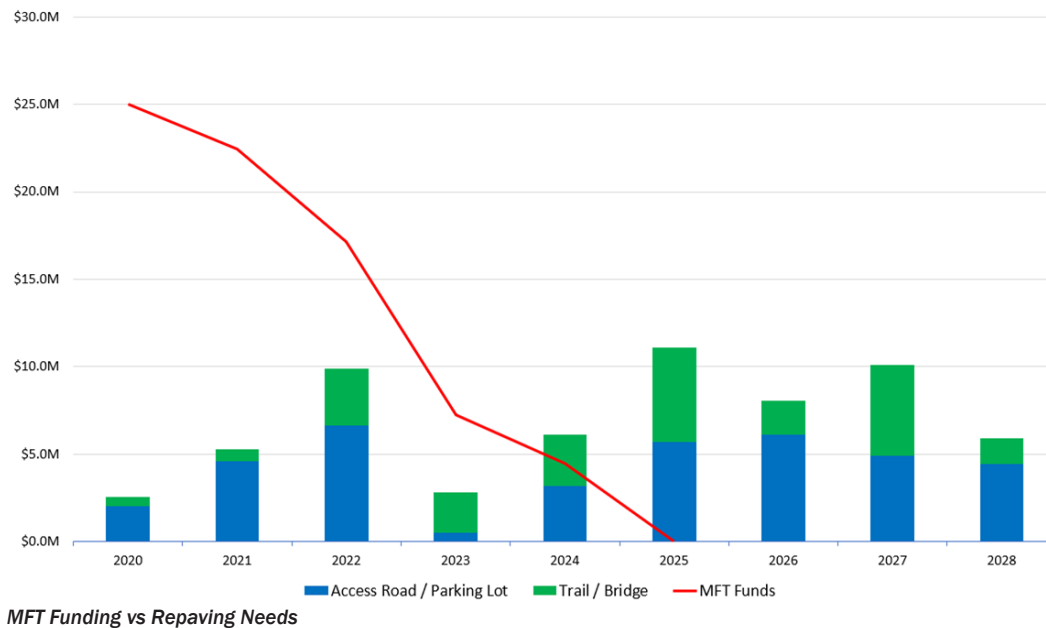
Edens Underpass Project



Project Highlights

Access Road and Parking Repaving

Over 300 access roads currently exist to bring visitors to an expansive network of Forest Preserves sites. In 2018, engineering staff estimated a need for roughly \$18 million for urgent repairs to 60 lots that were determined to be in poor or nearly failing condition. In 2020, an intergovernmental agreement with the Cook County Department of Transportation & Highways approved up to \$25 million in Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) funds to address trail rehabilitation, access road and parking repaving needs over the next five years. Since 2020, more than 50 sites countywide have had their access roads and parking areas resurfaced. By the end of 2024, work at nearly all of the original 50 poor-condition sites will be complete and MFT funds will be fully spent. Unfortunately, new paving inspections completed in 2023 found 19 poor-condition access roads and parking areas remaining and another 14 likely to be rated poor by 2025. Repair at all 33 locations has an estimated total cost of \$21 million.



Once the backlog is cleared, the Forest Preserves will still need to continue to budget \$5-6 million a year on an on-going basis to address portions of “fair condition” pavement that is likely to fail. Shrinking pavement at oversized parking lots and adding porous pavement and irretention will reduce long-term maintenance costs in a few locations.

Paving projects often incorporate trail access and storm water quality improvements. In 2023, resurfacing at Caldwell Woods includes a new ADA accessible trailhead realigned around a rain garden. Work at Deer Grove converted the roadway near Grove 1 to an extension of the paved trail to Quentin and Dundee Roads. The parking area footprint was also reduced at the Possum Hollow preserve and at Lansing Woods, providing new space for nature to grow.



Porous Paving at Possum Hollow Woods



Project Highlights

Recreation Amenities

Picnic shelters are another popular amenity that require annual capital investment of roughly \$600,000-\$800,000 a year for repair and accessibility upgrades. A major new restroom renovation program that is partially funded by 2023 ARPA funds will require millions more by 2025.

Picnic Grove Access Improvements

The Forest Preserves owns and maintains 200 picnic shelters, including some historic shelters. The last comprehensive conditions inspections in 2013 and 2018 found more than 50 shelters were in need of structural repairs. Four rounds of structural repairs were completed at 52 locations by the end of 2021 when another 12 shelters requiring major structural repairs and almost 40 with less severe needs were added to the list in 2022. A contract for major repair of 30 picnic shelters in North, Northwest, and Central Cook County groves was awarded in September 2023. This large 2023 group will be followed by additional shelter renovations at 11 South groves in 2024. After that, an estimated \$300,000 per year will still be needed on an on-going basis for re-roofing and storm damage for a handful of shelters per year on an on-going basis.

Access Improvements to Trails

Access and wayfinding signs to the Tinley Creek Trail system from Camp Sullivan and other recreation areas will also be completed in 2023 along with new access path improvements from parking areas to other trails in South and Southwest Cook County, including the I & M Canal Trail, the Thorn Creek Trails, and the Orland Grassland 5-mile loop trail. A new trail connection from Beaubien



Portage Trail - New ADA Path

Woods to the adjacent Altgeld Gardens neighborhood is also currently in design and will be constructed in 2024 with funding from the Chicago Transit Authority as part of the larger 130th Street Red Line station project. Annual capital spending on access path improvements at eight to 10 locations per year is roughly \$240,000. The north half of the loop trail around the Chicago Portage National Historic Site was paved this year. This site now has an ADA accessible overlook and new interpretive signs.

Recreation Amenities: Fishing and Paddling Facilities

In addition to trails and picnic groves, the Forest Preserves owns and maintains a range of other outdoor recreation facilities including fishing lakes, boating centers, canoe launches, campgrounds and golf courses – all of which require capital investment and maintenance. Grant support from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources continues to be especially important in funding outdoor recreation for boating and paddling improvements.

Fishing Lakes - Dam Structures

Many of the Forest Preserves' 43 fishing lakes are the result of flood control and recreation projects from decades ago. State regulations require regular inspections of dam structures to avoid potential failures and flood emergencies. Saganashkee Slough is a popular fishing and paddling lake that has an extensive earthen dam wall and spillways that is a high priority for monitoring and investment. A plan for rehabilitation of one or both spillway structures while continuing to monitor for leakage was submitted to the IDNR Office of Water Resources in 2022 and is still under review. Design and permitting at other high priority dams (Green Lake, Hidden Pond, Holy Family Villa Lake, Leaky Lake and Schiller Pond) would begin in 2025, followed by construction in 2026, subject to further design and funding.



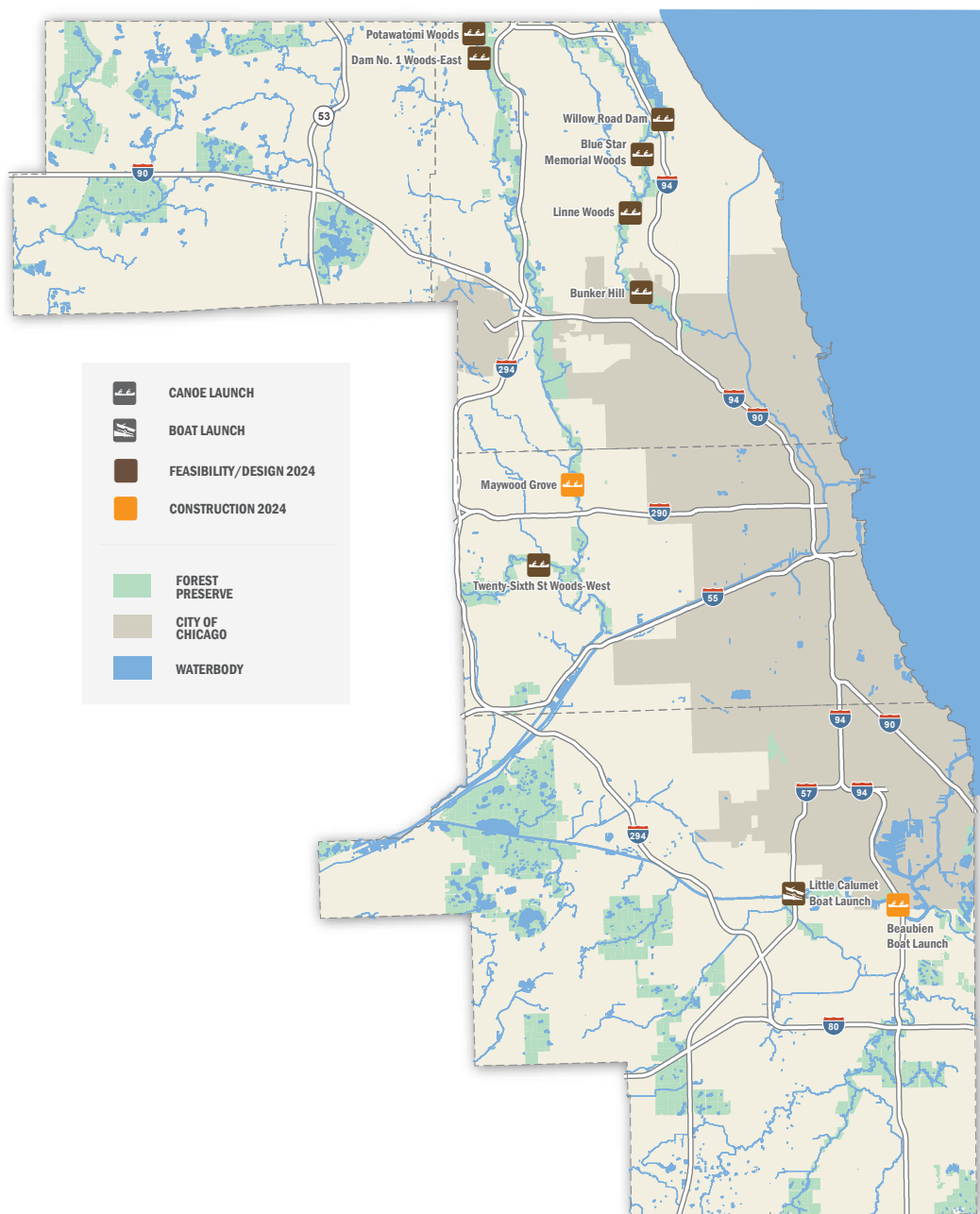
Project Highlights

Paddling - Canoe/Kayak Launch Improvements

Access to water-based activities remains a high priority. In 2023, new accessible floating canoe and kayak docks were added at two boating centers (Busse Lake and Tampier Lake).

Reconstruction of a delapidated pier at Beaubien Woods that will include state-of-the-art grab bars and apparatus should also be completed in 2025 with partial funding from an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Boat Access Area Development (BAAD) grant. A BAAD grant application for improvement of an existing primitive launch in Maywood is also pending and engineering feasibility studies are underway for possible improvements at half a dozen other river-edge sites. (See map below)

IDNR Open Space Land Acquisition and Development grant funds are also supporting rehabilitation of shoreline fishing areas and a new shelter and interpretive signs for tour groups to learn about the African American Water Trail and nearby historic sites on the Underground Railroad.



Project Highlights

Golf Course Renewal

Despite strong post-COVID demand, all courses have suffered from lack of capital investment over the past decades, but particularly in the past two years. The current golf course management lease with Indigo Sports was set to expire in 2022 but was extended for two years while Forest Preserve staff continue to explore options for underperforming courses and negotiate a new 10-year lease or management agreement with an experienced golf course management company.

Roughly \$13 million in basic capital needs were identified in 2017 by the National Golf Foundation (NGF) that still remain today, including replacement or improvement of irrigation systems, drainage, cart paths and clubhouse buildings. NGF and the current golf manager have also recommended investment in revenue-generating enhancements and repurposing courses with high capital needs and low levels of golfers.



Photos showing cart path conditions at GDNGC ranging from good to poor

Limited capital investment of \$1-2 million is planned in 2024-2025 on a few urgent repairs and more significant investment may be needed starting in 2026 once a new management agreement is in place. Roughly \$550,000 has been budgeted in 2024 for roof replacement at George W. Dunne National Golf Course and bridge repairs at Edgebrook and Chick Evans golf courses (in coordination with the Army Corps at Chick Evans). Two courses with poor paving conditions will also require more than \$1 million for parking lot and cart path work in 2025. The bridges and paving rated in poor condition in a recent conditions assessments by Forest Preserves consultants.



Chick Evans and Edgebrook bridge repair needs

Architectural design for restroom renovation and signage at River Oaks Golf Course and master planning for Burnham Woods Golf Course is also in 2024 work plans. Until there is an agreement with a golf management company, the 5-year plan also forecasts the need for roughly \$5.6 million in 2026 and 2027 for other site improvements at three to five courses, to be confirmed after a new manager is selected.



Project Highlights

Connecting People to Nature and Making Sites More Welcoming

In 2022, the Forest Preserves announced the “Connecting People to Nature Challenge” outreach program to encourage local residents to connect with nature and local groups to partner with the Forest Preserves. A total of nearly \$1 million was invested in three diverse Forest Preserves sites (Sauk Trail Woods in South Cook County, Miller Meadow in Central Cook County and Caldwell Woods/Bunker Hill in North Cook County) for programs to activate the sites, brush clearing, restoration to make them more open and welcoming, along with new directional and informational signs at site entrances and along trails.

A more limited amount of funding will continue to be invested in new amenities each year to make key public facilities like nature centers, camps, historic/ heritage sites, special ecological or recreation sites and trailheads on major regional trails more welcoming and accessible. New signs have been installed at more than 10 of these 60 special sites since 2015.

New Interpretive Signs and Exhibits

Camps, nature centers and aquatic centers are among the most popular destinations in the Forest Preserves for families, school groups and scouting organizations. New outdoor interpretive signs with information on natural features and cultural history were installed at the Sand Ridge Campus in 2021, followed by new signage at Crabtree Nature Center in 2023. Large-scale multi-panel signs are also in process for at the Beaubien Woods Boat Launch, the Caldwell Preserves and Eggers Grove.



Little Red Schoolhouse Entrance Sign



Motivational Mile Marker

New Entrance and Directional Signs

Three nature centers got new stone entrance signs in 2023 (Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center, River Trail Nature Center, and Crabtree Nature Center) to make them more identifiable as Forest Preserves facilities and add space to advertise special programs and events.

New Trail Mile Markers, Motivational Signs, and Intersection Posts

It is not always easy to identify the trail you're on or find a map while exploring the Forest Preserves. New mile markers were installed along trails at key sites like Miller Meadow, Sauk Trail Woods and Kickapoo Meadow in 2022 and 2023. Additional trailhead and trail markers are slated for a few major trailheads each year for the next couple of years.



Project Highlights

Urgent Building Repair, Replacement & Renovation Needs

The Forest Preserves owns over 550 structures comprised of more than 250 buildings and 200 picnic shelters. These include public buildings supporting education and recreation, over 50 restroom facilities, administrative and support facilities including the General Headquarters, Central Maintenance Compound and 15 field offices and maintenance yards for Landscape Maintenance, Resource Management and Law Enforcement staff. Due to several larger infusions of capital funds in the past 15 years (Illinois First in 2005, SB 83 in 2007-2008 and Forest Preserves bonds issued in 2012, 2015 and 2019) and more recent Build Illinois bond funds, there is no longer a significant backlog of urgent roof or HVAC replacements, life safety or building replacement needs. There is still a need to replace a few smaller garage and shed buildings and for major renovation of some older buildings, most notably public restroom buildings, and to ramp up investment in energy efficiency, clean energy, and electric vehicle infrastructure to meet climate change and sustainability goals. In addition to these special needs, a minimum of \$2 million per year will be needed for on-going roof and HVAC replacements.

Restroom Renovation Program

Thanks to additional funding from the referendum and grant support from Cook County, the Forest Preserves launched a major new restroom renovation program in 2023 focusing on public restroom buildings that are now over 40 years old. The Forest Preserves executed a five-year intergovernmental agreement with the Public Building Commission of Chicago (“PBC”) in April 2023 to manage a three-year program to replace flooring and fixtures and improve accessibility and sustainability. PBC contractors will renovate buildings at Busse Woods, Dan Ryan Woods and a few other locations in 2024. Renovation of additional buildings in 2025 and 2026 will require an estimated \$10.7 million in additional capital funding.



Restroom Building at Busse Woods

Salt Creek Landscape Maintenance Office and Garage

Construction of a new replacement 10,675-square-foot office/vehicle storage facility supporting the Salt Creek area is needed to allow the Central Western Cook County region to be maintained to the same standards as other regions in the Forest Preserves. The all-electric building will be constructed using net zero principles and will include a geothermal heating and cooling system and solar panels and will replace an inadequate, undersized 1930s office and 1967 metal garage building. Construction was delayed in 2021 due to unstable market conditions. This project was supported by a grant funding of \$4.4 million from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the contract was awarded for approximately \$8.1 million and is to be completed in summer of 2024.



Project Highlights

Updating Public Buildings

New referendum funds for public amenities have already been put to use as the required match for state grants for improvements to two public buildings in 2023 (Crabtree Nature Center and Caldwell Wellness Studio). Feasibility studies for other new buildings or additions will be completed in the next four years.

Crabtree Nature Center Improvements

Construction of new exhibits and energy-efficiency upgrades is complete at Crabtree Nature Center in Northwest Cook County. A \$1.05 million Public Museum Capital Grant award from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources provided supplemental funding for these improvements which include:

- A fully redesigned exhibit space with new interactive exhibits that explain the area's diverse mix of habitat—including oak-hickory forest, wetlands and restored tallgrass prairie—and its impact on the cultural history, plants and animals of the area.
- A redesigned interior which allows for more flexibility and the ability to accommodate new varieties of programming including workshops and classes, hands-on activities and provide a meeting space for the local community.
- New windows and entrance doors, fire alarm system upgrades, and a full HVAC system replacement.
- Conversion to all energy-efficient electric equipment. Design estimates target a 30 to 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- New identification, interpretive and wayfinding signage to welcome visitors and help folks navigate the nature center grounds.
- ADA improvements to ensure that people of all abilities can easily access the nature center and its many amenities.



New Exhibits at Crabtree Nature Center

Adaptive Reuse of Caldwell Warming Shelter to Welcome & Wellness Studio

The Caldwell Warming Shelter was originally built in 1962 to support toboggan slides that were removed in 2008. The building has since been used only for occasional programs. A Public Recreation Facility Construction grant was awarded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to help fund the repurposing and renovation of the building into a year-round multi-use welcome center and wellness studio. Construction is to be completed in spring of 2024. Additional funds have also been invested in new site improvements near the building, including new outdoor seating, information and interpretive signs and a new ADA path connecting to the North Branch Trail.



Construction of Caldwell Wellness Studio



Project Highlights

Sustainability Upgrades

Clean Energy Action Plan

The Forest Preserves with the assistance from consultants, 360 Energy Group and the University of Illinois' Smart Energy Design Assistance Center, completed an action plan with specific steps to meet greenhouse gas and renewable energy goals. The plan prioritizes LED lighting upgrades, energy efficiency retrofits and renovations to over a dozen buildings with high energy use and phase out of fossil-fuel-burning HVAC systems. Building envelope work (masonry and window replacement) is typically coupled with replacement of old, gas-fired HVAC systems with all-electric systems. The Plan also includes solar energy strategies to replace the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs).

Energy Efficiency, Electrification Projects

In 2023, the Forest Preserves began construction of major energy improvements at the **General Headquarters**, one of the highest energy use Forest Preserves buildings. This original building was built in the early 1930's and has had several additions over the years. The natural gas heating system has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. A \$2 million contract was awarded in 2023 to replace equipment. A ComEd Emerging Technologies incentive will cover roughly half the cost of very high-efficiency equipment. Window replacement and restroom renovation is also planned in 2024 at an estimated cost of \$3.25 million.



Gas Boiler at GHQ

At the **Central Maintenance Compound near Maywood**, building envelope upgrades (masonry repairs and replacement of windows) was completed in 2023. The main boiler is also scheduled to be replaced at the Central Warehouse in 2024. This centralized heating system that serves three buildings is to be replaced with electric heat pump units that decrease greenhouse gas emissions and combined with window replacements, will improve the overall energy efficiency of these buildings.

Building envelope upgrades will be designed in 2024 and constructed in 2025 at more than a dozen **other facilities** at an estimated cost of \$3.8 million.

LED Lighting Upgrades and New EV Charging Stations

In 2023, the Facilities Department will complete LED lighting upgrades at Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center and Sagawau Environmental Learning Center. In 2023, the Public Building Commission is also contracting for more comprehensive assessment of lighting replacement at over 75 buildings at all field offices and support facilities. The PBC work will include cost estimates and incentives research, but over \$5 million could be needed starting in 2025.

Cook County ARPA funding awarded in 2023 will also cover the cost of five new public EV Charging Stations at the Busse Boathouse, Volunteer Resources Center, General Headquarters, Dan Ryan Visitors Center and Swallow Cliff Woods to be installed by 2025. The Forest Preserves Facilities & Fleet Department has also allocated \$1 million in capital funds to design, upgrade electric supply and install Level II and higher EV chargers and charging stations at maintenance yards and other support facilities.



EV Charging Station



Project Highlights

Longer-Range Plans and Studies

A portion of capital funding each year is allocated to early planning, conditions assessment and feasibility study work for more complex programs and projects.

Improvements to Newly Acquired Land

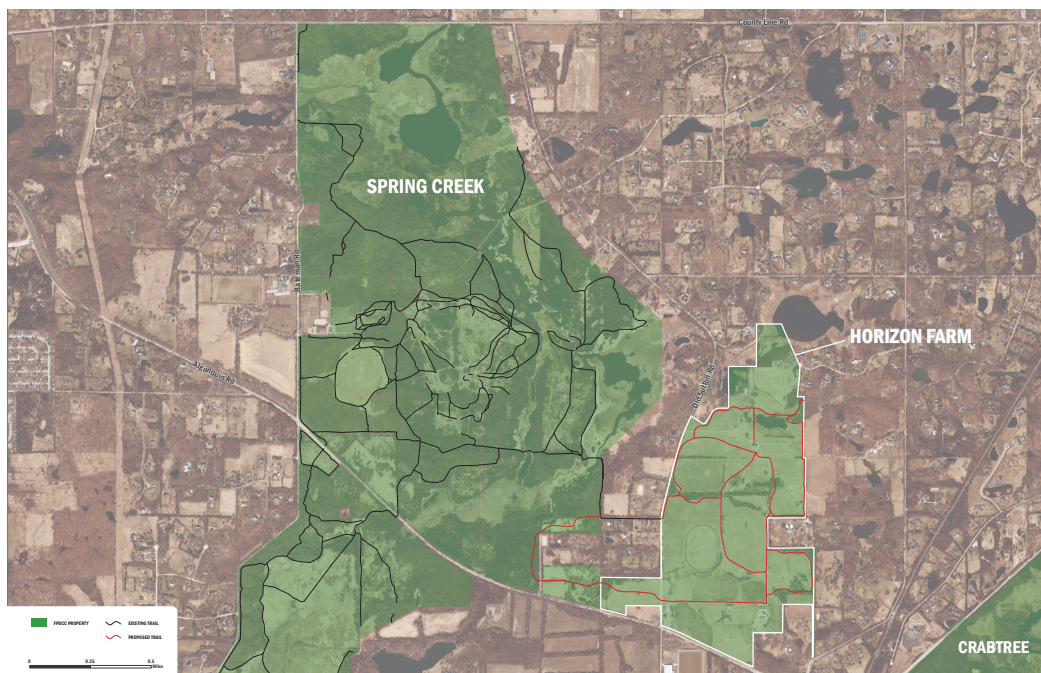
Due to the passage of the referendum, new funding has made it possible to acquire major new forest preserve holdings and to make some initial improvements to provide access and parking. MWRD and the Forest Preserves will begin concept planning and feasibility study work for the **Deer Creek Corridor in Southeast Cook County** in 2024.

Trail Gaps – Feasibility Studies – Lower Des Plaines and Other Gaps

The Forest Preserves' 2022 Trail Capital Plan & Guiding Principles report and the 2023 Cook County Bike Plan both support filling in gaps in the regional trail system to provide “low stress” alternatives for many cyclists. The Village of Brookfield is leading a phase 1 study for one of these – the “Lower Des Plaines/Salt Creek Trail Extension” along 1st Avenue from 26th Street to Ogden Avenue and then east to connect to the Salt Creek Trail system at Cermak Aquatic Center. The Forest Preserves and Cook County DOTH will assist in completing the phase 1 study in 2024. Other longer-range gaps that could be studied in 2025 with continued support from Cook County include a Des Plaines Trail bridge over Milwaukee Avenue and extension of the Tinley Creek Trail south to connect to regional trails south of I-80.

Site Master Plans: Horizon Farm/Spring Creek and Other Special Sites

Planning is currently underway for Horizon Farm after years of litigation with former owners. Planning for trail routes, surfaces and connections to the adjacent Spring Creek trail system is ongoing with the goal of improving the site for the public by 2025. Barrington Hills Park District and several equestrian clubs are currently partners in trail maintenance at the 4,000-acre Spring Creek Preserve in Northwest Cook County and will be actively involved in planning along with other stakeholders. Separately, a feasibility study for a possible building addition to Trailside Museum and master plan for other improvements at Thatcher Woods is also slated for 2024 along with in-house master plans for other special sites.



Horizon Farm/Spring Creek Trail Study



Project Highlights

Grants and Partnerships

While new funding provided by the referendum will allow the Forest Preserves to address more capital needs, including a long list of deferred restoration and maintenance projects, grants and intergovernmental agreements are still critical and will fund over 40 percent of the \$52 million in capital needs in 2024. Planning & Development staff are continuing to pursue grant opportunities and to grow collaborations to better leverage resources and expertise.

In 2023, new grant funds were awarded to support several critical energy efficiency projects and enhanced trails and outdoor recreation opportunities:

- \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds provided by the Cook County Bureau of Finance to support much needed capital improvements that enhance visitors' experience in the forest preserves including energy efficiency upgrades to public facilities including conversion of General Headquarters building to all-electric HVAC systems, new restrooms at Beaubien Woods and rehabilitation of up to 40 existing restroom buildings throughout the Forest Preserves.
- \$1.5 million in ARPA Brownfield Program funds, provided by Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability, to support structure demolition, environmental assessment, and environmental remediation with the Forest Preserves to increase access to healthy outdoor recreation and nature and enhance energy savings.
- \$300,000 through ComEd's Emerging Technologies Grant Program to support the construction of high efficiency heating, ventilating and air condition systems for the Forest Preserves' General Headquarters facility.
- \$188,000 awarded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Recreational Trail Program to improve one mile of trail and enhance ADA access at Tinley Creek Trail – Black Spur, located in Oak Forest in Southwestern Cook County.
- \$80,000 to support the development of an accessible canoe/kayak launch system at Beaubien Woods to improve access to the Little Calumet River; this project is funded in part through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Boat Access Area Development (BAAD) grant program.



General Headquarters - Before Rehabilitation



Capital Spending by Funding Source Summary

Project Category	2024 C&D Funds	Grant or Fees	MFT	Rollover / Transfer Existing Funds	2024 Total	2025-2028	Total
Land Restoration	\$ 7,629	\$ 2,920	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,549	\$ 30,673	\$ 41,223
Land Improvements - Trails and Other Recreation	\$ 2,210	\$ 5,889	\$ 2,863	\$ 998	\$ 11,961	\$ 75,502	\$ 87,462
Land Improvements - Site Amenities	\$ 420	\$ 265	\$ 2,862	\$ 1,035	\$ 4,582	\$ 22,969	\$ 27,551
Landscape Maintenance - Capital Outlays	\$ 827	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 827	\$ 3,308	\$ 4,135
Building Improvements	\$ 5,222	\$ 9,538	\$ -	\$ 4,086	\$ 18,847	\$ 64,521	\$ 83,368
Facilities & Fleet - Capital Outlays	\$ 2,180	\$ 175	\$ -	\$ 4,502	\$ 6,857	\$ 15,420	\$ 22,277
Planning, Design, & Consulting Services	\$ 911	\$ -	\$ 870	\$ 650	\$ 2,431	\$ 10,028	\$ 12,459
Total	\$ 19,400	\$ 18,788	\$ 6,595	\$ 11,272	\$ 56,054	\$ 222,421	\$ 278,474

NOTES: ALL FIGURES REPRESENTED IN THOUSANDS

Amount of 2025-2028 funding secured through grants or MFT:	\$ 60,476
Estimated 2025-2028 C&D funding (assuming \$19.4M/yr):	\$ 77,598
Estimated future funding gap 2025-2028	\$ 84,346

An electronic version of this draft and complete list of 2024 - 2028 projects can be downloaded from our web site at this link: <http://fpdcc.com/cip>



ABOUT THE FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

Explore the natural beauty of Cook County for an hour, a day or even a night. When you're surrounded by nearly 70,000 acres of wild and wonderful, there's no better place to feel free. The Forest Preserves of Cook County protects and restores its prairies, woodlands, wetlands and savannas so native plants and animals can thrive. At Forest Preserves' facilities and events, millions of visitors annually create their own adventure—hiking, swimming, fishing, golfing, and more. From cleaner air and water to a place to exercise, the Forest Preserves makes our communities healthier.

Forest Preserves of Cook County

General Headquarters, 536 N. Harlem Ave, River Forest, IL 60305

Forest Preserves Board of Commissioners

Toni Preckwinkle, President

Frank J. Aguilar
Alma E. Anaya
Scott R. Britton
John P. Daley
Dennis Deer
Bridget Degnen
Bridget Gainer
Monica Gordon
Bill Lowry

Donna Miller
Stanley Moore
Josina Morita
Kevin B. Morrison
Sean M. Morrison
Anthony J. Quezada
Tara S. Stamps
Maggie Trevor