



Capital Improvement Plan

UPDATE TO THE 5-YEAR PLAN
2023-2027





January 19, 2023

TONI PRECKWINKLE
President

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**General
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Arnold L. Randall

Dear President Preckwinkle and Commissioners,

The final 2023 Update to the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan for the Forest Preserves of Cook County is enclosed for your records.

Projected capital spending for **2023** has increased to \$59 million (from \$33 million last year) primarily due to a few significant grant awards, rollover of funds for a few 2022 projects to 2023 and the desire to accelerate some 2024 projects after voter approval of the recent referendum. The amended Plan includes almost \$20 million in supplemental Construction & Development funding for ecological restoration, public amenities, landscape maintenance and capital investment in support facilities and fleet.

An estimated \$141 million will be needed over the next four years for Forest Preserve needs and a few new amenities and facilities, with an estimated \$37 million in unfunded need that is front-loaded. New capital bonds supported by new revenue may be needed in 2024.

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

Please contact me 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
Trail Safety Improvements.....	11
New Bridges and Trail Connections	12
Access Roads Repaving	14
Paving Improvement Priorities Map 2021-2023.....	15
Recreation Amenities: Picnic Groves and Shelters	16-17
Making Sites More Welcoming	18
Connecting People to Nature.....	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 2023-2027.....	APPENDIX
Additional Unfunded New Amenities 2024-2027	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' buildings, trails and infrastructure. While the policy of the Forest Preserves is to keep at least 80 percent of its land in a natural state, close to 20 percent has been developed with over 350 miles of trails (including 125 bridges), 200 picnic shelters (many with comfort stations for the public), 10 golf courses, six nature centers, five campgrounds, three aquatic centers, three visitor and volunteer centers, 43 fishing lakes (with shoreline and water control structures) and dozens of maintenance yards and field offices.

This year's \$200 million 5-Year Plan has increased from \$121 million last year, largely due to new funding from the referendum, new grants and Build Illinois Bond funding, but also due to a few projects maturing and being ready for bid after years of planning and design.

Needs Assessments. Staff and consultants continue to improve information on the condition of existing infrastructure. Conditions assessments for paved trails, parking lots, picnic shelters, golf course and most dam structures are fairly current. Bridges were last inspected in 2013 and a new round of inspections will be completed in 2023. Limited inspection of 228 buildings served by gas, propane or electricity was completed in 2022, and is being supplemented by energy audits or envelope inspections at a few dozen of these in 2023. Unpaved trail inspections in the Palos Preserves is another focus 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 2023 capital spending of \$59 million is proposed, with just over \$21 million funded through grants, mitigation fees, Build Illinois Bond and Motor Fuel Tax funds. Transfer of \$5 million from reserves is proposed to supplement the original annual tax levy of \$7.5 million. Almost \$20 million in supplemental tax levy will cover high priority needs for 2023 and allow for acceleration of some projects that were originally programmed for 2024. An estimated \$141 million will be needed to cover capital needs over the next four years. Construction and development funds from annual tax levies will be supplemented by transportation and state grants to cover approximately \$104 million in needs, leaving an estimated \$37 million in unfunded need that the Forest Preserves will need to fund through other to be determined sources.

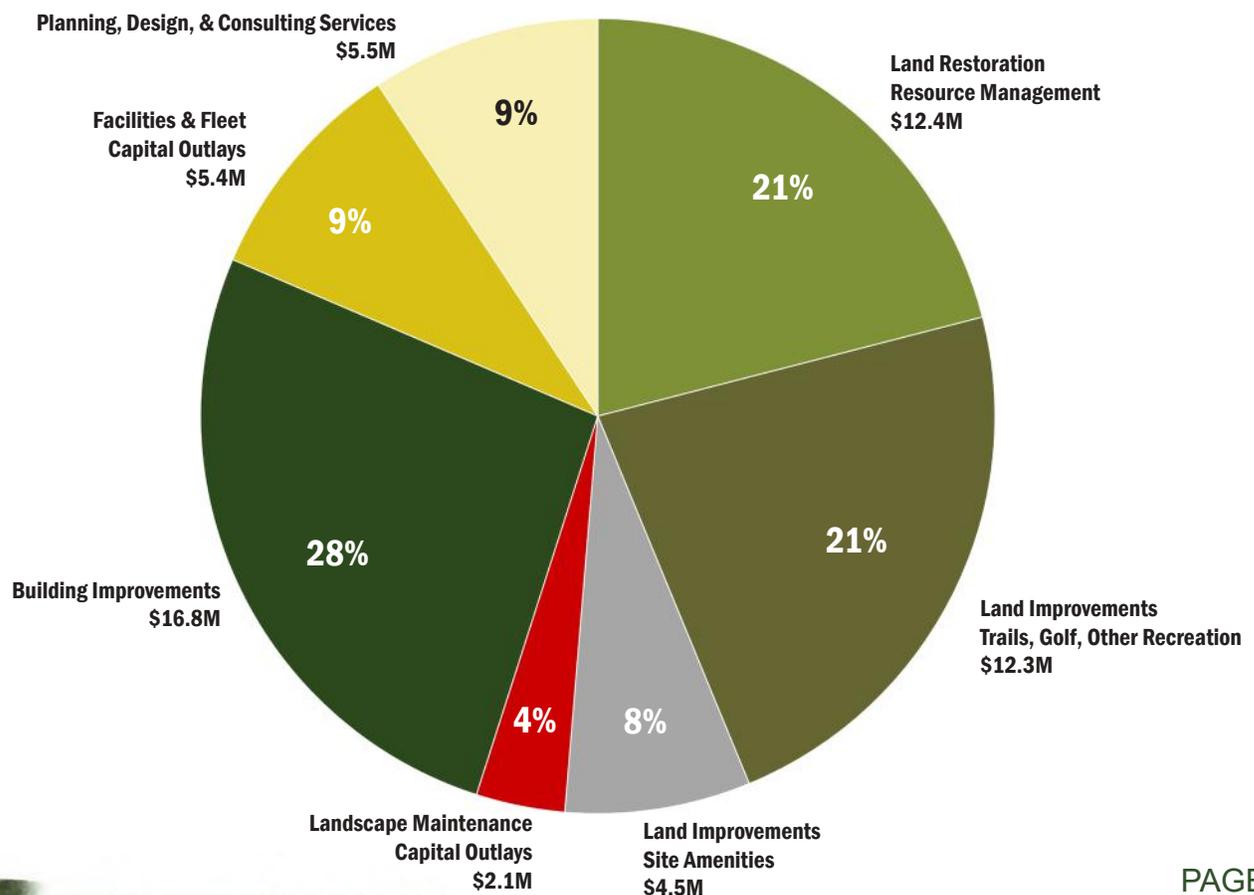
A detailed list of highest priority needs are summarized in Table 2, available in an Appendix along with Table 3. Table 3 also includes an additional \$47 million in new amenities that are not considered an immediate or necessary capital improvement but an additional amenity or facility that would benefit County residents. The Forest Preserves will pursue additional grants and partner support for these projects. The Des Plaines Trail and Beaubien Woods Boat Launch moved from this table to funded projects in Table 2 this year due to success in finding 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 and Development fund is established to account for roughly 6 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.

2023 CAPITAL SPENDING: \$59.0 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, trail 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 new Cook County Bike Plan (still a draft at the time of this report) 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

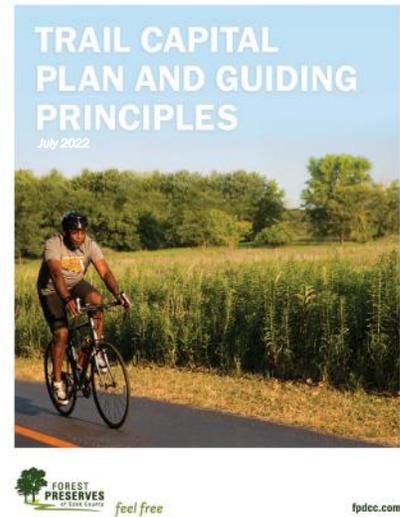
In 2020, the Conservation & Policy Council adopted a series of new position papers to provide further guidance on four key topics, and two of these continue to influence capital investment: "Moving Towards Racial Equity" (which challenges staff to consider capital investment and engagement in adversely 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 help make the Forest Preserves carbon neutral by 2050 by reducing its energy and gasoline usage and investing in new renewable energy sources. A new Clean Energy Framework report was released in 2021 with assistance from the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center's Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois to advance the goal of achieving 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050. Forest Preserves staff engaged the Smart Energy Design Assistance Center of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and 360 Energy Group, LLC, to prepare a Clean Energy Action Plan in 2022 to provide a roadmap for achieving these goals.

Flooding and Climate Resiliency

Although the Forest Preserves does not have its own plan, it is a partner in Cook County's Hazard Mitigation Plan with the Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.



Forest Preserves of Cook County

Clean Energy Framework
May 2021



Project Highlights

Landscape Restoration Priorities

Powderhorn

Powderhorn Lake Preserve is a complex located on the far southeast side of Chicago and Burnham featuring globally rare dune and swale topography interspersed with sand savanna, prairie, and wetland habitats, and an important fishing lake. Urban and industrial development has altered the hydrological conditions at Powderhorn Lake, interrupting its natural flow northward toward Wolf Lake. This has resulted in unnaturally high-water levels that negatively impact the nature preserve, the marsh (including the fish nursery and bird habitat) and separates the fish populations at both lakes. It has also resulted in flooding through the railroad into the adjacent neighborhood.

A three-year project conducted in partnership with Audubon, the Great Lakes Commission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Illinois DNR will restore more than 100 acres of wetlands by reconnecting the northern marsh at Powderhorn Lake to nearby Wolf Lake through the installation of a water control and fish passage structure. This connection will allow land managers to maintain water levels at Powderhorn Lake, helping to reestablish vital marsh habitat.



Powderhorn - Wolf Lake Connection



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 2,500 acres.



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 the American Rescue Plan Act 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 is scheduled to begin in fall 2022 and 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

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. In its current condition, portions of Camp Sullivan and other preserves in the Tinley Creek landscape are dominated by invasive brush and dense trees that create deep shade and bare soil that is susceptible to erosion. This erosion compounds over time, creating in-stream sedimentation, channelization, downcutting and disconnection of Tinley Creek and its tributaries to their floodplains. A major ecological and hydrological restoration project with funds from the Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability and federal American Rescue Plan Act will restore 180-acres at Camp Sullivan through removal of invasive brush and removal of hydrologic impairments. This work will result in increased natural infiltration of rainwater, reduced flooding, and improved community resilience to impacts from climate change. The project will also build upon restoration recently conducted at Tinley Creek Ravines immediately to the west, expanding restored portions of the Tinley Creek watershed.



Camp Sullivan Woods

Other Locations

Over \$3 million in supplemental funding in 2023 will advance large-scale restoration work at the Palos Preserves (McMahon sub-unit), Jurgenson Woods at the Thornton-Lansing Road Nature Preserve, Swallow Cliff and Deer Grove West.



Project Highlights

Urgent Land Improvement Needs - Trail Repairs

The developed areas of forest preserves include an extensive system of parking lots, paved and unpaved trails, bridges and culverts, dams and water control structures, golf course irrigation systems and other site improvements. New Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) funding will address many repaving needs, but there are still significant unfunded needs that are not eligible for MFT funding or federal grants, including many unpaved trail segments that do not serve a transportation function, repairs to lake shorelines, and dams and golf course capital needs.

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, particularly on sections with steep slopes. Most of the maintenance of the unpaved trails is done 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. Priorities for 2022-2023 include rehabilitation of severely eroded portions the unpaved trails at **Deer Grove** and **Thorn Creek** trail systems and nature center trails at **Sand Ridge** in South Cook.

Paved Trail Repair Needs

The Forest Preserves currently has a system of over 157 miles of paved off-street bicycle trails. While many miles of trail have been constructed or repaved in the last 10 years, others trail surfaces are nearing their expected useful life of 20-30 years and will need maintenance over the next five years. Forest Preserves Landscape Maintenance crews will assist with patching smaller problem areas to extend the use of the pavement, but more extensive trail repair work is performed by contractors managed by the Planning & Development Department.

Assuming an average useful life of 30 years, roughly five miles of the 157-mile paved trail system will need repaving each year; however, new trail conditions data is now available to prioritize work at specific locations.

Priorities include resurfacing of a 3-mile segment of the Tinley Creek Trail system south of 143rd Street (that will start in 2023) along with the entire 5-mile west loop on the I&M Trail. The Illinois Tollway will rebuild the eastern portion of the I&M trail system and repave the trailhead parking lot in 2023 after completion of the Mile Long Bridge. Repaving of the popular paved loop trail at Midlothian Meadows is also expected to be completed in 2023.



Unpaved Trail – Hiking Trail Upgrades at Sand Ridge Nature Center (2022)



Unpaved Trail – Des Plaines River Trail near Rosemont (before 2023 upgrades)



I&M Canal Trail



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. There are also some unique historic trail facilities like the Swallow Cliff Stairs that require special attention due to age and heavy use.

Swallow Cliff Stairs, Palos & Sag Valley Trail Rehabilitation

Portions of the unpaved trail system in the Palos and Sag Valley Preserves have suffered chronic erosion and eroded surface conditions that require major rehabilitation by outside contractors. New state Rebuild Illinois grant funding is funding the repairs to the popular Swallow Cliff Stairs on the same trail system and will be completed in 2021. A \$10 million Build Illinois grant in 2022 will fund additional Swallow Cliff and Palos Trail System infrastructure upgrades and related large-scale landscape restoration in the next four years.



Trail Erosion - Swallow Cliff South

Cable Gate and Drop Gate 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. In 2021, new reflective wrapping was added to all entrance cable gates to improve visibility. Staff are also reviewing our current design policies for keeping vehicles off our trails and discussing if our current methods are still the best practice in all cases. Removal or replacement of drop gates on some of the busiest trails will be evaluated in 2022.



Drop Gate at Whistler Woods

Bridge Repairs and Inspections

The Forest Preserves trail system includes 125 bridges 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. The need for repairs at the **Oakton Avenue bridge on the North Branch Bike Trail** was flagged in 2021 and repairs are planned in 2023. In addition, a consultant began inspection in 2022 of more than 100 other Forest Preserves bridges and underpasses crossing interior streams and ravines to update the last comprehensive inspection completed in 2012.



Oakton Avenue Bridge



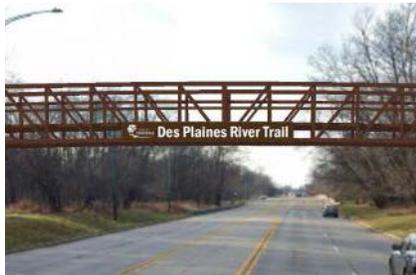
Project Highlights

Filling in the Gaps: New Bridges and Trail Connections

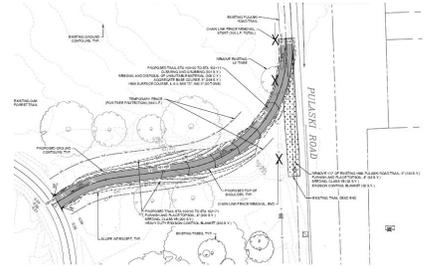
The Des Plaines River Trail is key focus for two new bridges that are slated to break ground in 2023 and 2024 as part of a larger partnership effort with Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways, four West Cook municipalities, and federal and railroad funding. A \$7.2 million contract has been awarded for a new bridge over Lawrence Avenue that is scheduled to open by late 2023 as part of 1.4-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 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.



NBBT Connection - Touhy & Caldwell



DPRT New Bridge - Lawrence Ave



Midlothian Meadow - Oak Forest Connection

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 is planning a connection from the Touhy and Caldwell Avenue to the North Branch Bicycle Trail within Bunker Hill.

Midlothian Meadow – Oak Forest Heritage Preserve Trail Connection – the Forest Preserves providing a connection between IDOT’s recently completed one-mile trail on the west side of Pulaski Road/Crawford Avenue to the existing Oak Forest Heritage Loop Trail. 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.

Salt Creek Trail – Wolf Road connection. The Village of Western Springs completed a new trail on the west side of Wolf Road in 2022 to connect residents to the Salt Creek Trail north of Ogden Avenue.

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

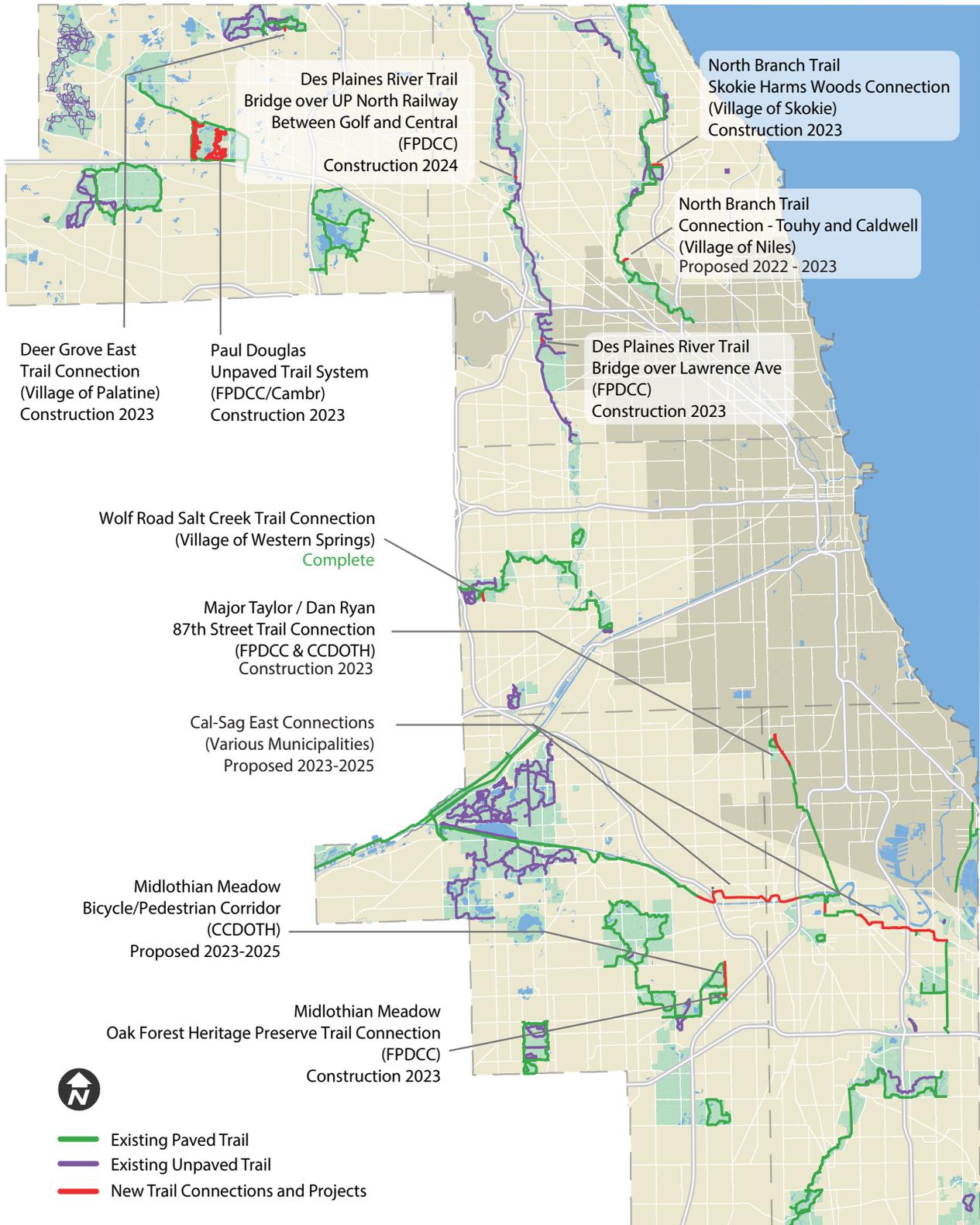
Major Taylor Trail Connection 87th Street. The Forest Preserves will construct new trail connections to both Dan Ryan’s aqueduct hiking trail and the Beverly neighborhood along the south side of 87th to the Major Taylor Trail in 2023.

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.





New Trail Connections



Project Highlights

Access Road and Parking Repaving

Over 300 access roads current 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 funds to address the trail access road and parking repaving needs over the next five years. An engineering design team was hired in June 2020 to assist in-house civil engineers with design and construction management services over the next five years.

Repaving in 2020 was limited to six locations, including Thatcher Woods and Beaubien Woods Boat Launch. Repaving work ramped up significantly in 2021 to address needs at 21 locations, including the access drive and parking areas at the River Trail Nature Center in Northbrook. Repaving work in 2022 is proposed at 23 additional locations (excluding trails) at an estimated cost of roughly \$5.9 million, and work at 15 locations with remaining work to be completed in the spring. In-house asphalt patching crews will need to continue to ramp up work to extend the life of driveways, parking lots and trails that currently require only patching or crack sealing. Landscape Maintenance's in-house pavement patching crew will receive \$412,500 in 2022 to purchase increased quantities of asphalt and equipment and perform related drainage (culvert replacement) work. Shrinking pavement at oversized parking lots and adding porous pavement and bio-retention will reduce long-term maintenance costs in a few locations.

The construction of the Schuth's Grove Parking Lot Green Infrastructure Retrofit & Canoe Launch project was fully completed in 2022. The parking lot was completely reconstructed with porous unit paving, to provide water quality and quantity benefits to the Des Plaines River. The new canoe launch expands the Forest Preserves paddling amenities and programs on the river. The project was funded, in part, by Motor Fuel Tax funds, a green infrastructure partnership with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, and a Boat Access Area Development grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Pavement reduction and porous pavement work was completed in 2022 at Possum Hollow Woods near LaGrange Park, with funding support from MWRD and Cook County DOT.



Wolf Road Woods Access Road to the Palos Preserves

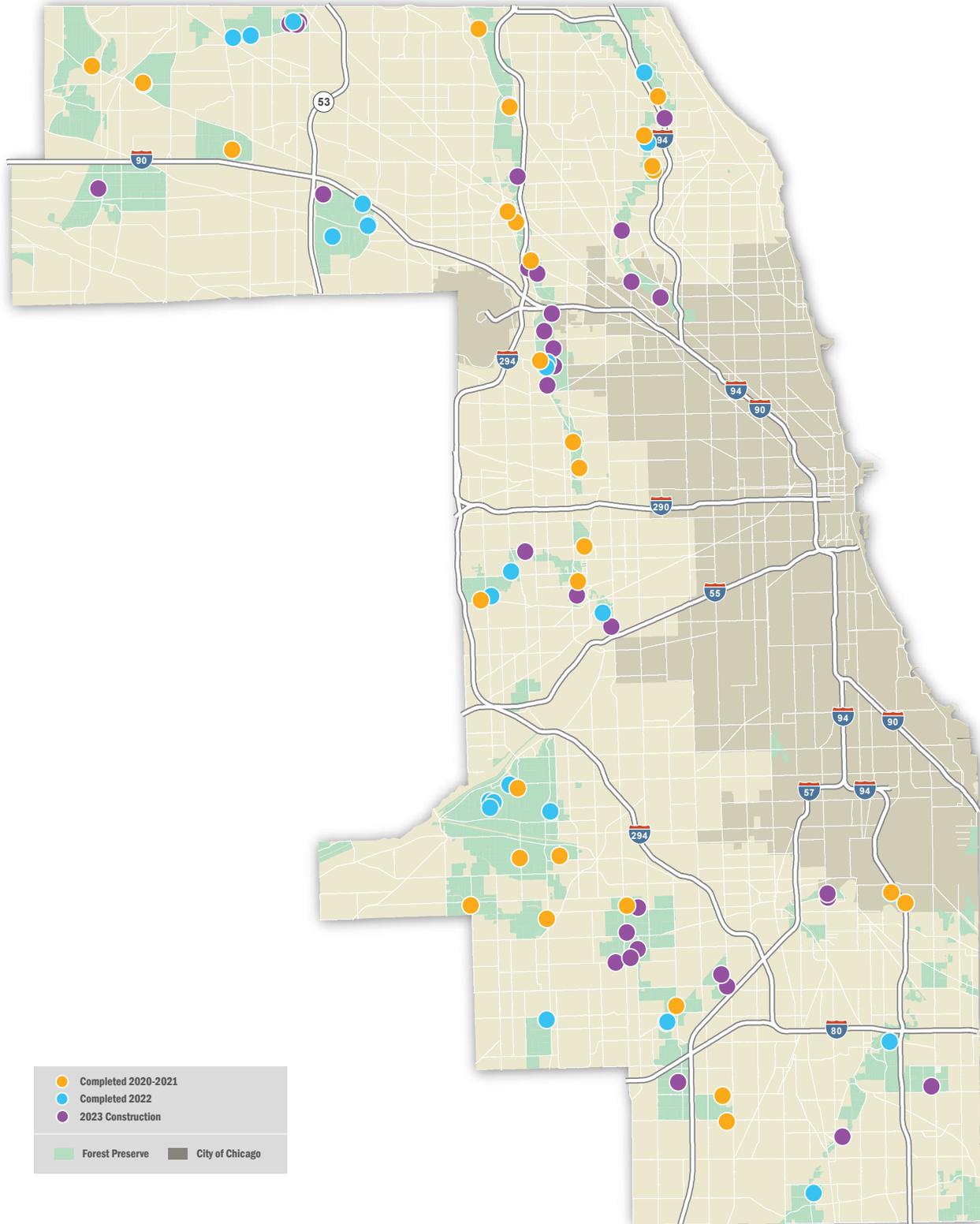


Schuth's Grove Green Infrastructure Upgrades



Pavement Improvement Priorities 2020-2023

FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY



Project Highlights

Recreation Amenities

An average of \$500,000-\$600,000 per year is needed for roof and structural repairs over the next five years. Although there has been steady progress in reducing the backlog of deferred maintenance, a new round of inspections in 2022 added eight more shelters to the list of 16 that were slated for major repairs. Forest Preserves architects are planning to cycle through needs in one of three zones (north, central and south) every three years. Work in north Cook County will start in spring of 2023 and will continue in West and Central Cook County groves in 2023, followed by south groves again in 2024. Heavier roof and structural work should be completed by 2025 and then shift to more ordinary maintenance at a larger number of shelters starting in 2026.



Picnic Shelter Repair

Picnic Grove Access Improvements

New ADA paths to picnic groves and shelters are also being added at a few groves each year in conjunction with paving contracts. New access paths will be completed to picnic shelters and groves at seven preserves in south and southwest Cook County in 2022, including Wampum Lake south of I-80, a popular fishing derby location, five heavily used picnic groves in the Palos Preserves and two groves in the Tinley Creek area, including the newly acquired site Villa Santa Maria.



Wampum Lake Picnic Grove Path

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. Planning and design for a new trail connection from Beaubien Woods to the adjacent Altgeld Gardens neighborhood. Annual capital spending on access path improvements at 8-10 locations per year is roughly \$240,000.



Camp Sullivan Spur

Outdoor Recreation Amenities

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.



Project Highlights

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 extensive earthen dam wall and spillways that is a high priority for monitoring and investment. Geotechnical investigations and hydrological monitoring was completed in 2022 and design of improvements to one or both of the spillways is expected to start in 2023, subject to review and approval by the IDNR Office of Water Resources. While the cost to replace the entire earthen dam is estimated at over \$9 million, Forest Preserves consultants hope to secure approval for a more modest plan for rehabilitation of one or both spillway structures with a lower estimated cost of \$2 million while continuing to monitor for leakage. 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.



Fishing at FPCC Lake

Paddling - Canoe/Kayak Launch Improvements

Access to water-based activities remains a high priority, especially in areas where racial and social equity is a focus. A new accessible canoe and kayak launch opened at Schuth's Grove in the western suburb of North Riverside in 2022 and is just a short 3-mile paddle downstream from an informal launch point at Maywood Grove for the award-winning Maywood Paddling program. This program and gear library has introduced approximately 1,500 new paddlers to the activity in the last two years. Local capital funds were needed to match an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Boat Access Area Development grant for the new Schuth's launch. Over \$1 million will be needed in 2023 and 2024 to leverage a \$1.15 million IDNR Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development grant award for major rehabilitation of fishing and boating infrastructure at the Beaubien Woods Boat Launch. A portion of the funds will also be spent to provide 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.



Paddling at Schuth's Grove

Reimagining Golf

Capital investment in golf has been reduced in recent years due to the anticipated expiration of the existing concession agreement with Billy Casper Golf in 2022. Major investment was also tabled at three underperforming courses (Burnham Woods, River Oaks and Edgebrook) while a study of potential alternatives for "reimagining golf" at these three locations was underway. The appropriation of \$200,000 in Build Illinois Bond funds for improvements at the Burnham Woods and River Oaks courses in 2022 will be used for modest improvements in 2023 and 2024 while the search for partners and additional funding continues to address challenges at these courses. The current concession agreement has been extended for two years, and there is also an opportunity to ensure that priority capital needs for golf are addressed as part of a new concession agreement that will be negotiated in 2024.



Project Highlights

Making Sites More Welcoming

Although most of the capital funds will go to repairing existing facilities, a limited amount of funding will continue to be invested in new amenities. Making 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 continues to be a specific focus. New signs have been installed at more than 10 of these 60 special sites since 2015 with new signs coming soon in 2022 and 2023 at three nature centers (River Trail, Crabtree and Little Red Schoolhouse), two campgrounds (Bullfrog Lake and Sullivan), the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, and over a dozen trailhead sites.

New Interpretive Signs and Exhibits

Camps, nature centers and aquatic centers are among the most popular destinations in the Forest Preserves 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. More will be installed at Crabtree Nature Center by the end of 2023. Large-scale multi-panel signs are also in process for four to five other locations.



New Intepretive Signage - Sand Ridge

New Entrance and Directional Signs

Three nature centers are scheduled to get new stone entrance signs in 2022 (Little Red Schoolhouse, River Trail, and Crabtree) to make them more identifiable as Forest Preserves facilities and add space to advertise special programs and events.



New Directional Sign - Sand Ridge

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. Installing new trailhead map signs to replace older trail map signs is a major goal for 2022 and 2023, along with ensuring there are adequate trail intersection posts and mile markers along the way.



Motivational Mile Marker



Intersection Post



Project Highlights

Connecting People to Nature

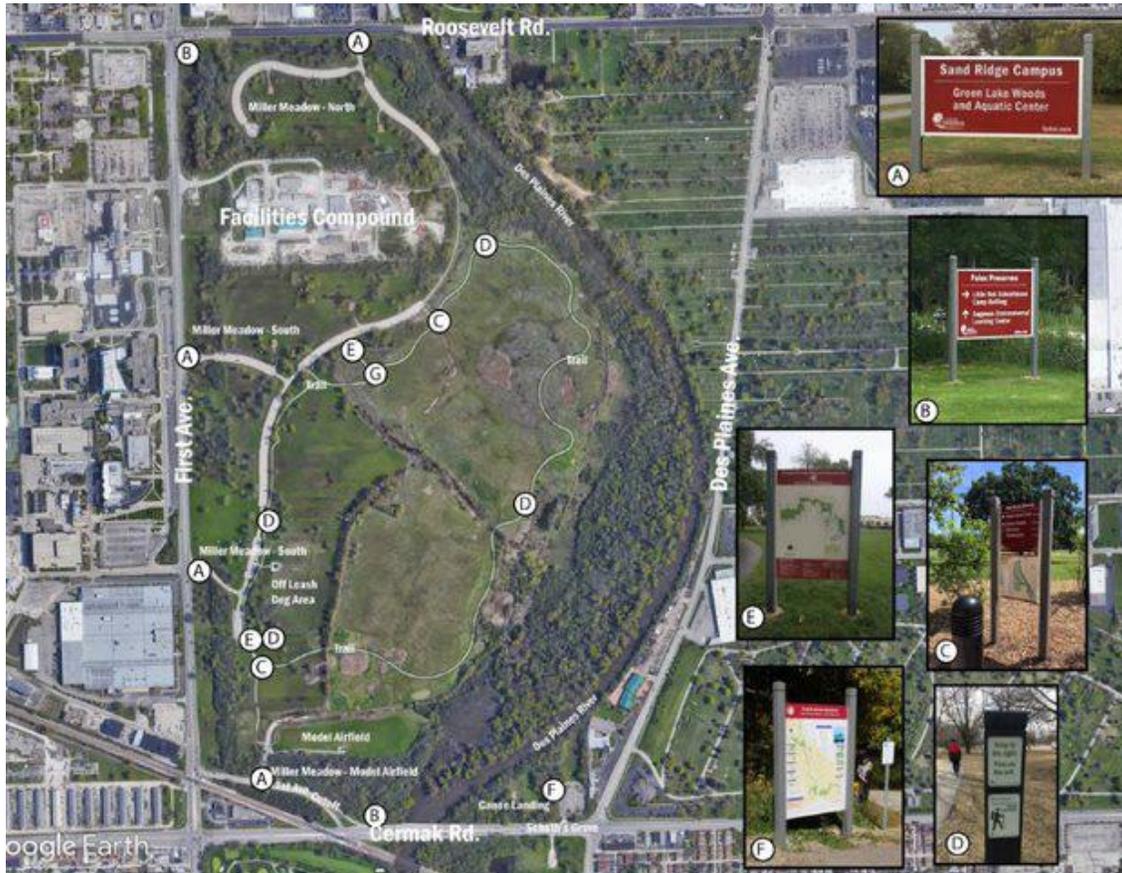
In the spring of 2022, the Forest Preserves announced the “Connecting People to Nature Challenge” outreach program to encourage local residents to connect with nature and local groups to partner with the Forest Preserves.

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) in both programs to activate the sites and restoration and signage to make them more open, welcoming and well known to nearby residents.

To make the sites more welcoming, the Forest Preserves crews and contractors have removed invasive brush to open up sightlines and planted new native flowers, as well as installed new directional and informational signs at site entrances and along trails. The exhibit below illustrates a range of new signs slated for installation in 2022 at Miller Meadow.

“With improvements and deeper local engagement, we want to encourage even more people to come out to enjoy their local preserve”

-Forest Preserves President
Toni Preckwinkle



Forest Preserves General Superintendent Arnold Randall is encouraging continued focus on these sites in coming years: “For local groups, we challenge you to join us in finding new ways to add more and keep improving these sites.”



Project Highlights

Urgent Building Repair, Replacement & Renovation Needs

The Forest Preserves owns over 550 structures including 250 buildings and 200 picnic shelters. Public buildings include education and recreation facilities and over 50 comfort stations. Support buildings include 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), there is no longer a significant backlog of urgent roof or HVAC replacements, life safety or accessibility needs.

There is still a need to tighten up building envelope systems –walls, windows and doors– at over 200 buildings. A minimum of \$500,000 per year will be needed over the next ten years. In 2022 in-house staff inspected buildings and developed an existing conditions matrix to prioritize future work. Staff will continue to assess and prioritize needed improvements in 2023. Consultant support will also be needed in 2023 to develop construction bid documents at high priority locations that were identified in building inspections.

Capital Renewal – 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 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. An estimated \$8.1 million is needed to construct the office and garage in 2023 and 2024.



Rendering of Salt Creek HQ & Garage



Project Highlights

Updating Buildings -New Exhibits at Existing Nature Centers

Crabtree Nature Center Improvements

Construction of new exhibits and energy-efficiency upgrades is in process at Crabtree Nature Center in Northwest Cook County. All work is scheduled to be completed in 2023. A \$750,000 Museum grant award from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources is supplementing funding for these improvements.



*Crabtree Nature Center New Design
Rendering by Space Haus*

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 2023.



Caldwell Woods Warming Shelter



Project Highlights

Sustainability Upgrades

Renewable Energy Action Plan

The Forest Preserves with the assistance from our consultants, 360 Energy Group and the Smart Energy Design Assistance Center, developed an action plan suggesting specific steps the Forest Preserves could execute to meet our greenhouse gas and renewable energy goals. Implementation of this plan will guide the Forest Preserves for the next 25 years.

Renewable Energy Projects

In 2023, the Forest Preserves will begin 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 the heating system has reached the end of its useful life. A ComEd grant program could provide funding for a new very high-efficiency system, subject to engineering investigation of the feasibility and cost of retrofitting various related building systems to support the new high-efficiency equipment. The main boiler will also be replaced at the Central Warehouse. This centralized heating system that serves three buildings will be replaced with electric heat pump units that will decrease greenhouse gas emissions and combined with window replacements will improve the overall energy efficiency of these buildings.



Central Compound - Before



Central Compound - After

Lighting Upgrades- Dark Skies

The Facilities & Fleet Maintenance Department has plans to retrofit all exterior and interior lighting to new LED style fixtures over the next five years to extend the life of all lighting to an estimated 14 years of operational use. This would reduce maintenance and service requests, save on energy bills and support an updated Dark Skies Initiative. A cellular-driven wireless control system would also provide a higher level of control with an improved service and delivery system.

Bonds issued in 2019 have already funded the first phase of replacements at strategic locations, including the Palos Preserves, a designated Urban Night Sky Place. Over \$4 million in additional funds will be needed from 2023 to 2025 to complete all work and integrate some of the new lighting to a wireless control system.



Night Sky at Maple Lake

Project Highlights

Longer-Range Plans and Studies

Lower Des Plaines/Salt Creek Trail Alignment Study

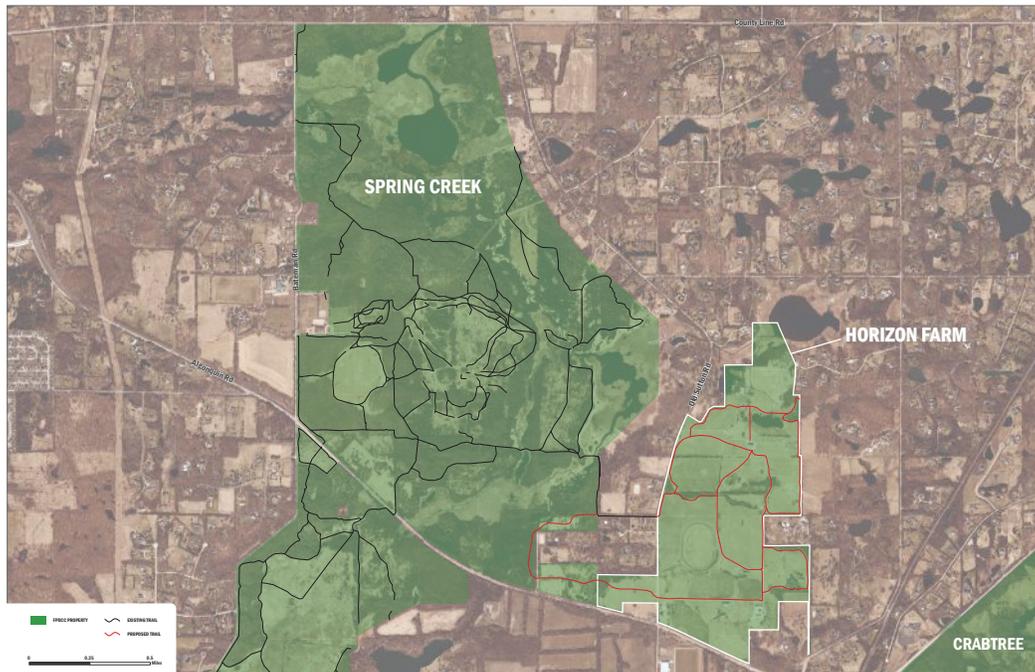
Further south along the Des Plaines River corridor, the Village of Brookfield is leading a phase 1 study of potential future alignment alternatives for an extension of the existing Salt Creek Greenway trail from 26th Street to Ogden Avenue as well as local connections to the main line trail. This study builds on a feasibility study and community engagement sponsored by the Forest Preserves in 2019 with support from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s Local Technical Assistance Program.

Trail Capital Improvement Priorities

In the summer of 2021, Forest Preserves trail planners joined with Cook County Department of Transportation & Highways trail planners to solicit public comments on two related plans: the draft Forest Preserves Trail Capital Improvement Guiding Principles report and the draft Cook County Bike Plan. The Forest Preserves Plan was finalized in July 2022 and the County’s plan is expected to be finalized in 2023. Both are intended to help prioritize future investment in trail projects. The Forest Preserves report identifies some final gaps in the regional trail system and reaffirms criteria for evaluating requests from municipalities. Cook County’s draft plan reinforces the importance of off-road forest preserve trails to provide “low stress” alternatives for many cyclists. An example of a longer-range project that is supported in both plans is potential extension of the Tinley Creek Trail - South Extension to connect to regional trails south of I-80.

Horizon Farm/Spring Creek Trail Study

Planning is currently underway for improvements to Horizon Farm which reopened in 2022. Planning for trail routes, surfaces and connections to the adjacent Spring Creek trail system will occur this winter while some trail improvement work is occurring. 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.



Horizon Farm/Spring Creek Trail Study



Project Highlights

Grants and Partnerships

The Forest Preserves is deeply aware of the urgency to increase Cook County's resilience to the impacts from climate change. The Planning & Development Department is focusing its efforts on increasing energy efficiencies, expanding public lands for improved ecosystem services that will help all residents have access to cleaner air and water, while also decreasing their risk of flooding, and ensuring that everyone has access to engage with nature and recreation activities in a safe and welcoming setting. Partnerships and collaborations continue to be a priority and the Forest Preserves is working closely with its sister agencies at Cook County, local and state agencies, and local non-profit organizations to leverage resources and share expertise.

In 2022, the Forest Preserves Planning & Development Department secured significant grant funding to improve and expand public land, outdoor recreation amenities, and facilities:

- \$10,000,000 in Build Illinois Bond funds, expected to be awarded in 2023 through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, to support the construction of Swallow Cliff and Palos Trail system infrastructure upgrades including accessibility, signs and landscape restoration.
- \$4,400,000 in Build Illinois Bond funds, awarded through Illinois Department of Natural Resources, to support the construction of a new Salt Creek Landscape Maintenance Headquarters and Garage. This project will allow the Forest Preserves to build a new, energy efficient maintenance facility office and garage in west suburban North Riverside to replace existing outdated facilities. This site and its buildings are key to the maintenance operations for the busy Salt Creek division.
- \$1,150,000 in Outdoor Recreation and Land Acquisition and Development funds, awarded by Illinois Department of Natural Resources, to support the development of outdoor recreation amenities at Beaubien Woods, one of only a handful of forest preserves located within the City of Chicago. The recreation amenities include reconstruction of existing boat launch ramps and onshore fishing boardwalk, an accessible canoe/kayak launch system, a new program shelter and interpretive signs, and a comfort station and trail connection to the adjacent neighborhood of Altgeld Gardens.
- \$200,000 in Recreational Trail Program funds from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to improve three miles of trail and enhance ADA access at two trailhead parking lots at Tinley Creek Trail, located in Oak Forest in southwestern Cook County.



Baubien Woods Boat Launch - Before Reconstruction

Capital Spending by Funding Source Summary

Project Category	2023 C&D Funds	2023 C&D Increase	Grant or Fees	MFT	Rollover / Transfer Existing Funds	2023 Total	2024-2027	Total
Land Restoration	\$ 4,463	\$ 5,225	\$ 2,700	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 12,389	\$ 34,794	\$ 47,183
Land Improvements - Trails and Other Recreation	\$ -	\$ 2,473	\$ 6,217	\$ 2,092	\$ 1,473	\$ 12,255	\$ 26,942	\$ 39,197
Land Improvements - Site Amenities	\$ 340	\$ 788	\$ 90	\$ 2,604	\$ 635	\$ 4,457	\$ 23,112	\$ 27,569
Landscape Maintenance - Capital Outlays	\$ 413	\$ 1,723	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,135	\$ 9,050	\$ 11,185
Building Improvements	\$ 573	\$ 5,462	\$ 5,766	\$ -	\$ 5,029	\$ 16,829	\$ 23,493	\$ 40,323
Facilities & Fleet - Capital Outlays	\$ 619	\$ 2,530	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,300	\$ 5,449	\$ 17,751	\$ 23,200
Planning, Design, & Consulting Services	\$ 1,052	\$ 1,380	\$ 1,121	\$ 953	\$ 999	\$ 5,505	\$ 6,158	\$ 11,663
Total	\$ 7,460	\$ 19,581	\$ 15,894	\$ 5,649	\$ 10,436	\$ 59,020	\$ 141,300	\$ 200,321

NOTES: ALL FIGURES REPRESENTED AS THOUSANDS

Amount of 2024-2027 funding secured through grants or MFT:	\$ 16,882
Estimated 2024-2027 C&D funding	\$ 87,800
Remaining unfunded need.	\$ 36,618

An electronic version of this draft and complete list of 2023 - 2027 projects can be downloaded from our web site at this link: <http://fpdccc.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

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