



River Ecology & Governance Task Force

March 15, 2022 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introduction
- II. Task Force Goals and Membership Expectations
- III. Case Study Presentation: How does a riverfront project happen?
- IV. Our Great Rivers Projects Input Session
- V. Looking Back to 2021 and Looking Forward in 2022

Task Force Objectives

Transforming Chicago's unique waterway system into a **thriving and ecologically integrated natural asset**, capable of accommodating the needs of people, requires **coordinated planning**, investment and management

Aspire to, and realize no later than 2040, inland waterways in Chicago that are **inviting, productive and living**, that **support wildlife in-stream and on their banks**, and that **contribute to our city's resiliency**

Short-Term Goals: 2021 - 2022

1. Create principles for a system-wide and neighborhood focused approach to Chicago's waterways
 - a. Adoption of principles by government partners participating on Steering Committee
2. Review current policies and create recommendations to strengthen them

Short-Term Goals: 2021 - 2022

3. Inform near-term planning opportunities to advance collective priorities
 - a. We Will Chicago
 - b. CDOT Access Study
 - c. USACE PAS Restoration Framework Plan
 - d. Industrial Corridor Modernization Process
4. Develop criteria to prioritize projects for identified funding opportunities
5. Standardize process for reviewing riverfront development projects

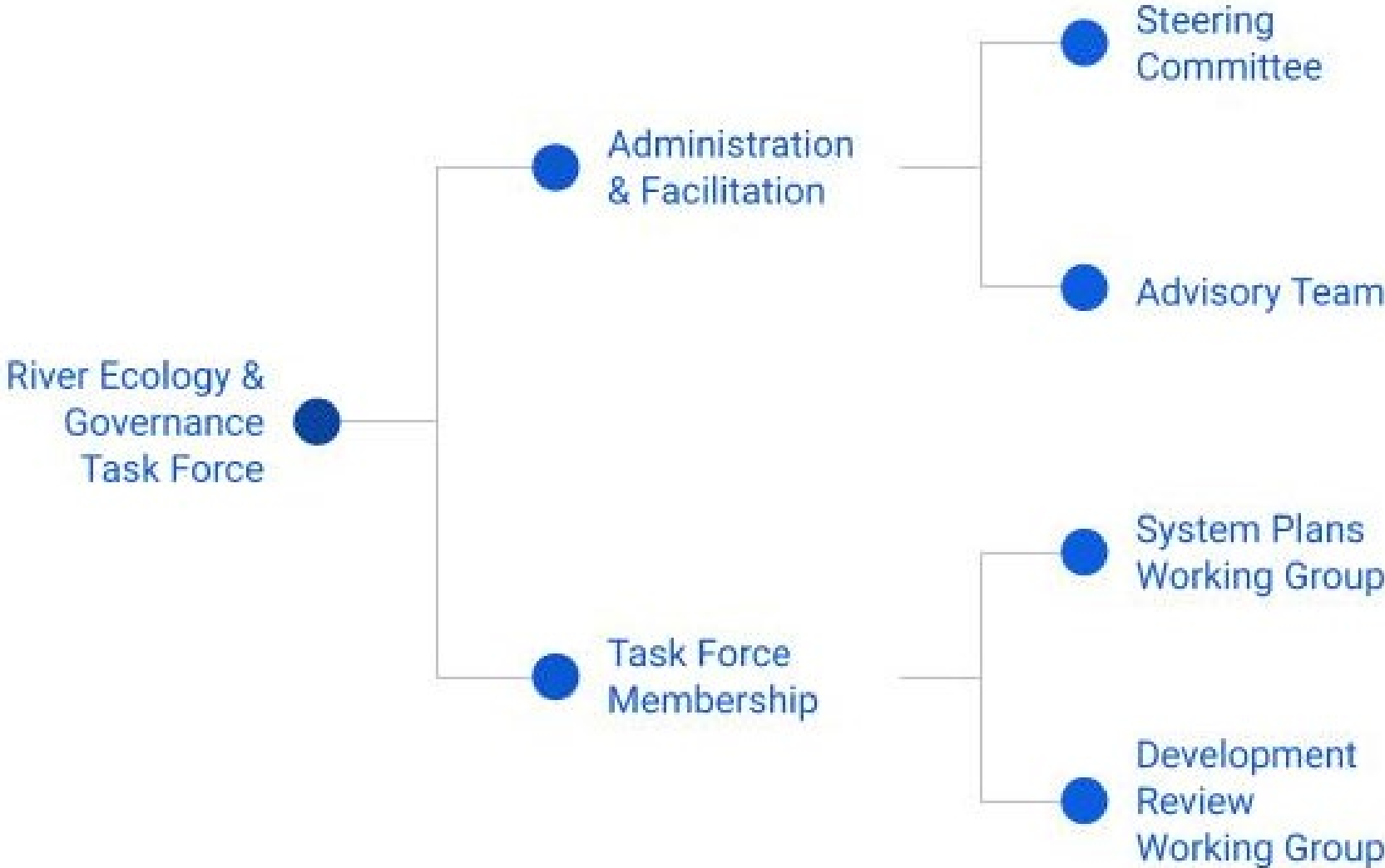
Membership Expectations

Task Force Membership

- Attend Task Force meeting (3/4)
- Participate in a Working Group (+50% of meetings)

Members are identified on the Task Force's website. Other organizations and individuals who are not identified as members are still able to participate and be informed about development reviews and project workshops that impact their neighborhood or community.

Task Force Structure for 2021 - 2022



Case Study Presentation

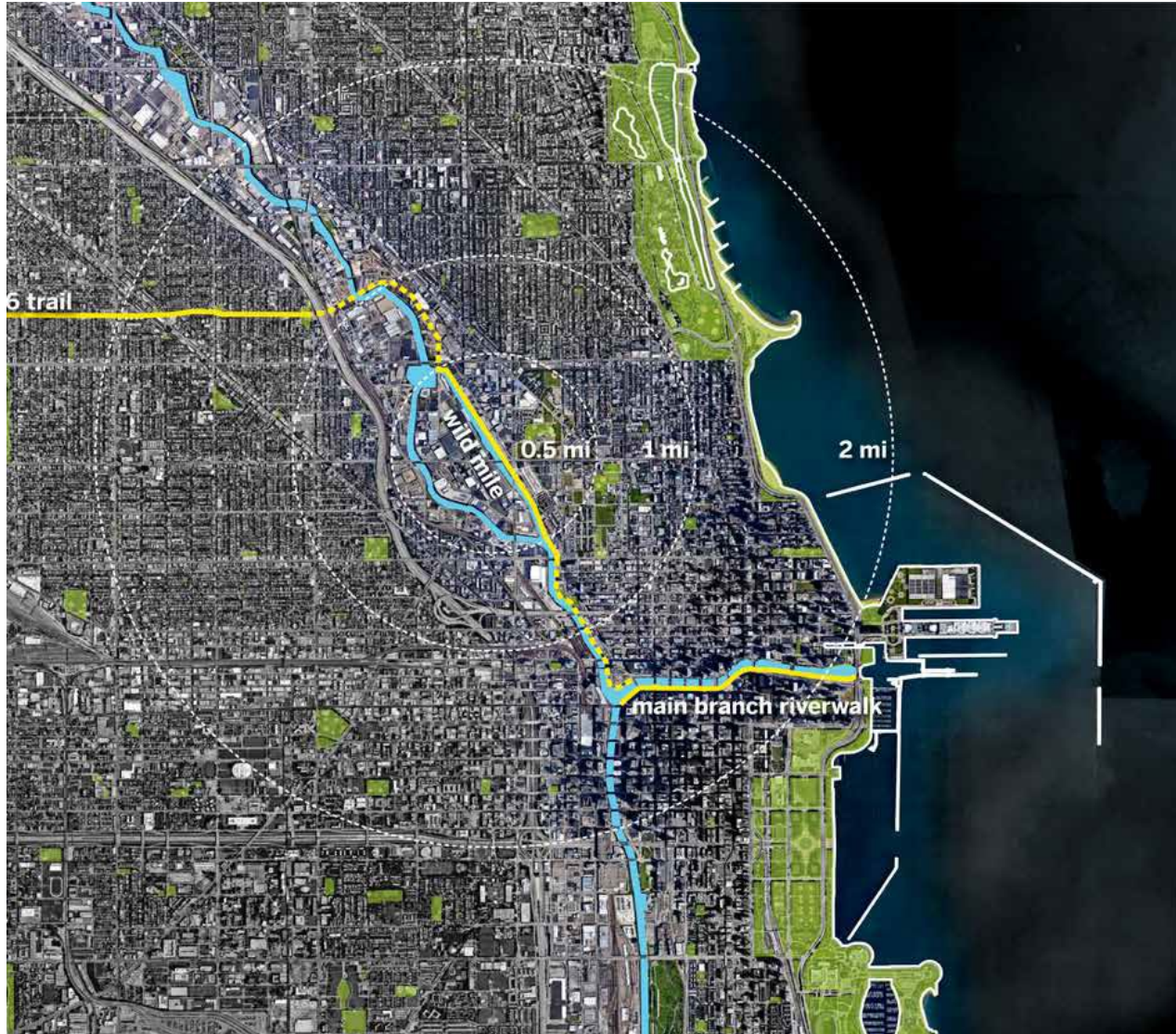
“a floating urban park”

An aerial photograph of Chicago, Illinois, showing the city's skyline and a large body of water (Lake Michigan) in the background. A prominent green path, outlined with white dots, runs along a river (the Chicago River) through the city, highlighting the 'Wild Mile' project. The path starts near the downtown skyline and extends southwards through various urban areas. The text 'Wild Mile Chicago' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

Wild Mile Chicago

“a community-led collaborative effort that personifies the importance of the City and local stakeholders coming together to create positive change and opportunities for engagement with and for diverse communities”

Wild Mile Location



Project Images



Before



After



Images courtesy of SOM

Project Collaborators

Core Team

- Urban Rivers
- Dept. of Planning & Development (DPD)
- NeighborSpace
- Near North Unity Program

Consultants

- SOM (and their consultant team)*
- Tetra Tech (and their consultant team)*
- HR&A
- Epstein Global

Stakeholders

- Shedd Aquarium
- LaSalle Street Church
- British International School
- Chicago Botanical Garden

Government Stakeholders

- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Ill. Dept. of Natural Resources (IDNR)
- Chicago Dept. of Transportation (CDOT)
- Alderman Burnett (27th Ward)
- City Council and Committee

Plan Advisory Committee

- Active Transportation Alliance
- Friends of the Chicago River
- Openlands
- We All Live Here
- Kayak Chicago
- Holsten Human Capital Development
- Green Corps Chicago
- enerGEEwhizz
- Chicago Public Library North Branch

*Consultant teams include firms with expertise in engineering, landscape architecture, ecology, etc.

Major Project Milestones

2014 – 2017: Idea, Pilot, Planning

- Conceived of project for North Branch
- Planning grant received from Patagonia
- 160' Whole Foods installation of floating wetlands (required IDNR permit)
- North Branch Framework Plan passed by Plan Commission

2018 - 2019: Planning, Engagement

- RFP issued for Wild Mile Framework Plan, Boardwalk: \$500,000 in OSIF funding
- Ideas charrette with key partners
- Partner programming and floating gardens installation continues
- Wild Mile Framework Plan engagement
- Wild Mile Framework Plan completion

2020 – 2022: Funding, Permitting, Implementation

- \$1.4 million in OSIF funding
- USACE, IDNR, CDOT permit approval
- Floating gardens installed Fall 2020, Spring 2021
- Floating walkways installed Fall 2021
- Report released on creating conservancy for long-term maintenance and programming

Planning and zoning regulations, processes, permits (local, state, federal)

Entity	Description
Department of Planning and Development	North Branch Framework Plan passed through Plan Commission. Led planning process to develop Wild Mile Framework Plan for implementation.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Permit: Required schematic drawings to understand how far structure extended into river, structural composition and securing of materials
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Required approval from all property owners adjacent to project. Permit required when putting structure in river.
Chicago Dept. of Transportation	Harbor permit. Required structural engineering drawings, with yearly updates. Harbor Master has to consider recreation boat traffic conflicts with habitat features.
REI / NeighborSpace	Public access agreement for pedestrian/kayak ramp. NeighborSpace was the fund manager, receiving funds from the City and responsible for distribution.

Community Engagement

Main Community Partner

- Near North Unity Program

Type	Description
Broad Community Engagement	Three meetings where design team presented and collected input on different strategies and proposals from community members
Plan Advisory Committee	Three meetings with 10 key stakeholder organizations
Stakeholder One on One Meetings	Individual meetings with 9 stakeholder organizations, many geographically adjacent businesses or nearby entities
Workshops and Ongoing Programming	Hosted an Ecology Workshop (Lincoln Park Zoo, Shedd Aquarium, USACE, research biologist) and a Near North Small Group Workshop (Access Living, Art on Sedgwick, Chicago Housing Authority)

Funding for riverfront projects (local, state, federal)

Other Funding (nongovernment)

- Urban Rivers received funding from private foundations and corporate sponsors for their role in the Wild Mile.

Program	Description
Open Space Impact Fees (OSIF)	Two rounds of funding from OSIF. \$500,000 for planning / boardwalk and \$1.4 million for phase I implementation of framework plan. The program is a reimbursement program and required an entity that was approved by City to accept funding. The funding required ordinance approval from the City Council's Special Events Cultural and Recreation Committee. The OSIF planning funding included providing resources to Near North Unity Program for their role in engagement as well as Urban Rivers. SOM was responsible for fund distribution.
National Fish and Wildlife Funding	Received by the Shedd Aquarium for habitat related research and programming.

Outcomes + Successes

Challenges + Lessons Learned

Our Great Rivers Projects Input Session

Calumet Connect Partnership

Are there community engagement processes or aspects of community engagement in Chicago that have been done well?

If not in Chicago, are there other locations where planning processes, especially those in environmental justice or industrial areas, have successfully incorporated community expertise and public health considerations in zoning and land use recommendations?

H2NOW Chicago

How can Current, the City of Chicago, and our H2NOW partners incentivize developers, property owners, and businesses along the river to install educational signage about water quality at key water access points?

Any input on the design of the signage to be more readable/accessible, or any pitfalls to avoid?

What modes of signage are possible (shared/independent, kiosk-style, digital, street light banner, etc.)?

100th Street Calumet River Project

One of the current landowners for this site is looking to sell, and the land is currently zoned for industrial use. What strategies can be pursued to ensure that this property can become and remain publicly accessible?

Looking Back to 2021 and Looking Forward in 2022

What the Task Force accomplished in 2021

- Structured a format for review of development projects as part of formal riverfront planned development process
- Provided consensus based feedback on seven development projects
- Defined set of priorities and themes for system-wide planning
- Informed USACE PAS Restoration Framework Plan by identifying opportunity sites
- Participated in listening sessions for the Southwest Industrial Corridor planning work and We Will Chicago citywide plan

How has input from the Task Force had an impact?

- Group has technical expertise and institutional knowledge that greatly informed the USACE PAS Restoration Framework Plan. **Information on opportunity sites would not have been included but for the input of the Task Force.**
- Group is beginning to influence government actions through reviews of development projects in Chicago. **Task Force feedback is included in the analysis and documents considered and developers are becoming more deliberate in approach.**

Priorities for 2022

- Task Force
 - Next Steps on USACE PAS Restoration Framework Plan
 - Sustainable Development Policy review and input
 - Informing ongoing planning processes (We Will Chicago, Industrial Corridor Modernization, Access and Transportation studies)
- Systems Plans Working Group
 - Research regulatory models to make collaborative recommendations for City policies
 - Establish joint coordinated community engagement opportunities
- Development Review Working Group
 - Greater transparency and structured process for development reviews
 - Consensus based input to result in increased recreation, nature, and connectivity opportunities for new developments

2022 Meeting Dates + Adjourn

Task Force Meeting Dates

- March 15: 3 pm to 4:30
- June 7: 3 pm to 4:30
- September 13: 3 pm to 4:30
- December 6: 3 pm to 4:30

Upcoming Working Group Meetings

- System Plans
 - April 13: noon to 1 pm
 - May 11: noon to 1 pm
- Development Reviews
 - April 5: 6 pm to 7:30 pm
 - May 3: 6 pm to 7:30 pm