



River Ecology and Governance Task Force

2022 Q1 Meeting | 3/15/2022 | 3 pm to 4:30 pm

Meeting Minutes:

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting kicked off at 3 pm with participants saying hi in the chat. Approximately 46 members of the Task Force attended the meeting.

Task Force Goals and Membership Expectations

The group started off the meeting by reviewing the Task Force objectives and short term goals for 2021 - 2022. As a reminder, the Task Force is focused on transforming the waterway system into a thriving and ecologically integrated natural asset through coordinated planning, investment and management. Ultimately, the goal is to have an inviting, productive, and living waterway system that contributes to the city's resiliency.

Membership expectations were introduced to the Task Force members. Consistency and participation is important to advance collective work. It was proposed to have Task Force members attend three out of four quarterly meetings and participate on at least one of the working groups, either System Plans or Development Review, attending at least 50% of the meetings.

Members would continue to be identified on the Task Force website. The group is not exclusive and interested residents do not need to be designated members to participate in a workshop or development review that is related to a project impacting their community or neighborhood. There are multiple ways to engage in the Task Force.

There were no major questions or concerns with the proposal.

Task Force Structure 2021 - 2022

The Task Force was reminded of the current structure of the group through 2022. Much of the administration and facilitation of the Task Force is done in partnership with an Advisory Team and a Steering Committee. There are two working groups that Task Force members participate in: System Plans and Development Review.

Case Study Presentation

Last year, many members noted that they were interested in having a better understanding of planning and zoning regulations, processes and permits, community engagement, and funding for riverfront projects. To build shared knowledge and understanding about these different practices, a series of development case studies would be presented at the Task Force meetings.

The first presentation was on the Wild Mile and included perspectives from the Dept. of Planning and Development, the Near North Unity Program, NeighborSpace, and Urban Rivers. The Wild Mile is an instream habitat and a park in the process of being constructed in the Chicago River's North Branch. Basic information was presented on the major project milestones and then the panel engaged in conversation, providing more detail about how the Wild Mile was conceived and implemented. The slide presentation also focused on summarizing the three areas of planning and zoning, community engagement, and funding. The panel ended by noting the outcomes and successes, challenges and lessons learned from the project.

A few questions arose from Task Force members concerning whether these or similar types of projects are being considered for other parts of the river system, like the South Branch. There are opportunities up and down the river for these types of projects.

Our Great Rivers Projects Input Session

Three projects that are being funded by the Chicago Community Trust Our Great Rivers grant program provided an update on their progress and asked for support on a question from Task Force members.

- **The Calumet Connect Partnership** focused on community engagement and examples of processes that have gone well and incorporated public health and environmental justice concerns. Examples from the group included: the C40 Design Competition, which did broad outreach to groups in the area in multiple languages, the North Park Village Advisory Council, which did coordinated community action in the 1970s to develop community focused facilities, and the West Philadelphia Landscape Project that confronted environmental injustice through engagement with schools and neighbors, focusing on documentation.
- **H2NOW Chicago** was interested in hearing ideas around the design and installation of educational signage about water quality. Suggestions included incorporating art instead of the traditional signage, providing a QR code to connect people to water quality reports in real-time, and pursuing partnerships with local organizations to promote via social media. Data should also be available online and off—a dashboard would be a helpful tool with some information to contextualize what the data means in the real world.
- **The 110th Street Calumet River Project** focused on how to create and maintain accessibility for privately owned parcels with industrial uses, particularly when the current owners may want to sell the land. Suggestions included discussions with the property owner to see how likely it would be to create an easement of purchase the land. Openlands is an organization that the City often works with on projects of this type.

Looking Back to 2021 and Looking Forward in 2022

There was an overview presented of what the Task Force accomplished collectively in 2021 as well as a brief summary of two key ways the Task Force has had an impact. This has occurred through the

Development Review working group and providing input on the US Army Corps Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Restoration Framework Plan.

In 2022, there are opportunities to be involved in additional ongoing planning processes such as We Will Chicago, plans for Industrial Corridor Modernization, and Transportation and Access studies. The goals and priorities for the System Plans Working Group and the Development Review Working Group were also presented. The US Army Corps provided some additional information on what the plans are for next steps after the PAS study is complete and the Department of Planning and Development noted that the Sustainable Development Policy is being updated and members of the Task Force will be invited to provide input on the revisions.

2022 Meeting Dates and Adjourn

The dates for the 2022 Task Force meetings were provided to members as well as upcoming meetings for the System Plans Working Group and the Development Review Working Group.

The meeting concluded at 4:35 pm.