



# What is Green Infrastructure?

Department of  
Planning &  
Environment

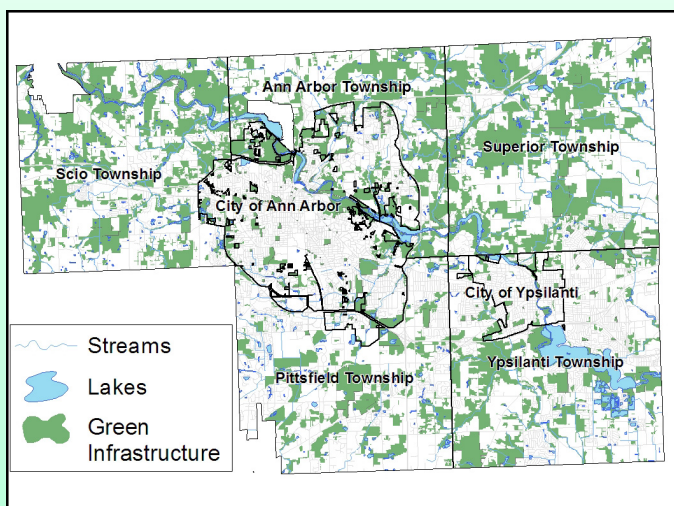
## The Basic Philosophy

“Green infrastructure is our nation’s natural life support system — an interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and other natural areas; greenways, parks and other conservation lands; working farms, ranches and forests; and wilderness and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to the health and quality of life for America’s communities and people.”

*-The Conservation Fund:  
Green Infrastructure Monograph, 2001*



*Washtenaw County Prairie Remnant*



*Washtenaw Metro Alliance Existing Green Infrastructure*

## Natural Systems are Infrastructure Too

If we view our natural areas as Green Infrastructure, we can think about their conservation strategically and regionally, rather than on a case-by-case basis. We know we need to develop and maintain sewers, roads, bridges, and buildings—our built infrastructure—to improve our quality of life. But we often forget that our natural systems require the same care, and offer us equally important benefits when they are healthy, connected, and functioning properly.

## More Connectivity Equals Improved Quality of Life

Like our built infrastructure, our Green Infrastructure acts as a system. Just as one neglected road can affect driving conditions for miles around, one element of an ecosystem affects environmental quality and the quality of life for the entire region. For example, each remaining wetland and stream buffer improves water quality for miles downstream, while contiguous woodlands provide homes and safe passageways for native wildlife. All of these elements also increase the aesthetic value of the region for its human inhabitants.



*Little Heron Pond, Washtenaw County*

Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment  
[www.ewashtenaw.org](http://www.ewashtenaw.org)  
734-222-6808



*Working farms offer local sources of food which we can easily and safely transport to our own tables.*

### Features of Green Infrastructure

- ◆ Wetlands
- ◆ Prairies
- ◆ Farmland
- ◆ Rivers and Streams
- ◆ Lakes
- ◆ Parks
- ◆ Forests



*County Farm Park, Ann Arbor*

## Benefits of a “Green Infrastructure” Approach to Preservation

### ECOLOGICAL:

- ◆ Provides connections to maintain biodiversity
- ◆ Filters pollutants from air, water, and soil
- ◆ Aids in cooling streams and soils through shading
- ◆ Protects and enhances the water quality of rivers and lakes
- ◆ Recharges groundwater aquifers
- ◆ Buffers developed areas from floodwaters, saving lives and property
- ◆ Protects water resources such as riparian corridors and aquifer recharge areas

### ECONOMIC:

- ◆ Increases property tax revenues and home values because properties near and adjacent to green infrastructure often increase in value and generate greater overall revenue.
- ◆ Encourages corporate relocation to the area by increasing quality of life
- ◆ Increases tourism and new business generation, such as bed and breakfasts, rental facilities, restaurants, and art galleries
- ◆ Attracts environmentally sensitive development



*Historic structure at Parker Mill County Park in Ann Arbor Township; Connected to Gallup Park by a recreational path.*



*Sledding at Rolling Hills Park, Ypsilanti Township*

### SOCIAL:

- ◆ Provides an alternative to crime and drugs
- ◆ Increases socialization and celebrates diversity
- ◆ Improves physical and mental health
- ◆ Ensures access for urban residents to large green spaces
- ◆ Enhances local residents’ sense of connection with nature and to each other
- ◆ Expands opportunities for recreation

For More Information, Contact:

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