



What is Green Infrastructure?

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



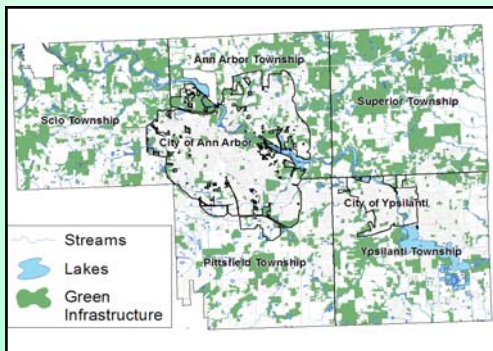
Working farms offer local sources of food which we can easily and safely transport to our own tables.



Washtenaw County Prairie Remnant



County Farm Park, Ann Arbor



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 affects 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

Features or Parts of a Green Infrastructure System

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

Benefits of a "Green Infrastructure" Approach

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



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

At right, sledders at Rolling Hills Park County Park, Ypsilanti Township.



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

SOCIAL:

- ◆ Provides an alternative to crime and drugs
- ◆ Increases socialization and celebrates diversity
- ◆ Improves human health and eases mental fatigue
- ◆ 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:
Washtenaw County
Department of Planning and Environment
734-222-6808 ph. <http://planning.ewashtenaw.org>

Need more Green? Check out these Resources

Other Washtenaw County-Area Resources:

- ◆ Washtenaw County Wind Energy Project at www.ewashtenaw.org/wind
- ◆ Washtenaw County Environmental Portal at www.ewashtenaw.org/environment
- ◆ Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation at www.parks.ewashtenaw.org
- ◆ Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner at <http://drain.ewashtenaw.org>

Other Resources:

- ◆ The Conservation Fund Green Infrastructure Program www.greeninfrastructure.net
- ◆ The U.S. Green Building Council at www.usgbc.org
- ◆ Brownfield Redevelopment information at www.epa.gov/brownfields
- ◆ The Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association at www.glrea.org