

River Ecology and Governance Task Force

Quarterly Meeting

12/03/2024

3 pm to 4:30 pm

AGENDA

3:00 pm 1. Welcome and Introductions

Please say “hello” in the chat.

3:05 pm 2. Task Force Short-Term Objectives and Short-term Goals

Review of the objectives and short-term goals for 2024 – 2025.

3:07 pm 3. Small Group Discussion: Work Plan 2024 Outcomes and 2025 Objectives

During 2024, the Task Force advanced its work plan objectives through its quarterly and working group meetings: System Plans Working Group, Development Review Working Group, and River Assets Working Group.

At this meeting, the Task Force will review accomplishments from this year and discuss how to advance/refine/update goals for 2025, focusing on the following questions:

- *Review the goals, objectives, tasks, and priorities that came out of work planning in 2023 (see attached slides).*
- *Are these still the right goals and objectives?*
- *What needs to be changed or added?*
- *What emerging river needs should be considered to include for next year?*
- *What new goals and objectives should the Task Force consider as priorities for 2025?*

3:55 pm 4. River Assets Working Group Update and Discussion

The River Assets Working Group has been meeting to understand the feasibility of creating a more clearly defined structure and processes to guide river development and maintenance. As part of this work, the working group created potential short-term and long-term strategies. The Task Force will review the strategies and participate in a Mentimeter activity to provide feedback on a couple of questions:

- *How could these recommendations improve your work and the work of your organization?*
- *What are potential challenges to implementing these strategies that you foresee?*

4:22 pm 5. Government Partner Project Updates

Updates on priority government partner projects for 2024 and a look ahead of what is in store for 2025.

4:27 pm 6. Project Challenges Check-In

Time allotted at the end of quarterly meetings for Task Force members to complete a Google Form if they have River project-related questions for government Task Force partners.

4:30 pm 7. Adjourn and 2025 Task Force Meeting Dates

Task Force Objectives

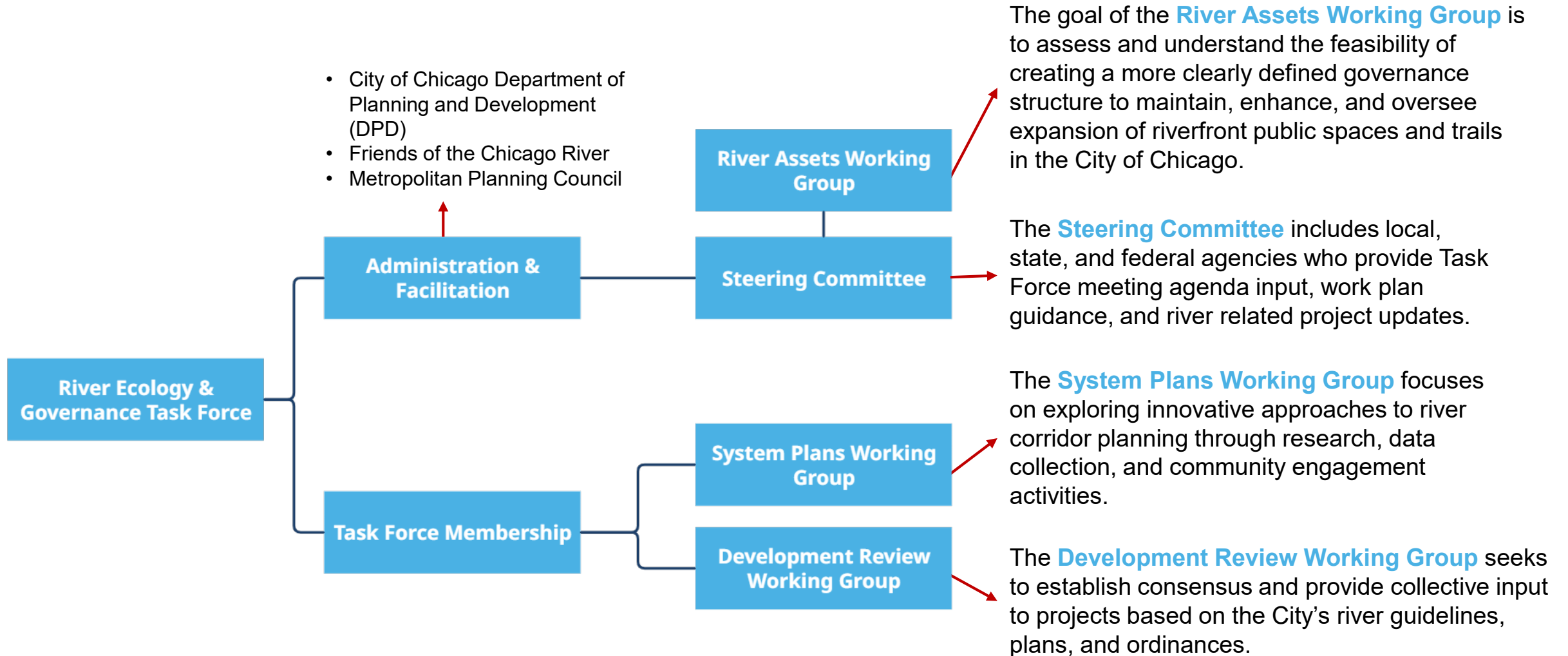
- Transforming Chicago’s unique waterway system into a thriving and ecologically integrated natural asset, capable of accommodating the needs of people, requires coordinated planning, investment and management.
- Aspire to, and realize no later than 2040, inland waterways in Chicago that are inviting, productive and living, that support wildlife in-stream and on their banks, and that contribute to our city’s resiliency

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**

River Ecology and Governance Task Force 2024 Structure Diagram



Task Force Work Plan for 2024

Goal #1: Review current polices and create recommendations to strengthen them

Goal #2: Inform near-term planning opportunities to advance collective priorities

Goal #3: Develop criteria to prioritize projects for identified funding opportunities

Goal #4: Ensure process for development reviews is followed and continues to improve new riverfront developments

Goal #1: Review current polices and create recommendations to strengthen them

December 2023 REGTF Survey Results:

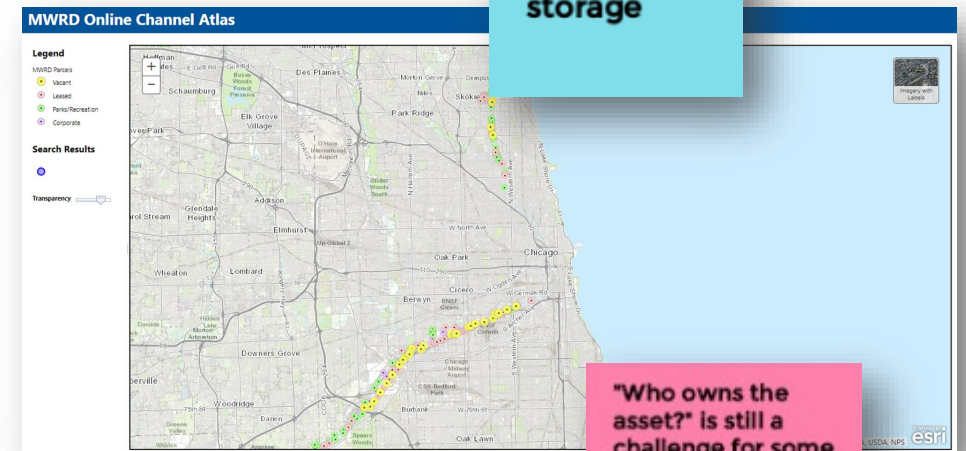
1. **Improving access to river edge (21)**
2. Funding (aligning opportunities with investment and resources) (13)
3. Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Policy (12)
4. Zoning and Use restrictions along the river (11)
5. Plan Implementation (Community, Citywide) (10)
6. Reduce pollutants that affect the river (8)
7. Design guidelines (8)
8. Wildlife protection (8)
9. Chicago Cumulative Impacts Assessment and Environmental Justice Action Plans (7)
10. USACE navigable channel recommendations (5)
11. Implement stormwater/water quality educational signage around Chicago's waterways (4)
12. Plan updates (2)

Goal #1: Review current polices and create recommendations to strengthen them

System Plans Working Group

Exploring River Access Through....

- ✓ Collecting barriers and opportunities for future improved access
- ✓ Researching ownership conditions for land along the river system
- ✓ Discussing our current urban water trail system
- ✓ Examining case studies and success stories that can serve as a model for improved river access



Increased kayak/boat storage

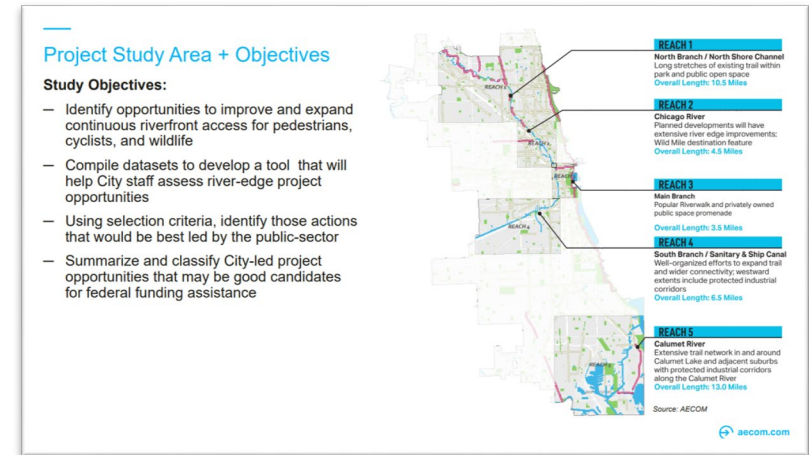
"Who owns the asset?" is still a challenge for some property owners or stewards of public spaces (e.g. some entities aren't in the business of owning bridges)



Goal #2: Inform near-term planning opportunities to advance collective priorities

CDOT: River Edge Access Study ✓

- We've received regular updates and Task Force input opportunities throughout 2024, the tool is now finalized.



DPD: Calumet Design Guidelines and Land Use Update (Ongoing)

- We've received updates at recent Task Force meetings, we will continue discussing this opportunity together in 2025.



Goal #3: Develop criteria to prioritize projects for identified funding opportunities

- ✓ Formed a new REGTF “Governance Working Group” (*now called the River Assets Working Group*) that includes participation by all key relevant agencies and City departments as well as other relevant partners such as substantial riverwalk private property owners / public easement holders and land trusts.

As part of the River Assets Working Group we:

- Researched case studies from other similar cities’ regulatory and funding models.
- Based on findings from these case studies, we identified potential new strategies for diversifying and prioritizing funding for river related capital improvements and maintenance.
- We also proposed strategies for improving planning, coordination, funding, and implementation efficiency to advance river edge projects.
- We will continue to refine the proposed strategies into a work plan in early 2025.

Goal #4: Ensure process for development reviews is followed and continues to improve new riverfront developments

- Provide development teams with the “*Chicago Rivers – Partner-Gathered Context Information*” document developed in the 2023 System Plans Working Group meetings. ✓
- Provide clarity to developers about process and role with the Task Force Development Review Working Group ✓
 - [Located on REGTF Development Review Working Group webpage](#)
- Track how feedback has informed changes to riverfront development and create a checklist to ensure process is followed. ✓
- Conducted formal reviews and provided joint comments on DuSable Park and QTS Data Center expansion as well as multiple development advocacy informal coordination discussions. ✓

Small Group Discussion Topics: Work Plan 2024 and 2025 Objectives

- Review the goals, objectives, tasks, and priorities that came out of work planning in 2023.
- Are these still the right goals and objectives?
- What needs to be changed or added?
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