Community Green Infrastructure Planning Grant

In Fall 2015, the Green Infrastructure Center Inc. (GIC) and Virginia Department of Forestry provided the City of Suffolk with $10,000 in technical assistance to help our community map, evaluate and plan for conserving our best natural resources. The grant provides free technical assistance for our locality to create green infrastructure maps and plans that meet local needs and conserve the highest valued natural assets.

Overview

The Green Infrastructure Community Planning Grant (GICPG) is administered by the nonprofit GIC with support from the Virginia Department of Forestry and funding from the Southern Region of the USDA Forest Service. Our locality will use the information to identify opportunities to protect and connect natural and cultural assets in the Nansemond River watershed. Our locality is providing a match through in-kind support such as such as staff or volunteer hours, printing and use of facilities and supplies.

How This Work Can Help Us!

- ✓ We can increase biodiversity and ecological resilience!
- ✓ We can make smarter investments in community water, trees, trails, food and parks!
- ✓ We can create a healthier community since the greener the community, the cleaner the air and water and the greater the options to exercise outdoors!
- ✓ We can prevent excessive stormwater runoff and flooding by increasing infiltration!
- ✓ We can make our community more attractive to businesses!

Green Infrastructure Planning Overview

Green infrastructure includes intact forests, tree canopy, wetlands, dune systems, parks and rivers, or agricultural soils that provide clean water, air quality, wildlife habitat and food. These natural assets create healthy communities and sustain the local economy. However, if we don't know where our green infrastructure is located, we can lose it over time. Communities can reap many benefits from their natural systems if they identify, rank and map them as part of the communities' "infrastructure." Communities create maps and strategies to form a green infrastructure plan. These plans can help facilitate development in ways that reduce its impact on the landscape, or to restore environmental functionality where it has been lost. There are also many social benefits too! Even in developed areas, assessing trees and planting more can reduce asthma rates, crime and utility bills!

Communities can use their green infrastructure plans for many purposes such as, revitalizing a downtown business district, protecting current and future water supplies, protecting or expanding their economy, creating healthful cities, protecting wildlife and biodiversity, providing or identifying new outdoor recreation options, informing transportation, comprehensive plans or zoning decisions. Example plans are available on GIC's website at http://www.gicinc.org/projects.htm

This is not a planning process for site design or master plans – this planning work is intended for the city, county or regional scale. This is green infrastructure planning at the landscape scale.

Process

Our locality is participating actively in the mapping effort including conducting data analysis, planning assessment and helping to identify priorities and implementation opportunities.

Our community is engaged through the GI Study Advisory Committee, which represents stakeholder interests in the watershed. The larger community will also be invited to attend public forums to share information. Once we have maps available to review, we'll invite the community to comment on them!

With assistance from GIC, our community will create a prioritized base map of the green infrastructure and themed overlay maps to highlight important related features such as water resources, outdoor recreation, forestry, local agri-business etc. using the six steps for community green infrastructure planning. They are summarized below.

> Step 1: Set Goals – What does the community value – clean water, nature recreation, scenic beauty?

> Step 2: Data Review – What do we know and what do we need to know to map our best values?

> Step 3: Asset Mapping – Map the community's ecological, cultural and economic assets.

> Step 4: Risk Assessment – Find out what's at risk and what could be lost if no actions are taken.

> Step 5: Opportunities – Based on assets and risks, what can or should be saved? What could be restored? Engage the community in ranking key areas of importance. Map these opportunities and draft strategies to conserve them.

> Step 6: Implementation – Based on identified opportunities, integrate green infrastructure priorities into local plans projects as necessary.

Timeframe

This project began in fall 2015 and will be completed by fall 2016.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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