

# gROWing Chicago Habitat

A CASE STUDY

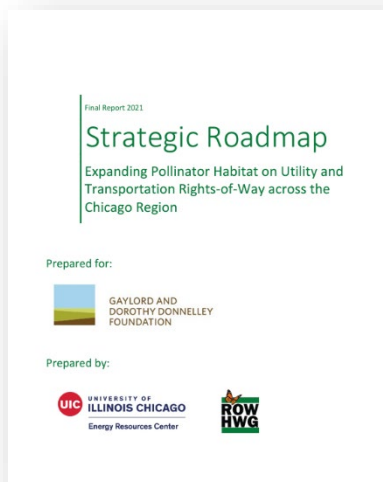
## Introduction

When managed with wildlife in mind, utility and transportation lands can provide valuable habitat resources for a variety of species. The Chicago Wilderness region is comprised of more than 27,000 miles of utility and transportation rights-of-way<sup>1</sup> that can offer refugia for wildlife, potentially support greater biodiversity than surrounding areas, and connect favorable habitats across an otherwise highly fragmented landscape.

[gROWing Chicago Habitat](#) is a network of organizations comprised of energy companies, transportation agencies, conservation groups, and public and private land managers across the Chicago Wilderness region, working together to support habitat on energy and transportation rights-of-way (ROW).



Rights-of-way and protected lands across the Chicago Wilderness footprint. Source: Field Museum.



## Potential Study

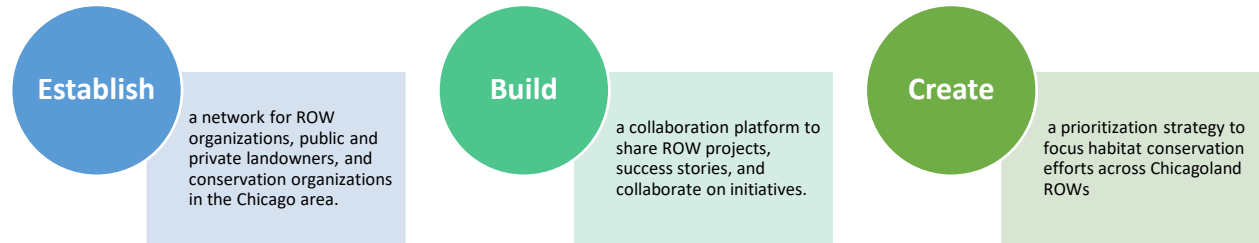
The Energy Resources Center at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) conducted a [potential study and strategic roadmap](#) for the Chicago Wilderness region to determine current adoption of habitat practices as well as barriers, opportunities, and incentives for creating pollinator habitat on utility and transportation lands.

Through a stakeholder engagement process, the study identified several recommendations to support additional habitat on utility and transportation lands in the region.

<sup>1</sup>Chicago Wilderness Prioritizing Green Infrastructure map: <https://hub.chicagowilderness.org/pages/greeninfrastructure-tools>

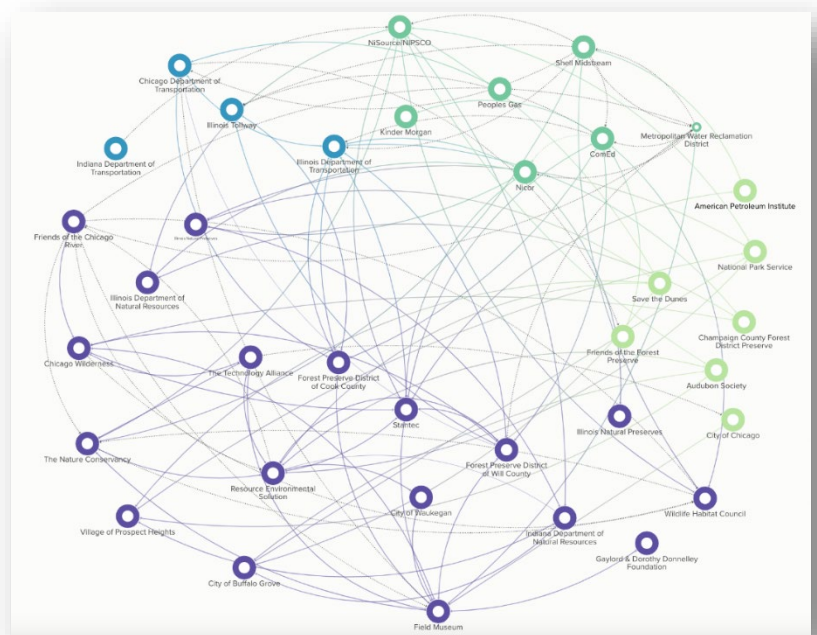
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The recommendations from the potential study and strategic roadmap formed the basis for creating and facilitating the gROWing Chicago Habitat initiative. The goals of gROWing Chicago Habitat include:

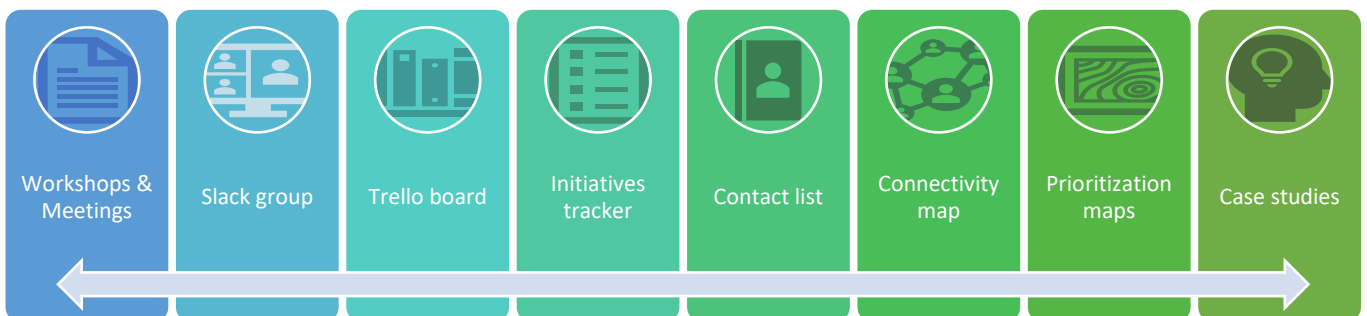


Since 2022, UIC has convened over 70 organizations across the Chicago region through outreach and regular meetings (both in-person and virtual), where participants have the opportunity to learn and share their experiences with creating habitat on utility and transportation lands.

gROWing Chicago Habitat partners have shared case studies, mapped network connections, developed prioritization strategies for planning habitat projects, identified potential project opportunities, and workshopped project roadmaps in a collaborative setting. These activities have resulted in numerous new partner collaborations and spurred additional habitat conservation work on the ground.



Network map of how gROWing Chicago Habitat participants are connected



Outcomes from the gROWing Chicago Habitat initiative

Questions about gROWing Chicago Habitat? Visit our [website](#) or email Caroline Hernandez at [cah27@uic.edu](mailto:cah27@uic.edu).



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